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Gert-Matthias Wegner

# Drumming in Bhaktapur

Music of the Newar People of Nepal

*Volume I: Text*



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## Drumming in Bhaktapur

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### About the author

Gert-Matthias Wegner (b. 1949) is a German ethnomusicologist. He founded and directed Kathmandu University's Department of Music, taught at the Free University Berlin and published mostly about drumming traditions in South Asia.

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To the memory of Hari Govinda Ranjitkar (1934–2019)





# Contents

## Volume I: Text

List of Maps	xi
Preface	xiii
Thanks	xvii
<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2 Apprenticeship and the Cult of Nāsaḥḍyah</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>3 Town Rituals and Processional Music</b>	<b>35</b>
3.1 <i>Dhimaybājā</i>	53
3.2 <i>Dhābājā</i>	67
3.3 <i>Nāykhībājā</i>	69
3.4 <i>Sāymi gūlābājā</i>	78
3.5 <i>Śākya and Vajrācārya gūlābājā</i>	101
3.6 Flute, Harmonium and Violin Ensembles	112
3.7 Jugī Tailor-Musicians	116
3.8 <i>Kābājā</i>	141
<b>4 Dances</b>	<b>145</b>
4.1 <i>Cacā pyākhā</i> and <i>Pañcatāla</i>	149
4.2 <i>Navadurgā pyākhā</i>	163
4.3 <i>Sāpāru</i> Dances	172
4.4 <i>Bhaila pyākhā</i>	182
4.5 <i>Mahākālī pyākhā</i>	190
4.6 <i>Kha pyākhā</i>	200
<b>5 Song Groups, Bards and Beggars</b>	<b>205</b>
5.1 <i>Dhalcā</i> and <i>Bhajan</i>	212
5.2 <i>Dāphā</i> and <i>Lālākhī</i>	217
5.3 <i>Navadāphā</i> and <i>Navabājā</i>	225

## Contents

<b>6</b>	<b>Royal Kettledrums and <i>Navabājā</i></b>	247
6.1	<i>Dhā̃/Kvakhĩ</i>	257
6.2	<i>Kvatāḥ</i>	263
6.3	<i>Dhā̃cā</i>	272
6.4	<i>Dhimaycā</i>	275
6.5	<i>Nāykhĩcā</i>	278
6.6	<i>Pachimā</i>	282
6.7	<i>Dhalak</i>	286
6.8	<i>Kvakhĩcā</i>	291
6.9	<i>Nagarā</i>	297
6.10	<i>Dabadaba</i> and <i>Kāntā̃dabadaba</i>	302
6.11	The <i>Navabājā</i> Repertoire	303
6.12	Drum-Making	312
<b>7</b>	<b>Cymbals</b>	329
7.1	<i>Tāḥ</i> and <i>Tāḥcā</i>	330
7.2	<i>Jhyāli</i> and <i>Jhyālicā</i>	332
7.3	<i>Sichyāḥ</i>	334
7.4	<i>Bhuchyāḥ</i>	335
<b>8</b>	<b><i>Śāstriya Saṅgīt</i></b>	339
<b>9</b>	<b>Musical Change</b>	347
<b>10</b>	<b>Appendix</b>	351
	Bhaktapur Maps	353
	Glossary	357
	Dictionary of Newar Music Terms	371
	Bibliography	397
	Documentary Films and Audio Examples	403

## Volume II: Transcriptions

<b>11</b>	<b>Transcriptions</b>	405
11.1	Dhimaybājā	409
11.2	Nāykhībājā	433
11.3	Dhā̃/Kvakhī	447
11.4	Kvatāḥ	463
11.5	Dhā̃cā	473
11.6	Dhimaycā	483
11.7	Nāykhīcā	491
11.8	Pachimā	501
11.9	Dhalak	523
11.10	Kvakhīcā	543
11.11	Nagarā	549
11.12	Lālākhī	571
11.13	Sāymi <i>Gūlabājā</i>	611
11.14	Vajrācārya and <i>Śākya gūlabājā</i>	631
11.15	Tamva	669
11.16	Bhaila <i>Pyākhā</i>	675
11.17	Mahākālī <i>Pyākhā</i>	699
11.18	Sāpāru <i>Pyākhā</i>	703
11.19	<i>Pañcatāla</i> (Kathmandu)	707
11.20	<i>Pañcatāla</i> (Bhaktapur)	763



## List of Maps

(drawn by Niels Gutschow)

Map 1: Bhaktapur 1987	4
Map 2: Open shrines with aniconic stone representation and god houses	5
Map 3: Bhaktapur: location of farmers' houses	8
Map 4: Bhaktapur's main processional route	10
Map 5: Areas of the main Nāsaḥ shrines	13
Map 6: Shrines of Nāsaḥdyaḥ and Haimādyāḥ with their flight lanes	14
Map 7: Shrines of Gaṇeśa	20
Map 8: Nāsaḥ <i>pūjā</i> processional route	33
Map 9: <i>Dhimaybājā</i> group playing <i>tāhā dyaḥlhāygu</i>	38
Map 10: <i>Sāpāru</i> procession of Bhairava as <i>tāhāsā</i>	43
Map 11: Processions of Indrāyaṇī	44
Map 12: <i>Navarāt</i> processions I	45
Map 13: <i>Navarāt</i> processions II	46
Map 14: Three different death processions of Nāy butchers	53
Map 15: <i>Dhimaybājā</i> groups of farmers and bricklayers	57
Map 16: <i>Dhimaybājā</i> groups with shrines of Gaṇeśa	58
Map 17: <i>Dhimaybājā</i> groups in relation to the pair of music gods	58
Map 18: Homes of Nāy butchers	71
Map 19: <i>Nāykhībājā</i> groups	72
Map 20: Daily morning procession of Sākvalā oil pressers	86
Map 21: Daily processions of the three Sāymi <i>gūlābājā</i> groups	86
Map 22: Collecting holy water from five sacred sites	90
Map 23: Buddhist pilgrimage destinations	94
Map 24: <i>Cibhā pūjā</i> procession	95
Map 25: Processional route of the five Dīpaṅkāra Buddhas	96
Map 26: Śākya and Vajrācārya households	101
Map 27: Standard <i>gūlābājā</i> procession of the Inācva Śākya and Vajrācārya	106
Map 28: Inācva Śākya and Vajrācārya <i>gūlābājā</i> visiting the Aṣṭamātrika	108
Map 29: The 41 Jugi households	120
Map 30: Navadurgā annual schedule of twenty-one neighbourhood visits	169
Map 31: Navadurgā visiting localities in and around Bhaktapur	169

List of Maps (drawn by Niels Gutschow)

Map 32: Kumāḥ potters' homes	183
Map 33: <i>Dhalcā</i> and <i>bhajan</i> groups	213
Map 34: <i>Dhalcā</i> groups in relation to shrines of Nāsaḥḍyaḥ	215
Map 35: 113 song groups	216
Map 36: Bhaktapur's 63 <i>dāphā</i> song groups	218
Map 37: Location of 5 remaining <i>navadāphā</i> groups	227
Map 38: Performance site of Taleju <i>navadāphā</i>	228
Map 39: Yāchē <i>navadāphā</i>	236
Map 40: Names of <i>tvaḥ</i> quarters	354
Map 41: Names of <i>khyah</i> squares, streets, courtyards	355
Map 42: Names of neighbourhoods	356

## Preface

This publication is intended for English-language readers around the world, including the present generation of educated Newars. With its focus on the musical life of Bhaktapur during the decade starting from 1983, it could serve as a point of reference for comparison with the present situation. The transcriptions of almost every Newar drumming composition played in Bhaktapur and the use of special compositions for inducing divine inspiration may interest musicians even beyond South Asia.

It was my late Guruju of *navabājā*, Hari Govinda Ranjitkar who claimed that this publication was his last unfulfilled wish. Unfortunately he passed away in 2019 at the ripe age of eighty-four, having taught the repertoire of the nine drums to many students at Kathmandu University's Department of Music. Since its foundation in 1996, my transcriptions of the compositions served as teaching materials and are included in this publication together with other drum repertoires of Bhaktapur. I studied with Hari Govinda for almost two years, starting in March 1983 with daily lessons at my home at Yatāchē, Bhaktapur. Lessons were divided between the repertoire of the nine *navabājā* drums *dhā*, *kvatāḥ*, *dhācā*, *dhimaycā*, *nāykhīcā*, *pachimā*, *dhalak*, *kvakhīcā* and *nagarā*, and in addition *dhimay* and *lālākhī*. My late Guruju Ganesh Bahadur Sijakhva taught the latter two drums. Both Gurujus were the leading drummers of Yāchē Gaṇeś *navadāphā*. In the 1980s, this group was still performing regularly and within hearing distance of my roof terrace.<sup>1</sup> This and all my further drumming apprenticeships in Bhaktapur required the prescribed rituals and offerings to the local gods Gaṇeś, Kumār, Nāsaḥḍyaḥ and Haimādyāḥ, as described in chapter 2. During his remaining years following my *navabājā* apprenticeship, Hari Govinda added only a few minor variants<sup>2</sup> to the existing repertoire. The transcriptions published here are exactly what he taught me in 1983/84. To allow comparison with other genres and related repertoires, the drum compositions of *dāphā* (*lālākhī*), Bhaila *pyākhā*, *cacā pyākhā*, processional drumming genres Sāymi *gūlābājā* and Śākya *gūlābājā*, *dhimaybājā*, *ṇāykhībājā*, *ghētāgiśi* and *tamva* are also included. The cult of the music god Nāsaḥḍyaḥ concerns every genre of Newar music and dance. To cover important aspects of this cult, the relationship with processional music is also examined in chapter 2.

My early publications in the series 'Newar Drumming'<sup>3</sup> include summaries in Newari that complement the English text. As the knowledge of English among young Bhaktapurians has improved since then, this publication does not include a Newari summary. I am sure, with school education

1 In 1983 there was no motorized traffic in Bhaktapur.

2 Fabian Bakels allowed me to look at the notes of his much later lessons with Hari Govinda

3 Wegner 1986b and 1988

commonly available, every young person in Bhaktapur will be able to read the transcriptions after studying the instructions. This publication describes music in society as I encountered it in the early 1980s. Many Newars used the Nepali version of their Newari caste names, ‘Kapāli’ instead of ‘Jugi’, ‘Banmālā’ instead of ‘Gāthā’, ‘Prajāpati’ instead of ‘Kumāḥ’, ‘Manandhar’ instead of ‘Sāymi’, etc. Farmers wanted to be ‘Kisān’ instead of ‘Jyāpu’. In this publication the Newari caste name is applied in general to members of specific castes. Individuals appear with their preferred surnames. If not indicated otherwise, Newari terms are represented in the Bhaktapur dialect. With its abundant use of nasals, the pronunciation differs from Kathmandu Newari and there are many special words and phrases that identify the ‘*pakka* Bhaktapur Newar’<sup>4</sup>—as I have been called to my amusement.

In March 1983 I settled in Bhaktapur as a member of the ‘German Nepal Research Programme’, to document Newar drumming traditions. As an ethnomusicologist and a performing musician in a society where participation and contribution were essential values, my role did not agree with the concept of a scholarly observer keeping a safe distance from his or her research object, to produce a ‘theory’ as a visiting card for use in academic circles. For trying to understand another culture, I recommend humility.

As a resident of Bhaktapur for more than three decades, it was inevitable and natural that I interacted with local people and that my later role as a teacher of local drumming traditions affected those traditions. Obvious mistakes in some compositions were amended. I introduced written notation of compositions as a teaching aid and organised the first concert tours of Newar musicians to Europe. These were clearly out of context performances but they stimulated foreign interest in Newar culture and helped to raise the status of musicians involved, exposing them to unprecedented appreciation of their music. In 1995 I taught Indira Lachhimasyu of Dattātreya, the first female *dhimay* drummer, causing a fundamental change of the local concept of gender participation in music making<sup>5</sup>. My aim at creating jobs for local musicians as regularly paid music teachers led to the foundation of the Department of Music at Kathmandu University—a pilot project of applied ethnomusicology in South Asia<sup>6</sup>. This started operating in 1996 at Chupin ghāt, Bhaktapur and was inaugurated by the then German President, the late Dr. Roman Herzog during his state visit to Nepal. Devastation of the physical facilities during the big earthquake in April 2015 and the following flood wave in August 2015 caused the Department of Music to move to Kathmandu, along with the core staff from Bhaktapur and earlier graduates from various areas of Nepal, to resume their academic activities in a new setting that should accommodate the rising number of students.

At my age personal participation as a drummer in the musical life of Bhaktapur is definitely over. But I hope that this publication will promote interest in this unique and fascinating repertoire and inspire future drummers to live with these compositions and behold the bliss of Nāsaḥḍyaḥ’s inspiring magic.<sup>7</sup>

4 ‘real/complete Bh. N.’

5 Until 1995 the local concept meant that men did all the fun things in life and women the rest.

6 cf. Fabian Bakels 2021. *Ethnomusicology and Preservation of Traditional Music in Nepal*. PhD thesis, Free University Berlin—to be published soon

7 Nāsaḥḍyaḥ is the local god of music and dance whose cult is examined in detail in chapter 2.





*Gā* bell and *pakka* Bhaktapur Newar in front of the palace, 1985



## Thanks

I am grateful to my late Guruju of *navabājā*, Hari Govinda Ranjitkar and to my late Guruju of *dhimay* and *lālākhī*, Ganesh Bahadur Sijakhya. They initiated me into the cult of the Newar music god Nāsaḥḍyaḥ in such a thorough manner that, at a later stage, I was able to perform the detailed rituals for my Bhaktapur students of *dhimay* drumming. I am grateful to Tek Bahadur Prajapati and Krishna Prajapati who taught me the drum compositions of Taulāchē Bhaila *pyākhā* and to Mangal Lal Manandhar (*Sāymi gūlābājā*), to Punhi Rāj Śākya and ‘Gvale Guruju’ Nucherāj Buddhacārya (Vajrācārya and Śākya *gūlābājā*), to Krishna Prasad ‘Kampani’ Kapali (*tamva*) and to Ratnakaji Bajracharya (*pañcatāl*). I apologize to all those sacrificial animals whose life was taken as per ritual requirement during my personal drumming apprenticeships. No doubt, they would not have lived much longer in the vicinity of so many keen meat-eaters. But it was my desire to learn that caused their sacrifice.

There are hundreds of other musicians who allowed me to record their music and interview them. It would fill many pages to mention the names of each and every musician with whom I was involved in some way or other during the past forty years in Bhaktapur. My heartfelt thanks to all of them! I would also like to thank my drum-maker during the 1980s, the late Dil Bahadur Kulu and his relatives, for constructing and maintaining my drums and teaching me some of his skills, the late Ganeshman Basukala for translating during my early teaching sessions, interviewing all the music groups and helping in many other ways as my first field assistant, Buddhalal Manandhar for preparing surveys of music groups and Pandit Mahesh Raj Pant for translating a number of legal documents.

I am grateful to the late Bishnu Prasad Shrestha, resourceful and worldly-wise manager of the German Nepal Research Programme’s local office and his excellent support team including Mahendra Shrestha (driver) and Nutan Sharma who was especially helpful with translation and erudite advice. Commissioned by me, Nutan prepared a commented list of all music manuscript kept in the National Archive. Their patience with sometimes demanding and eccentric German scholars was truly admirable.

I am grateful to Laxmi Nath Shrestha for teaching me rudimentary Newari, and to his late wife Belaiti for sharing recipes from her *thaḥchē* in Dhulikhel.

I am grateful to Shamsher Bahadur Nhuchen Pradhan for negotiating my rent agreements and other necessary legal requirements that made my life in Bhaktapur easier.

I would like to thank my friend Madhu Krishna Chitrakar for his magnificent paintings and for the permission to use some of them for teaching and publication.

Thanks

I would also like to express my sincere thanks to Shyam S. Dhaubhadel and his brother Ananta for their friendship and unfailing support of my work in Bhaktapur.

I am grateful to my late friend Jagadish SJB Rana who visited me in 1987 in Bhaktapur, saying, “I heard about your work. How can I help you?” Coming from a member of the top level of Nepalese aristocracy, this offer was definitely meaningful. It proved effective in dealing with nonplussed administrators during the foundation work of the Department of Music. When Jagadish Rana accompanied me to ministries and other government offices, there was instant awe and submission. He did enjoy those memorable scenes, with a twinkle in his eyes. “It will be done,” was one of his favourite sayings. My sincere thanks go to Jagadish for allowing me to use the 17th century Newar *rāgamālā*—then acquired from another branch of his family—in my publications.

My faithful secretary, Raju Hyaunmikha helped me to design the Microsoft Excel based notation of drumming syllables in the early 1990s, transcribe my hand-written notation of all compositions, created a database for information on music groups and musical change and checked the final proofs for mistakes. He retrieved the notation documents, after the earthquake (April 25th, 2015) smashed my home and my computers. A big THANK YOU, Raju! A helpful expert at Mac Support Kathmandu managed to breathe new life into one of those damaged computers. I am grateful to Prasanna Shrestha and his team.

I am indebted to my faithful students and friends Fabian Bakels, Ravi Kapali, Bishnu Bahadur Manandhar, Lochan Rijal, Abhaya Krishna Shrestha and members of the Nepal Army who came to the rescue of my belongings after the earthquake devastated my Bhaktapur home while I was in Germany. Some of the material presented here would have been lost without their efforts. Many thanks to Fabian Bakels, for allowing me to compare transcriptions based on *nagarā* lessons that he took thirty years after my *navabājā* apprenticeship (1983/84).

I am grateful to Ranav Adhikari for his technical expertise in applying English subtitles in my documentary films and installing them in YouTube. I am also grateful to Rajkumar Manandhar for a photo of the Navadurgā dancers.

I am immensely grateful to Prof. Dr. Niels Gutschow who opened my eyes to the meaning of urban space and ritual in Newar culture, contributing countless details to my understanding of Bhaktapur and the Bhaktapurians and helping me in many ways. Based on our field notes and those of our respective field assistants, he produced admirable maps depicting the location of music groups, musical processions, etc., that are included in this publication. Among his publications about Bhaktapur, I recommend readers to his crowning achievement ‘Bhaktapur-Nepal: Urban Space and Ritual’<sup>1</sup> as a companion to this study.

I shall always remember with gratitude Prof. Dr. Bernhard Kölver, founder and co-ordinator of the German Nepal Research Programme, for supporting my continuous membership as a research scholar and for sharing his knowledge and enthusiasm. He did an ad hoc translation from Sanskrit for me of the musically relevant passages of the *Bṛhad-Svayambhū purāna*. He introduced me to the novels of P.G. Wodehouse, causing a lifelong addiction to this fountain of sweetness and light.

My sincere thanks go to all the collaborators of the dictionary project, foremost to Dr. Ulrike Kölver and her invaluable expertise as a linguist. Her Nepalese team included Iswarananda

1 Gutschow 2017

Shresthacarya, Daya Ratna Sakya and Nirmal Man Tuladhar. Daya Ratna Sakya was particularly helpful and patient, ploughing through the available literature in Newari with me.

I thank Prof. Richard Widdess for his beautiful friendship, for his helpful comments on this manuscript and for including Carol Tingey and me in his Leverhulme-funded Research Project that allowed us for three years to carry out research into historical links between Indian and Newar musical traditions. This brought to light among other things the only complete Newar *rāgamālā* manuscript<sup>2</sup>, commissioned in Bhaktapur during the early 17th century. Richard's study<sup>3</sup> of sacred *dāphā* singing in Bhaktapur set new standards in ethnomusicological scholarship and has been a source of inspiration to me. I strongly recommend readers to explore his *dāphā* book, before diving into the ocean of Newar drumming.

I would like to thank Simonne Bailey for her friendship, continuous encouragement and patient corrections of my attempts at producing readable scientific prose in English. Her corrections are made even more valuable by the fact that for a decade she participated in almost every performance of the Yāchē *navadāphā* and several other music and dance groups, playing the natural trumpet *pvaṅgā* and the shawm *Gujarāti mvālī*—thus knowing better than anybody else what I was trying to say and what had to be questioned. Initially, her double identity as a British lady and a low-caste Newar musician tended to confuse locals. But soon she was generally accepted and much in demand as a performing Jugi. At the end of her Bhaktapur stay I inherited her indestructible cast iron cooking vessels made in the United Kingdom, that are giving such marvellous service in my kitchen.

I thank Bronwen Bledsoe for lending me her excellent NIKON camera for over a year, after my camera broke down during the wild New Year festivities at Thimi. I am grateful to Kevin Bubriski for allowing me to use the brilliant photos that he took in 1988 at my home and during our *dhimay* drumming procession to Indrāyaṇī. I am also grateful to Bikas Rauniyar for two photos of Bhaktapur events, and to Bernd Karl Rennhak for photos of my drums that he took during his visit to Bhaktapur in 1984. If not indicated otherwise, all other photos in this publication were taken by me.

I am grateful to the German Research Council (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, DFG). Without their generous support for eight years, my ethnomusicological fieldwork in Nepal would not have been possible. I am equally grateful to the Leverhulme Foundation for funding my research for three years and to the German Academic Exchange Programme (DAAD) for funding my initial decade of establishing and directing the Department of Music at Kathmandu University.

I am very grateful to the 'Pro Musica Viva – Maria Strecker-Daelen Stiftung' and my old friend, Werner Ehlenberger for contributing to the production costs of this publication and to my daughter Uscha Wegner for creating preliminary digital versions of the manuscript for reviewers, publishers and friends to read.

Last not least, my sincere thanks go to the gentle and tolerant people of Bhaktapur. They managed to bear with me for several decades, extending their warm Newar hospitality and friendship to a German drummer who fell in love with their admirable culture.

2 Wegner and Widdess 2004 and 2005

3 Widdess 2013

## Thanks

It makes me sad to realize that quite a few people mentioned here have already passed away. I owe them much gratitude for their kindness and support of my work and hope that—despite coming out so late—this publication will help others to remember them as I do with fondness.

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# 1 Introduction

The Newar people of the Kathmandu Valley and beyond are an ethnic group of Nepal that absorbed many cultural influences from South Asia over the past two thousand years. Their Newari language belongs to the Tibeto-Burmese language group. Their admirable musical culture saw its heyday during the rule of the later Malla kings of Bhaktapur, Patan and Kathmandu (13th to 18th centuries) and continued to thrive initially even under later Nepali-speaking rulers of other ethnic background. During the 1980s, the decline of Newar culture had become a matter of concern to many Newars who engaged in appeals to preserve their language.<sup>1</sup> As there are now several ground-breaking publications about the social, spatial and ritual orders of Bhaktapur, I will not duplicate this but recommend the reader to consult these essential books for detailed and fascinating background information.<sup>2</sup> Owing to the lack of data, it is not possible to reconstruct a continuous early history of music in the Kathmandu Valley. This was not made easier by the unhelpful habit of invading armies destroying and eradicating whatever they encountered. Frequent massive earthquakes had a similar effect. The earliest written document dates from 464 A.D. when the Licchavi ruler Mānadeva (464 to 505) had a stone pillar with a carved inscription installed at Cāṅgu Nārāyaṇa. Originally the pillar carried the glorious statue of Garuda that now stands on the pavement, facing the sanctum and is said to be a portrait of King Mānadeva. The stone plinth of the temple shows coarse carvings that could be the earliest depictions of musical instruments in the Kathmandu Valley. Although the temple was destroyed and rebuilt several times after earthquakes and fire, the plinth carvings—now in part concealed by later structures—could refer to the music practice of the Licchavi period that coincided with the North Indian Gupta period. We perceive musicians playing various drums, cymbals, transverse flutes, lutes and harps.

The first stone inscription mentioning a music group dates from 604 A.D. It stands at the roadside in Lele<sup>3</sup>. Line eleven of the Sanskrit inscription goes “...yāḥ mā 12 vādīttra gauṣṭhikā nāmmā 10 ... rasya mā 40 pradīpagauṣṭhikā nāmmā 8 arccā gauṣṭhikānām...”, mentioning a group of musicians endowed with a land donation of ten *mānikā*. *Vādīttra gauṣṭhikā* translates into Nepali as *bājā guṭhi*. So the practice of supporting music groups with land donations goes back to the Licchavi rulers. It reached a monumental scale during the later Malla period (15th to 18th centuries), the Golden Age of Newar culture.

1 Whelpton 2005 offers an insightful discussion of changes in lifestyles, values and identities (chapter 6).

2 Gutschow 1982, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2017, Gutschow and Kölver 1975, Levy 1990

3 cf. Wegner and Sharma, 1994 and 1995

## 1 Introduction

The first written version of the *Bṛhad-Svayaṃbhū purāna* in Sanskrit dates from the third quarter of the fourteenth century<sup>4</sup>. It mentions<sup>5</sup> sweet sounding *ghaṇṭa* bronze bells, the performance of dance (*nṛtya*), hymns (*stotra*, *dharāṇi*), song (*gīta*), singing (*gāna*) in local language (Newari). Musical instruments (*vādya*) played for Svayaṃbhū include<sup>6</sup> *mṛdaṅga*, *dundubhi*, *paṭaha*, *vīṇā*, *muruja*, *dhvār ghaṇṭa*, *ḍiṇḍimā*, *jharjhara*, *bherī*, *kāhāla*, *tūrya*, *śṛṅga*, *śaṅkha*, further<sup>7</sup> *maṇḍala*, *mukunda*, *kāmsya tāla*, *kāhāra*, *vāṃśa*, *ghoṣa vādya* and<sup>8</sup> *kāmsaya*, *dhakkā*, *mṛduḍiṇḍima* and *jantu śṛṅga*. The manuscript<sup>9</sup> mentions *tirtha* processions<sup>10</sup> where the following instruments were played, *maṇḍala*, *mṛdaṅga*, *paṭaha*, *dhakkā*, *dhvana*, *dundubhi*, *maddu*, *ḍiṇḍima*, *tāḍana*, *vīṇā*, *kiṅkinī*, *kāmsaja*, *turya*, *kāhāla*, *jantu śṛṅga*, *śaṅkha*, *bherī*, and *ghoṣavādya*. It also tells us that Svayaṃbhū is adorned with the *pañcatāla* instruments (compound drum, cymbals, natural trumpets) and other instruments.<sup>11</sup> We learn about three different kinds of utterance and their use<sup>12</sup>, *japa* (murmur, for *mantra* and *yajurveda*), *paṭh* (recite, for *stotra* and *ṛgveda*), *gāi* (sing or recite in a singing manner, for *sāmaveda*). Important advice for monks (*bhikṣu*) is added: If they indulge in *doṣa* (sins) like alcohol inspired dance, song, playing of instruments, garlands, perfume and—heaven forbid—*maithuna* (sexual intercourse), this will lead them to hell (*durgati*).<sup>13</sup> So, if a reader of this publication happens to be a monk, he should stop reading here. As the following chapters prove, the Newar people of Bhaktapur tend to enjoy all these things tremendously.

The cult of the music god Nāsaḥḍyaḥ with its unique concept of the linear progression of divine energy along flight lanes indicated by specific openings in brick walls must have been in practice when ancient settlements emerged. The town of Bhaktapur grew from a cluster of villages, each having at its centre a shrine of Nāsaḥḍyaḥ (Fig. 1). This becomes clear when we examine the gods worshipped during music apprenticeship and the processional routes to the respective shrines. The following chapters include several maps providing evidence.<sup>14</sup>

Following the Licchavi period, the time between 740 and 1150 was a dark age of anarchy that coincided with a similar situation in Tibet. Vajrayāna Buddhism became a prominent religious influence with its centre in Lalitpur (Patan). It introduced Tantric Buddhist *caryā* songs (*cacā* in Newari) and dances (*cacā pyākhā*). According to legend, Bhaktapur was founded during the 9th century. During the 12th century Anandadeva of Banepa moved his residence to Bhaktapur. The early Malla period began with Ari Malla (1200–1216). In 1342 the queen and prince of Simraungarh (Terai) settled in Bhaktapur, installing their tutelary deity Taleju. Bhaktapur was in control of the trade route to Tibet and became the leading town in the Kathmandu Valley until its division into the three Malla kingdoms in 1482. (Map 1)

4 I owe this information to the late Prof. Horst Brinkhaus who was preparing his translation of the text.

5 p. 66

6 p. 104

7 p. 122

8 p. 138

9 pp. 296, 297

10 pilgrimage to sacred water sources for ritual purification

11 p. 153

12 p. 200

13 p. 221

14 cf. chapters 2., 3.1, 3.3, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3

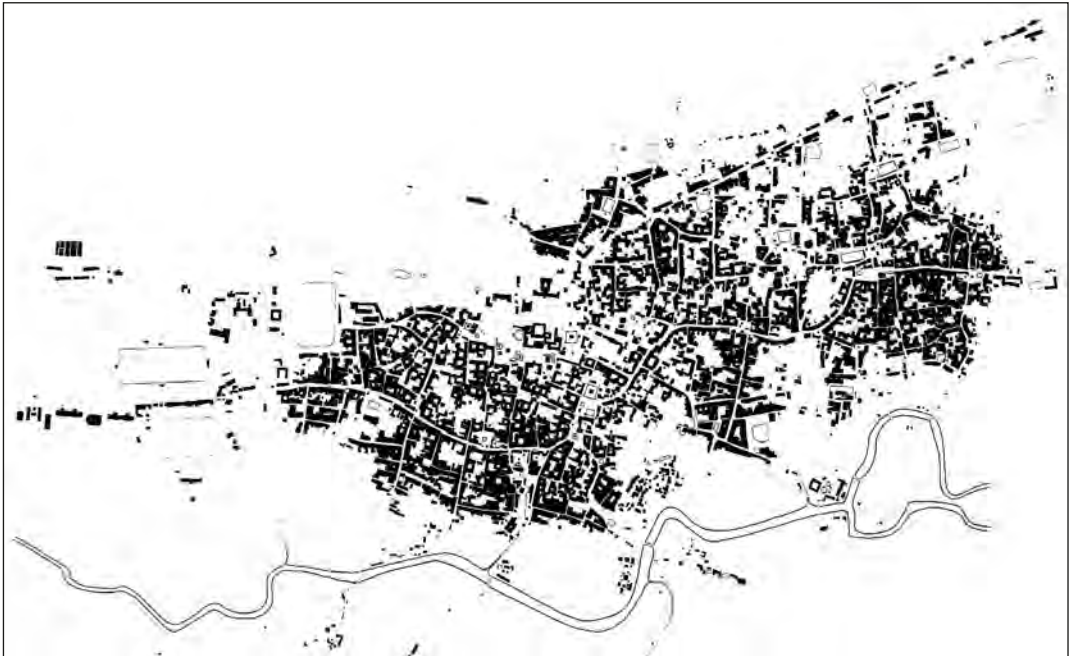




*Fig. 1:* Bhaktapur in 1985 seen from south, with the temple roofs of Nyatapola and Bhairavnāth in the central Taumādhi square, the division between upper (right) and lower town (left). The temple roof of Cāᅅgu Nārāyaᅅa is just about visible between two tall trees on top of the forested ridge north of Bhaktapur. The central part of this ridge is veiled by polluting exhaust of brick kilns that kept multiplying around Bhaktapur during the following decades, putting every citizen's health at risk and destroying the basis for agriculture. In the foreground we perceive a Jyāpu farmer in a wheat field, carrying two baskets suspended from a bamboo pole.

With all those invading armies devastating North India, the remote Kathmandu Valley appeared as a peaceful refuge to those arriving in search of physical security. They brought with them their cults, their skills and in some cases, their musical instruments. All this contributed to the unique Newar musical culture that blossomed between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries. Among the Malla kings of Bhaktapur who left an important legacy as patrons of music, art and architecture were Jagajjotir Malla (1614–1637), Jagatprakāśa Malla (1644–1673), Jitāmitra Malla (1673–1696), Bhūpatīndra Malla (1696–1722) and Raᅅajīt Malla (1722–1769). The former is remembered as a composer-king. He devised the most spectacular details of Bhaktapur's New Year festival, founded the initial *navadāphā* groups and composed *dāphā* songs that were still sung in the 1980s. His statue crowns a pillar in front of the Golden Gate in the palace square. Bhaktapur remained a Malla kingdom until 1769 when it was the final Malla kingdom to fall into the hands of a conquering warlord, Pṛthvī Nārāyaᅅa Shah of Gorkha, founder of the state of Nepal. When he made Kathmandu the capital of his kingdom and resided in the Hanuman Dhoka palace, he encountered Indian court musicians whose performance irritated the ruler. They were deported to India, to be invited back to stay by the conqueror's grandson, Raᅅa Bahādur Shah (ruled 1777–1799). Pṛthvī Nārāyaᅅa Shah found the musical culture of the Newars tolerable enough to recommend his subjects to proceed with their ritual masked dances and singing and drumming at

## 1 Introduction

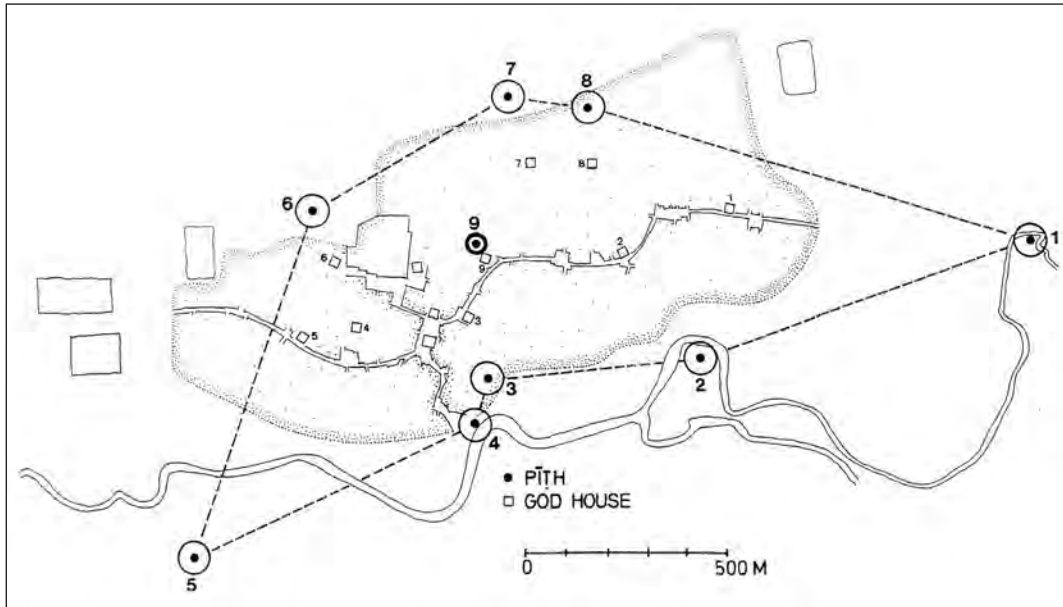


*Map 1: Bhaktapur 1987 with the old main road to Tibet meandering through the town and the Hanumante river flowing from east to west (map courtesy of Niels Gutschow)*

temples and during processions. Even after the conquest, new forms developed and the creative spirit remained unbroken for a while. The new ruler did not interfere with the land endowments that financed Newar culture. Nepalese school textbooks describe King Pṛthvī Nārāyaṇa Shah as ‘father of the nation’, whereas some Bhaktapurians used expressions for the Shah kings that cannot be repeated in polite society. More than two centuries after the conquest, people in Bhaktapur lived with a marked sense of subjugation, perceiving Newar culture as superior but threatened by decline. Two Royal Nepal Army camps outside Bhaktapur and continuous army presence in the Malla palace compound did not contribute to relax the situation. In Bhaktapur, the old spatial and social orders persisted. Robert Levy called it a ‘unicultural town’.<sup>15</sup>

When I arrived in Bhaktapur in March 1983, it was a town for pedestrians. There were no vehicles. People walked. The air was clean and so were the Hanumante and Kasaṇ Khusi rivers. Set on an elevation stretching from east to west, the old town with its Newar population of seventy thousand was overlooking the paddy fields where over seventy per cent of the citizens worked as farmers. Chilies, ginger, cucumber, cauliflower and yoghurt were of outstanding quality. Clouds of butterflies and golden dragonflies hovered over the fields and everywhere lingered a smell of the most prominent weed, *Cannabis indica*. There was a feeling of profound peace, of being out of this world. Nobody lived outside the old town. Farmers spending the night out in a field hut to water potatoes or cauliflower, had alarming stories to tell of ghosts making their appearance, rattling at the door, etc.

<sup>15</sup> Levy 1990



Map 2: Open shrines (*pīth*) with aniconic stone representation and god houses (*dyahchē*) with golden statues of Aṣṭamātrkā mothergoddesses Brahmāyaṇī (1), Maheśvarī (2), Kumārī (3), Bhadrakālī (4), Vārāhī (5), Indrāyaṇī (6), Mahākālī (7), Mahālakṣmī (8) and Tripurasundarī (9) (map: Niels Gutschow, in Levy 1990, p. 155)

Inside Bhaktapur it felt very safe, as if living in a womb. The town was protected by numerous gods and goddesses residing in temples and shrines that constitute a *maṇḍala*, with the shrines of the eight mother goddesses Aṣṭamātrkā at the periphery and Tripurasundarī in the centre and shrines of other gods spreading all over the town (Map 2). The Bhaktapur *maṇḍala* painting below includes only some of the main gods and goddesses. The outer rhombic realm shows the Aṣṭamātrkā starting with Brahmāyaṇī and Maheśvarī (top left), in the next realm eight Bhairava-s and Mahāsiddhas, then eight Gaṇeśas and Tripurasundarī in the centre. In reality, the total number of Gaṇeśa shrines is forty. There are more Gaṇeśas outside the town. One of the four guardian Gaṇeśas of the Kathmandu Valley, Surya Vināyaka Gaṇeśa is located two kilometres south of Bhaktapur and receives blood sacrifices after completion of musical apprenticeships. The shrine of the tutelary goddess of the Malla kings, Taleju is located inside the palace complex and does not appear in the *maṇḍala* painting.<sup>16</sup> (Fig. 2)

As my language skills in Nepali and Newari improved, my teacher of the nine *navabājā* drums, Hari Govinda Ranjītkar revealed his mythic world view by telling us the story of a tornado that he witnessed during his young days. In the Kathmandu Valley, the occurrence of a tornado is much rarer than earthquakes, perhaps once in a century. This one devastated a rectangular water reservoir on the southern slope of Cāngu Nārāyaṇa, breaking one of the walls

16 The Buddhist *maṇḍala* of Bhaktapur includes Buddhist shrines, monasteries and *cībhāh* monuments but also the mother goddesses Aṣṭamātrkā and Surya Vināyak Gaṇeśa. It is actualised by Buddhist processional music groups during the month of *gūlā*, as explained in chapters 3.3 and 3.4.



Fig. 2: Bhaktapur *maṇḍala* showing in the outer rhomboid area the Aṣṭamātrkā among trees, in the second area eight Bhairavas and Mahāsiddhas, in the third area eight Gaṇeśa-s with other gods, and in the triangular centre three Gaṇeśa-s and Tripurasundarī dancing with two goddesses. Next to the rivers lie cremation grounds with jackals looking for bones. The borders show the distant surroundings, left the Himalayan peaks north of Bhaktapur with Langtang (7234 m) and Shishapangma (8027 m), right the south view with Phulchowki hill (2791 m). (painted by Madhu Krishna Chitrakar in 1987 after an older prototype)

and spilling the contents. In the early 1980s, this slope was reforested with pine trees that have grown into a fine plantation. The reservoir has been left untouched since the event that Hari Govinda related. One of the famous Licchavi period stone images in the temple courtyard of Cāngu Nārāyaṇa depicts Lord Viṣṇu sitting on his mount, the snake-devouring eagle Garuḍa. In the Kathmandu Valley, traditional water sources are protected by Nāga snake gods, said to promote fertility and continuous flow of water. As everyone can see, a *Nāga*'s care does not extend to modern urban water systems. However, what Hari Govinda saw during that cataclysmic event was this: Not a black cloud covering the sky with the sun shining above but *Garuḍa* spreading his mighty wings, carrying on his back Lord Viṣṇu in all his glory. Having spotted the *Nāga*, *Garuḍa* pulled the angry snake (the tornado's roaring funnel) up into the sky for his

afternoon snack. Now without the Nāga's protection, the water basin was devastated and ran dry. For the past eighty years, nobody has dared to repair it after divine interference with this frail human structure.

Thus it became clear to me that the old generation of Bhaktapur Newars perceived the world in a way dramatically different from my own. I probably would have seen something uncommonly dull, as the national weather report.<sup>17</sup> Soon I realised that Hari Govinda's magical view of the world was no exception. In fact, the entire local mythology had been superimposed over the landscape (urban and otherwise), and people were living happily in daily communion with their gods.<sup>18</sup> As I was taught during drumming apprenticeships, the divine presence needs to be actualised during processions and town rituals with the help of musical invocations called *dyahlhāygu*. These compositions work like telephone numbers connecting the drummers' minds with the divine energies residing in shrines, temples and other religious artefacts. Played in the proper context, *dyahlhāygu* invocations can open a portal to the realm of the gods.<sup>19</sup> By tapping those divine energies, musicians are rewarded with inspiration. In fact, everybody is. During festivals, Newars tend to consume gallons of home made *thvā* (rice beer) and *aylāḥ* (spirit), ensuring a most generous flow of inspiration.

Caste prescribed not only the locality of your house but also what kind of daily work to pursue, whom to marry (ideally within the same caste), and exactly where to be cremated at the respective *ghāt* at the river banks. Crossing the social divide was unacceptable. Untouchable sweepers had to live outside the old town walls in small huts made of dried mud bricks and thatched with straw, whereas houses of other castes included three to four floors and burnt *pvalā apā* tiles as roofing. Almost every family owned a house—with the exception of most Jugi tailor-musicians who were allowed to occupy the upper floor of some public *sataḥ* gate houses. In 1983 people lived at a caste-related distance to the Malla palace and their tutelary deity Taleju. High-caste ritual specialists and families of earlier courtiers lived close to the palace and Nāy butchers and other low castes at the periphery of the town. The Jyāpu farmers' quarters occupied most of the space in between. They range in the middle of the caste hierarchy. (Map 3)

Besides spectacular temple squares, traditional architecture included hundreds of multi-purpose *phalcā* shelter buildings with a row of carved pillars on the front side, donated by local people for public use. Such multi-purpose shelters were dotted all over the town, frequently next to temples, most of them used by song groups singing for the gods during evening hours. Temple squares had *dabū* stone platforms used by music groups and also for the performance of masked dances. All musicians and dancers were males.

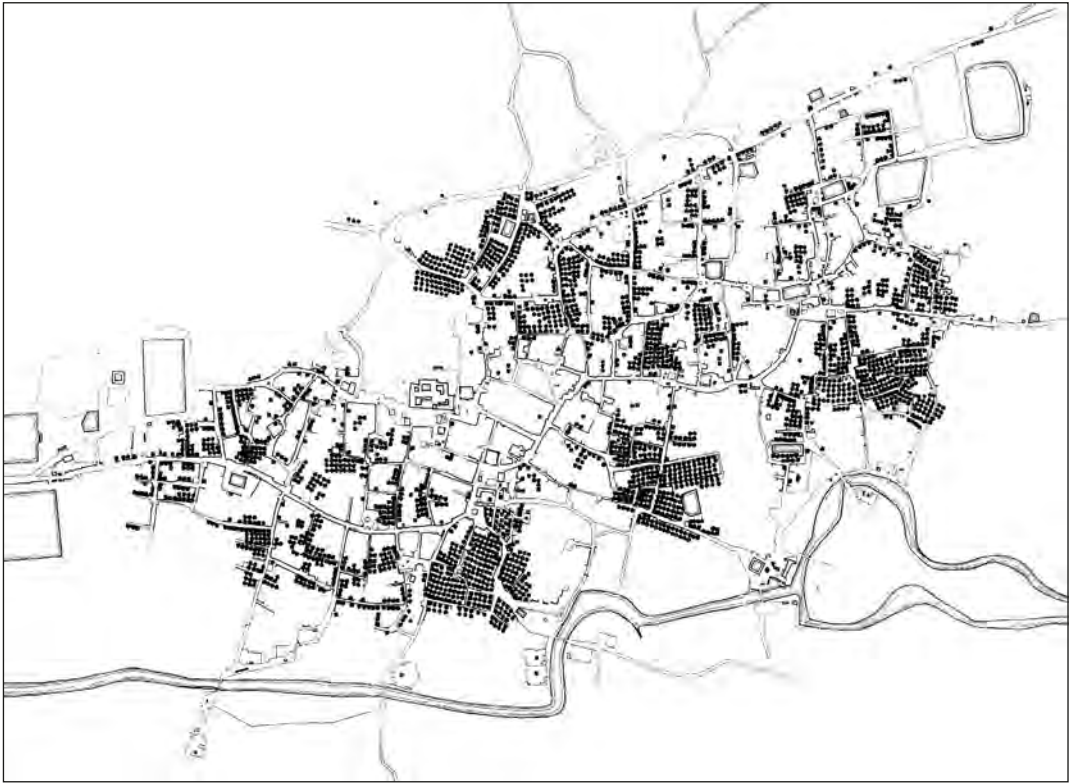
In 1983 there were one hundred and thirteen song groups performing on a daily basis in *phalcā* shelters. The three genres of devotional group singing included—starting with the oldest—sixty-three *dāphā*, one *kvakhīcā dhalcā*, thirty-six *dhalcā*, and thirteen *rās bhajan* and *gyānmālā bhajan* groups. The imported genres *dhalcā bhajan* and *rās bhajan* are similar to popular North Indian genres of devotional group singing. A Buddhist version of *rās bhajan*,

17 In the 1980s, the national weather report informed precisely about yesterday's weather. The rest of the news was equally stale.

18 cf. Gutschow 1982, Levy 1984 and Wegner 2009

19 cf. chapter 2. and Wegner 1986a, 1992c, 2006e, 2009, 2012

## 1 Introduction



Map 3: Bhaktapur: location of Jyāpu farmers' houses, excluding the area around the royal palace. Most music groups of Bhaktapur comprised of farmers. (map in: Gutschow 1982, p. 49)

*gyānmālā bhajan* was created in the 1940s at Svayaṃbhū and initially banned by the Hindu ruler of Nepal, Juddha SJB Rana. *Dhalcā* groups play *dhalak* (*ḍholak*) as accompanying drum. *Bhajan* groups use *tamal*, *bām* (*tablā*, *bāyāṃ*) and *arven* (harmonium). The much older genre *dāphā* is responsorial group singing with the accompaniment of *lālākhī* drums, cymbals and natural trumpets. At an age before television and with long gaps between radio broadcasts, music was a common evening occupation for the male Bhaktapurian and had an important function in promoting participation and socialization. Today (2021) this dense musical landscape is a matter of the past. With very few exceptions, most surviving groups perform only during festivals. As these are oral traditions, there is increasing danger that part of the repertoire will be forgotten or survive as impaired versions. In offering a notated version of almost all drumming repertoires of Bhaktapur as teaching and learning aid, this publication will hopefully help to prevent the loss of these musical traditions.

A survey carried out by my first field assistant Ganesh Man Basukala in 1983/84 identified over two hundred music and dance groups:

- 1 Navadurgā *pyākhā* (important cult and annual masked dance cycle performed by Gāthā gardeners)
- 30 dance groups (exact number and genres changing every year) performing during *sāparu* and *Indra jātra* festivals, including Bhaila *pyākhā* performed by potters, Mahākālī *pyākhā*, Rādhākṛṣṇa *pyākhā* and many other dance genres. The numerous *ghētāgiśi* stick dances preceding the cow effigies during *sāparu* are not included. Their number varies every year.
- 23 *dhimaybājā* (processional drumming of farmers)
  - 3 *dhābājā* (processional drumming of farmers)
  - 9 *nāykhībājā* (processional drumming of butchers)
  - 2 *kābājā* (processional playing of large natural trumpets)
  - 3 Sāymi *gūlābājā* (Buddhist processional music of oilpressers)
  - 3 Śākya and Vajrācārya *gūlābājā* (Buddhist processional music of gold- and silversmiths)
  - 4 *bāsurikhalah* (transverse flute ensembles as part of *dāphā* and *navadāphā* groups)
  - 9 Jugi groups (playing shawms, fipple flutes, *tamva* kettledrum and marriage band music)
  - 5 Gāine bards (singing songs with *sāraṅgī* fiddle accompaniment)
    - 1 group of farmers singing ballads during *sāparu*
- 36 *dhalcā bhajan*
  - 1 *kvakhī dhalcā*
- 13 *bhajan* (Hindu *rās bhajan* and Buddhist *gyānmālā bhajan*)
- 63 *dāphā* (song group with *lālākhī* drums, cymbals, natural trumpets)
  - 6 *navadāphā* (*dāphā* plus additional ensemble of nine *navabājā* drums accompanied by Jugi shawm players)

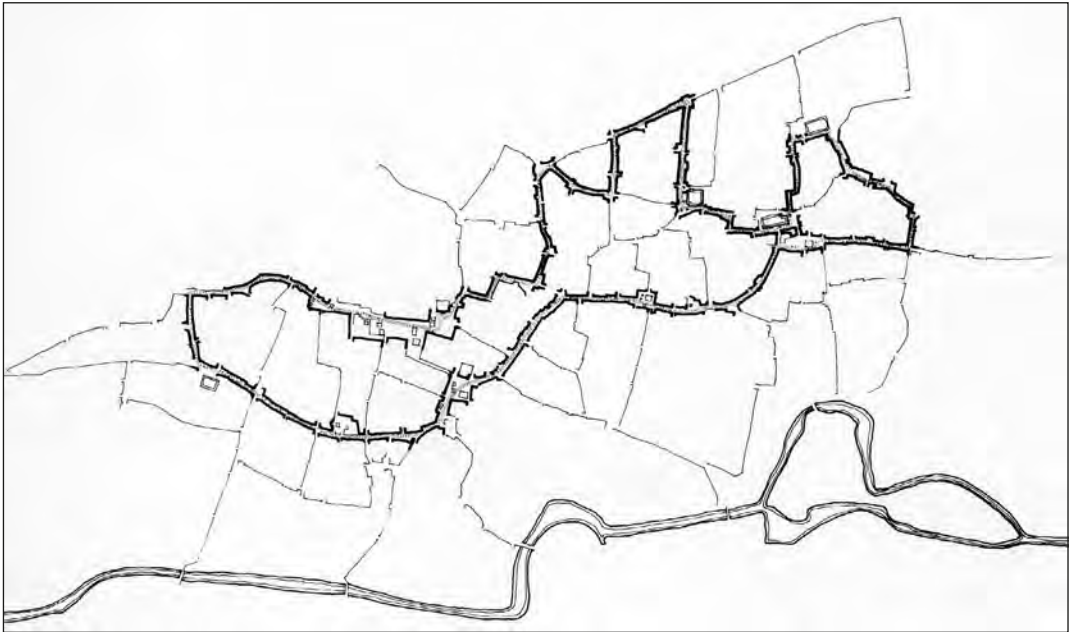
In addition, there were three Buddhist vocal genres, *tutaḥ* hymns, *gvarā/gvārā* songs with instrumental accompaniment, tantric *cacā/caryā* songs and—probably already extinct in Bhaktapur during the 1980s—tantric Buddhist dances, *cacā pyākhā*.<sup>20</sup>

With the exception of Jugi tailor-musicians, all other genres of Newar music took place without payment. In 1963, King Mahendra Shah issued the *bhūmi sudhār* act, a land reform with dramatic consequences for the entire Newar culture. The *guṭhi* land endowments donated to music groups by earlier sponsors were confiscated by the state—in exchange for the installation of ill-equipped *guṭhi saṁsthān* offices that were to look after temple maintenance and town rituals. Since then, musicians had to finance their own performances. This is one of the chief reasons for the rapid decline of the entire Newar musical culture.

Like every ancient Hindu city, Bhaktapur has a processional route, the *pradakṣina*. It meanders through Bhaktapur in a big loop, touching most of the important temples and shrines—with the exception of most of the Aṣṭamātrkā goddesses at the periphery of the town. It is along this route that most processions and dynamic aspects of town rituals proceed, invariably clockwise, sometimes in two to four hours, sometimes in the course of several days. As will be shown in the following chapters, this is where music and dance play a decisive role in consolidating Newar

20 cf. chapters 3.4, 3.5, 4.1, 11.14, 11.18, 11.19

## 1 Introduction



Map 4: Bhaktapur's *pradaksina*, the processional route covering the main squares, temples and shrines (map courtesy of Niels Gutschow)

society and its values of participation and contribution. Circumambulation of a religious object in the proper manner is a way of showing respectful adoration, of leaving offerings and receiving blessings, a chance for accumulating merit and for seeing and being seen. (Map 4)

Niels Gutschow's maps with local place names of Bhaktapur can be found in the appendix. Two detailed charts of the local calendar in relation to lunar phases, festivals and agricultural cycles can be found in Gutschow's *Stadtraum und Ritual der newarischen Städte im Kathmandu-Tal*.<sup>21</sup> Newari and Sanskrit terms are translated in the Glossary. Newari musical terms with translations are listed in the Dictionary.

<sup>21</sup> Gutschow 1982, pp. 10–11



## 2 Apprenticeship and the Cult of Nāsaḥḍyaḥ

The cult of the music god Nāsaḥḍyaḥ and rituals connected with apprenticeship of music are outlined in earlier publications<sup>1</sup>. The Lord of Music and Dance is called with musical offerings *ḍyaḥlhāygu*<sup>2</sup>, as his blessings are needed for any music performance to succeed. The cult of the music god must be one of the oldest in the Kathmandu Valley. Every Newar settlement has at its centre a shrine of Nāsaḥḍyaḥ. If a village is too small to have a Nāsaḥḍyaḥ shrine, the oldest drum serves as a portable shrine. The god is believed to reside in drums. Each of the Bhaktapur's twenty-four shrines of Nāsaḥḍyaḥ is paired with a smaller shrine of his destructive aspect, Haimāḍyaḥ. (Figs. 3–9)



*Fig. 3:* Shrine of Thāthu Nāsaḥḍyaḥ with Nāsaḥ *pvaḥ* hole in the central brass plate, signifying the flight lane of the Lord of Music and Dance, that passes in a linear progression of divine energy (cf. Wegner 1992b) through the shrine and adjacent buildings. During rituals, offerings are given to Nāsaḥḍyaḥ, Haimāḍyaḥ (at his shrine around the corner and his flight lane crossing that of the Nāsaḥ shrine at an angle of 90°), Gaṇeś, Kumār (both depicted on the brass plate), Betāḥ (central stone figure between two guardian lions), two Khicā dogs holding human limbs and to the invisible divine attendants Nandi and Bhṛṅgi (located left and right on the brick wall). This is where most music students of the upper town are initiated into the cult of Nāsaḥḍyaḥ that includes blood sacrifices at the shrine. Years after I took this photo in 1984, a crude woodcarving was added above, depicting Śiva as Nṛṭyanāth. Of South Indian origin, Nṛṭyanāth is now popularly identified with Nāsaḥḍyaḥ.

1 Ellingson 1990, Wegner 1986 and 1992b

2 lit. 'calling the god'

## 2 Apprenticeship and the Cult of Nāsaḥdyah



*Fig. 4: Thāthu Nāsaḥdyah with Nāsaḥ pvaḥ hole in the central brass plate (detail), depicting Gaṇeś (left), and Kumār (right) in dancing postures below the Nāsaḥ pvaḥ hole, 1984*

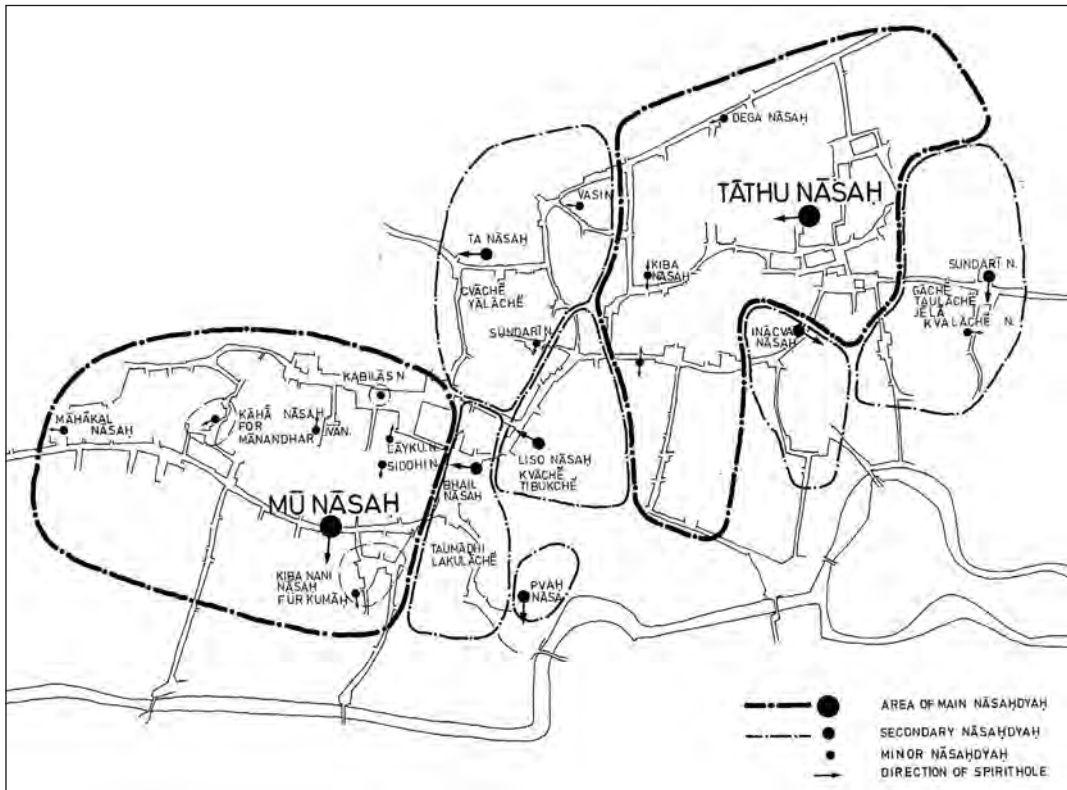
Some of these shrines are more important than others. They attract music groups from larger areas. For example, most music apprentices from the entire lower town visit the shrines of Nāsaḥmanā Nāsaḥ (also called Mū Nāsaḥ) and Haimā. The realms of influence of the main Nāsaḥ shrines point to Bhaktapur's early history when the town grew from a cluster of ancient villages, each with their own Nāsaḥ shrine.<sup>3</sup> (Fig. 5, Map 5)

Every shrine has empty holes signifying a flight lane of the music god. Such flight lanes pass through a series of characteristic holes in brick walls of several adjacent buildings. The flow of divine energy must not be blocked. This concept of a linear progression of divine energy is not known in India. It appears to be an ancient concept in Nepal and Tibet. Almost all flight lanes proceed horizontally. The only exception is Kabilās Nāsaḥ located in the pavement of the palace

3 cf. map 5

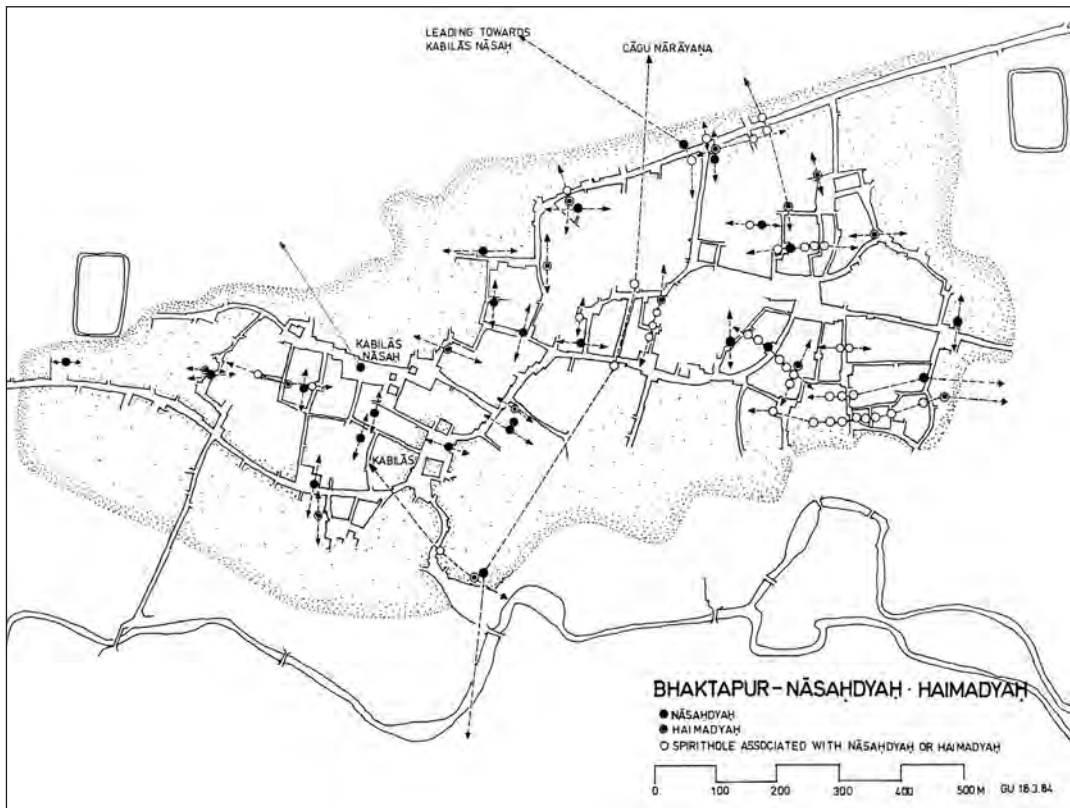


Fig. 5: Mū Nāsaḥ of the lower town at Nāsaḥmanā



Map 5: Areas of the main Nāsaḥ shrines of Bhaktapur (map courtesy of Niels Gutschow)

## 2 Apprenticeship and the Cult of Nāsaḥḍyaḥ



Map 6: Shrinest of Nāsaḥḍyaḥ and Haimāḍyaḥ with their flight lanes extending through *Nāsaḥ pvaḥ* and *Haimā pvaḥ* holes in brick walls (map courtesy of Niels Gutschow)

square. Its flight lane points vertically into the sky and is known to connect with the cave of Kabilās Nāsaḥ near Nuvakot, two days walk northwest of the Kathmandu Valley (Map 6). Newar music groups from Bhaktapur and Kathmandu organise pilgrimages to carry out blood sacrifices at the cave and have a picnic on the plateau above. In March 1984 I was invited by farmers of Yātā to join such a pilgrimage of their *dāphā* group and play *dhimay* during the Nāsaḥ *pūjā*. Whilst the men were busy with their Nāsaḥ ritual at the cave, the women went a little further down to another cave that was the seat of the goddess Sasudyāḥ, the local name for Sarasvatī. Having arranged their weaving shuttles and offerings, they performed a *pūjā* for the goddess, asking their work at the loom to be blessed. According to local belief, Kathmandu’s oldest Nāsaḥḍyaḥ at Golkupakha (ward no. 29) came from Kabilās.

The local folk story of Kabilās Nāsaḥ’s flight from Bhaktapur to Nuvakot refers to the Mahābhārata epic. Prince Bhīmsen was known for his exceptional physical strength and fitness that came along with a certain lack of intellectual refinement. It occurred to him that he wanted to learn singing. So he approached Nāsaḥḍyaḥ and asked him to be taught. The music god invested much time and effort in training this powerful student, but to marginal effect. In learning music, a modicum of intelligence is essential. When this is absent, discipline alone cannot replace it.



*Fig. 6: Kabilās Nāsaḥ in the pavement of the Bhaktapur palace square*

Bhīmsen used to practise singing during lonely walks in the fields. He met a farmer who told him that he had been attracted by Bhīmsen's voice as he had mistaken it for the bleating of his missing sheep. Bhīmsen did not like this. He thought highly of his voice and blamed his teacher. His warrior blood boiled and he wanted to kill Nāsaḥḍyaḥ. The god knew what was coming and preferred to withdraw to a mountain cave at Kabilās where only his devotees can reach him.



*Fig. 7: Haimāpvaḥ in Gvaḥmādhī 1995. After demolition of the old brick house the flight lane of Haimāḍyaḥ had to be preserved in its original position in front of the new medical store and received a cement finial.*

## 2 Apprenticeship and the Cult of Nāsaḥdyah



*Fig. 8: Haimādyah in Kvāthādaū, related to Thāthu Nāsaḥ around the corner in Tacapāḥ*



*Fig. 9: Nāsaḥpvaḥ (left) with embossed brass plate in the wall of the Navadurgā dyaḥchē in Gaḥchē and Haimāpvaḥ (right) in a garden wall in Yāchē*

To start a drumming apprenticeship, would-be students of a neighbourhood approach the most prominent drummer of their choice. They address him as ‘Guruju’ and observe a respectful attitude towards him<sup>4</sup>. For example, during ritual feasts, he occupies a seat of honour and is offered the cooked head and tail portion of the sacrificial animal<sup>5</sup>. Apprentices are expected to ask him for permission before touching their food. The teacher instructs the students to prepare a clean room<sup>6</sup> with a *gvākhā* wall niche for keeping the music gods. In the case of *navadāphā* and a few other initially well-bestowed groups, a special *dāphāchē* building serves for keeping musical instruments and for instructing apprentices. In all other cases, a room in a private home is designated as a teaching and practice room for the duration of the apprenticeship. No outsider is allowed access to this room after the gods have occupied their wall niche. The niche is covered with a piece of cloth protecting the gods from the eyes of possible intruders. Students worship the gods twice a day and practise in their presence. The teacher arrives every evening to check their progress. New lessons are only taught during auspicious weekdays, Thursday (assigned to Nāsaḥḍyaḥ), Saturday (Nārāyaṇa), Sunday (Surya) and Tuesday (Gaṇeśa).

Music apprenticeships begin on a Thursday and are structured by the following rituals:

1. Nāsaḥ *sāle pūjā* (transferring and installing the music god in the practice room),
2. several *khīpvu pūjā* (starting a new drum and/or a new major composition),
3. *hane pūjā* (before practising with accompanying instruments),
4. *pirāne pūjā* (coming-out ritual with major blood sacrifice and procession presenting new drummers to the neighbourhood), and
5. *carthi pūjā* (sacrifice and picnic at Ināre<sup>7</sup>, asking the guardian Gaṇeśa for blessing)

If anything goes wrong, this should be amended with a *chemā pūjā* (asking for forgiveness). When displeased, Nāsaḥḍyaḥ does not hesitate to unleash his wrath, causing doom and disaster. Fortunately, in Newar culture there is a solution for everything. A *chemā pūjā* at the Nāsaḥ shrine with a modest offering of eggs and other items suffices to soothe the raging god and bring back his blissful aspect. To illustrate the reliability of this proven method, my teachers gave the following examples:

Five boys were in the middle of their flute apprenticeship when one of them lost his mother. That caused his ritual impurity for a year and prevented him from partaking in the *pirāne pūjā*. As a result, he fell ill. The astrologer recommended a *chemā pūjā* for Nāsaḥḍyaḥ. When this was done, the boy recovered.

4 This is in no way comparable to the quasi-religious adoration that a guru enjoys and promotes in the context of Indian classical music.

5 If you happen to be the teacher and don’t want to eat those grizzly bits, hand them over to the person next to you who will be absolutely delighted. This is how it is done: Accept head and tail with your LEFT hand, pretend to admire the smell with joyous approval, before getting rid of them in a charming manner.

6 ‘Clean’ means, the floor is washed with a mixture of cow dung and water, then dried before arranging straw mats to sit on. These *sukhū* straw mats provide a habitat for a jumping and biting gang of *kusi* (Pulex irritans), with their number increasing until the end of the apprenticeship.

7 Surya Vināyak Gaṇeśa south of Bhaktapur



Fig. 10: Hari Govinda Ranjitkar carrying a cock—not stolen, bought!—for my first Nāsaḥ *sāle pūjā* in 1983

Stealing sacrificial animals makes better drummers, for sure. That is what *gurujus* tell their students with a wink. Timid faint-hearts are advised to grab a cauliflower. (Fig. 10)

Obviously, a certain dose of playful mischievousness is a necessary ingredient in a growing musician, if it comes together with the ability to practise until the respective problem is solved. The time for stealing sacrificial animals is Wednesday evening, as the sacrifice has to happen on Nāsaḥḍyaḥ's day, Thursday. It does not take much courage to pinch a chicken. Stealing a male goat requires advanced skills, shrewdness, creativity, nimble legs, tolerance to the animal's rich body odour, and Nāsaḥḍyaḥ's divine assistance. Before approaching the animal of his choice<sup>9</sup>, the student picks up a few leftover rice grains from a recent ritual at the Nāsaḥ shrine. Charged with the god's magic, these grains have to touch the animal's head, ensuring that it remains calm during the procedure and does not give away Nāsaḥḍyaḥ's devotee to its keepers. They would certainly not be amused. From first-hand experience I can testify that the charm works beautifully with most animals kept in Bhaktapur. Only ducks are immune to the spell. They become agitated, making quacking alarm noises. Stay clear of ducks, is my advice. (Figs. 11–13)

The Sāymi oilpressers of Gvaḥmādhi started an apprenticeship of Buddhist processional *gūlābājā* music. Soon it became evident that the candidates were unable to learn the compositions. After a year of abysmal suffering, the teachers gave up, deciding to perform *pirāne pūjā* at midnight, so that nobody would witness the deficient performance. Nāsaḥḍyaḥ did witness the rotten music and took offence. The anxious oil pressers immediately arranged for an elaborate *chemā pūjā* and managed to reconcile the god before disaster struck.

As a rare feat, Hari Govinda Ranjitkar succeeded in stealing four cocks in one go for his *pirāne pūjā*. A jealous neighbour<sup>8</sup> watched him and proceeded to blackmail him. Soon after this incident, the nasty neighbour fell seriously ill. For two years he wasted away until his bones were shining through his skin. An astrologer revealed the cause and advised to pacify Nāsaḥḍyaḥ, protector of drummers and chicken thieves, with a *chemā pūjā*. The patient recovered.

Nāsaḥḍyaḥ is known to favour students who commit petty theft as a test of courage.

8 In Bhaktapur everybody appears to have jealous neighbours who can get absolutely vicious at times.

9 Sacrificial goats should be completely white or completely black. No cheating with shoe polish, please!



*Fig. 11:* Sujaman Banmala demonstrates the method of stealing a chicken for Nāsaḥḍyah in four steps. Step 1: Collect sacrificial grains at the Nāsaḥḍyah shrine



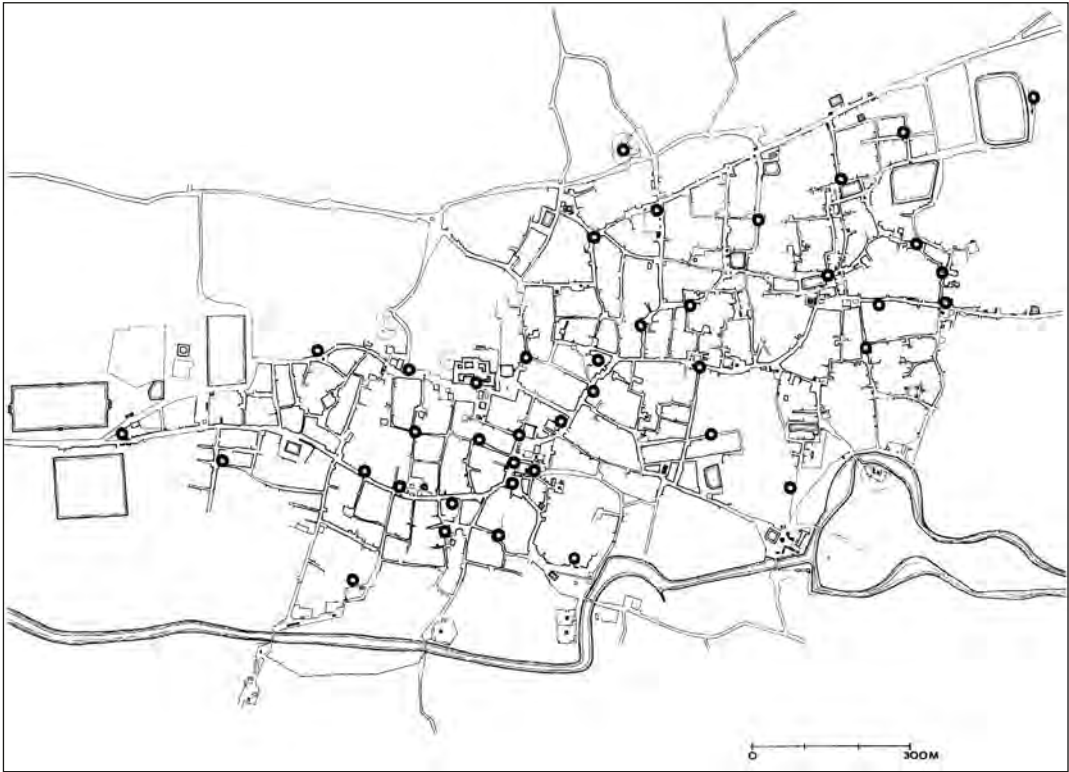
*Fig. 12:* Step 2: After sprinkling the grains on the chicken, grab it



*Fig. 13:* Steps 3 and 4: Stow away the chicken and go home, as if in deep and pleasant thought



## 2 Apprenticeship and the Cult of Nāsaḥḍyaḥ



Map 7: Shrines of Gaṇeśa. The god receives offerings for good luck during music apprenticeships (map courtesy of Niels Gutschow, also publ. in Levy 1990, p. 221)

Apprenticeship rituals always address both qualities of Nāsaḥḍyaḥ, the creative, inspiring aspect and the destructive force that causes mistakes in music. These opposed qualities are represented not only by the pair of related shrines of Nāsaḥḍyaḥ and Haimāḍyaḥ but also by the two drum-heads, the higher sounding one (Nāsaḥ) and the lower sounding one (Haimā). Only in the case of the pair of the kettledrum *nagarā*, the lower sounding drum is called Mākaḥ<sup>10</sup>—in accordance with the terms used in Kathmandu and Patan. Consequently, the system for keeping Newar drums demands that drums standing on the floor or hanging from a wall hook must show the Nāsaḥ head and conceal the Haimā head. This is strictly observed and believed to create a beneficial aura for humans to live in.

Usually, apprenticeship rituals at the shrine of Nāsaḥḍyaḥ are carried out by the teacher who purifies and decorates the shrine with prescribed offerings, before addressing the god with prayer, supervising the sacrifice and further proceedings.<sup>11</sup> Every Nāsaḥ *pūjā* is preceded by offerings

<sup>10</sup> This could refer to Mahākāla Bhairava.

<sup>11</sup> When I became a teacher of *dhimay*, it was expected that I learned all those tantric ritual skills to initiate my students in the proper manner.

at the local Gaṇeśa shrine and to Kumār residing in a carved stone inserted in the pavement in front of every Newar house entrance. (Map 7)

A Nāsaḥ *pūjā* always includes a smaller *pūjā* for Haimādyah whose shrine is found in the vicinity of the Nāsaḥ shrine. Nāsaḥyaḥ receives the blood of male sacrificial animals. Haimādyah prefers young female chickens.

Before the proceedings start, the lady of the house with the practice room is asked to prepare four large plates with offerings for the gods. She purifies the floor where the plates are arranged to receive the following offerings:

<i>nīnā</i>	ritually clean, untouched water,
<i>tulbālā</i>	scarlet cloth to be shredded into strips that are tied around participants' necks,
<i>svā</i>	flowers,
<i>svāmā</i>	flower garlands,
<i>abīr</i>	red powder,
<i>bhvisinhāḥ</i>	orange powder,
<i>gvaḥjā</i>	fried beaten rice mixed with water and shaped into six cones,
<i>janakvakhā</i>	cotton threads,
<i>kīga</i>	husked rice,
<i>tecvaḥ</i>	raw barley,
<i>bajī</i>	toasted beaten rice,
<i>musyā</i>	fried soya beans,
<i>māri</i>	flat bread,
<i>lābhā</i>	garlic pods,
<i>pālu</i>	peeled pieces of ginger root,
<i>nā</i>	dried fish,
<i>nyā</i>	distilled liquor or rice beer,
<i>khē</i>	raw eggs,
<i>phalphul</i>	fruit,
<i>ita</i>	cotton wicks,
<i>dhupāy</i>	incense powder in curled paper rolls,
<i>dhū</i>	incense sticks,
<i>sukunda</i>	ritual brass oil lamp filled with
<i>tū cikā</i>	mustard oil, and
<i>salicā</i>	tiny clay cup for catching soot.

Only for a Nāsaḥ *sāle pūjā* the necessary items include two *kisalī*, small clay cups filled with husked rice with an areca nut on top and a coin sticking out of the grains. If available, there should also be white *dhvaphaḥsvā*<sup>12</sup> and incense. The Nāsaḥ *sāle pūjā* serves to entice both, Nāsaḥyaḥ and Haimādyah into the areca nuts where they reside for the duration of the apprenticeship. The gods are kept in the wall niche to encourage the students who direct their prayers at them.

12 *Jasminum officinale*, white jasmine blossoms with seven to eight petals

## 2 Apprenticeship and the Cult of Nāsaḥḍyaḥ

During the final *pirāne pūjā* they are brought back to their shrines and released from the nuts. Showing respect for the music god, those carrying the offerings must walk barefoot, ignore the inescapable layer of muck and phlegm coating the brick pavement and keep their balance whilst walking and sliding along.<sup>13</sup>

When the small procession arrives at the Nāsaḥ shrine, teacher and students circumambulate it clockwise, showing respect to the god and at the same time absorb some of the spiritual energy emanating from the shrine. The teacher purifies the altar with water, decorates it with flowers and places the *tulbālā* cloth above the brass plate with the Nāsaḥ hole. Out of respect for Nāsaḥḍyaḥ and the god's flight lane that must not be blocked, he does not stand exactly in front of the flight hole but tries to keep his body a little aside. He proceeds by smearing red and orange powder on all the places where members of Nāsaḥḍyaḥ's entourage are depicted or known to be. They also receive one rice dough cone and one *janakvakhā* cotton thread each. The two *kisalī* clay cups with rice grains and betelnut, coins and all edible items including raw eggs are placed on the altar below the Nāsaḥ hole.

If there are funds for a more elaborate tantric ritual, a ritual specialist called Ācāju (Karmācārya) of the Pañcatharīya caste is called to carry out the ritual in a grand, professional manner. Having purified the shrine with water and after an initial prayer, the Ācāju proceeds to paint several magic diagrams on the altar with rice flour. Three among them (nos. 1, 4, 5) include overlapping triangles with a *bindu* seed in the centre, symbolising male and female energies in creative union. Several diagrams (nos. 1, 2, 3, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 13, 15) include one or several *kvayē* flames in different sizes that look like the number 6. In a special basket, the Ācāju brings twenty-two small figures shaped as *gvaḥjā* cones and mounds. Consisting of beaten rice and water, they are decorated with red *bhvisinhāḥ* powder and black fried soya beans *musyā* inserted as eyes. These and other objects are placed on top of the diagrams. The Ācāju decorates the shrine, offers flowers, incense, water, *thvā* rice beer, *aylā* liquor, edibles including raw eggs that are perforated with a match and all the other paraphernalia listed above. He applies series of magic *mudra* gestures, whilst reciting chains of magic *mantra* syllables. Thus he invokes Nāsaḥḍyaḥ, Gaṇeś, Kumār, Betāl and the Navadurgā. Finally he rings a bell suspended at the side of the shrine, to actualise the benevolent divine energies for success of this rite of passage. (Figs. 14, 15)

Detailed meaning of the diagrams and of offerings arranged on them

- 1 Nāsaḥḍyaḥ in union with his Śaktī
- 2 Gaṇeśa: a *gvaḥjā* cone made of beaten rice and water placed on top
- 3 Kumār: a *gvaḥjā* cone in the shape of the diagram placed on top
- 4 Betāl
- 5 *baukuṇḍā*: a clay cup filled with a mound of beaten rice paste decorated with fried soya beans. This is Nāsaḥḍyaḥ *yā mhutu*, 'Nāsaḥḍyaḥ's mouth'.
- 6 *pātra*: rice beer or spirit
- 7 *kalas maṇḍap*: dry fish and water

13 Regular town cleaning started only in 1989

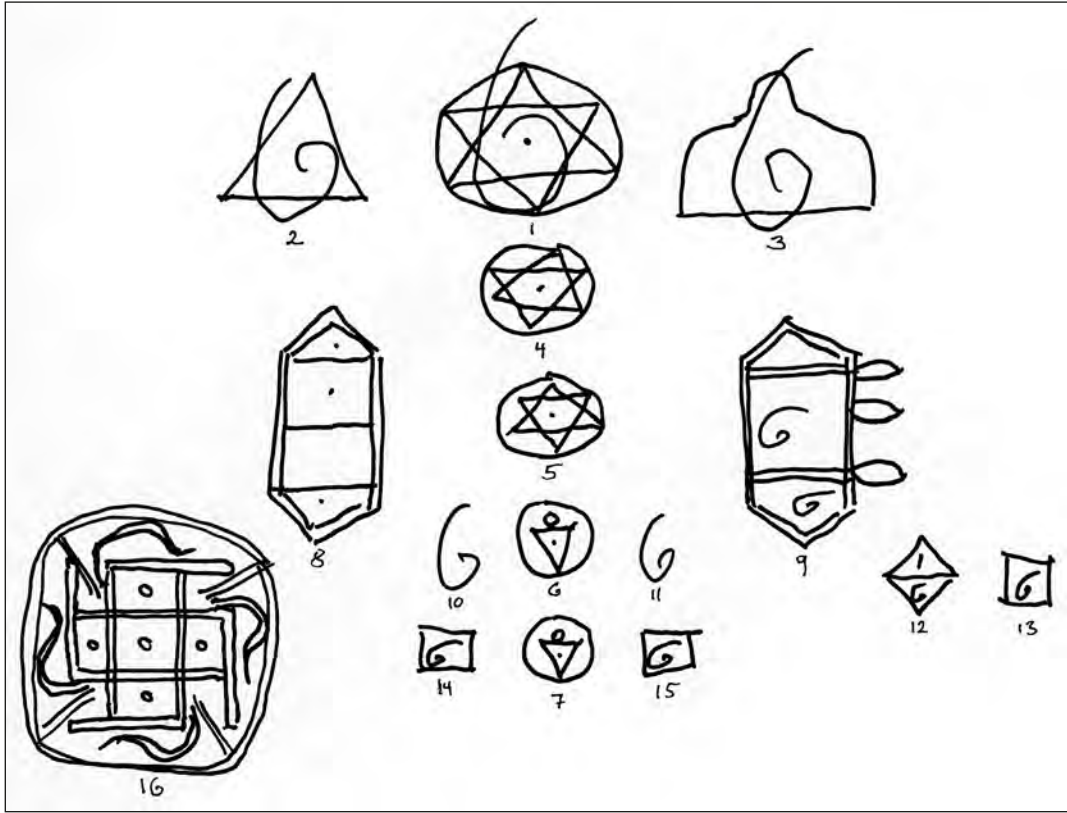


Fig. 14: Drawing of the Ācāju's diagrams sprinkled with rice flour on the altar before specific offerings are placed on top.

- 8 *pañcabali*: five *gvaḥjā* cones and five mounds with one soya bean each, representing five different sacrificial animals for the Navadurgā, buffalo, goat, ram, duck and cock
- 9 *tribali*: three *gvaḥjā* cones and three mounds representing buffalo, goat and sheep offerings for warding off ghosts
- 10, 11 *kvaye* flame
- 12 *mvahani saḥ*: arrangement of burning wick and clay cup for collecting soot
- 13 *sukūdā*: mustard oil container with wick lamp
- 14 *śaṅkha*: conch trumpet
- 15 *jal pātra*: water offering
- 16 *svastika*: two *dhaupatu* clay bowls with yoghurt

With its lavish preparation, intense observation of every minute detail, and only half-revealed procedures involving all senses, this elaborate ritual becomes a special focusing tool for approaching the gods in the proven manner. The aim is, to bring about a divine response that can be felt at a deeper level in our human existence. If performed correctly, the ritual opens a portal between the world of humans and the realm of the gods. It remains open for the initiated musician as a

## 2 Apprenticeship and the Cult of Nāsaḥdyah



Fig. 15: Ācāju Krishna Karmacharya returning the music gods to the shrine of Thāthu Nāsaḥ during a *pirāne pūjā* for Yāchē *navadāphā*, 1984. The painted diagrams on the altar are covered with offerings.

potential means of addressing the gods with the help of musical invocations. In the context of Newar culture, music can be a powerful tool of communication and union, reaching out beyond the limited world of human affairs to access Nāsaḥdyah's magical bliss, the wondrous source of artistic inspiration.

During the *pirāne pūjā*, the Ācāju or in his absence, the Guruju blocks the central *Nāsaḥpvaḥ* flight hole in the metal plate with an edible *dhaubāji* paste<sup>14</sup>, to ensure that the god does not drift away. The face of Nāsaḥdyah is applied on the paste with red powder and three tiny silver eyes, indicating the divine presence<sup>15</sup> during the following blood sacrifice. (Fig. 16)

A blunt knife of impressive dimensions is also carried to the Nāsaḥ shrine, along with the sacrificial animals. The blade is purified and decorated with red and orange powder, flowers and rice grains. Sacrificial animals are asked for their consent to be sacrificed. Sudden shaking of the hair (goat) or the head (chicken) is said to signal agreement, as it matches the South Asian human gesture of letting one's head dance in eager approval. To make the omen work, water is sprinkled on the head or splashed against the belly of the goat. This helps to release the desired effect. Goats and chickens dislike being wet and shake the water off. If they only knew what fatal chain of events that movement triggers, their reaction would be more cautious. Nāsaḥdyah appears to tolerate cheating. Immediately after the head is cut off, the gushing blood is sprinkled over the

14 a sticky mixture of yoghurt and beaten rice

15 Ācāju's father identified this painted face as Bhairava's. Perhaps he was referring to the only Nāsaḥdyah that is part of a Bhairava temple, on the groundfloor front of the Taumādhi Bhairavnāth temple.



*Fig. 16: Dhaubāji paste with the god's face (red powder mark and three silver eyes inserted), blocking the Nāsaḥḍyah passage during my first *pirāne pūjā*, 23/3/1984*

## 2 Apprenticeship and the Cult of Nāsaḥḍyaḥ



Fig. 17: Severed goat head with tail in the mouth and cotton wicks and incense burning on top



Fig. 18: Dog awaiting his turn to bark during a *pirāne pūjā* of *Yāchē navadāphā* 1984

brass plate with the Nāsaḥ hole and over all members of Nāsaḥḍyaḥ's entourage. The severed head of the sacrificial animal is placed on the altar. Two lit oil wicks are placed on the head. Black soot is caught in an upturned *salicā* clay bowl. (Fig. 17)

If stray dogs are present and happen to bark during the proceedings, this is considered a very good omen for Nāsaḥḍyaḥ's acceptance and support. (Fig. 18)

The body is carried around the shrine, then gutted and the intestine cleaned and blown up to a snake-shaped balloon. This is draped around the brass plate as an adorning offering. Tiny strips of skin from the neck portion—in case of chicken, with feathers—are cut off and offered to Nāsaḥḍyaḥ and his entourage. A few of these skin strips are taken home to be stuck above the entrance of the house in a respectful gesture towards the house gods. (Figs. 19, 20)





*Fig. 19:* The goat intestine is blown up as an offering to Nāsaḥḍyaḥ. Strips of chicken skin are stuck like a crown to the head of the snake-eating demon Chepaḥ (Kīrtimukha), 23/3/1984

2 Apprenticeship and the Cult of Nāsaḥdyah



Fig. 20: Nāsaḥdyah in union with his Śaktī as cosmic creative energy (painting by Madhu Krishna Chitrakar)



Fig. 21: Bhaila Bahādur Banmala and Gaṇeś Kumār Banmala offering prayer before receiving the drums, 1988



Fig. 22: Dayārām Banmala and Nhuchhe Kumār Banmala having just received the drums from me, 1988

Before students play what they have learnt as an offering to Nāsaḥḍyaḥ, the teacher lifts the covered drums a few inches off the ground for each student to offer a coin, flower petals and husked rice to the music god residing in every drum and touch the drum with his forehead. The teacher then places the drum on the student's lap. (Figs. 21, 22)

In response, the students offer prayer and a small gift to the teacher, usually a Nepali cap and a coin. After this, all the students play their lessons together, starting with the musical offering *ḍyaḥllhāygu*. If a student feels blocked by stage fright, he may throw a raw egg at the brass plate. As its contents spill over the already messy shrine, the inhibition dissolves, enabling the student to play their repertoire with confidence. When the music is finished, the edible paste with Nāsaḥḍyaḥ's face is plucked off and distributed as edible divine blessing (*prasād*) among all participants who

## 2 Apprenticeship and the Cult of Nāsaḥḍyah



Fig. 23: Children awaiting the end of the *pūjā*, all set to get rich pickings

consume it with joy, as this is the first food they are allowed to eat on a *pūjā* day. At the end of the ritual every participant receives a red *bhvisinhāḥ* mark on the forehead and a vertical line of black soot drawn with a match above the *tikā*. The black *mvahani* line signifies participation in a blood sacrifice.

Students and teacher are honoured by students' relatives who offer new caps, tie white *betāli* turbans around their heads, sprinkle red powder over them, apply orange *tika* marks, a dab of yoghurt at the right temple<sup>16</sup> and rub red powder on the cheeks, rounding off the total effect with flowers. As a reward for his teaching efforts, the teacher receives a cap and a matching set of

<sup>16</sup> in case of females, on the left temple



Fig. 24: Dhimag students from Yāchē and their teacher Ganesh Bahadur Sijakhvā (with turban, next to central pillar) getting ready for their procession home after *pirāne pūjā* 1991

shirt and trousers, *nā* and *survāḥ*. A preliminary *samaybaji* meal<sup>17</sup> is served in front of the shrine and eaten after offering tiny bits of each food item and a drop of the accompanying drink spilled with the ring finger towards the gods and after asking the teacher for permission to start. (Fig. 23)

Eggs and some flowers are collected for taking home. Now children from the neighbourhood have their chance. From the beginning of the ritual they gathered right and left of the altar, eagerly waiting to pounce and grab remaining edibles and coins.

During the procession home, elated students present themselves to the public as fresh drummers, filled with a sense of accomplishment. The entire neighbourhood takes interest in the new drummers and people comment on their playing. (Fig. 24)

On arrival at the practice house, water is splashed on the lintel of the entrance, red powder smeared and a strip of feathery chicken skin stuck to it as an offering to the house gods. In the practice room, the teacher puts Nāsaḥḍyah's blessings in form of flower petals on everyone's head<sup>18</sup>. Students receive the blessing with the respectful expression "*Bagya ti, Guruju!*" A grand *bhvē* feast is prepared and consumed. At the end, the students escort the teacher home with a drum procession, honouring him by playing the sacred *dyahllhāygu* invocation in front of his house.

On the following Saturday, teacher, students and helpers carrying cooking vessels and food-stuff for a grand picnic proceed to Surya Vināyak Gaṇeśa to thank the god with a *carthi pūjā* that

17 consisting of beaten rice, a potato dish, raw garlic and ginger, toasted soy beans, fried buffalo meat, the half-done portion of goat's neck, washed down with several cups of rice beer

18 Flowers serve as a vehicle for divine blessing that is transmitted by touching the devotee's head

## 2 Apprenticeship and the Cult of Nāsaḥḍyaḥ

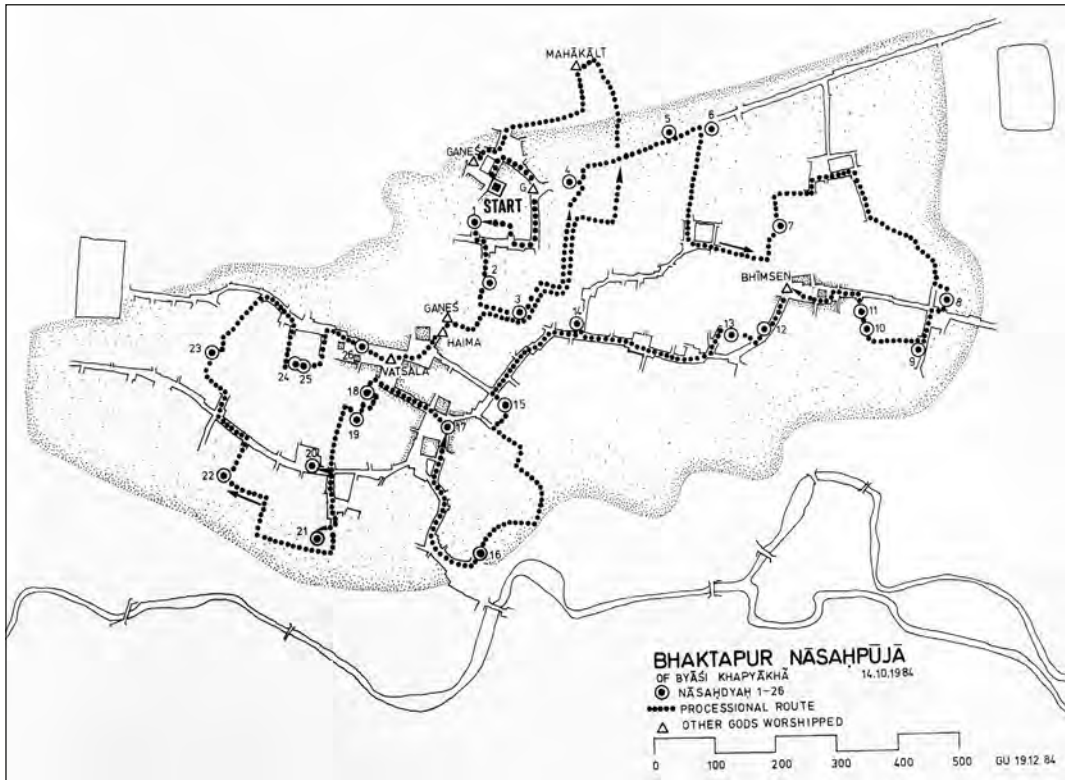
includes a blood sacrifice. The shrine lies at a forested ridge two kilometers south of Bhaktapur, a famous picnic spot. At the end of February rhododendron trees on top of the ridge begin to bloom. Youths collect these glowing red *taku svā* flowers to present them to their girlfriends who tie them to their hair knot. At the start of the procession, teacher and students play *dyahllhāygu* for Nāsaḥḍyaḥ, before proceeding with processional drum patterns. The next *dyahllhāygu* is played at the destination, as an offering to Gaṇeśa. Only on the way back home, other gods receive a short version of *dyahllhāygu*. This includes, among others, a sacred tree that is circumambulated and the local Hanumante river, as it is perceived as flowing from Lord Śiva's head. Bhaktapur's Hanumante is a minor tributary to the holy river Gaṅgā, the source of fertility to the plains of North India.

The teacher's involvement does not end here. In case of processional drumming apprenticeships, he continues to lead the new group for at least a year, playing either the lead drum or a pair of *bhuchyāḥ* cymbals. During processions he teaches the students how to read the townscape of old Bhaktapur as a musical score, selecting and adjusting the musical patterns according to the locality. Every drummer needs to identify all the gods on the way and play musical invocations, in order to open the portal to the spiritual power inherent in those shrines. Whilst passing the shrines in the prescribed manner, either a short version of *dyahllhāygu* is woven into the ongoing processional patterns, or the procession stops in front of the most important gods to salute them with the complete *dyahllhāygu*. Playing such musical invocations for the gods can be compared to dialing a complex telephone number. If you play/dial correctly, the connection with the source of inspiration is established and the music reaches another quality. It is THIS that musical processions aim at, both in tantric Hindu and tantric Buddhist contexts: Inspired music and dance can reveal that our true nature is cosmic creative energy.

*Navabājā*<sup>19</sup> drummers are initiated along similar lines, with blood sacrifices to be carried out with each of the nine drums that are taken up. Ideally, the student learns the complete set of compositions for the first drum, *dhā*, before proceeding to the next instrument, *kvatāḥ*, and so on, until at last the *naḡarā* repertoire is taught as a set. The final stage of the apprenticeship includes at least a week of practicing with all accompanying instruments, cymbals, natural trumpets, shawms and fipple flutes. Learning all seventy-five *navabājā* compositions by heart with the help of drumming syllables requires not only assiduous practice, a good memory and the blessings of the music god, but also the means to cover all expenses for rituals, feasts and making or repair of instruments. It takes more than a year to complete the *navabājā* apprenticeship. To minimise costs, *navadāphā* groups tend to teach students in a group, with each student learning only one or two drums. Nowadays there is a tendency to reduce the repertoire of each drum to one or two compositions, usually the easier and more popular ones. This practice causes other compositions to be forgotten. Students of *navabājā* learn during performances how to adjust the drum compositions to the shawm melodies. Students of *lālākhī* learn how to adjust the drum accompaniment to the different length of *dāphā* songs.

In October 1984 my *dhimay* drumming friends and I were invited to lead an extremely rare event, a Nāsaḥ *pūjā* procession with ritual offerings at every single Nāsaḥ shrine of Bhaktapur.

<sup>19</sup> *Navabājā* is an ensemble of nine different drums accompanied with cymbals, shawms, fipple flutes and natural trumpets, cf. chapters 5.3 and 6.



Map 8: Nāsaḥ pūjā processional route 1984 (map courtesy of Niels Gutschow)

A few other gods on the way (Byāśī Gaṇeś, Mahākālī, Bhīmsen, Vatsala) were included. This was organised by farmer families of Byāśī, with over five hundred participants. It took the whole day and ended with a grand feast. The old processional route for this comprehensive Nāsaḥ pūjā had been documented for a Naṭeśvar pūjā in 1894. Ninety years later this route had been blocked in places by urban growth. A sacred route cannot be changed. We had to climb ladders and planks leaning against those brick walls, sheds, and other obstacles. As far as I know, this was the only procession of its kind until today. (Map 8)





### 3 Town Rituals and Processional Music

Following the Vedic model, the non-secular Newar world order combines the world of humans and the realm of the gods. This inclusion needs constant renewal through elaborate town rituals where music and ritual hold the world together. If that world order breaks, life becomes meaningless. Therefore the chief aim of processional music is, to actualise the Bhaktapur *maṇḍala*, the spiritual townscape, by means of playing musical invocations. In this way, being part of this *maṇḍala* becomes a direct experience for everybody to share.

For an ethnomusicologist, documenting processional music is one of the most demanding exercises—especially if one is interested in musical change. The chief requirements are plenty of time and the opportunity to watch events over the course of several years, both as an observer and as a participating musician or dancer. Even if working with a team of field assistants, plenty of time is needed to watch and grasp the detailed meaning of town rituals where thousands of people participate with different genres of processional music in simultaneous processions and ritual events. In the case of Bhaktapur almost everything can have several layers of meaning, depending on the musician's caste and role in the town rituals. Initially, the researcher tends to be overwhelmed and confused by a powerful surge of chaos. Obviously, this 'overkill' is an intended effect of Newar town rituals. Everybody appears to rejoice in the rule of chaos, which is such a wonderful antidote to the tightly regulated life in traditional Newar society.

During the Bhaktapur New Year festival *biskāh*<sup>1</sup>, Bhairava's chaos-generating associate, Vetāla himself exercises his dangerous influence for eight days. To prevent him from going to excesses, his statue is safely secured to Bhairava's chariot with canes—to limited avail. On the first day, the forces that sustain the urban order of Bhaktapur weaken and break down—sometimes in seconds. This happens every year<sup>2</sup> when the tug of war between chariot pullers of the upper and lower town suddenly turns into real war, with both parties hurling bricks at each other, sometimes ripping out ammunition from temple foundations to brace themselves against the onslaught of the armed forces in combat gear who are uncomfortably waiting in the background to join the fun with a brutal *lathi* charge. Before that happens, it is wise to leave and postpone documenting things for a while.

A memorable variant of the proceedings happened in 2000. Eager to set the scene for a tame version of the town ritual for tourists and official guests to enjoy, the town council had recruited several hundred able young men of their choice, many among them well-trained body-builders,

1 in Nepali: *bisket jātrā*. For detailed accounts of this festival cf. Gutschow 1982, 2017 and Levy 1990

2 April the 9th or 10th



Fig. 25: Pulling the Bhailakhah, Bhairava's chariot with Vetāla tied to its crocodile head with canes. 1985

all dressed in white T-shirts with the label 'Bhaktapur Nagar Palika'. They drowned the festive crowds and the auspicious music of the Bhairavnāth *navadāphā* group with amplified instruction, "LET US SHOW OUR FOREIGN GUESTS HOW PEACEFULLY WE CELEBRATE OUR FESTIVAL! ONLY MEMBERS OF OUR TEAM IN WHITE T-SHIRTS ARE ALLOWED TO PULL THE CHARIOT!! BE CALM!!! BEHAVE!!!!"—After a stunned silence this resulted in the most spectacular brick fight in Bhaktapur's recent history. The white T-shirts left Taumadhi Square in twenty seconds, the tourists even faster. When the dust had settled, people celebrated their tug of war without further well-meaning interference. It was a most enjoyable and serene tug of war, after all. (Fig. 25)



Fig. 26: Bhaila *khaḥ* blocking Bhaktapur's main road at Tibukchē after an axle broke. 11th April 1988

In keeping with Bhairava's ferocious character, his chariot tends to leave a trail of destruction on its way. It rams into buildings, snaps electric wires, brings down plaster and roof sections. Almost every year, some intoxicated revellers are maimed by the dangerous wheels with their unpredictable speed and direction. Sometimes even the chariot meets with disaster. (Fig. 26)

The most spectacular annual processional music event is the climax of the New Year festival, *dyaḥ svagā biyegu* on the 4th of *Vaiśākh*. During the festival all the gods leave their *dyaḥchē* god houses where the golden statues are kept throughout the rest of the year. Each god is carried in a palanquin or—in the case of Bhairava and Bhadrakālī their chariots pulled through their respective area of influence to receive offerings. Finally each golden statue is arranged in front of the central aniconic stone in the *pīṭh* for *dyaḥ svagā biyegu* to proceed. On this day, every song group sings next to the shrine where they usually perform. Every single processional music group takes the round of the *pradakṣiṇā* that extends on this occasion to some extra loops, as not a single god should miss the musical and other offerings. *Dyaḥlhāygu* is played in front of every shrine and *svagā* offerings put to actualise the blessings of all the gods and goddesses for the coming year.

Gods receiving *tāhā dyaḥlhāygu* during a *dhimay* procession on the day of *dyaḥ svagā biyegu*

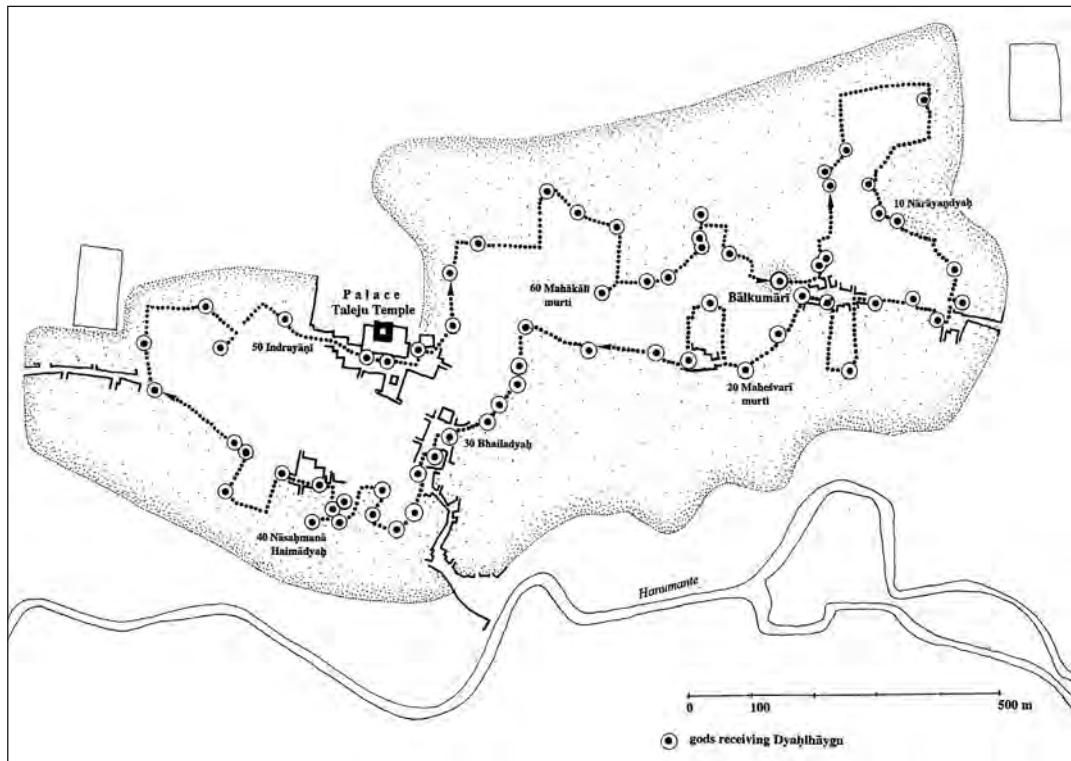
(starting from my home, see map 9 below)

Nāsāḥdyaḥ, Bālkumārī, Salā Gaṇedyah, Bhailadyah, Kutipvakā Gaṇedyah murti, Kutipvakā Gaṇedyah degah, Kamalvināyak Gaṇedyah, Navadurgā, Bhailadyah, Nārāyaṇdyah, Gaṇedyah, Sujamādhī Nāsāḥdyaḥ, Vākupati Nārāyaṇdyah, Brahmayaṇī *dyaḥchē*, Talātūchi

### 3 Town Rituals and Processional Music

Ḡaṇedyah, Maḥcvaḥ Bhailadyah (Seto Bhairav), Brahmayaṇī *murti* and Dattātreyā (one invocation for both), Tacapāḥ Bhisīdyah, Inācvaḥ Nāsaḥdyah, Maheśvarī *murti*, Cvarcā Ḡaṇedyah, Jhaurvahī Dipākarā (Gvaḥmādhī Ajājudyah), Gvaḥmādhī Ḡaṇedyah, Sukuldhvakā Bhisīdyah, Tripurasundarī, Dahī Vināyak, Durupadyah (Pārvatī), Kvāchē Nāsaḥdyah, Kumārī, Bhailadyah, Nārāyaṇdyah, Gaḥḥiti Bhailadyah (Sabhūgaḥ Bhailadyah), Kāsi Viśvanāth, Lākulāchē Ḡaṇedyah, Ināre Ḡaṇedyah (Suryavināyak Ḡaṇedyah), Bvulucā Bhailadyah (Sveta Bhairav), Gorakhnāth, Jyathā Ḡaṇeś, Ḡaṇeś, Nāsaḥmana Haimādyah, Nāsaḥmana Nāsaḥdyah, Maṅgalāchē Ḡaṇedyah, Manakāmanā, Ḡaṇedyah, Bārāhī *dyahchē*, Cvaṇā Ḡaṇedyah, Phaitvakā Ḡaṇedyah, Itāchē Ḡaṇedyah, Lokeśvar, Indrayāṇī, Kabilās Nāsaḥdyah, Taleju, several gods including Ḡaṇedyah in one go, Bālākhu Ḡaṇedyah *pith*, Bālākhu Ḡaṇedyah *mūrti*, Cvachē Nāsaḥdyah, Chumā Ḡaṇedyah, several gods including Tuchimalā Bagavaṭī, Mahākālī *dyahchē* and *pith*, Mahākālī *mūrti*, Yāchē Ḡaṇedyah, Haimāpvaḥ, Nāga, Sasudyah and Mahādev in one go, Mahālakṣmī, Bhailadyah, and Nāsaḥdyah.

In response to massive demand on this day, some drums and cymbals take the round several times in different hands. The town vibrates with drumming and cymbal crashing in joyous communion with the gods. In every home, elaborate preparations are made for the next day when extended



Map 9: Dhimaybāḡa group playing *tāhā dyahllhāygu* during *dyah svagā biyegu* on Vaiśākḥ 4 gate. The *pradakṣiṇā* is enlarged with a few added detours to include a maximum number of gods (map courtesy of Niels Gutschow)



Fig. 27: Water-begging procession passing Dattātreya Square 6/7/1992

families get together for a grand New Year feast, *bhvāy*. This is, when Newars invariably go to non-vegetarian excesses.

The basic routine with gods carried along the *pradakṣiṇā* includes one or several processional music groups and in some cases also many torchbearers slowly moving in a long double line in front of the palanquin with the compulsory ritual umbrella behind. Women with offerings follow in a long line behind the palanquin, carrying lamps with burning wicks soaked in mustard oil. Processional music may include the percussion bands *dhimaybājā*, *dhābājā*, and in special cases *nāykhībājā*. Instrumental processional ensembles with melody instruments could be transverse flutes with *dhalak* or *pachimā* drum accompaniment (*bāsuriḥkhalah*), or mixed ensembles with transverse flutes, harmoniums, and violins with *magaḥkhī*<sup>3</sup> drum accompaniment. Mobile song groups for processions with gods include the genres *dāphā*, *dhalcā* and *bhajan*.

When the monsoon rains do not start as expected during the second week of June and the dry season keeps extending, the nursery paddy runs dry and the rice harvest is in acute danger. Then only *nā phvā vānegu*, a water-begging procession can help. Boys from farming families walk along the *pradakṣiṇā* with pots and pans, shouting ‘Hara Hara Mahādyah, *vā vāye dyah!*’<sup>4</sup>—People respond, pouring water from their kitchen windows into the street and the boys try to catch the water with their vessels. When I witnessed such an event in July 1992, this show of abundance

3 in Nepali: *māḍal*

4 ‘Lord Śiva, let it rain!’



Fig. 28: Farmers playing *dhābājā* in Mūlāchē on the day of *gathāmugaḥ carhe*, July 1984. The demon's lovingly prepared organs are given a final touch, before the musicians accompany him to his cremation site.

did appeal to the absent-minded god<sup>5</sup>. Monsoon broke two days later and the harvest was saved. (Fig. 27)

The day of *gathāmugaḥ carhe* derived its name from *gathāmugaḥ* demons representing diseases that appear during the monsoon rains and need to be driven out of Bhaktapur. Straw effigies of such demons are prepared in ninety localities. *Dhābājā* drummers have their turn to create the mood and accompany the rapid *gathāmugaḥ* processions to special cremation sites at the periphery of Bhaktapur where women will 'purify' their babies, swaying them in the smoke of the burning straw demons. The demons' male equipment could not have been made more obvious. Boys shout naughty ditties<sup>6</sup>, proudly waving straw bundles with a tiny little straw phallus. What fun! (Fig. 28)

Buddhist processional music is one of the oldest surviving music traditions in the Kathmandu Valley. The first written version of the *Svayaṃbhū purāṇa* from the second half of the fourteenth century, mentions Buddhist groups from Kathmandu, visiting *Svayaṃbhūnāth* every morning during the Buddhist processional month of *gūlā* (Śrāvaṇ, July/August), to worship with animal horns and drums. Over six centuries later one would expect things to have changed. But in the 1980s, worship with animal horns and drums was still carried out every year by three *gūlābājā* groups

5 *Indra* is responsible for rain but addressing *Mahādyah* (Lord Śiva) helps even better.

6 I collected over ninety samples in one hour, definitely hardcore and unfit for publication



Fig. 29: Cow effigies for the dead passing Taumādhi square during *sāpāru*

organised by Sāymi oilpressers of Bhaktapur and two oilpresser groups of Banepa<sup>7</sup>. Buddhist Vajrācārya priests and Sākya gold- and silversmiths organise a different kind of *gūlābājā* with drums accompanied with Western trumpets and clarinets played by Jugī tailor-musicians. The aim of Buddhist *gūlābājā* is, to accumulate merit by playing musical offerings, circumambulating all Buddhist monuments and monasteries. These processions actualise the Buddhist *maṇḍala* that extends far beyond Bhaktapur to Namobuddha, Bungamati, Svayambhū and other places. These groups and their ritual and processional activities are examined in chapters 3.4 and 3.5.

Depending on the nature of a festival, many processions unfold at least in part along the *pradakṣiṇā*, the processional route proceeding in a big loop, touching a maximum number of temples and shrines<sup>8</sup>. Invocations for *Nāsaḥḍyaḥ* are played at the beginning and end of every procession. For example, cow processions with *ghēṭāgiṣi* stick dances during the *sāpāru* festival<sup>9</sup> on the day after Śrāvaṇ fullmoon proceed exactly along the *pradakṣiṇā*. To remember the dead and lead them to heaven, *tāhāsā* cow effigies are carried around, with stick dances performed in front along the way.<sup>10</sup> (Fig. 29)

7 also Patan *gūlābājā* includes horns and drums

8 cf. chapter 1.

9 in Nepali *gāṅjātrā*

10 cf. chapter 4.3, Grieve 2004, Widdess 2006

3 Town Rituals and Processional Music

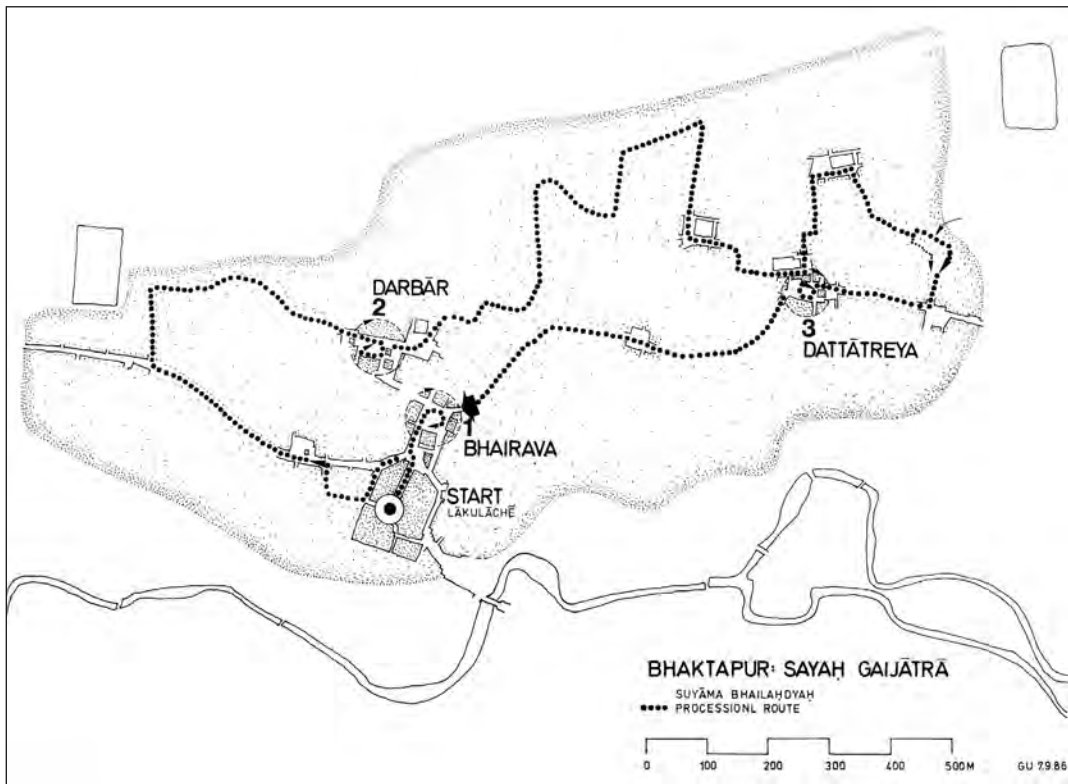


Fig. 30: Little girl in cow costume walking the processional route (four long hours)



Fig. 31: Bhairava as *tāhāsā* straw cow leading the final group of cow effigies along the *pradakṣiṇā* (photo courtesy of Bikas Rauniyar)





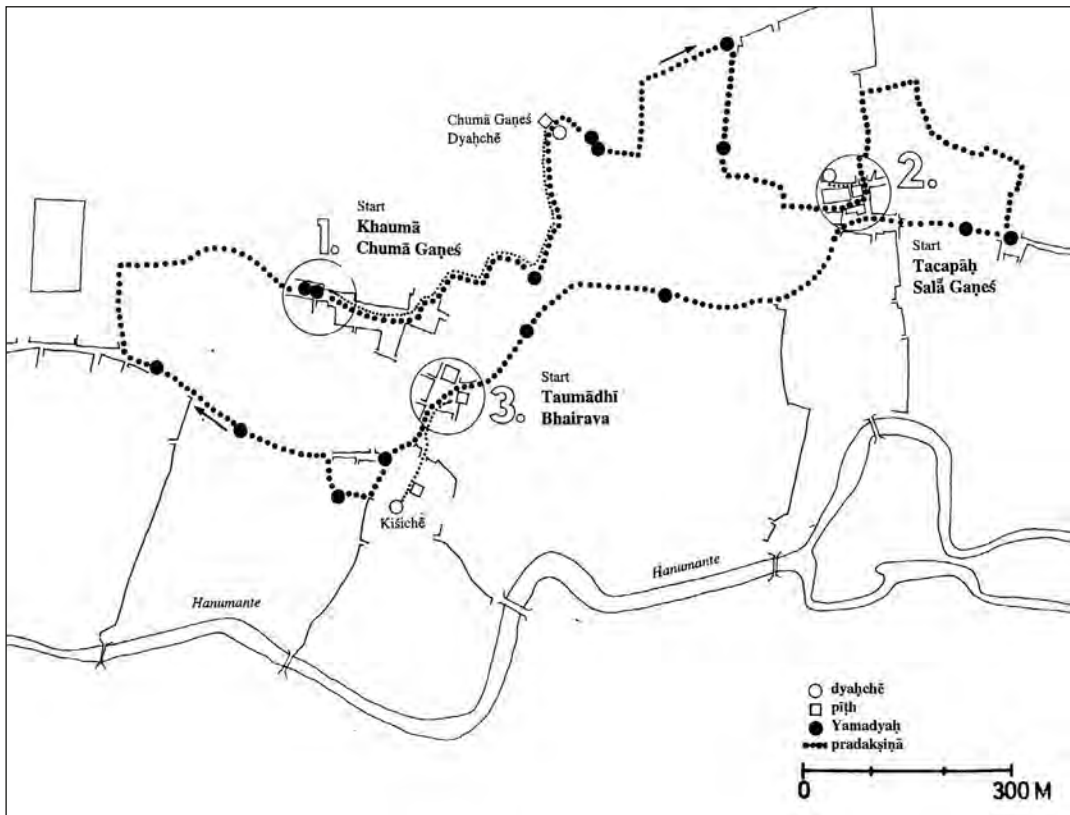
Map 10: *Sāpāru* procession of Bhairava as *tāhāsā* straw cow along the *pradakṣiṇā*, with three extra rounds in each of the numbered squares (map courtesy of Niels Gutschow)

Cows can be of six varieties, tall effigies made of bamboo, saris, straw horns and grinning cow faces painted on paper for dead grown-ups, small effigies for dead infants put onto peoples heads and quietly walked around early in the morning, a clay bull carried on a tray, a child in cow costume dragged along by parents or, in rare cases, a real cow driven along the processional route. (Fig. 30)

The sixth variety is the tallest cow effigy of all, made of bamboo poles, straw bundles, straw horns, and a grinning bull face. This is Bhairava himself, taking the shape of a straw bull to participate in the procession towards its end and to show the bereaved families that the gods protect the souls of the dead. In the evening, the last group of ‘cows’ is lead by Bhairava and his female consort, Ajimā. Contrary to the earlier groups of cows with stick dancers, Bhairava’s group takes three rounds in the three main squares of Bhaktapur, honouring Bhairavnāth, Taleju (temple inside the palace) and Dattātreyā. During the cow festival day in 1989, we counted exactly five hundred cows taking the round of the *pradakṣiṇā*. (Map 10, Fig. 31)

One month later, during *Indra jātrā* one mother goddess and three gods proceed along the *pradakṣiṇā*, *Indrāyaṇī* (1st day), *Salā Ganeś* (3rd day), *Chumā Ganeś* (4th day) and *Akāś Bhairav* (5th day). The palanquins with masks or statues of the gods are preceded and announced by *dhi-maybājā* drumming and song groups of their neighbourhood. Women living around the shrine

3 Town Rituals and Processional Music



Map 11: Processions of Indraṛyaṇī (1st day), Salā Gaṇeś (3rd day), Chumā Gaṇeś (4th day) and Akāś Bhairav (5th day) during Indra jātrā (map courtesy of Niels Gutschow)



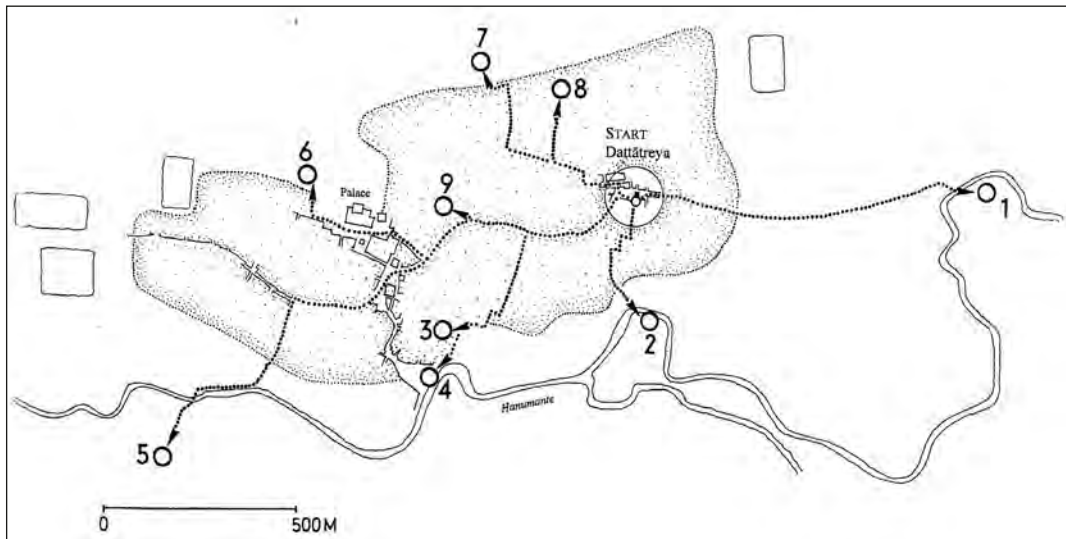
Fig. 32: Kajilal Shahi (*nāykhī*) and colleagues playing *nāykhībājā* in front of a painting of Akāś Bhairav, 1985

of Chumā Gaṇeś, use this opportunity to walk behind the palanquin in a long row in their finery, carrying trays with oil lamps and offerings for other gods on the way. (Map 11)

Some processions attract large numbers of penitents balancing clay cups filled with lamp oil and two burning wicks on their heads and shoulders, often holding additional lamps in their hands. The mustard oil used for this purpose is very hot and penitents need the assistance of their wives or mothers to refill and reposition the cups. This exercise is said to ward off evil that threatens a family or to help make a wish come true, a son to be born, etc. Occasionally, a tough penitent may roll himself sideways along the entire route, his head, knees and elbows protected with bandages.

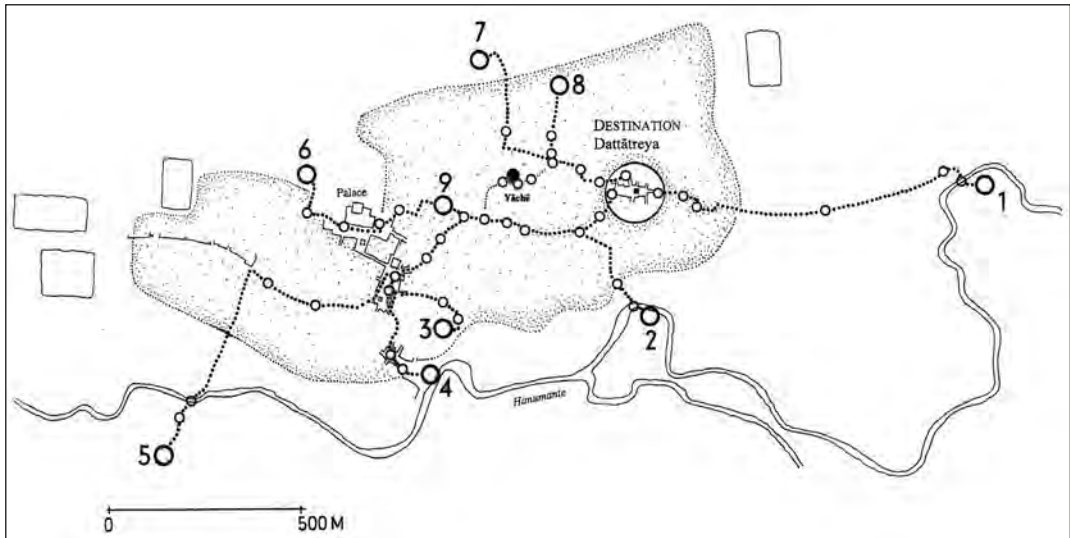
A painting on a bamboo mat showing Ākāś Bhairav is attached on the right side of the front of the Bhairavnāth temple in Taumādhi. For the procession on the fifth day of Indra *jātrā* it is taken down, sprinkled with sacrificial blood, decorated with flower garlands and blown-up intestines and carried along the processional route by two helpers. Two butcher drummers play *nāykhībājā* in front, announcing the arrival of the god. (Fig. 32)

Another type of procession includes convenient sections of the *pradakṣinā* whilst proceeding to a specific shrine on the periphery of Bhaktapur. Until the procession reaches that shrine, only a single *dyahlhāygu* invocation is played for Nāsaḥḍyaḥ at the start of the procession. The next invocation follows at the destination, the shrine of the respective god or goddess. Only whilst returning home, gods on the way receive invocations as well. This happens for example during the *navarāt* processions of the *mvahani* town ritual, when the people of Bhaktapur visit the shrines of the protecting Aṣṭamātrkā mothergoddesses, every night a different goddess in turn. This monumental build-up includes eight shrines, beginning with Brahmāyaṇī, then Māheśvarī, Kumārī, Bhadrakālī, Vārāhī, Indrāyaṇī, Mahākālī, Mahālakṣmī (nos. 1 to 8 on the map) and



Map 12: *Navarāt* processions of Dattātreya *dhimaybājā* during (numbered per day of the festival) to the Aṣṭamātrkā shrines (*mvahani* 2006). Brahmāyaṇī (no. 1) is visited again on *dasamī* (map courtesy of Niels Gutschow)

### 3 Town Rituals and Processional Music



Map 13: *Navarāt* processions to the Aṣṭamātrkā shrines with all *dyaḥlhāygu* invocations played whilst returning, shown as small circles (map courtesy of Niels Gutschow)



Fig. 33: *Dhimabājā* with Gāthā drummers (left: Dayārām Banmālā) playing their showpiece *mā*, directed by me as lead drummer at the shrine of Indrāyaṇī (no. 6 on Map 13) during *navarāt* processions 1988 (photo courtesy of Kevin Bubriski)

ends on Mahānavami with processions to Tripurasundarī (no. 9), in the centre of the Bhaktapur *maṇḍala*. In the morning of the following day of Vijayādasamī, all Bhaktapurians visit the shrine of Brahmāyaṇī (no. 1) for a purifying dip in the Hanumante river<sup>11</sup>. They also receive blessings from the Navadurgā dancers who spent the night out there with a *khame* buffalo sacrifice that entices the gods and goddesses to materialize in new Navadurgā masks for another annual dance cycle<sup>12</sup>.

In accordance with the location of the Aṣṭamāṭṛkā shrines at the periphery, these *navarāt* processions unfold in a concentric manner. As illustrated on the second map, the invocations played whilst returning from the Aṣṭamāṭṛkā shrines to the starting point accumulate during the nine nights to *ḍyaḥllhāygu*-s for all the gods along the *pradakṣiṇā*, actualising the complete Bhaktapur *maṇḍala*. (Map 12, 13)

At the destination of the procession, the *guru* leads the group to a position near the shrine where they can be seen and heard by the festive crowd. The music stops briefly, allowing musicians to exchange instruments and position themselves in a circle for playing their most impressive piece *mā* as an offering and finally, *ḍyaḥllhāygu*. In such a peak situation, the music can become a focal point of fascination and inspiration to the crowd, pulling them into a whirlpool of joyous ecstasy—an experience that everybody remembers. This is called an event. (Fig. 33)

The month of Māgh is recommended for mortifying oneself in order to have a boon granted by the gods, for example to be blessed with the birth of a son. If you make a vow to the gods, limit your desires and suffer voluntarily for a cause, a reward is bound to follow. This is what the example of countless great ascetics teaches us. Participation in Mādhav Nārāyaṇa *vrata* is considered a time-consuming but highly beneficial exercise, as it includes special worship of Lord Viṣṇu<sup>13</sup>, exposure to freezing cold for hours, strict rules of purity and a vegetarian diet. Daily observance begins with a bath near the sacred confluence at Hanuman *ghāt* where a special building is reserved for Mādhav Nārāyaṇa *vrata*. During this month, penitents visit the various places of Nārāyaṇa worship. Wearing only a small towel around their hips, they balance clay pots containing water on their heads. Hundreds of straws reach into those pots, looking like a headdress. When people ask for a little sacred water as a blessing, it is made to flow through those straws by tilting the head. A wooden base and two sticks keep the pot in position. Each of these scantily clad men enduring the cold holds a conch in the right hand and keeps sounding it as an announcement for others not to block the way. Dogs are not allowed to cross the street in front of the procession. The leader carries a portable shrine of Mādhav Nārāyaṇa. (Fig. 34)

If someone prefers to endure heat instead of cold as a penance, this can be arranged with maximum public attention during *mvahani* or *sakhimā punhi*. The penitent lies down near a temple and is covered with cow dung that carries one hundred eight clay cups filled with mustard oil and two burning wicks each. Female family members keep those lamps burning for hours. They cause great heat and discomfort to the penitent roasting below the illuminated dung bed. Suffering is guaranteed and might help to grant the desired boon—usually a son.

11 Today it may seem unbelievable, but in the 1980s this river was clean enough for ritual bathing

12 cf. chapter 4.2

13 Mādhava is one of Viṣṇu's manifestations



Fig. 34: Mādhav Nārāyaṇa vrata: Penitents playing conch, carrying sacred water on their heads

One of the most opulent processions where I was invited to participate in with our *dhimay* drum group, was the Caṇḍeśvarī *jātrā*. This included twelve music groups of all processional genres and penitents balancing oil lamps. Such a big and noisy procession announces itself fifteen minutes before it arrives in front of the house. When many groups play simultaneously but never together, the total musical chaos becomes an irresistible festive roar structured with the multiple crashing of many cymbals. It sends exciting tremors through the buildings, sometimes bringing the plaster down. People can comfortably interrupt their daily chores and rush down to stand in the street, ready to get a glimpse of the god or goddess passing their home. Girls prefer to look down from windows and balconies to offer their prayer and have a good view of the drummers.

It is a golden chance for young men to pick the most beautiful girls from the long queue of ladies with their one cheek illuminated by the oil lamps on a carried *pūjā* tray.

*Jantabājā* brass bands play the most common processional music for life cycle rituals, with the exception of death processions. During marriages they walk in front of the decorated vehicle carrying the bride to the bridegroom's house. Before she enters the car, she is expected to put on a noisy show of anguish and despair about leaving her *thaḥchē* (parents' house). It is not as if she was departing forever. She will be back after a few hours. The noise level of her show is supposed to demonstrate to the neighbours the degree of love and attachment she has for her parents and siblings. This invariably culminates in an exaggerated physical struggle against being gently pushed into the vehicle, accompanied with squeals as if a pig was about to be slaughtered. Mercifully, processional music is played to drown the drama. Marriage bands are local copies of fashionable Indian bands, with poor quality Western trumpets, clarinets, snare drums, maracas, etc., made in India. Musicians wear fancy uniforms and produce a boisterous clamour, playing Hindi film songs and sometimes a traditional marriage song. Until the 1960s marriage bands used traditional drums and shawms. In those days there were no taxis in Nepal. The bride either walked or was carried to her new home in a hammock fastened to a special pole carried by two men. There were traditional songs for different stages of the procession, one of them played when the groom's party was about to lean the hammock pole against the wall of the bride's home, announcing that the bridegroom and the time for farewell to her family had arrived. Some Jugi musicians also play in modern marriage bands and earn their major income from these activities during the marriage season. In the 1980s there were also a few marriage bands organised by farmers and by Nepali-speaking Damāi tailor-musicians living in villages near Bhaktapur.

When despite all life-shortening habits a Bhaktapurian manages to reach the age of seventy-seven years, seven months and seven days, his family organises a joyful procession led by a noisy *jantabājā* brass band or *dhimaybājā*. The old person sits on a decorated trolley that is pulled by numerous grandchildren along the *pradakṣiṇā*.

During the fullmoon night of Phālgun (February/March), a fertility ritual starts at the Bhīmsen temple bordering Dattātreyā square, using only a section of the *pradakṣiṇā* to move on to Brahmāyaṇī *pīth* and back. For eight days prior to this event, an impressive, larger than life-like carved phallus weighing approximately 12 kg is suspended in the porch below the Bhīmsen temple bordering Dattātreyā square.<sup>14</sup> With its oiled red tip pointed through a triangular 'female' opening in a piece of cloth, it can be set in a horizontal swinging motion by those desiring to play with it. There is no lack of volunteers. This is Bhīmsen's *cīr*, the powerful hero's phallus. During fullmoon night, a shy person unable to father a son arrives to carry the phallus all the way to Brahmāyaṇī *pīth*, bathe it in the river at the holy site, circumambulate the *pīth* three times and carry the *cīr* back to Dattātreyā, before rushing home to resume his marital duty with renewed vigour. Members of the Bhīmsen temple song group have already sung *hvali me* songs for hours before the self-conscious client arrives. They give him noisy company along the way to Brahmāyaṇī *pīth*, shouting lecherous ditties. (Fig. 35)

14 During the 1990s, in an attempt to hide the obvious from touristic attention, it was decided to display the spectacular object in a less visible place on the first floor and move it to the groundfloor only on fullmoon.

### 3 Town Rituals and Processional Music



*Fig. 35: Bhīmsen's cīr on the way to Brahmāyaṇī, 1985*

After bathing the *cīr* with much splashing and ado, the mood changes abruptly to serene songs in praise of the gods. I was assured that this ritual had been unfailingly crowned with conception of a male heir. Only in one unfortunate case, the wife had already been pregnant with a girl.



*Fig. 36: Nāykhībājā led by Kajilal Shahi playing sībājā during a funeral procession from Tacapāḥ to Brahmāyaṇī ghāt on 25/9/1984*



During the playing of *sībājā* music for death processions of Nāy butchers from the house of the dead person to one of the three cremation grounds, the frequent change of patterns triggered by street crossings, etc. reveals a direct connection between musical patterns and locality. Bhaktapur's townscape functions as a music score that tells the *nāykhī* drummers where to play what and exactly where to change from one pattern to another<sup>15</sup>. (Fig. 36)

Depending on the locality of the dead person's home, the body is carried either to Cupī ghāt or to Brahmāyaṇī ghāt where the cremation proceeds upon arrival. If a person feels his or her death approaching, the person may ask to be carried to *Hanumān* ghāt. Situated opposite the confluence of two rivers, this is the most auspicious place for leaving this world, with both feet in the water. The body is then carried only twenty metres along the river to the cremation ground for low castes whilst the *nāykhībājā* group plays the complete sequence from **A** to **F** (Map 14). Every participant of the death procession needs to observe ritual purification after the cremation. After a death procession starts, carved *chvāsa* stones set in the pavement at major street crossings indicate the initial pattern changes of *sībājā*. *Chvāsa* are infested with evil spirits related to death and suicide. People place food offerings and used clothes of dead persons on top of a *chvāsa* near their house.

All funeral processions proceed in a completely similar manner. Street crossings with *chvāsa* stones and other places related to this ultimate rite of passage (burial sites, crossing bridges, etc.) indicate the exact places for change of musical patterns. The town is a musical score. The *sībājā* music is said to have evil qualities, if played or heard out of context. It is only taught at night in complete secrecy and isolation in a field hut. There is reason for respecting the taboo<sup>16</sup>.

These examples of town rituals and ritual processions underline the meaningful role of music as a key element of such dynamic events. By actualising the Bhaktapur *maṇḍala* with the help of invocations, processional music opens a safe and direct link to the gods, focuses peoples' minds on the flow of inspiration and multiplies the festive joy of the entire population. With its unifying capacities, it helps Bhaktapurians to perceive themselves as part of a greater whole, it affirms and strengthens their cultural identity. Music certainly has the potential to transcend the limits of everyday perception by making it transparent to an all-embracing, joyous realisation of life's meaning.

The maps showing processional routes highlight the fundamental relationship of music and locality in a traditional Newar town. Whilst looking at these two-dimensional representations of dynamic processes, it is helpful to imagine another world projected on to these. It is the local mythology that occupies not only Newar towns but the entire Kathmandu Valley—more so in the perception of the older generation that is about to leave this world.

15 cf. Wegner 1988

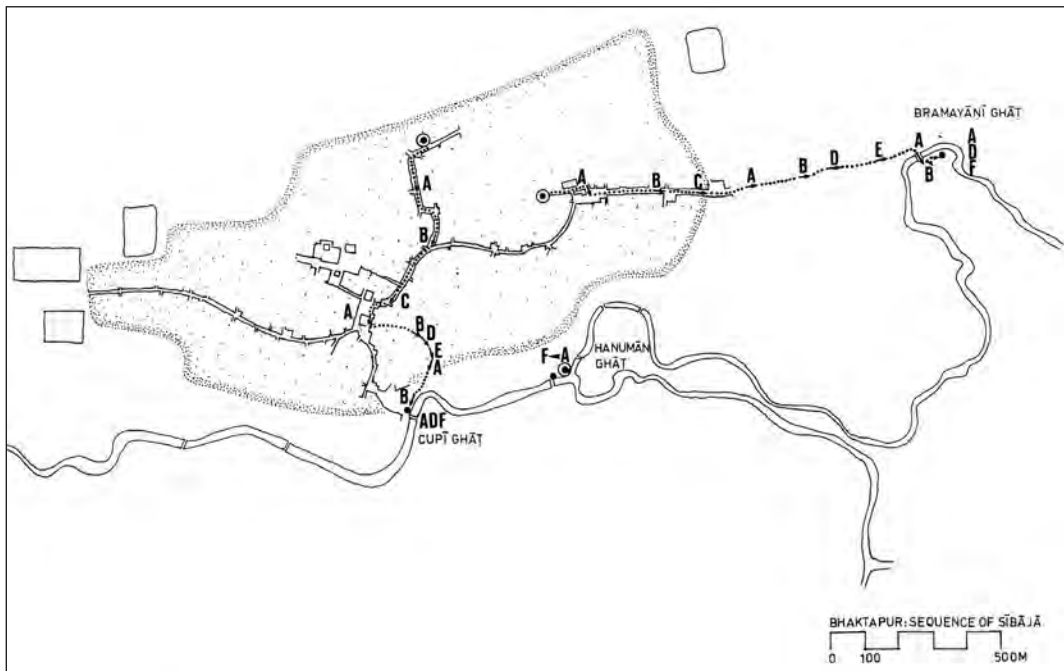
16 cf. Preface in Wegner 1988, where a method for neutralising the black magic of *sībājā* is explained

### 3 Town Rituals and Processional Music

#### Sībājā sequence in relation to locality

(death processions depicted in map 14 below)

Pattern	Destination: Cupī <i>ghāt</i>	Destination: Brahmāyaṇī <i>ghāt</i>
A	from the house to Cvachē <i>chvāsa</i> (major street crossing)	from the house up to Dattātreyā <i>chvāsa</i> (major street crossing)
B	up to Sukul dhvakā <i>chvāsa</i> (major street crossing)	up to Sujamādhi <i>chvāsa</i> (major street crossing)
C	up to Kvāchē <i>chvāsa</i> (major street crossing)	up to the foundation stones of Bhaktapur's ancient town gate (old town ends here)
A	up to Calāku <i>chvāsa</i> (major street crossing)	up to Khyaḥ <i>pvukhu</i> (pond for bottom- wash after obeying nature's call)
B	up to Durgā <i>pīṭh</i>	up to Dyaḥ Ilācā Gaṇeś <i>pīṭh</i>
D	up to lane leading to Bhadrakālī <i>pīṭh</i>	up to Brahmāyaṇī <i>khyah</i> , burying site for infants ( <i>mimapvumā mācā</i> )
E	passing this road crossing	up to path leading down to river bank (Brahmāyaṇī <i>ghāt kvahā vānegu lācā</i> )
A	up to <i>sītātāpvucā</i> bridge	crossing Brahmāyaṇī bridge
B	up to the path leading down to the funeral site. The <i>nāykhībājā</i> group and the women stop here.	up to Brahmāyaṇī <i>pīṭh</i> . The <i>nāykhībājā</i> group and the women stop at the southeast corner of the <i>pīṭh</i> .
A	The body is laid down. Everybody washes their face with river water and offer water to the deceased one. The eldest son chases evil spirits away with <i>pret śradda</i> . The body is lifted again, and the procession circulates the funeral pyre three times, before the body is placed on the pyre, the head facing east.	
D	The eldest son lights the cremation pyre by putting the straw torch at the head of the corpse.	
F	The music stops. The relatives wait at the <i>phalcā</i> . A few <i>sīguthī</i> members watch the body turn into ashes that are thrown into the river. It is a tributary of the holy Ganges.	



Map 14: Three different death processions of Nāy butchers with sequences of *sībājā* patterns A to F changing according to locality. Corpses of the eastern part of Bhaktapur are carried to Brahmayānī ghāt. Those of central and western Bhaktapur are carried to Cupī ghāt. People wishing to end their lives at Hanumān ghāt are carried there to die at the most auspicious place. (map courtesy of Niels Gutschow)

The following chapters examine the different genres of Newar music, status and role of the musicians and the meaning of the repertoire.

### 3.1 *Dhimaybājā*

*Dhimaybājā* is the most popular genre of processional drumming among Newar Jyāpu farmers, Āvāḥ bricklayers and—more recently also Gāthā gardeners and Navadurgā dancers<sup>17</sup>. The ensemble combines cylindrical *dhimay* drums of the South Asian *ḍhol* type with two different pairs of cymbals. In 1986 I wrote,<sup>18</sup> ‘No procession is complete without the deep rumble of *dhimay* and the crashing of *bhuchyāḥ* and *sichyāḥ*. This combination is considered to get the maximum number of girls hanging out of the windows.’ (Fig. 38)

This still holds true in 2020, with the difference that nowadays it is also the girls banging the drums—sometimes in mixed bands, sometimes as girl groups. No doubt, processional music offers an excellent opportunity for showing off, for impressing onlookers of both genders with volume, speed and panache. Crowded street crossings and temple squares are ideal localities for

17 I trained two Gāthā groups, among others, during the 1980s.

18 Wegner 1986, p. 11



*Fig. 37: My late Guruju Ganesh Bahadur Sijakhvā playing a dhimay made by a Tamaḥ brass maker of Maṅgalbajār, Patan and drum maker Bil Bahadur Kulu of Mūlāchē, Bhaktapur 1984*



*Fig. 38: Yāchē dhimaybājā with sichyāḥ-player (r.) checking the windows for girls, 1992*



Fig. 39: *Dhimaybājā* in the good old days: Members of my first group of *dhimay* students, Nhuche Kumar Banmala and Dayaram Banmala—both in front—playing with me and other drummers at Indrāyaṇī during a *navarāt* procession 1988 (photo courtesy of Kevin Bubriski)

such displays. The respective patterns must be on the tip of the drummers' fingers, so that they can instantly react when spotting an adorable person. Compositions with naughty drum syllables are useful for teasing a rival group of drummers.<sup>19</sup> If necessary, the Guruju moderates students' exhibitionist antics. Despite a prevailing element of fun, musicians should proceed in a dignified manner. Body movements as a means of expressing drum patterns can be a suitable technique in *dhimaybājā*, if applied in a charming manner, suggesting that the drummers are led by the Lord of Music and Dance. Unfortunately contemporary *dhimay* playing has become an ugly display of wildly shaking young men and women going for speed and noise, as they are unable to play a single pattern clearly. They want to be seen and heard, without being able to give joy to others. They neglect gods on the way, sometimes forgetting to play *dyahḷhāygu* as they pass a temple or a shrine. In their ignorance they have not even heard of the Bhaktapur *maṇḍala*. All this makes me sad, as this was different when we were young. Music should be an offering—NOT an exhibition.

The photo (Fig. 39) shows another aspect of cultural change. Nhuche Kumar (left) wears a beautiful *survāḥ*<sup>20</sup>. In 1983 it was still common practice with Jyāpunī farmer women to weave at their loom cotton cloth in individual family patterns. This was tailored and presented to family members during festivals. When fashion changed to foreign industrial products, the busy click-clack of the looms disappeared from the farmers' quarters and the beautiful ancient patterns were

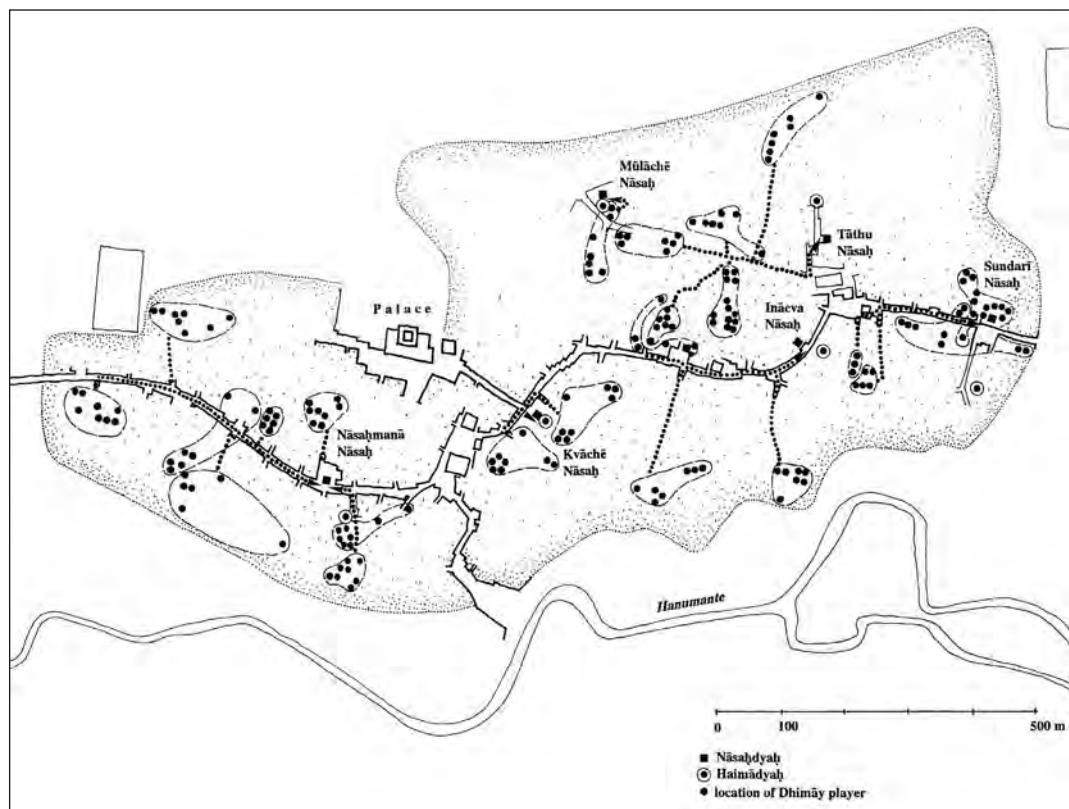
19 cf. Wegner 1986, p. 29

20 traditional trousers

lost forever. In the 1980s, Newar culture still owned traces of an earlier age when people must have been gifted with a natural capacity of beauty and spirituality that pervades the astonishing cultural achievements of the past and that we can still sense today. Where did it go?

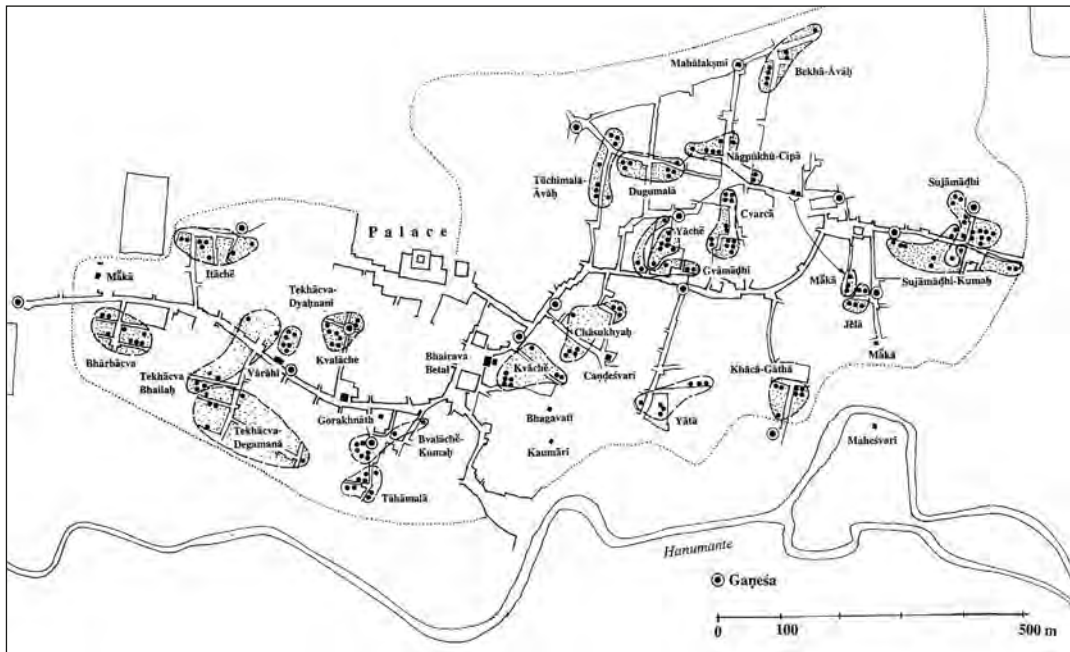
The maps 15–17 show the twenty-four *dhimay* groups of 1983 with the players' homes and routes to the shrines of the music gods worshipped during their apprenticeships. With my teaching activities I added five more groups, four in the upper town, one in the lower town. Two groups comprised of farmers and Sāymi oilpressers and two of Gāthā gardeners and Navadurgā dancers, and one mixed Sāymi and a Jyāpu farmer. My Guruju, Ganesh Bahadur Sijakhva of Yāchē was a very prolific teacher producing several excellent drummers of his Jyāpu caste. (Map 15)

There is a rule about inclusion in drumming apprenticeships. If enrolling in a traditional apprenticeship with Nāsaḥ *sāle pūjā*, every student must complete the course—whatever the ability to learn music. For a teacher this can be a trying test of patience, but in the end everybody succeeds in learning the repertoire by heart, at least playing it in an acceptable manner. This effort should not be underestimated. Before I introduced written notation as a teaching aid, students had to chant the drumming syllables aloud, trying to fix everything permanently in their minds like a chain. During the initial processions it sometimes happens that the memory of a novice fails and he stops playing, with a pitiable expression as if drowning. In such an emergency situation,

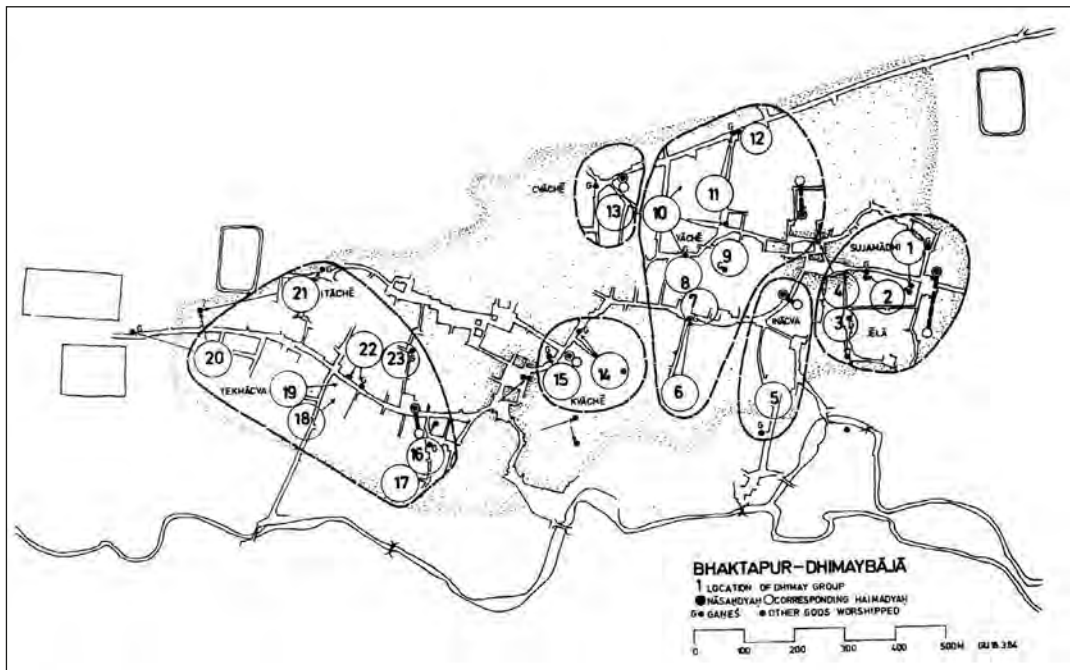


Map 15: *Dhimaybājā* groups of farmers and bricklayers, 1983 (map courtesy of Niels Gutschow)

### 3 Town Rituals and Processional Music



Map 16: *Dhimaybājā* groups with shrines of Gaṇeśa and other gods worshipped during apprenticeship, 1983 (map courtesy of Niels Gutschow)



Map 17: *Dhimaybājā* groups in relation to the pair of music gods Nāśahdayā and Haimādayā worshipped during apprenticeship, 1983 (map courtesy of Niels Gutschow)





*Fig. 40:* Two *dhimay* drums, one made of brass (diameter of head: 40 cm, width: 53 cm), the older one of wood having a *dhimay pucā* secured with the strap (photo: Bernd Karl Rennhak)

the teacher has to jump to the rescue, shouting the drumming syllables into the lost person's ear. Thus saved from his blundering, the young drummer joins the other players with mixed feelings of shame and relief.

Map 17 reveals an insight into Bhaktapur's early history. The town grew together from a cluster of ancient villages, each having a pair of Nāsaḥ and Haimā shrines at its centre. The upper town shows *dhimay* groups worshipping the music god at five different shrines, with Thāthu Nāsaḥ as the most prominent one. Every *dhimay* group of the lower town uses a single pair of shrines, Nāsaḥmānā Nāsaḥ and the related Haimā. It depends on the immediate area of the god's influence, which one of the many shrines of Gaṇeśa is selected in the vicinity of the house where the drummers are taught. When we compare the use of Nāsaḥ shrines during apprenticeships of other music and dance genres in Bhaktapur, a similar picture evolves. Historically, the lower town was the latest addition to old Bhaktapur when it gradually extended towards west.

It must have been the need for security and for preserving as much valuable agricultural land for food production as possible that lead farmers to live with their life stock in a densely settled urban area. In contemporary Nepal there is now little agricultural land left in the Kathmandu Valley, definitely not enough to feed the current population of over three million. As the aftermath of the earthquake in April 2015 demonstrated, any disruption of transportation can lead to dramatic scarcity of food supply.

Before the 1980s, *dhimay* drums were carved out of tree trunks that often had an irregular shape. As such trees became unavailable near the Kathmandu Valley, the body of the drum is now made of tin or brass and in an exactly cylindrical shape. The two drumheads are X-laced together with a leather strap. (Fig. 40)



Fig. 41: *Dhimay pucā* made of cane in playing position—original size and ideal shape and weight

The right hand uses a *dhimay pucā* made of cane rolled in steam. This cane grows in the hot Tarāi flatlands bordering India. Cane is used during Bhaktapur's New Year festival for tying Vetāla to the Bhaila *khaḥ*. When the chariot is dismantled after the festival, *dhimay* players used to turn up, asking for used canes to make their *dhimay pucā*. Nowadays most players use a little stick instead. This straight *dhimay kachicā* produces a comparatively bad sound. If the steam-bending of a *dhimay pucā* seems a little more time-consuming, the advantage over the *kachicā* is obvious: Produced in the proper manner with a *pucā* on the Nāsaḥ drumhead, the *tā* sounds clear and crisp. The *pucā* is not held tight by index finger and thumb but given just enough freedom to move sideways, to conclude the impulse of the arm movement towards the drum. The range of the *pucā*'s sideways movement is controlled by the ring finger at its lower end. The *pucā* touches the hide only briefly with the upper curve of the cane spiral. All this is impossible to achieve with a frail *kachicā* stick. (Fig. 41)

**Right hand stroke:**

Fig. 42

*tā, tī, nā, nā, re, li*

The Haimā head of the *dhimay* is played with the left hand. It has a *masalā* tuning paste<sup>21</sup> stuck to the inside centre of the hide. Owing to its components *sāl dhūp* (tree resin), *alapu* (castor seeds) and *tū cikā* (mustard oil), the oil seeps through the hide, showing a dark circular spot. It lends weight and resonance to the Haimā head, allowing for the production of two distinct sounds, *ghē* and *kha*. Every couple of years, this *masalā* tuning paste needs to be replaced by the drum maker who is asked to tighten the straps before festivals.

**Left hand strokes:**

Fig. 43

*ghē, ghū, jhī, kā*

21 For a detailed documentation of *masalā* preparation and application see chapter 6.12



Fig. 44

*kha, khu*

**Stroke combination:**

$dhā = tā + ghē$

A special effect is achieved by first playing *tā*, then a resonant *ghē*. The *dhimay pucā* held by the right hand should remain in very loose contact with the drum hide. It helps, if the drum is tilted a little, with the left side down and the right side up. If done correctly, the *ghē* stroke causes the cane *pucā* to vibrate against the drum hide, causing a purring sound. This effect is only possible with a rolled cane, not with a straight *dhimay kachicā*. This purring sound appears only in a single short composition—*gu* no. 19—after every single *tā*.

In Bhaktapur, *dhimay* is accompanied with two different pairs of cymbals, *bhuchyāḥ* and *sichyāḥ*. The details and playing-technique of these instruments are described in chapter 6.10. Before touching these instruments, one has to learn how to play them without damaging the costly brass cymbals<sup>22</sup>. *Bhuchyāḥ* and *sichyāḥ* play a similar pattern, *bhuchyāḥ* in slow speed and *sichyāḥ* in double tempo. The strongest accent is on the first stroke (Fig. 45).

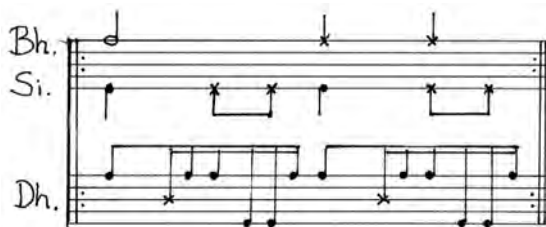


Fig. 45: Processional *dhimay* (DH.) pattern *nyāḥ* with *bhuchyāḥ* (BH.) and *sichyāḥ* (SI.) accompaniment above

<sup>22</sup> see chapter 7.4



Fig. 46: Cvarcā flute ensemble with *dhimay* accompaniment 1985

All Bhaktapur *dhimay* groups use this combination with *bhuchyāḥ* and *sichyāḥ*. It adds a thrilling excitement to the performance. With the exception of three groups, all others play the repertoire transcribed in this publication. The repertoire of the potters of Tālākva is similar to that played by Kumāḥ potters in Thimi. The Cvarcā and Casukhyaḥ groups play *dhimay* with other patterns accompanying their transverse flute ensembles. The Cvarcā *dhimay* (length: 55 cm, diameter: 49 cm) happens to be the largest in Bhaktapur. It is unusually heavy, needing a strong player. (Fig. 46)

A *dhimay* procession may last for several hours. Drummers and cymbal players keep exchanging instruments to avoid too much strain. The best effect is achieved with an ensemble of four drums combined with two pairs of *bhuchyāḥ* and two pairs of *sichyāḥ*. With properly tightened drums, the effect is powerful and well balanced, making it possible to play together with maximum precision. A higher number of players may find it difficult to co-ordinate in a festive crowd with several groups playing next to each other, each one trying to dominate with extra loud cymbal strokes. To prevent damage to the ear, I strongly recommend the use of cotton balls to protect the delicate inner ears. If heard from a short distance, the combined noise of the cymbals can cause irreversible hearing problems that start with irritating tingling noises lasting for hours after the procession. They may never stop.

If a procession is caught in a rain shower, the sudden humidity may bring down the pitch of the drum hides. When the sound becomes too dull, people make a straw fire to dry the drums and revive their original sound quality.

The *dhimay* repertoire learnt from Ganesh Bahahadur Sijakhva includes the following compositions:

### 3 Town Rituals and Processional Music

1. *Dyaḥllhāygu*. The long invocation *tāhā dyaḥllhāygu* is reserved for the beginning and end of a procession and for the god or goddess at the destination. If there are gods of special importance on the way back, the procession may stop for *tāhā dyaḥllhāygu*. It is never played when the procession passes a shrine without stopping. For that purpose, only the last four lines of *tāhā dyaḥllhāygu* are woven into the processional pattern. This short version is called *cicāḥhāḥgu dyaḥllhāygu*. The final strokes of *cicāḥhāḥgu dyaḥllhāygu* signal a stop to the other players, also at the end of *mā*.
2. *Nhyāḥ* is the basic processional pattern and its variants.
3. *Gu* and *chinā* are short pieces with repeated lines to be woven into the basic processional patterns according to the lead drummer's intention.
4. *Mā* is a long showpiece lasting for twelve minutes, an accumulation of many *chinā* arranged in an interesting development with several virtuosic climaxes and tempo changes. This piece is played for special occasions, for example at the shrines of the mother goddesses. It is followed by *tāhā dyaḥllhāygu*, before the procession returns home.
5. *Nhyāḥ thāyagu cvaḥ*. If there is a break on the way and the lead drummer wants to start again, he plays a slow *nhyāḥ thāyagu cvaḥ* that builds up the tempo stepwise for *nhyāḥ* and short processional pieces to follow.

The *mā* piece taught by Ganesh Bahadur Sijakhva<sup>23</sup> had a few serious flaws that invariably caused a brief musical chaos during performance. At these irritating stumble points, the cymbal players had to adjust their regular pattern to sudden irregularities caused by a few missing strokes or an additional stroke that disturbed the flow. I finally corrected those obvious mistakes that can easily enter during oral transmission. These corrections were quickly approved of by my teachers and all other players and were taught to the following generations of drummers. As is expected from an advanced drummer, I also composed a few short *chinā* and *gu* pieces that entered the repertoire. In the 1990s, a *gu* taken from the *dhā* repertoire by another group entered the *dhimay* repertoire and became an instant hit with all *dhimay* bands<sup>24</sup>. This and a few of my own compositions and corrections of *mā* are among the revised transcriptions included in this publication. For teaching and learning purposes I recommend using only this corrected version of the *dhimay* repertoire.

It would be a rewarding ethnomusicological research project to examine and compare the different *dhimay* traditions in the Kathmandu Valley<sup>25</sup>. Some localities in Bhaktapur and Thimi share somewhat similar patterns but organise them in a different manner, along with genuinely different patterns. It is absolutely fascinating how much variety of interesting and meaningful patterns can be created with only three basic strokes and one combination stroke. Limitation tickles the creative impulse. If one extended the focus of research to other varieties of *ḍhol*-type drumming traditions among other ethnic groups of Nepal, for example the Limbu and Māḥji people of East Nepal, one would discover radically different repertoires with different cultural meaning.

23 see Wegner 1986

24 I could not find out who came up with this idea. Adjusting drumming patterns from other genres is not uncommon.

25 In 2021, Abhaya Krishna Shrestha published a YouTube presentation 'Music Diaries Nepal' comparing Bhaktapur and Kathmandu *dhimay* repertoires.



Fig. 47: Baḍikhel *dhemā* group circumambulating the shrine of Buṅgadyaḥ at Buṅgamati 1992. The odd-shaped *dhemā* in the centre serves as a portable shrine of Nāsaḥdyāḥ, as the village is too small to have a shrine built of bricks.

In 1991 Nutan Sharma introduced me to the *bājā guṭhi* of Baḍikhel, a tiny village near Lele that may go back to the *vādīttra gauṣṭhikā* mentioned in the seventh century stone inscription of Lele. The local Paharīs are descendants of the ancient Newars (Kirāta) settling in the Kathmandu Valley before the Licchavi conquered it. Their *dhemā*<sup>26</sup> repertoire includes a *dyāḥlhāygu* having similar patterns as in Bhaktapur but played at half tempo<sup>27</sup>. (Fig. 47)

Also other *dhimay* groups in the Kathmandu Valley play this essential pattern of *dyāḥlhāygu*—sometimes with minor variants. As Abhaya Krishna Shrestha pointed out<sup>28</sup>, this exposes a very ancient basic element of Newar culture that is directly linked to the cult of Nāsaḥdyāḥ throughout the Kathmandu Valley.

Another aspect of *dhimay* drumming processions is dance, *dhimay pyākhā*. In Bhaktapur sometimes spontaneous dancing of inspired drunks erupts in front of the drums. As there are no standardised movements and gestures, these joyous outbreaks last only for a minute. Only once it happened that two boys aged ten and eleven started to dance with astonishing grace and variety in front of our drums after a picnic at Ināre. To our delight, they kept dancing all the way back to Inācva, Bhaktapur, covering the three kilometres in a state of bliss. (Figs. 48–50)

26 local pronunciation of *dhimay*

27 cf. Wegner 1994 and 1995

28 cf. his YouTube presentation ‘Music Diaries Nepal’

3 Town Rituals and Processional Music



Fig. 48: Spontaneous dancing with *dhimay* during a *navarāt* procession recorded by Buddhahal Manandhar (r.), 1988 (photo courtesy of Kevin Bubriski)



Fig. 49: Farmers of Pāngā had a special tradition of vigorous and expressive *dhime pyākhā* (1987)



Fig. 50: Bhaktapur's biggest *dhimay* played by a farmer of Cvarcā at Yaḥsīkhyāḥ on 1st of Vaiśākh 1985



### 3.2 Dhābājā

*Dhābājā* combines one or two *dhā* barrel drums with *bhuchyāḥ* and *sichyāḥ* cymbals in an ensemble of processional music played by Newar farmers. The sound is loud and robust. The ancient use of this drum is illustrated by relatively simple compositions consisting of two lines each and by depictions of Nāsaḥdyāḥ flanked by two drummers, Nandi and Bhṛṅgi, one of them playing *dhā*. The other drum played for the god is *kvatāḥ*. The repertoires of both drums include *dyaḥlhāygu* invocations. During the New Year festival, members of the *dāphā* group playing for Thāthū Nāsaḥdyāḥ suspend a small painted *ilā* canopy under which they perform for the god. The painting on the lower side of this *ilā* shows Nāsaḥdyāḥ as half male and half female Ardhanareśvara in a dancing pose, accompanied by Nandi and Bhṛṅgi playing *dhā* and *kvatāḥ*. (Fig. 51)



Fig. 51: Canopy showing half male, half female Nāsaḥdyāḥ with Nandi and Bhṛṅgi playing *kvatāḥ* and *dhā* (painting on canvas: Purna Chitrakar)

### 3 Town Rituals and Processional Music



*Fig. 52: Dhābājā drumming in Yaḥsīkhyah during New Year morning 1984*



*Fig. 53: Dhābājā drumming at Brahmāyaṇī during Vijayādaśamī morning 1985*

Presumably older but less popular than *dhimaybājā*, *dhābājā* was mostly part of some *dāphā* groups that incorporated the set of instruments for specific processions. For example, *dhābājā* and the *dāphā* drum *lālākhī* with thick-walled *taḥ* cymbals alternate in accompanying the stick dance *ghētāgiśi* that precedes cow effigies during the town ritual *sāpāru*. *Dhābājā* combined with natural trumpets *pvaṅgā* accompanies some of the Bhaila *pyākhā* masked dances performed by Bhaktapur's potters. Also Buddhist processional music groups use the combination of *dhāḥ* with *bhuchyāḥ* and *sichyāḥ* but they reverse the drum, holding the *dhākathi* drumstick playing the Haimā drumhead with the left hand. Farmers hold the *dhākathi* with the right hand, playing the higher sounding Nāsaḥ drumhead with the left hand. (Figs. 52, 53)

The *dhābājā* of Mūlāchē was not an addition to a *dāphā* group but independent. Mūlāchē farmers played *dhābājā* for their local life cycle rituals and town rituals like *dyaḥ svagā biyegu*, *sāpāru*, *mvahani* and *gathāmugaḥ carhe*.

The processional *dhābājā* repertoire shares several short compositions with *dhimaybājā*. They are repeated several times before returning to the basic processional pattern *nhyāḥ*. As with *dhimaybājā*, the *dyaḥllhāygu* invocation includes series of accelerated strokes:

/tāghē o /tāghē o /tāghē o / tāghē o /tāghē o /tāghē o /tāghē o /

The *dhimay dyaḥllhāygu* starts in a similar manner before proceeding with different patterns.

*Dhā* is the first one of the nine drums to be played in succession during a *navabājā* performance. Every *navabājā* performance starts and ends with a *dyaḥllhāygu* played by *dhā*. Following the *dyaḥllhāygu*, the solo drummer plays *cva* 1 and *gu* 1. During the following rounds of the nine drums, *cva* 2 could be combined with *gu* 2, or *cva* 3 with *gu* 3, etc. Most of the *dhā* pieces played during *navabājā* performances and processions are similar to those used for Bhaila *pyākhā* dance accompaniment and Nāsaḥ *pūjā* processions. They are transcribed in chapters 11.3, and 11.16.

Construction and playing technique of the *dhā* drum are explained in chapter 6.1.

### 3.3 Nāykhībājā

My Guruju, the late Kajilal Shahi was an outstanding *nāykhī* drummer with a virtuoso technique and impeccable memory (Fig. 54). He had learnt his repertoire by imitation, without using drumming syllables. Each piece was stored in his mind like a chain that cannot be interrupted. This excluded the ability to isolate patterns during lessons. He repeated complete pieces at full speed until he was sure that I played everything correctly.

Owing to their low social status in traditional Newar society, Nāy butchers lived at the periphery of the town, far from the Malla palace and important temples in the centre of Bhaktapur. During the Malla period, Nāy families were regularly disowned of their property. It was considered unsuitable for them to make a good living from selling meat, an injustice they had to bear with, in addition to other caste related suppression. Nāy women were frequently taken as concubines by wealthy members of the upper castes. (Map 18, 19)



Fig. 54: My late Guruju of *nāykhībājā*, Kajilal Shahi  
1985

In addition to slaughtering animals in the early morning hours and selling meat, Nāy had several ritual duties that involved them as players of processional *nāykhībājā* music. These playing duties ranged from accompaniment for life-cycle rituals to highlighting public announcements with the rapid *cvaykegu* piece to the detailed musical participation in several town rituals. The ten *nāykhībājā* ensembles<sup>29</sup> included one or several *nāykhī* drums and one or several pairs of *sichyāḥ* cymbals.<sup>30</sup> (Fig. 55)

Kajilal Shahi of Jēlā was responsible for playing the piece *bāre khī* during the procession of the five Dīpaṅkara Buddhas on *pañcadān carhe*. The Buddhas interrupted their procession at twenty-two places<sup>31</sup> to dance a respectful round for local gods to the accompaniment of an ensemble of Sāymi oilpressers playing *dyahlhāygu* with natural trumpets *pvaṅgā* and the compound drum *pastā*. Hindus perceive in those Buddha images the five Pāṇḍava brothers of the Mahābhārata epic. The leading Buddha's drooping head supports the Hindu interpretation, as it appears to express Yudhiṣṭhira's shame of his disastrous gambling passion<sup>32</sup>. (Fig. 56)

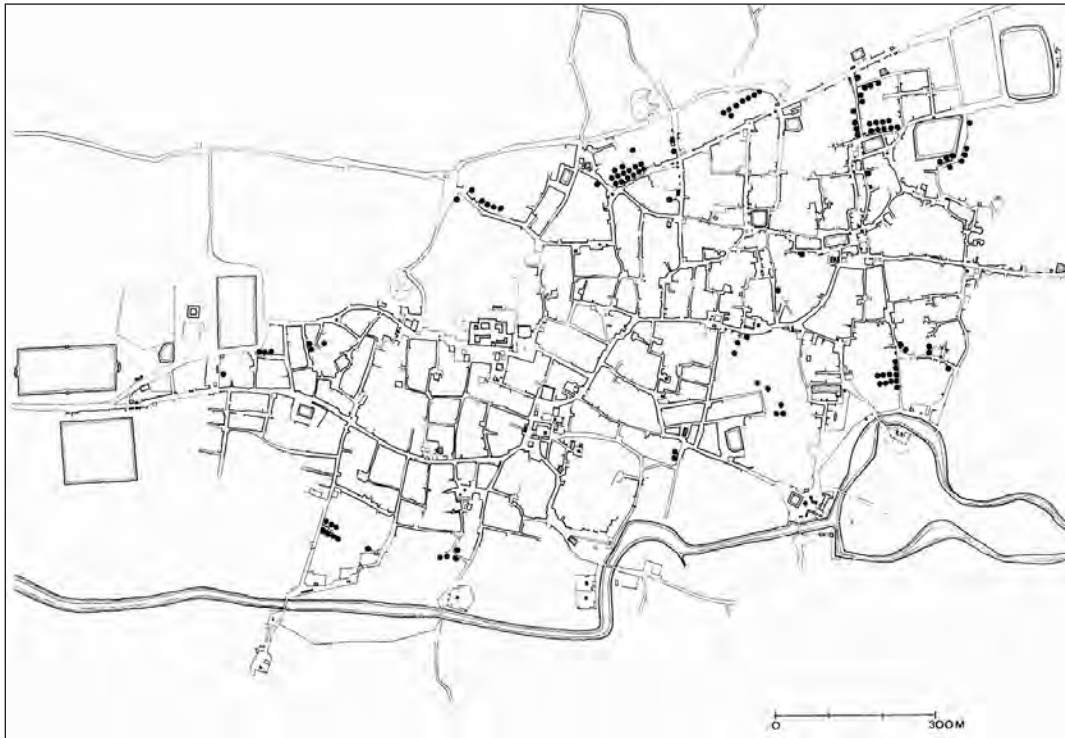
During Indra *jātrā*, Kajilal and a colleague had to play *nāykhībājā* during the procession of Ākāś Bhairav painted on a *pulu* mat made of bamboo leaves. It is carried along the *pradakṣiṇā*

29 survey 1984

30 details of instruments and playing technique see chapters 6.5 and 6.10

31 Until 2019 the number of such places had increased to thirty-eight

32 A Tibetan pilgrimage manual for Nepal offers a third identity of this Buddha as Dolma

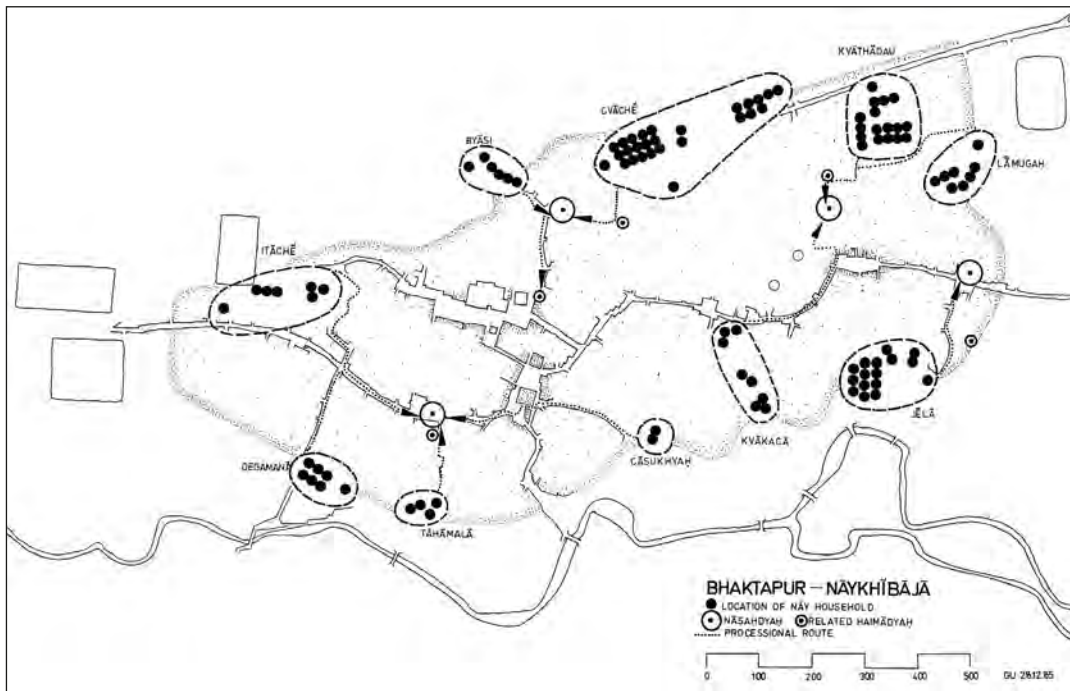


Map 18: Homes of Nāy butchers situated at the periphery of Bhaktapur (map courtesy of Niels Gutschow)



Fig. 55: Nāykhī drum and a pair of sichyāh cymbals (photo courtesy of Bernd Karl Rennhak)

### 3 Town Rituals and Processional Music



Map 19: *Nāykhībājā* groups with music gods worshipped during apprenticeship, 1985 (map courtesy of Niels Gutschow)

processional route before being attached to the front of the Bhairavnāth temple in Taumādhi where it remains for a year. This route is documented in chapter 3.

Kajilal was also in charge of participating in processions of the Navadurgā dancers starting on the day of Mahāṣṭamī and ending on fullmoon after *mvahani*. Before the 1970s, an ensemble of eighteen large natural trumpets *kā* played by Sāymi oilpressers of Gvaḥmādhi preceded the Navadurgā during their procession to Brahmāyaṇī on Mahānavamī and back into the town on the following day. These instruments were mainly played during death processions of wealthy persons, producing a deep, ominous roar<sup>33</sup>. On the evening of Mahānavamī, Kajilal slaughtered the *khame* buffalo for the *Navadurgā* at *Brahmāyaṇī pīth* before the *Navadurgā* dancers ‘stole’ their masks in Yāchē and delivered a portion of the meat to the mask maker. This ritual duty alternated between Kajilal’s Jēlā *nāykhībājā* and Byāsi *nāykhībājā*, but the colleagues in Byāsi were glad to leave this to Kajilal for a small fee. Whenever the Navadurgā attended invitations during the week after the sacrifice, it was Kajilal walking in front with another *Nāy*, simultaneously playing *nāykhībājā* and carrying on their shoulders a bamboo pole with the *khame* water-buffalo’s severed head tied to it with a rope, dangling two feet above the ground. On Āśvin fullmoon 1986 I had the pleasure of helping out as a *nāykhī* drummer during the Navadurgā visit to Yātāchē. I had to play the *pūjākhī* pattern and carry one end of the heavy bamboo pole on my right shoulder. Kajilal

33 A *kābājā* ensemble was resurrected in 2019 and accompanied the Navadurgā to Brahmāyaṇī with a new set of *kā* trumpets made of copper



Fig. 56: Five Dīpaṅkāra Buddhas visiting Nāgpukhū on *pancadān carhe* 1986. Kajilal Shahi and his son play the *nāykhībājā* piece *bāre khī*, announcing the arrival of the five Buddhas. Hindus identify the Dīpaṅkāra Buddha walking in front as Yudhiṣṭhira, his face lowered in shame of his gambling vice that caused the great war of the Mahābhārata epic. The drooping head is also seen as a hint to Buddhist monks as the proper posture whilst begging for alms. This Buddha is identified as the Ādibuddha, the primordial Buddha. Another popular name alluding to the posture is Ajajudyah, Grandfather God.

accompanied with *sichyāḥ*, carrying the other end of the pole on his left shoulder, the reeking buffalo head swaying between us in a cloud of flies<sup>34</sup>. Fortunately it takes only a few minutes from the Navadurgā *dyaḥchē* to Yātāchē, where the gods attended a ritual feast and a piglet sacrifice, to satisfy their lust for fresh blood. Having carried the *khame* head for a week, Kajilal received as a reward the neck portion of the buffalo meat. This duty ended on the day after full moon when the Navadurgā gather at night in Gachē square to perform spectacular individual dances, before drinking a cocktail of *khame* blood stirred with rice beer and eating the decaying brain<sup>35</sup>.

The Nāy of Bhaktapur have six senior leaders. Every year these Nāy *nāyaḥ* have to carry out between thirty-two and thirty-six *thā pūjā* sacrifices of buffaloes and goats for Taleju. During the night between Mahānavamī and Vijayādaśamī, all six *nāyaḥ* gather for the annual main sacrifice, wearing white *ghāji nā* frocks, *jani* belt and *phaytā* hats. Having slaughtered and carved up

34 At times, the ethnomusicological fieldwork method of participant observation can lead to unforgettable experiences.

35 see chapter 4.2



Fig. 57: *Nāykhībājā* escorting the exhausted *Nāy nāyaḥ* home after a night of butchering for Taleju, Vijayādaśamī 1986. Each *nāyaḥ* carries a white bag with strips of buffalo meat to be distributed as a sought after ghost repellent.

twenty-five buffaloes for Taleju, they emerge from the Golden Gate before noon on the day of Vijayādaśamī, where their local *nāykhībājā* groups await them, ready to escort them home. They play the piece *bārā dāygu* signalling ‘return from a sacrifice’. (Fig. 57)

Exhausted after a busy night and their dresses soiled with sacrificial blood, the *nāyaḥ* are stopped every few steps by citizens begging for tiny strips of sacrificial meat that the *nāyaḥ* carry in white cotton bags, mixed with marigold<sup>36</sup> flower petals and ready for distribution. When roasted on charcoal fire, their fumes work as an excellent ghost repellent—if applied systematically in every room. Windows should remain shut for a while, making sure that even the most stubborn ghost suffocates before the extended family arrives for a grand feast.

During *mvahani*, *nāykhībājā* together with Jugi shawm players preceded the eleven Ekanta-Kumārī on their way from the main Kumārī’s residence at Kvāthādaḥ to their *āgamche*<sup>37</sup> in Mulāchē (Fig. 58).

On the day of *pāsaḥ carhe*, a Duñ carrier and a helper put rice grains sprinkled with sacrificial goat’s blood on every *chvāsa* stone along the *pradakṣiṇā* route. The initial offering is placed on a massive rectangular stone slab in the *bekvacuka* palace courtyard. On this evil spot a Brahman

36 *Tagetes erecta*

37 ritual clan god house





Fig. 58: *Nāykhībājā* and Jugi shawm-player accompanying the Ekanta-Kumārī during *mvahani* 1985

committed suicide, in protest against a king's greed for land belonging to the Taleju temple. His angry ghost affects the area until today—despite throngs of unaware tourists being herded through the courtyard during daytime. Mercifully, nobody is allowed to enter after dark when the ghost prowls about. The offerings do not really suffice for keeping his wrath under control and must be renewed every month. Until 1983, butchers played *nāykhībājā* in front of the annual rice distributing procession held to pacify this and all other suicide-inducing demons. Since then *nāykhībājā* stopped participating, as the musicians did not receive anything in return, following King Mahendra Shah's confiscation of the *guṭhi* land.

The most notorious musical duty of *nāykhībājā* is *sībājā*, the music for death processions of Nāy, earlier also of Malla kings and Rājopadhyāya priests of the Taleju temple<sup>38</sup>. During death processions for kings and priests, the Jugi shawm players had to play *rāg Dīpak* with their curved *pūjā mvālī* shawms. This remained the only occasion for performance of this 'fire-igniting' *rāga*. To date, some musicians in South Asia promote the belief of supernatural powers linked to specific *rāga* music. During August 1983 I recorded a Warli *bhagat*<sup>39</sup> in Palghar district of Maharashtra, India who played an ancient stick zither *ghāṅglī*, singing a song in the paddy

38 analysed processional routes of *sībājā* see chapter 3.

39 shaman of the local *ādivasi* ethnic group

### 3 Town Rituals and Processional Music

fields to help the plants grow. It was for the same reason that Damāi musicians in central Nepal were hired to play *pañcaibājā* music in the fields and Newar Jyāpu women sang rice-sowing and -transplanting songs. The *sībājā* music of the Nāy is believed to exercise black magic, even cause people to die, if played out of context<sup>40</sup>. As explained in detail in chapter 3, this music is closely related to the locality leading the drummers to adjust their patterns, as if they were reading a musical score.

Besides *sībājā*, the *nāykhībājā* repertoire includes the following drum compositions:

<i>dyahlhāygu:</i>	invocation played at the start and end of a procession and during a ritual,
<i>pūjā khī:</i>	procession moves to a place of ritual action,
<i>bārā dāygu:</i>	procession returns from place of ritual action,
<i>cvaykegu:</i>	creating public attention for announcements or to highlight ritual action,
<i>bāre khī:</i>	played exclusively for processions of Dīpañkara Buddhas,
<i>caltī:</i>	dance piece, and
<i>sībājā:</i>	music for death processions.

*Calti* is an open form comprising of several series of lively dance patterns held together by three main patterns that keep returning in between developments, giving unity to the piece. Usually players decide on the spot what patterns they play and how to combine them. They may leave out the slower introduction and start directly with any part of the fast main section. None of the performances that I saw had as many varieties as the version that I learnt from Kajilal and that is transcribed in chapter 11.2 of this publication. Nobody could play as fast and clearly as he did. When drummers felt tired of playing *pūjā khī* or *bārā dāygu* during long processions, they inserted a few sparkling *calti* episodes here and there. The happiest performances of *calti* did not happen in public but during private feasts in Nāy homes when the music moved people to dance in front of the drums.

The *nāykhībājā* repertoire of the butchers stands apart from all other drumming traditions in Bhaktapur. There is not a single pattern shared with any other group, not even with those that use the *nāykhī* drum in the different contexts of *navabājā* and *gūlābājā*. The name *calti* is used in other repertoires for pieces structured in four *mātrā* patterns. But this is where similarities end. I suspect the reason was general fear of the black magic associated with the death music *sībājā*. During my *nāykhībājā* *pirāne pūjā* at the shrine of Thāthu Nāsaḥdyaḥ I played the complete repertoire—with the exception of *sībājā*, of course. A senior Vajrācārya resident of that area happened to listen intently to my first public performance. He was surprised to hear most of these compositions for the first time in his life.

Kajilal did not use drumming syllables to teach the compositions. He remembered them as a sequence of movements and was not able to isolate patterns for didactic purposes. Instead he played an entire piece from beginning to end in full speed, expecting me to pick up whatever I could. I was taught at my home. For teaching the death music we had to rent an isolated straw-thatched field hut where nobody else could hear us at night. Whenever Kajilal played *sībājā* for me, he

40 As *sībājā* is included in my transcriptions, I repeat the warning not to play this piece out of context!

appeared to relive an entire death procession. The second pattern is fast and tricky, challenging my patience when I had missed it, having to wait for Kajilal's imagined procession to reach its destination, before I was given another chance. It took me six nights to learn the entire piece in the absence of drumming syllables.<sup>41</sup> In order to notate the compositions, I decided to apply the set of drumming syllables used by my *navabājā* teacher, Hari Govinda Ranjitkar to memorize his repertoire of *navabājā* compositions that included the similar drum *nāykhīcā*.

Kajilal Shahi was certainly the most phenomenal *nāykhī* drummer whom I ever met. But only a very limited circle of local caste members appreciated his supreme virtuosity. I believe I was his only student. During the initial years of Kathmandu University's Department of Music<sup>42</sup>, concerned parents from Kathmandu made me promise that their children would not have to learn the butchers' drum, before allowing them to enroll as students.

The playing technique of the *nāykhī* is described in chapter 6.5, with the exception of the rubbing technique producing the *kvī* sound that is not used in *navabājā*, only in *nāykhībājā* and in Sākya *gūlābājā*. Before playing, the Haimā drumhead needs to be rubbed with *men*, wild bee wax. The player rapidly moistens the tip of the middle finger of his right hand in his mouth, before rubbing it across the prepared drum hide. The tip of the middle finger points vertically against the drum hide. The tip of the straight thumb touches the soft, fleshy part of the middle finger and shoves it across whilst the middle finger remains in light but continuous contact with the prepared drum hide. This causes a wail sounding like *kvī*. In the *caltī* piece, *kvī* series can also form a hectic rhythmic pattern:

/kvī o o kvī/ o o kvī o /

/kvī o o kvī/ o o kvī o /

The drumstick remains in the right hand but is not used for this sound production. It requires a fair amount of practice, before all this is under control. The most difficult pattern to play clearly in fast tempo, is this:

/da na pā dā/ o dā pā dṛkha/

Again, separate practice is necessary to master this delicious imposition of the rapid *dṛkha* flourish. It starts with two open strokes with the drumstick, followed by a soft *pā* with the left hand:

dṛkha = danapā

Good luck!

41 Whatever the German esoterica entrepreneur Peter Hess wrote about my *nāykhī* apprenticeship in his publication *Klangschalen für Gesundheit und innere Harmonie*, is complete bogus.

42 opened in 1996

### 3.4 Sāyami *gūlābājā*

*Gūlā*, the Buddhist processional month starts on the day of new moon in July/August. As Buddha pointed out to his disciples, this time of year has always been considered beneficial for giving and accepting alms. During *gūlā*, musical activities of the Newar Buddhists in the Kathmandu Valley reach a monumental scale. Every morning, the men walk along processional routes to visit Buddhist monasteries (*bāhā* and *bāhī*), and circumambulate monuments (*cībhāḥ*, *caitya*), shrines (*degaḥ*), and other places of Buddhist worship in the Kathmandu Valley and beyond. Whilst processing, they play the so-called *gūlābājā*-music that is mostly instrumental, dominated by drums.

The first written version of the *Bṛhad-Svayaṃbhū purāṇa*<sup>43</sup> mentions Buddhist processional music groups circumambulating the Svayaṃbhū Mahācaitya every morning of *gūlā*, playing animal horns and drums. In the 1980s, *gūlābājā* groups of Sāyami oil pressers from Bhaktapur and Banepa played invocations with horns and drums<sup>44</sup> at all Buddhist monuments of Bhaktapur and major Newar Buddhist monuments including Svayaṃbhū, Namobuddha, Buṅgāmati, and other localities. In Bhaktapur there are two different genres of *gūlābājā*, that of the Sāyami oil pressers and the Śākya and Vajrācārya gold- and silversmiths. Both of these different kinds of instrumental ensembles require participation of low-caste Jugi tailor-musicians. During *gūlā* in the 1980s, three Sāyami *gūlābājā* and three Śākya *gūlābājā* groups used to carry out their daily processions in and around Bhaktapur every year. (Fig. 59)

The invocations of Sāyami *gūlābājā* music could be part of an unbroken tradition predating the fourteenth century. I presume that drums other than the older *dhā*, *pastā*, *nāykhī* and *dabadaba*<sup>45</sup> were added to *gūlābājā* during the later eighteenth or nineteenth century, in an attempt to create a Buddhist *navabājā*, following the model of the early *navadāphā* groups<sup>46</sup> founded by King Bhūpatīndra Malla (ruled 1696–1722). For special occasions like *dhalāpa* grain offerings by pious Buddhist families, Bhaktapur's and Banepa's Sāyami *gūlābājā* groups played most drums used in *navabājā*. Jugi tailor-musicians accompanied these drums with shawms and fipple flutes. With the exception of short *pūjāmvālī* and *dyahlhāygu* pieces played at the beginning of the daily processions at the shrine of Nāsaḥḍyaḥ, the longer compositions for these 'modern' drums and shawms are identical to those played during *navadāphā* performances.

An ancient oil presser of Gvaḥmādhī recalled the following story about the origin of *gūlābājā*: Once there was a continuous drought for twelve years. People were starving. They wanted to call 'Bhagavān' for help and tried to arouse him from deep meditation with a friendly fanfare of *pvaṅgā* (natural trumpets). No response. Finally the oil pressers were asked to come to the rescue with an ear-splitting blast of their goat and buffalo horns. With a start the god awoke and so did the rain clouds. Since then, this effective horn blast is re-enacted during processions to Kasti-Bhagavān<sup>47</sup>.

43 from the third quarter of the 14th century

44 for a detailed study of processional and ritual activities during *gūlā* see Wegner 2009

45 hourglass drum of the *damaru* type

46 cf. chapter 5.3

47 Śveta Matsyendranāth

Another reason for pious merit gathering during *gūlā* could be awareness of the approaching end of the world<sup>48</sup>. The last and shortest of the four world cycles, *kaliyuga* is currently running out, leading to complete dissolution of the entire creation. Our present world cycle lasts for four hundred and thirty-two thousand years, with only a few millennia to pass before the end of time. The final month of each *yuga* year coincides with *gūlā*. So this extra busy month could have been intended for Buddhists to face the inevitable not with despair or foolish excesses but with pious activities leading to a favourable rebirth in a future existence—hopefully as a human being that can again learn Buddha’s teachings and live accordingly, practicing altruism and striving for enlightenment.



Fig. 59: Banepa *gūlābājā* with animal horns, shawms and different drums, visiting Sākvalā, Bhaktapur, 1985

In 1975 Gutschow and Kölver counted 129 Sāyami oil presser households in Bhaktapur. These families live in three neighbourhoods, Sākvalā/Kvāthādaу, Inācva/Gvaḥmādhī (both located in the Upper Town), and Tekhācva/Bhārbācva/Vāḥṣa Gopāl (Lower Town), where they pursue their traditional occupation of producing and selling mustard oil. They generate additional income by distilling *aylā*, a fiery beverage required for every Newar feast. It was not uncommon for senior Bhaktapurians to start their day with an inspiring peg or two. The three Sāyami *gūlābājā* ensembles in Bhaktapur are named after the residential areas Sākvalā, Gvaḥmādhī and Vāḥṣa Gopāl.

48 Bernhard Kölver hazarded this fascinating conjecture during a discussion with me



Fig. 60: Sāymi boys with buffalo horns *ghulu*, 1987

Sāymi call their kind of *gūlābājā* ‘*nakha dhalā*’, literally ‘collective worship with horns’. The smallest boys blow buffalo horns *ghulu* (Fig. 60), and the older ones play two varieties of goat horns, *cāti* and *tītītālā*. Their fathers and uncles play nine different drums, cymbals and natural trumpets *pvaṅgā*<sup>49</sup>.

The Sāymi *gūlābājā* ensemble consists of three functionally different groups walking in a long procession of around sixty musicians:

1. Small boys with buffalo horns *ghulu* alternating with bigger boys and men with goat horns attached to bamboo tubes *cāti* and *tītītālā*, several double-headed *dhā* drums and thin-walled brass cymbals *sichyāḥ* and *bhuchyāḥ*,
2. two different double-headed drums *pachimā* or *dhalak* accompanied by *Jugi* tailor musicians with appropriate melodies on shawms, and
3. natural trumpets *pvaṅgā* playing together with the compound drum *pastā*, comprising of two drums tied together, enabling the playing of three drum heads, accompanied with *tāḥ* cymbals.

Group 1 plays invocations when they reach and circumambulate a Buddhist monument on the way. The *dhā* drums play also processional music (with and without horns).

Musicians of group 2 walk in the middle of the procession, playing different processional music with shawms and other drums (*pachimā* or *dhalak*).

Group 3 (*pastā*, *tāḥ* cymbals and a pair of *pvaṅgā* trumpets) plays only invocations when the tail of the procession reaches the respective Buddhist monument (*cībhāḥ*, *caitya*).

49 Called *pañcatāla* in the *carya* dance context and *pvaṅgā* by other castes

Like other Newar processions including several music groups that play at the same time but not together, Sāymi *gūlābājā* processions passing a *caitya* present a musical chaos. It makes sense only in relation to the localities that induce groups 1 and 3 to powerful outbursts of *dyah̄lhāygu*. Extra instruments including *dhimaycā*, *nāykhī*, *kvakhīcā*, the pair of kettledrums *nagarā*, the hourglass drum *dabadaba* and fipple flutes are taken along during pilgrimages to important Buddhist shrines in and near the Kathmandu Valley. They are also played during visits to other oil presser neighbourhoods and during ritual grain offerings in support of the *gūlābājā* group. Such *dhalāpa* grain offerings are organised by wealthy Buddhist families keen on improving their merit. A ritual specialist of the highest Buddhist Vajrācārya caste, a so-called Gubhāhju manages all ritual details for the *gūlābājā* group. During grain offerings, he performs an elaborate ritual ensuring blessings for the musical instruments and for the donor family. (Fig. 61)

During *gūlā* 1986, the Sākvalā Sāymi *gūlābājā* group received three *dhalāpa* invitations in Banepa, six in Bhaktapur and three in Thimi. A *dhalāpa* offering includes five kinds of grain in large quantity, among other things:

<i>jāki</i>	husked rice
<i>vā</i>	unhusked rice
<i>cvaḥ</i>	unhusked wheat
<i>tecvaḥ</i>	barley
<i>bāji</i>	toasted beaten rice
<i>chucū</i>	wheat flour
<i>kaygu</i>	dried peas
<i>myā</i>	red lentils
<i>lāvjā</i>	maize
<i>musyā</i>	fried soya beans
<i>mārikasi bājā</i>	pot with flat bread
<i>gvapacā</i>	pot with money
<i>svāmā</i>	flower garlands
<i>janakvakhā</i>	cotton threads



Fig. 61: Ritual specialist Gubhāhju Gyān Ratna Vajrācārya playing a handbell with *vajra* handle during a Sāymi *gūlābājā* procession 1985

### 3 Town Rituals and Processional Music

<i>ita</i>	wicks
<i>dupāy</i>	incense powder in curled paper rolls
<i>dhū</i>	incense sticks
<i>tāyē</i>	fried unhusked rice
<i>abīr</i>	red powder
<i>svā</i>	flowers
<i>phalphul</i>	fruit
<i>cikā</i>	mustard oil
<i>jāki</i>	husked rice for <i>pūjā</i>
<i>duru</i>	milk
<i>ghyaḥ</i>	clarified butter
<i>kasti</i>	honey
<i>dhau</i>	yoghurt
<i>dhaupatu</i>	tiny brass or clay cup for yoghurt offering
<i>sukunda</i>	ritual oil lamp

Impressive mounds of five different grains are displayed in the donor's house when the group arrives. The musicians play a series of invocations. These *dyahllhāygu* are the same as those played before the daily start of the procession at the shrine of Nāsaḥdyah. The Gubhāḥju invokes Nāsaḥdyah, the five Buddhas Vairocaṇa, Akśobya, Ratnasambhāva, Amṛtāmbhāva, Amoghasiddhi, the four Tārās Locanī, Māmakī, Paṇḍurā, Aryā, and several emanations of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, before blessing the musicians, the musical instruments, and the songbook of unaccompanied hymns (*tutaḥ*). When offerings are carried out, the Gubhāḥju asks for the auspicious *pūjāmvālī* piece to be played by *nāykhī* and shawms. He places orange powder marks (*sinā tikegu*) on every musical instrument, adds flowers, cotton threads (*janakhvakhā*) and sprinkles unhusked rice grain, before placing marks of wet orange *sinā* and red *abīr* paste on the musicians' foreheads. The musicians receive a vegetarian meal (*samay*).

An elaborate programme of music follows, starting with the *pastāḥ* drum playing the pieces *nhyāḥ*, *khīpvu* and *dhādiganā* and the *dhā* drums playing *cavā* with shawm accompaniment. It concludes with powerful horn incantations of the *mantra* 'Ārya Tārā Tārā—Buddha Dharma Saṅgha' played in unison with the drums. After this, each drum plays one or two long pieces with shawm accompaniment. *Dhimaycā* plays *caltī*. *Nāykhī* plays *caltī*. *Dhalak* plays *dehrā* and *tatalī*. *Pachimā* plays *partāl*. *Dabadaba* plays a piece without name<sup>50</sup> with flute accompaniment. *Kvakhīcā* plays *caltī*. *Nagarā* plays *dehrā* and *brahmatāl*. *Dhalak* or *dhā* conclude with *cavā*, the piece that is most auspicious and said to have healing properties. With the exception of the *dabadaba* repertoire, all these compositions are also part of the auspicious *navabājā* repertoire for nine drums.

The Sākvalā oilpressers learnt these pieces from the *navabājā* masterdrummer of the Dattatreya *navadāphā* group. Unlike the *navadāphā* groups who used to perform every month, the oil presser groups perform only during *gūlā* and need to refresh their memory of the appropriate drumming compositions. In 1988 Surya Shankar Manandhar, the most prominent drummer of the Sākvalā

50 This composition has been forgotten





Fig. 62: Buddhalal Manandhar playing *dhimaycā*, *pachimā*, *dhalak* and *nagarā* with shawm accompaniment (l. to r.: Marsya Dai, Satya Nārāyaṇa, ?) during a visit of his Vāṁśa Gopāl *gūlābājā* to Gvaḥmādhī, 1985

Sāyṁi *gūlābājā* group could not remember the longest *dhā* composition *cavā*. He had to refer to the solo drummer of Dattātreyā *navadāphā* to restore the composition.

After playing a final round of *dyahllhaygu* invocations, the oil pressers carry the offerings to their *dhalāchē*. The grain is sold, the money spent on drinks and *pūjā* expenses. (Fig. 62)

During daily *gūlābājā* processions, Sāyṁi males living in Sakvalā gather at six a.m. at the near-by shrine of Thāthu Nāsaḥḍyaḥ. One of the elders places offerings of grain and flowers at the shrine where they are instantly consumed by hungry chickens and dogs. A vermilion mark is applied to every participant's forehead. While musicians gather, senior oil pressers sing Buddhist



Fig. 63: Senior Sāyṁi oil pressers singing *tutaḥ* hymns at the shrine of Thāthu Nāsaḥḍyaḥ during *gūlā* 1985



Fig. 64: Nhuchhe Bhakta Manandhar of *Sākvalā* playing the *nāykhī* piece *pūjāmvālī* with accompaniment by cymbals and three Jugi *Gujarātī mvālī* players (l. to r.: Chandranāth Darśandhāri, Marsya Dai, Prithvi Man) at Thāthu Nāsaḥḍyaḥ, before the daily *gūlābājā* procession with horns and drums started. 1985

*tutaḥ* hymns<sup>51</sup> from a hand-written songbook containing the song texts (Fig. 63). A *nāykhī* drummer asks arriving Jugi tailor-musicians to accompany him with shawms, to lend dignity to the ongoing *pūjā*. Every morning they play the piece *pūjāmvālī*. (Fig. 64)

When everyone has arrived and the ritual offerings and prayer for the music god completed, Nāsaḥḍyaḥ receives a comprehensive series of musical offerings. The player of the thick-walled, small bronze cymbals *tāḥ* ring out the first piercing notes by striking these together, leaving just enough time after each stroke for everyone to raise their right hand three times to their forehead, in a triple salute to the music god. Three *dyaḥllhāygu* for *pastā* drum and natural trumpets follow, alternating with three powerful *dyaḥllhāygu* for *dhā* and horns—resembling the wake-up call for Kasti-Bhagvān to put an end to the draught mentioned in the story above. It is quite effective of waking up neighbours who still happen to sleep at six a.m. (Figs. 65–67)

After this, the drums *nāykhī*, *dhimaycā*, *dhalak*, *pachimā*, *kvakhīcā* and *dabadaba* each play one short *dyaḥllhāygu* for Nāsaḥḍyaḥ, with the accompaniment of various cymbals. As soon as all invocations for the music god are completed, the procession starts to move, first circumambulating

51 Sanskrit: *stotra*

the Nasaḥḍyaḥ shrine with a piece called *dyaḥ cākā hulegu*, ‘circumambulating the god’. They proceed with processional drum patterns to the monastery where the Dīpaṅkara Buddha of Kvāthāḍau resides and further via Kvāthāḍau, Gaḥchē, Sujamāḍhi and Tacapāḥ to the destination of the procession, the *dhalāchē* house in Sakvalā (no. 17 on map 20). The *dhalāchē* serves as



Fig. 65: Sākvalā oil pressers play *dyaḥllhāygu* with *dhā* drums and alternating animal horns at the shrine of Thāthu Nāsaḥḍyaḥ. 1986

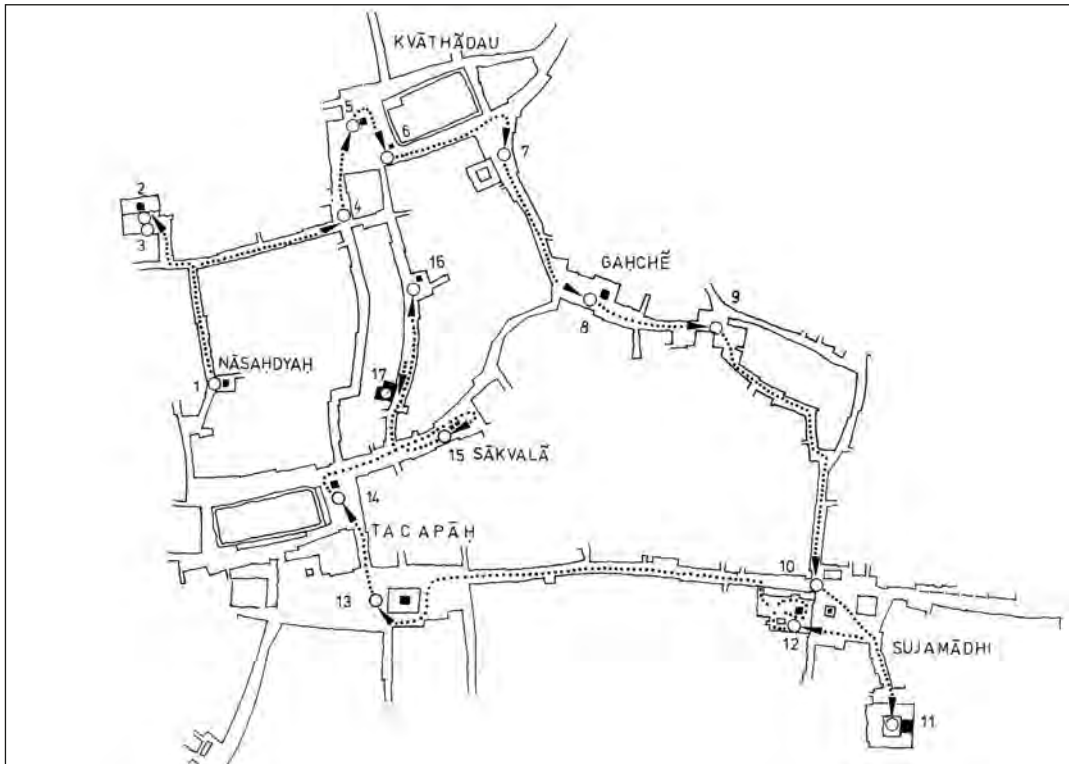


Fig. 66: *Dyaḥllhāygu* played by the compound drum *pastāḥ*, *pvaṅgā* trumpets and *tāḥ* cymbals. 1985

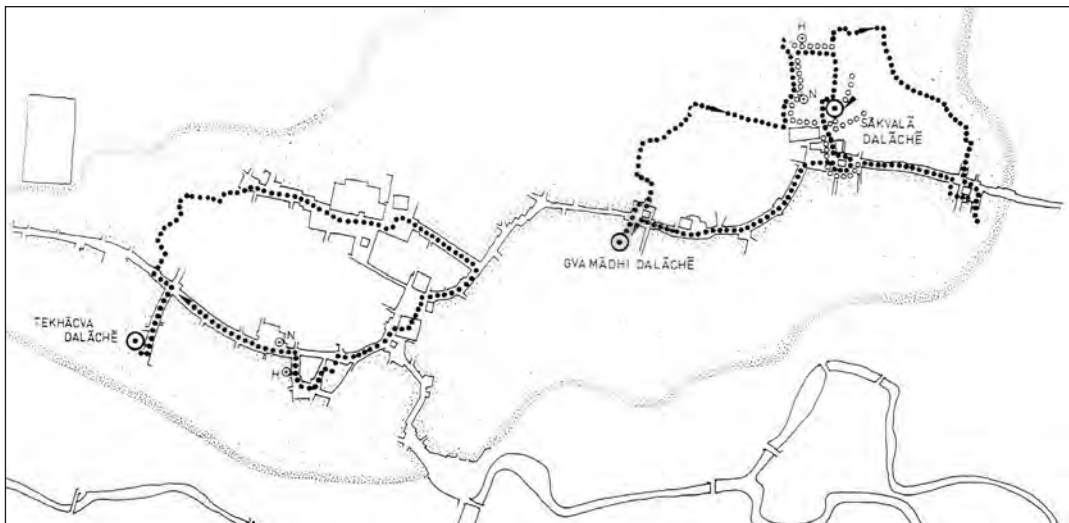


Fig. 67: Sākvalā oil pressers circumambulate Thathu Nāsaḥḍyaḥ with *cāṭi* goat horns. August 1987

### 3 Town Rituals and Processional Music



Map 20: Daily morning procession of Sākvalā oil pressers, with numbered musical offerings for Nāsaḥdyah (1), Buddhist monuments and for a few Hindu gods on the way. The procession ends in the *dhalāchē* house (16). (map courtesy of Niels Gutschow)



Map 21: Daily processions of the three Sāymi *gūlābājā* groups of Tekhācva, Gvaḥmādhi and Sākvalā, ending in their respective *dhalāchē* houses (N = Nāsaḥdyah, H = Haimādyah, circle with dot = *dhalāchē*; map courtesy of Niels Gutschow)



Fig. 68: Säyṁi gūḷabājā of Sākvalā (over sixty musicians) entering the courtyard in front of the Dīpākara Buddha in Kvāthādaṁ, 1986

a temporary place for ritual gatherings during *gūḷā*. Owing to the usual quarrel among Newar brothers demanding partition of their inherited home into equally small slices with separate staircases, there are now few houses with large enough rooms for carrying out the rituals.

As the morning air resounds with powerful fanfares reflected by the brick walls, the oil pressers invoke all the Buddhas in and near their residential area, Sākvalā, by means of playing *dyaḥlhāygu*. In the course of the processional month, the *dhalāchē* becomes the temporary centre



Fig. 69: Cāti goat horns playing *dyaḥlhāygu* for the Dīpākara Buddha in Kvāthādaṁ, 1986.



Fig. 70: At the tail end of the procession, the compound drum *pastāḥ* and *pvaṅgā* trumpets play *dyahḥhāygu*— here in the courtyard in front of the Dīpākara Buddha in Kvāthādaḥ, 1985.

of a monumental protective Buddhist *maṇḍala*—actualised by the total sum of invocations played during *gūlābājā* processions. (Figs. 68–70)

Several among the older *dhā* and *pastā* compositions played during procession have syllables written above my drum notation<sup>52</sup>, like for example:

/ TI DU / TI DU / TI - / DU - /

These syllables are used by oilpressers to imitate the sounds of the different animal horns that are played in a call and response manner.

TI: high sounding *cāti* and *tītītālā* goat horns with bamboo mouthpieces

DU: *ghulu* low sounding buffalo horns in response

In a similar manner these horns are capable of playing the Buddhist invocation of Ārya Tārā<sup>53</sup> and the Triratna<sup>54</sup>:

/ ĀRYA / TĀRĀ / TĀ - / RĀ - / BUDDHA / DHARMA / SAṄ - / GHA - /

ĀRYA TĀRĀ TĀRĀ: goat horns calling in unison

BUDDHA DHARMA SAṄGHA: buffalo horns responding in unison

horn ensemble sounding:

/ TI TI / TI TI / TI - / TI - / DUDU / DUDU / DU - / DU - /

52 cf. chapter 11.13

53 female Buddha (in Vajrayāna Buddhism) or Bodhisattva (in Mahāyāna Buddhism) of compassion

54 Triratna: The three jewels *Buddha*, *dharma* and *saṅgha* are the three aspects of refuge in Buddhism, representing the combined spiritual essence of all enlightened beings.

Nobody can possibly escape hearing this but the *mantra* is perceived only by the initiated. Having reached the *dhalāchē* house, the musicians announce their arrival, playing *dhalāchē sidhaykegu dyaḥlhāygu* ('invocation for arrival at the *dhalāchē*'), to be followed by the piece *svanā thā vāne-bale* ('climbing the stairs'). The procession ends on the first floor of the building with *dyaḥlhāygu* in front of a growing mound of thousands of tiny clay *caitya*-s.

A *dhalāchē* house must have on the ground floor a small room (*nyāchī kvathā*) for storing holy water, another room (*cā kvatāḥ*) for keeping black clay, and on the first floor a very large room for gatherings. This large room has a secluded area with a temporary shrine (*dyaḥkuthi*), guarded and kept in a state of purity by six *dhyaḥbāri* attendants. These young oil presser men fast during the month of *gūlā*, eating only one vegetarian meal per day<sup>55</sup> after finishing the ritual duties, abstain from sex and have their heads shaved. If they are defiled by touching a dog or in any other way, they have to bathe and shave again. People place donations of rice grains for the attendants into the silver crown *kikāpā* of Lokeśvar<sup>56</sup> at Thāpālāchē. (Fig. 71)



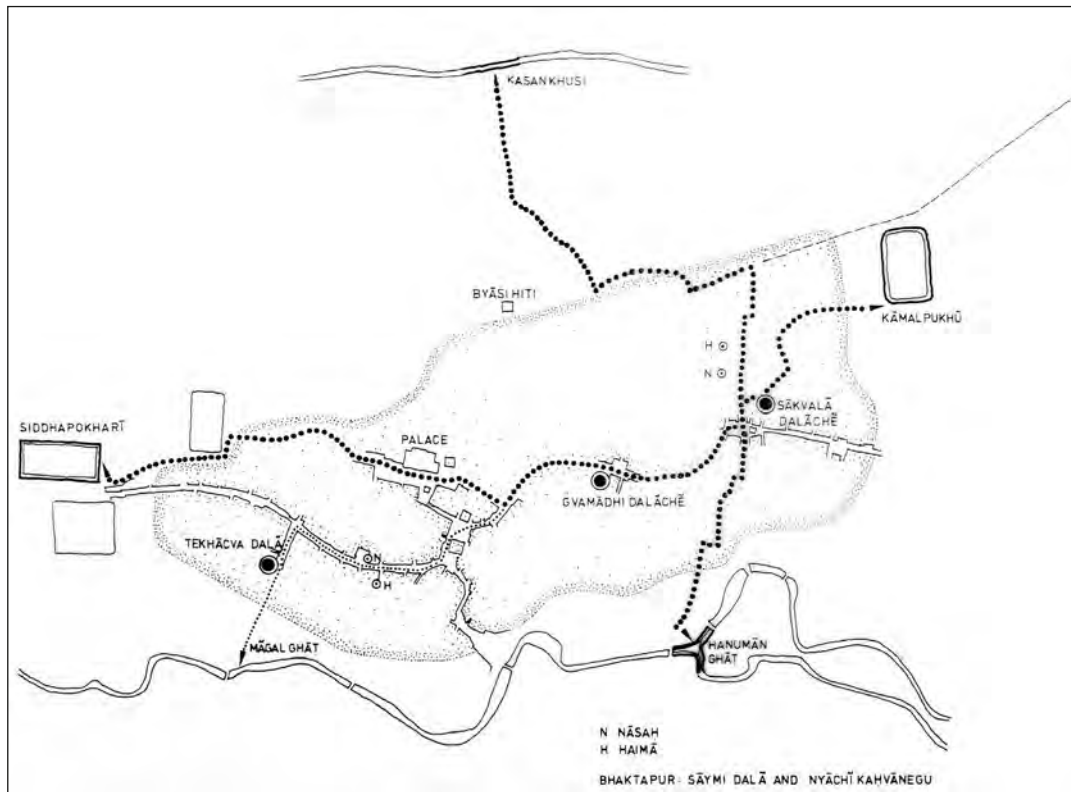
Fig. 71: *Dhyaḥbāri* in attendance of the *dyaḥkuthi* containing the growing hill of black votive clay *caitya*-s, 1985

The *dyaḥkuthi* shrine contains the daily growing hill of small *caityas* (in Newari: *cibhā*), moulded of black clay by oil presser women under the supervision of a Vajrācārya priest (Gubhāḥju). Under his expert guidance the women produce a total of one hundred and twenty-five thousand votive *caityas*, to be submerged at the confluence of two rivers (*triveṇi*) at Hanumān Ghāt at the end of *gūlā*. At this confluence there resides a mighty Nāgarājā, snake guardian of all springs and rivers. He is present in the main room of the *dhalāchē* as a paper effigy (*nāgva*), prepared by a member of the Cītrakār painters' caste, looking like many intertwined snakes with a single split tongue

55 Even rice and nine beans soup *kvāti* are not taken up to fullmoon, only *mari* wheat bread and milk. After *sāpāru* sweet *khīr* milk rice may be eaten without upsetting the restrictions.

56 Newari for Avalokiteśvara, Bodhisattva of compassion

### 3 Town Rituals and Processional Music



Map 22: Collecting holy water from five sacred sites (map courtesy of Niels Gutschow)

in the centre. The *nāgva*'s presence ensures a peaceful atmosphere in the house where so many people gather during the month of *gūlā*.

Before the auspicious *caitya* production can start at the *dhalāchē*, ritual purification and collection of water and clay at prescribed localities needs to be accomplished. Having shaved their heads during the previous day *aīsi* (the day before the new moon), the *dhyahbārī* attendants collect holy water (*nyāchī kah vānegu*) from five places on the periphery of Bhaktapur, Maṅgal Tirtha, Siddha Pvukhu, Hanumān Ghāt, Kamal Pvukhu and Kāsan Khusi.<sup>57</sup> (Map 22)

The five huge water pots are arranged in the centre of a meticulously cleaned small storage room (*nyāchī kvatāḥ*), to resemble the cardinal points and respective Buddhist sites of pilgrimage in and beyond the Kathmandu Valley.

- East: Kamal Pvukhu (Vajrajogini)
- South: Hanuman Ghāt (Namobuddha)
- West: Siddha Pvukhu (Svayambhū)
- North: Kāsan Khusi, (Khaḍgajogini)
- Centre: Maṅgal Ghāt

57 Only the oil pressers from Sākvalā leave out Maṅgal Tirtha.



The *Sākvalā* oil pressers who leave out Maṅgal Ghāt, place a second pot with water from Kamal Pvukhu in the centre of this *maṅḍala*

As soon as the five pots containing holy water are arranged in line with the cardinal points of the Buddhist sites, the Gubhāhju performs an elaborate *pūjā* next to the pots. This is repeated every morning. The two girls assembling the offerings need to be substituted during their monthly menstrual cycle. For the initial *pūjā*, eight trays with offerings are arranged in a line. On the following days, clay cups (*kisali*) with uncooked rice and betelnuts take the place of the *pūjā* trays. A number of ritual items are placed in front of the eight trays/cups, a ritual mirror (*jvalā nhāykā*), red powder (*tikka*), a water-filled pot (*kalas*) with two hexagrammes sprinkled with rice flour on the floor next to it, cones of overboiled rice (*gvajā*), orange powder (*sinamu*) and holy soot. Five additional items are placed on the right side: a jug with rice liquor (*aylā*), a ritual wick lamp (*sukundā*) containing mustard oil, three gods represented by three *kisali*—each resting on a *maṅḍala* sprinkled with rice flour on the purified floor. Three of eight *pūjā* plates are carried to the shrines of the local Gaṇeśa, Nāsaḥḍyaḥ and Dīpaṅkara Buddha. The remaining five *pūjā* plates are carried to the roof terrace where the priest throws offerings in the direction of the following gods whose shrines are several miles away, Nīl Barāhi, Namobuddha, Vajrajogini, Svayaṃbhū and Karuṇāmaya of Buṅgamati. As the processional month proceeds, all these gods and holy places are circumambulated and musical invocations played by the *gūlābājā* group.

Those entering either the water-storage room (*nyāchī kvatāḥ*) or the clay room (*cā kvatāḥ*) must purify themselves by sprinkling a liquid called *pañcagapya* on their heads. This purifying concoction combines five cow products: urine (*sācva*), dung (*sau*), milk (*duru*), butter (*ghela*) and yoghurt (*dhau*). It is kept in a clay pot from where it can be taken out with the help of a tuft made of cotton strips (*gutah*) conveniently attached to a stick handle for those in need of a refreshing sprinkle.

In the middle of the moonless night preceding *gūlā*, the manager of the *dhalāchē* and the attendants walk to the site where black clay is collected. The *Sākvalā* oil pressers go to a place near Mulādhvakhā, the Tekhācva group to Khāpi. They offer *kisali* clay cups containing a betelnut on top of a mound of uncooked rice, before demarcating a border around the digging site with four sticks (*tī*) connected with a sacred thread (*pāsukā*). After collecting the black clay, they carry it to the *dhalāchē* where it is put into the clay room (*cā kvatāḥ*) on the ground floor. Before they arrive, the Buddhist priest prepares a proper base for the clay, by arranging a lotus-shaped *maṅḍala* with eight golden (*lupale*) or silver (*vahapale*) petals. A mat (*pulu*) made of bamboo is placed on top of the *maṅḍalā*. The collected basket loads of black clay are put on top of this mat. The attendants knead the clay into an even consistency and the priest assembles twenty-one little mounds of clay on his *pūjā* tray.

During morning hours, a pleasant atmosphere of pious business prevails. Enveloped by fumes of aromatic shrubs and incense and by the sounds of the chanting and bell tinkling of the Gubhāhju priest, the oil presser women engage themselves in *caitya* mass production. The procedure is simple but requires total concentration. The women use *caitya*-shaped brass moulds (*dyahpalā*), which are approximately 2,5 cm high. Following the priest's instructions, they roll the clay between thumb and index fingers, taking care not to touch it with their little finger or with their fingernails. They oil the clay roll, stuff it into the mould and insert a grain of uncooked rice into the clay, giving it



Fig. 72: A clay *caitya* is pulled out from a brass mould with the help of a piece of clay stuck to its base.

life. The emerging clay *caitya* is carefully placed on a tray, decorated with flowers and later on transported to the guarded *dyaḥkuti* shrine kept next to the eastern wall of the room. During this month, the women are not supposed to eat rice—with the exception of sweet *khīr* rice pudding on *sāpāru* day. (Fig. 72)

The Gubhāḥju chants prayers in Sanskrit followed by Newari instructions for preparing clay *caitya*-s (*dyaḥpalā thāyagu*):

<i>Om basudhye svāhā.</i>	
<i>Cāḥ likah!</i>	Take out the clay!
<i>Om vajra bhavāye svāhā.</i>	
<i>Cāḥ gyalā gyalā yāy!</i>	Roll the clay!
<i>Om araje viraje svāhā.</i>	
<i>Cāḥ cikane ṭhūne!</i>	Oil the clay!
<i>Om vajra dhātu garbhe svāhā.</i>	
<i>Cāḥ thāsāsa duthane!</i>	Put it into the mould!
<i>Om vajra mudga rāḥ mākvataye mākvataye humphaṭ.</i>	
<i>Cāḥ thāsāsa kvatele!</i>	Press it tightly!
<i>Om vajra kāṣṭaḥ chedaye chedaye humphaṭ.</i>	
<i>Cāḥ dhyene!</i>	Cut off extra clay!
<i>Om dharma dhātu garbhye svāhā.</i>	
<i>Cāḥ duthane!</i>	Insert a grain of rice!
<i>Om dharma ratne svāhā.</i>	
<i>Thāsā pikāye!</i>	Take it out of the mould!
<i>Om supratīṣṭhita vajra āsane svāhā.</i>	
<i>Āsane taye!</i>	Put it on the tray!

When the tray in front of a woman is filled with one hundred eight clay *caityas*, she decorates them with flowers and red powder and burns incense, before asking one of the *dyaḥpalā* attendants to carry the tray to the temporary shrine (*dyaḥkuti*). There he empties the tray and returns it to her. The growing mound of votive clay *caityas* in the *dyaḥkuti* shrine receives daily offerings of red powder and—on the arrival of the *gūlābājā* procession—musical offerings. Sākya and Vajrācārya groups may perform their *gūlā* processions without organizing elaborate *caitya* productions at home, but Sāymi oil presser groups have always combined men’s musical processions with women’s *caitya* production.

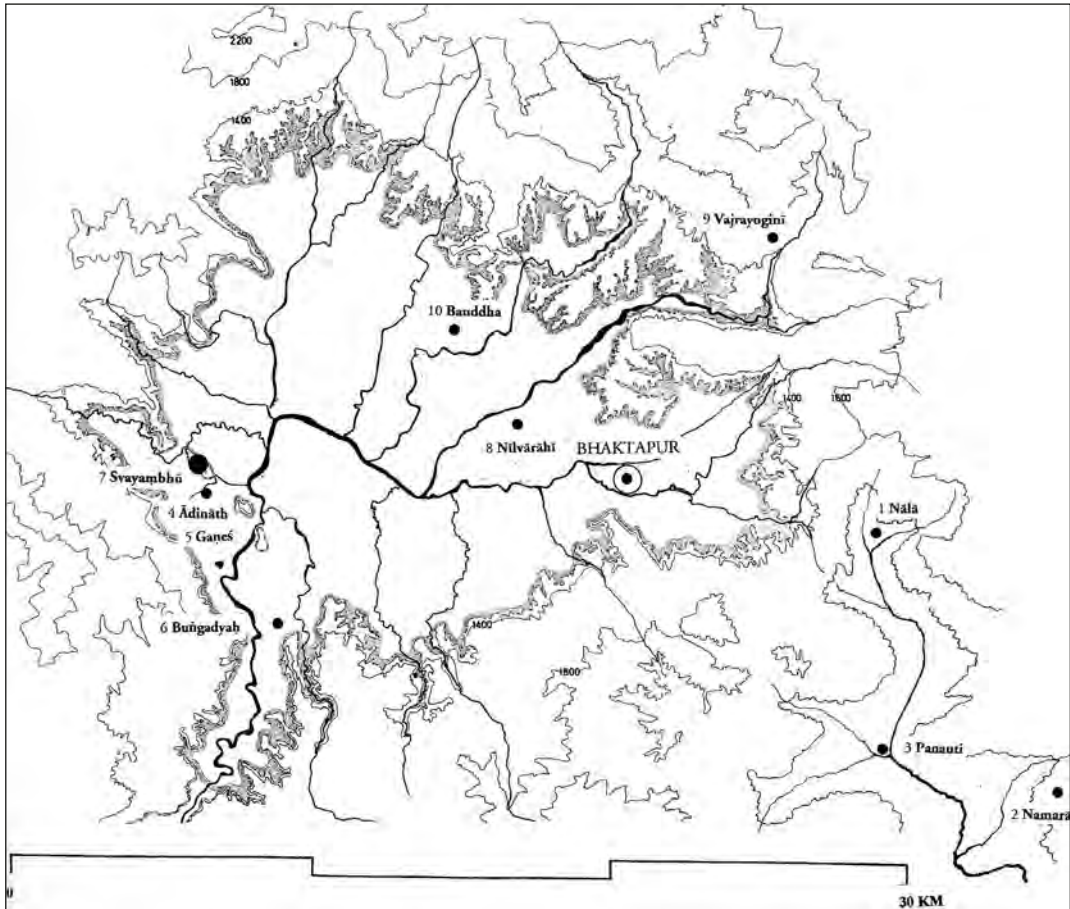
Those concerned with ritual activities in the *dhalāchē*—the sponsor of the house, the *dyaḥbārī* attendants and the women producing miniature clay *caityas*—enjoy a special bonus. In the case of death happening in their families during *gūlā*, they are exempt from after-death purification rituals. Otherwise, oil pressers have to perform *nhenumā*, ritual rice offering on the seventh day after death. They keep cooked rice in front of their houses, presuming that departed souls must have a strong attachment to home-cooked food. Jugī tailor-musicians are supposed to collect these meals and lure away the ghosts, absorbing possible evil influences like a sponge. The other purification ritual on the tenth day includes bathing and shaving at one of the ritual bathing *ghāts* outside Bhaktapur. Both these purification rituals become obsolete when the concerned person is already purified by ritual activities in the *dhalāchē*. (Fig. 73)



Fig. 73: Oil presser women preparing votive clay *caityas* in the *dhalāchē*, 1985

On Wednesdays and Saturdays the *gūlābājā* groups expand their processions to include the shrines of the eight mother goddesses at the periphery of Bhaktapur and Sūrya Vināyak Gaṇeś at Ināre. Long-distance pilgrimages to some important *caityas* and *mahācaityas* in the Kathmandu Valley and beyond were carried out walking (Map 23). Nowadays the groups rent vehicles. These destinations include—usually in this succession:

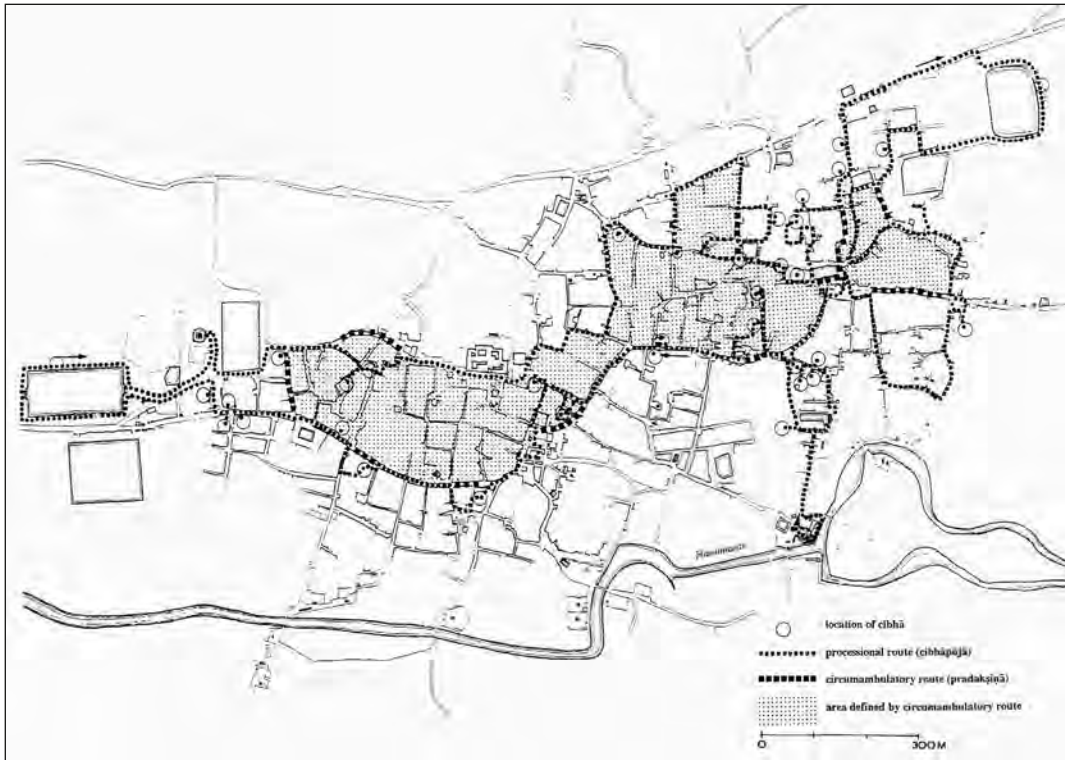
### 3 Town Rituals and Processional Music



Map 23: Buddhist pilgrimage destinations in and beyond the Kathmandu Valley (map courtesy of Niels Gutschow)

1. Nālā (Karṇamāyī/Lokeśvar) and Banepā (1 *dhalāpā* invitation)
2. Namobuddha/Namarā Bhagvān
3. Panauti (2 *bāhās*, *caitya*)
4. Chobhar (Ādināth Lokeśvar)
5. Chobhar Gaṇeśa
6. Buṅgamati (Buṅgadyah)
7. Svayambhū
8. Nīlvārāhī and Thimi, (3 *dhalāpā* invitations)
9. Vajrayoginī and Saṅkhu (1 *dhalāpā* invitation)
10. Bauddha (rarely observed)

The second last day of the processional month is reserved for *cibhāḥ pūjā*. The Sāymi and Śākya *gūlābājā* groups followed by the Sāymi and Śākya women visit every single *caitya* in Bhaktapur,



Map 24: *Cibhā pūjā* procession visiting every single *caitya* in town (in Gutschow 1982, p. 77)

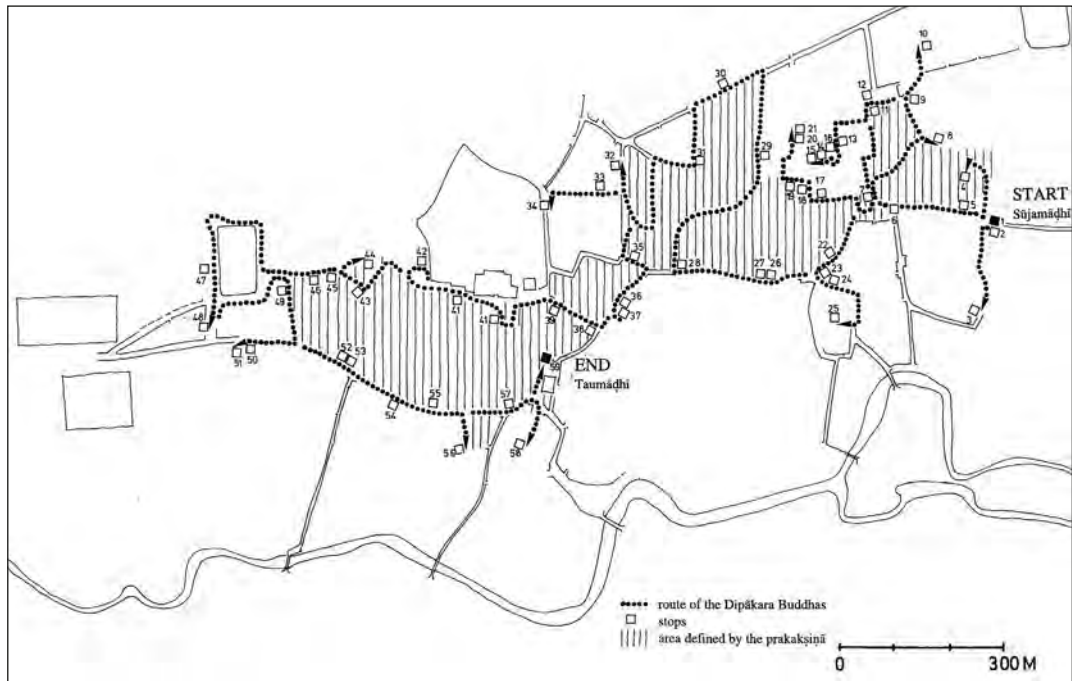
the men offering *dyahllhāygu*, the women placing small clay cups with oil and burning wicks and rice grain. From their windows, local people sprinkle rice grain on the procession. In a stupendous final effort in offering and receiving symbolic alms, this procession completes the actualising of the Buddhist *maṇḍala* of Bhaktapur. (Map 24)

The complete Buddhist *maṇḍala* begins with the innermost layer, its centre established by the Buddhist priest and the four pots with water collected from four sacred sites and arranged in four cardinal directions in the water storage room *nyāchī kvatāḥ* in the *dhalāchē*. The next layer is established with the help of *gūlābājā* during daily morning processions in the area near the *dhalāchē*<sup>58</sup>. Other layers include all *caityas* in Bhaktapur, the shrines of the Aṣṭamātrka at the periphery of the town, Sūrya Vināyak Gaṇeś and ten destinations in the Kathmandu Valley and further east. All this is achieved with the help of musical *dyahllhāygu* invocations played at the respective localities in the course of one month, *gūlā*.

On the following day of *pañcadān carhe*, the five Dīpākarā Buddhas leave their monasteries to meet at Sujamādhi where they receive offerings from a huge crowd of Hindu worshippers who perceive them as the five Pāṇḍava brothers from the Mahābhārata epic. The Dīpākarā Buddha of Kvāthādaṃ leads the other four Buddhas. As explained in chapter 3.3, the leading Buddha's

58 cf. map 20

### 3 Town Rituals and Processional Music



Map 25: Processional route of the five Dīpaṅkāra Buddhas on *pañcadān carhe*. Numbered boxes indicate where the five Buddhas rest to receive worship and offerings. (in Gutschow 1982, p. 75)

drooping head supports the Hindu interpretation, as it appears to express Yudhiṣṭhira's shame of his disastrous gambling vice. The five Buddhas are announced by *nāykhībājā* playing the piece *bāre khī*<sup>59</sup>. The Buddhas visit fifty-eight more localities where they stop to receive offerings from local people. Before sunset they are arranged on a stone platform in Taumādhi square. All Śākya and Sāymi *gūlābājā* groups arrive to play simultaneously (but not together), a grand, ear-splitting finale, before escorting the Buddhas to their respective residences. (Map 25)

On the last day of *gūlā*<sup>60</sup>, the clay *caityas* produced by the Sāymi women receive further blessings by way of an elaborate ritual carried out by the Gubhāḥju. After this, the *caityas* are ready for submersion at the confluence of two rivers into the Hanumānte. This sacred cremation site is called Hanumān ghāt (in Newari: Khvāre), the most auspicious place for Bhaktapurians to leave this world of suffering and misery. On this final day, the one hundred and twenty-five thousand clay *caityas* are arranged in baskets with a few spectacular big ones on a palanquin—and carried to Hanumān ghāt. In front of the procession a helper carries a long bamboo pole with the *nāgva* effigy of Nāgarājā the snake guardian tied on to it. *Dyaḥbāri* attendants carry the remaining holy water. The *gūlābājā* ensemble follows, also the priest and the women with the *pūjā* leftovers. (Fig. 74)

At the *ghāt* the men undress and enter the water. The bamboo with the effigy is placed at the exact point where Nāgarājā resides at this confluence. The palanquin is put down on the stone

59 see photo on p. 73

60 *Sāymi*: new moon, *Vajrācārya* and *Śākya*: the day after



Fig. 74: 125.000 *caitya*-s on the move, 1986



Fig. 75: Submersion of 125,000 clay *caityas* at Hanumān ghāt, 1985

steps leading into the river. The musicians play a final set of invocations while the bathers splash water on the big *caityas* in the palanquin and empty all the baskets into the river, before taking a purifying dive. Merit achieved! (Figs. 75, 76)

When everything is over, the procession returns to Sākvalā with the music of the *pachimā* drum with shawm accompaniment. No horns are played. This is the end of *gūlā* activities.

For the past twenty-five years, the three Sāymi *gūlābājā* groups of Bhaktapur found it impossible to finance annual apprenticeships with the prescribed Nāsaḥ *pūjās*, *dhalāchē* rituals and processions. In several years not a single Sāymi group played, before one or another group made the effort again. If the annual performance cycle is further discontinued, the orally transmitted repertoire will be forgotten. To prevent that, all Sāymi *gūlābājā* compositions are included in chapter 11.13 of this publication—with the exception of the lost *dabadaba* pieces. Since 1986 attempts were made in Sākvalā to restore some of those pieces. (Fig. 77)

The drum repertoire of Sāymi *gūlābājā* derived from various sources and different strata of the musical history of the Kathmandu Valley. The combination of animal horns and *dhā* drums for playing invocations may go back to the early practice of Buddhist processional music mentioned in the *Brhad-Svayambhū purāṇa*. The combination of the compound drum *pastā* and *pvaṅgā* trumpets for playing invocations suggests a Buddhist Vajrācārya influence with their similar compound drum *pañcatāla* played in combination with pairs of *pāytā* natural trumpets. Oilpressers play the *dhā* drum in a way similar to the Śākya *gūlābājā* practice where the right hand plays the higher sounding Nāsaḥ drumhead and the left hand holds the drumstick. This is the reverse way of playing *dhā* in the Hindu context of *dhābājā*, *navabājā* and accompaniment of masked





*Fig. 76: Submersion of the palanquin with the bigger clay caitya-s at Hanumān Ghāt, 1986*



Fig. 77: Dabadaba player, Tāpālāchē 1985

dances. If we examine the non-Buddhist influences, the use of *navabājā* drums in combination with shawms and fipple flutes must have been a much later addition to the Sāymi *gūlābājā* repertoire with those advanced compositions directly derived from *navabājā* groups playing at the most important Hindu temples since the early eighteenth century. Some simply structured invocations and processional patterns played by *dhā* and *pastā* could hint at a certain influence of invocations played by Śākya *gūlābājā*. All these influences result in a typical Newar stylistic hotchpotch that becomes even more colourful when we consider that oilpressers sing *dāphā* songs with Hindu song texts. They also sing Buddhist *tutaḥ* hymns and play Newar folk melodies with their *bāsuri* flute ensembles. During evenings of the month of Māgha, the head of the family may read the *Svasthānī Vrata Kathā*<sup>61</sup> to his family. Consequently, when you ask a Mānandhar (Sāymi) if he considers himself a Hindu or a Buddhist, the answer will be a big and contented

“YES!”

61 an episode of *Skanda Purāṇa*

### 3.5 Śākya and Vajrācārya *gūlābājā*

Vajrācārya and Śākya are artisans, Buddhist monks and householders. Some Vajrācārya work as tantric Buddhist priests (Gubhāhju) and perform certain rituals for other castes. In a strict Buddhist sense, they belong outside the caste hierarchy, 'although in fact, in their life as householders, they are inevitably concerned with their caste status.'<sup>62</sup> Vajrācārya and Śākya intermarry. Most Vajrācārya work as gold- and silversmiths, artisans and shopkeepers and in this respect are not distinguishable from the Śākya who cannot be family priests. Their disposition is that of an old élite now dominated by others, but still knowing exactly what they are worth. The expensive and elaborate *gūlā* processions and rituals demand considerable physical and financial effort. They are a demonstration of an ancient minority's identity and wealth<sup>63</sup>. Gutschow and Kölver<sup>64</sup> counted two hundred and nine Buddhist priests and gold- and silversmith households in Bhaktapur. (Map 26)



Map 26: Śākya and Vajrācārya households in Bhaktapur (map courtesy of Niels Gutschow)

Bhaktapur's Śākya and Vajrācārya organise three *gūlābājā* groups in the following localities: Inācva, Yātāchē (Upper Town) and Tekhācva/Vaṃsa Gopāl (Lower Town). The three ensembles use similar instruments and play a similar set of compositions that are taught to the youngest

62 Gellner 1992, p.59

63 Gutschow and Kölver (1975)

64 1975

### 3 Town Rituals and Processional Music

group members during the months before *gūlā*. The *pirāne pūjā* at the completion of the drumming apprenticeship is performed on the day of *aūsi* (new moon), just before *gūlā* starts. (Fig. 78)

During *gūlābājā* processions, Śākya and Vajrācārya play only two kinds of two-headed drums, *dhā* and *nāykhī*<sup>65</sup>. When played in this context, these drums are decorated with golden Chinese ‘long life’ ideogrammes on a bright red background, pointing to the ancient trade link of the



Fig. 78: At the beginning of *gūlā* Śākya and Vajrācārya goldsmiths arrange offerings to the music god on their *gūlābājā* instruments at the shrine of Inācva Nāsaḥdyaḥ during August 1986 (right: my personal *dhā* drum)

Śākya artisans of Bhaktapur with Lhasa<sup>66</sup>. There are several *dhā* drums and at least one *nāykhī*. The louder *dhā* group includes two different pairs of cymbals called *bhuchyāḥ* and *taḥ*. The *nāykhī* drum is accompanied with a pair of light brass cymbals called *sichyāḥ*. *Dhā* and *nāykhī* do not play similar musical patterns simultaneously but, at specific localities, they play concurrently. One drum group plays a long composition with processional patterns and at the same time the other drum group addresses gods on the route by playing a *dyāḥlhāygu* invocation. In this way both

65 lit. butchers' drum

66 Before the Chinese PLA occupied Lhasa in 1951, the local Newar expatriate community was large enough to celebrate their annual *sāpāru* (*gāi jātrā*) procession of cow effigies along the Barkhor route.

drumming activities occur at the same time and place but in terms of musical patterns, tempo and instrumentation they are totally apart. Nobody seems to mind. The temporary musical chaos makes sense because of the locality—a Buddhist monument on the way. Newari language does not have a word for ‘disturb’. This appears to be an alien concept to people who accept that life unfolds like a song with many different voices. All sounds are welcome sounds, because they are there.



*Fig. 79: Punhī Rāj Śākya playing my red dhā drum with golden Chinese ‘long life’ decoration pointing at the special relationship of Śākya artisans with Lhasa, August 1986*

Whenever *dhā* is played in the context of *gūlābājā*, the drummer holds the drumstick in the left hand to play the Haimā hide<sup>67</sup>. The Nāsaḥ hide is played with the right hand using several fingers to produce the *dr* and *r* drum rolls. This is exactly the reverse of the way *dhā* drums are played in Hindu contexts like *navabājā*, accompaniment of masked dances and processions. Is the reason just to make a Buddhist difference from Hindu habit? Or does this clumsy use of finger technique point at something that made musical sense long ago and was half forgotten? I could not find a convincing answer. The Hindu way of holding the drumstick with the right hand definitely makes

<sup>67</sup> This applies also to Sāyimi *gūlābājā* and Prajāpati *gūlābājā* of Thimi.



Fig. 80: Punhī Rāj Śākya (centre) leads the *dhā* ensemble playing a processional pattern with Jugī (Kedār: trumpet, Chandranāth: clarinet). The *nāykhī* (front) plays a *dyahlhāygu* as the procession approaches Caturvarṇa Mahāvihāra in Śākvathā. The invocation aims at the Dipākārā Buddha and the Tārā kept in the *vihāra*. 1986

more sense when virtuosic *ḍṛkha* drum rolls and volume are called for.<sup>68</sup> When the *nāykhī* drum is played in *gūlābājā*, the sides are not reversed. This drum uses the same playing-technique as butchers and *navabājā* drummers do in their respective performance contexts with entirely different repertoires. Śākya and Vajrācārya *gūlābājā* combines several *dhā* drums playing the same processional patterns together, creating a loud, solemn impact. Moving at a stately gait, their *gūlābājā* signals disciplined presence and never makes people dance. (Figs. 79, 80)

When either *dhā* or *nāykhī* play processional patterns, two or three tailor-musicians accompany with a Western clarinet and one or two trumpets. Since the 1950s these now fashionable wind instruments have replaced the earlier shawms *rasan* (straight) and *bhamarā* (curved). The Jugis walk in front of the Buddhist drummers, simultaneously smoking cigarettes and playing the same serene Buddhist tunes every day—their minds fixed on the small remuneration that awaits them at the end of the month, a feast and grain or—more common these days—cash. During the final feast, the Śākyas would be horrified and vehemently protest, if a low caste tailor-musician expected to have food in the same house. Tailor-musicians are made to eat outside in the open by the toilet, of course.<sup>69</sup> When it comes to demonstrations of hierarchy, the Buddhist ideal of compassion is readily forgotten. (Fig. 81)

68 This applies to right-handed drummers.

69 When Simonne Bailey participated in Śākya *gūlābājā* processions as a *Jugi* trumpet player, people were confused how to treat her. As a British lady she was politely ushered upstairs to participate with the Śākyas

Starting in the late 1980s, some *gūlābājā* groups added more *dhā* and *nāykhī* drums than necessary, creating a very noisy, almost aggressive effect. With too many young drummers volume increases but co-ordination suffers. During the late 1990s, some Śākya and Vajrācārya groups started to include girls as drummers during processions—resulting in co-ordination suffering even more. This began after I trained the first girl in town as a *dhimay* drummer in 1995. Indira Machimasyu's public appearance as a processional *dhimay* drummer caused quite a stir, encouraging many girl groups to emerge in various genres and conquer ground hitherto held by men alone. Perhaps the time was ripe.



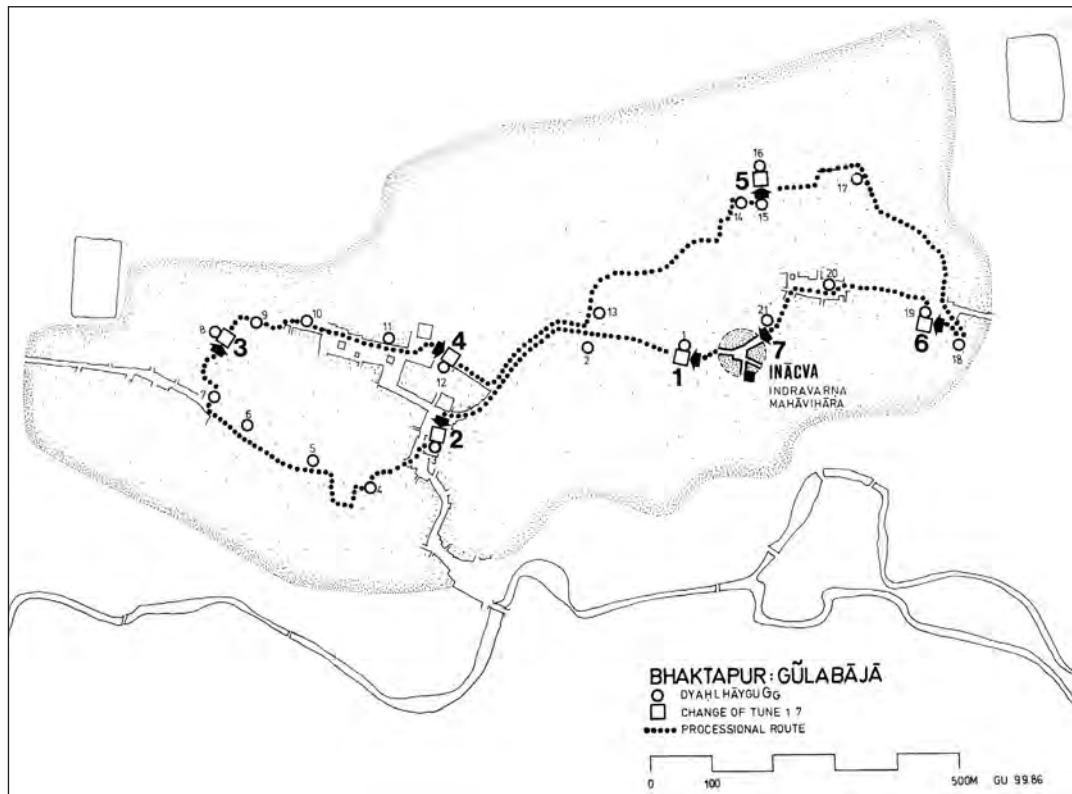
Fig. 81: Jugi tailor-musicians accompanying Yātāchē Śākya and Vajrācārya *gūlābājā* with trumpets and clarinet (l. to r.: Gunkaji, Rām Gopāl, Siddhi Nāth). 1986

Around six a.m. the Śākya and Vajrācārya of Inācva start their daily processions outside the Indravarṇa Mahāvihāra monastery with all *dhā* drummers playing three *dhyāḥlhāygu* invocations followed by one invocation played by *nāykhī*. For special occasions, the *nāykhī* repertoire includes the popular showpiece *tatali* that is also part of the *navabājā* and dance repertoires.

As the *dhā* group starts with the first pattern of the processional piece *calti*, the Jugi tailor-musicians join in with their trumpets and clarinet, accompanying the drummers with a serene melody whilst heading west along the main road to the Jhaurbahī monastery (no. 1 in map below). The procession walks into the courtyard and continues with processional music, as the *nāykhī* drummer plays his *dhyāḥlhāygu* for the Buddha residing on the first floor. This distribution of two different musical functions among *dhā* drummers and *nāykhī* continues up to the Caturvarṇa Mahāvihār in Sākvathā (no. 4). Here, on completion of the third processional *dhā* piece, roles reverse. From now on the *nāykhī* drummer plays processional music and the *dhā* group becomes active only when they have to play invocations. At the Ādīpadma Mahāvihār in Sujamādhi (no. 6),

in their final feast. But in her temporary role as a loyal Jugi she preferred to have food with her colleagues outside by the toilet.

### 3 Town Rituals and Processional Music



Map 27: Standard procession of the Inācva Śākya and Vajrācārya gūlābājā. Other groups use the same route but different starting points. (map courtesy of Niels Gutschow)

the *dhā* group resumes their earlier function, playing yet another processional piece, that leads the procession back to the starting point Inācva.

The map 27 shows the daily standard route of the Inācva gūlābājā group. The bold numbers stand for seven different processional pieces accompanied with trumpets and clarinets. The small numbers point to invocations played by the other drum.

With the exception of their different starting and ending points, the three Śākya and Vajrācārya groups of Bhaktapur use the same standard processional route. The Inācva group starts at Indra-varṇa Mahāvihāra and proceed via Paṣi Khyaḥ (Gvaḥmādhi), Sukul Dhvakā (Bhimsen), Taumādhi Nārāyaṇa Caukh (no. 2), Bvalāchē Bahī, Bārāhi, Vaṃśa Gopāl (Jethvarṇa Mahāvihār), Lokeśvar (Khaumā Bahā, no. 3), Caturvarṇa Mahāvihār (no. 4), Sukul Dhvakā, Yāchē, Nāg Pvukhu, Dipākarā Buddha (no. 5), Kvāthādaū, Gvaḥchē, Sujamādhi (Ādīpadma Mahāvihār), Vākhupati Nārāyaṇa and Dattātreyā back to Inācva. For the miniature clay *caitya* production<sup>70</sup> this group collects holy water at Hanuman ghāt and black clay at Bhvutti Pākva.

The group from Bikumachē (Yātāchē) starts at Paṣu Bahī and proceeds via Dipākarā Buddha (no. 5) and all other stations back to the starting point Paṣu Vihāra and up to their *dhalāchē*.

<sup>70</sup> see chapter 3.4



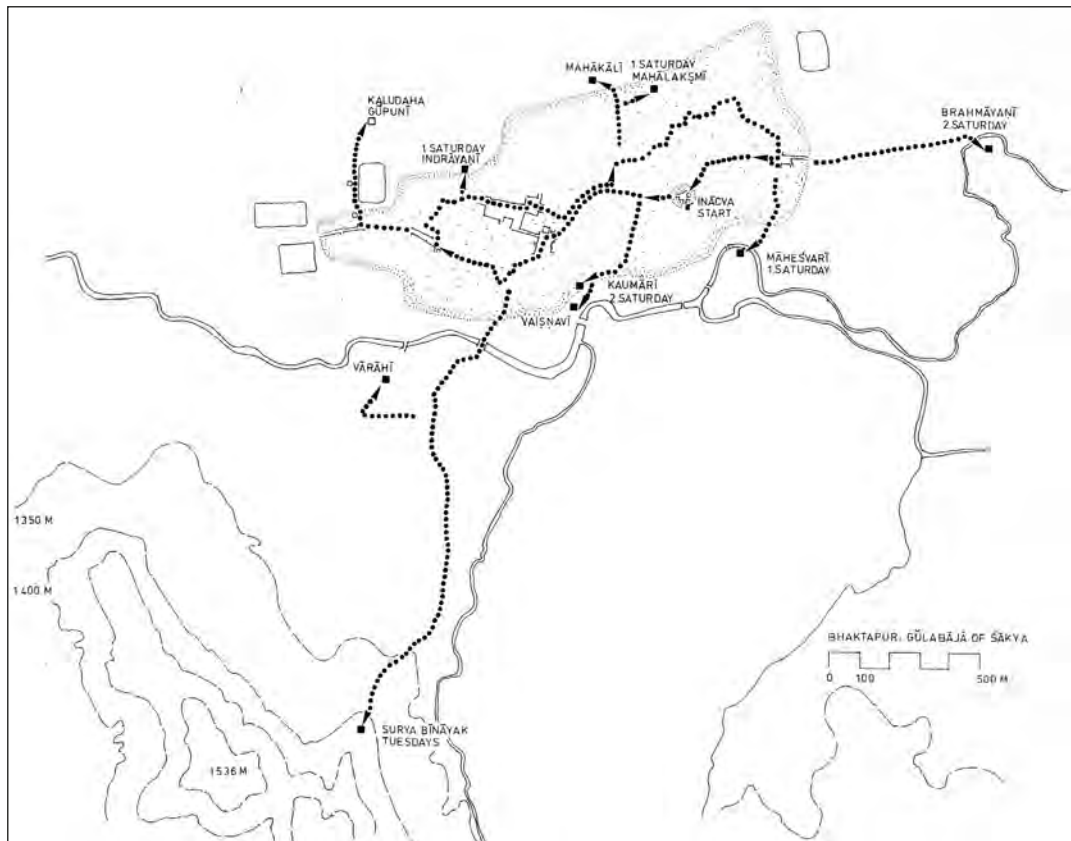
The third group from Tekhācva, follows the same route. Their starting- and ending point is Jethvarṇa Mahāvihār. In 1986 they did not have a *dhalāchē*. Earlier they collected holy water from Hanumān *ghāt* and black clay from Khāpī south of Yātā.

Whilst following their daily standard routes that lead through all residential areas of Śākya and Vajrācāryas in Bhaktapur, the three groups circumambulate a much larger area than the Sāymi oilpressers who restrict their daily rounds to Buddhist artifacts in the vicinity of their respective residential areas. With a few deviations, the Śākya and Vajrācārya follow the *pradakṣiṇā*, Bhaktapur's processional route for town rituals. When it came to visiting the compulsory far away pilgrimage destinations on day trips to Namobuddha, Nala, Vajrajogini, Nīlbarāhi, Karuṇāmaya (Buṅgadyaḥ) of Buṅgamati, Ādināth Lokeśvara of Chobhar, and Svayambhū, a problem occurred in 1986, as the following procession schedule (*gūlā* 1986), of the Inācva group reveals.

date	route/destination	shortcut/excuse
5/8/ <i>aūsi</i>	Palikhyaḥ Nāsaḥ	
6/8 Wednesday to 8/8	standard route	
9/8 Saturday	Indrayāṇī, Mahākālī, Mahālakṣmī, Maheśvarī	
10/8 to 11/8	standard route	
12/8	Surya Vināyak, Barāhī	
13/8 Wednesday	standard route	
14/8	standard route with shortcut via Thāthu Nāsaḥ because of Chandranath Darśandhārī's sore foot	
15/8	standard route	
16/8 Saturday	Kumārī, Badrakālī, Brahmayāṇī	
17/8 and 18/8	standard route	
19/8 <i>guni pvuni</i>	Thāthu Bahī, Kuthu Bahī, Kālu Daha	
20/8 Wednesday, <i>sāpāru</i>	Thāthu Bahī, Kuthu Bahī	
21/8 to 25/8	standard route with shortcut (Chandranath's foot)	
26/8	Kamal Vināyak	
27/8 Wednesday	standard route with shortcut (rain)	
28/8 and 29/8	standard route	
30/8	standard route with shortcut (business at home)	
31/8	standard route	
1/9	morning: standard route, evening: <i>mātā biyu vānegu</i> (light offering procession: visiting all Buddhas)	
2/9 <i>pañcadān carhe</i>	morning: standard route, evening: Taumādhi	
3/9 Wednesday	picnic at Godāvarī, visiting Karuṇāmaya at Bāregāon	
4/9 <i>aūsi</i>	standard route with shortcut	
5/9	Hanumān ghāt, submersion of <i>caitya-s</i>	

1986 was a *nābvulāgu* (having five Wednesdays) *gūlā*, allowing for five Wednesday processions to the following far away destinations: Namobuddha, Vajrajoginī (near Sākhu), Svayambhū,

### 3 Town Rituals and Processional Music



Map 28: Inācva Śākya and Vajrācārya gūlābājā visiting the Aṣṭamātrika and Sūrya Vināyak Gaṇeśa (map courtesy of Niels Gutschow)

Karuṇāmaya (Buṅgādyah at Buṅmati), Ādināth Lokeśvara (on Chobhar hill). Owing to the delayed Nāsaḥ pūjā, the Inācva group missed the first long procession to Namobuddha and decided to drop all other Wednesday excursions. The delay was caused by confusion about different calendars identifying different days (19 and 20 Śrāvaṇ), as the fourteenth day of the lunar month, *carhe*. Such confusions are not uncommon in Nepal, when certain lunar phases apply to two days and even astrologers of high repute waver, delaying announcement of the proper day for ritual action to the last hour. In that profession it pays to be vague and ominous.

The procession schedule reveals the inclusion of the tantric mother goddesses Aṣṭamātrika (Brahmāyaṇī, Maheśvarī, Kumārī, Badrakālī, Barāhī, Indrayāṇī, Mahākālī and Mahālakṣmī) residing in their shrines at the periphery of Bhaktapur. They constitute the outer circle of the Bhaktapur *maṅḍala* of gods and goddesses. Their importance as protectors of Bhaktapur makes their inclusion into otherwise Buddhist oriented processions mandatory. This applies also to Surya Bināyak Gaṇeśa, one of the four guardians Gaṇeśas of the Kathmandu Valley. (Map 28)

During the final five days of *gūlā*, ritual activities accelerated. The *cibhā pūjā* procession on 1st of September (see 1986 schedule above), also called *mātā biyu vānegu*, combined the



Fig. 82: Annual guest appearance of *Prajāpati gūlābājā* from Thimi, led by Gopāl Prajāpati playing for the Dipākarā Buddha at Kvāthādaṁ on *Pañcadān carhe*, before the Buddha is carried to Sujamādhi, 1996

Śākya men and their *gūlābājā* music with the women distributing rice grains and burning oil wicks at all Buddhist artefacts in town.<sup>71</sup> Stone *caityas* in the streets and in the courtyards were decorated with oil lamps donated by the Buddhist households of the neighbourhood. Every single Buddha was activated and alive, highlighting the *triratna*, the three jewels of Buddhism, awakening (*buddha*), religious duty (*dharma*) and the community of initiates striving for enlightenment (*saṅgha*).

*Pañcadān carhe*<sup>72</sup>, the last day before new moon, sees hectic giving and taking of alms, involving thousands of Bhaktapurians. In the morning, the five Dīpaṅkara Buddhas are decorated and leave their monasteries to gather on a stone platform in Sujamādhi where they receive offerings of grain, fruit, flowers, yoghurt and music from a vast crowd of devotees, both Hindu and Buddhist. The leading Dīpaṅkara Buddha is also called Ajajudyāḥ, the grandfather god—another explanation for the drooping head. The Dīpaṅkara Buddhas are escorted throughout the town by *nāykhībājā* played by two butchers, to receive offerings in all areas where Buddhist families live. Members of the Gāthā caste (gardeners and Navadurgā dancers) carry baskets with offerings first given to the five Buddhas (Fig. 82, 83). At the end, the Gāthā are allowed to keep fruit and vegetables. The Śākya and Vajrācārya keep the grain. On the day of *Pañcadān carhe*, all Bhaktapur Buddhists eat the nourishing *kvāṭi* soup prepared with nine kinds of soaked pulses boiled with a large piece of

71 processional route see chapter 3.4

72 lit. the fourteenth day (of the lunar month) for giving five kinds of alms



Fig. 83: Śākya boys posing with their drums in Yātāchē 1988

peeled ginger root, then flavoured with red chillies, *jī*<sup>73</sup> and *imu*<sup>74</sup> seeds fried in oil.<sup>75</sup> Others take *kvāti* two weeks earlier, during fullmoon.

At sites of special religious significance and only, if in an exalted mood, the older Śākya and Vajrācārya may reveal a specially treasured part of their *gūlābājā* repertoire. Then they sing *gvārā*<sup>76</sup>. My teachers Punhī Rāj Śākya and Nucheraj Buddhacārya were willing to teach me Śrī Kṛṣṇa *gvārā* and Nityanāth *gvārā*<sup>77</sup>, mentioning that these two would suffice for the entire month of *gūlā*. They were correct. In 1986 Śrī Kṛṣṇa *gvārā* was sung and played at the Aṣṭamātrika shrines and Nṛtyanāth *gvārā* in front of the Dipākarā Buddha in Kvāthāda. But there were more *gvārā*. During the following year, the senior members of the Inācva group suddenly got into the mood during *cibhā pūjā*. They stopped the procession and attempted altogether five or six *gvārā*. In the end, it was only one elderly person singing and scolding the fumbling Jugi musicians when all others had already given up. With their irregular meter and singing style, different drum patterns for each stanza, *gvārā* has much in common with *caryā/cacā* tantric Buddhist songs and

73 cumin

74 *Trachyspermum ammi*

75 I like it more tasty, stirring in soured cream, lime juice, *garam masālā* and a dash of Angostura Bitter in addition, finally decorated with chopped green coriander

76 Bhaktapur pronunciation: *gvārāḥ*, Kathmandu pronunciation: *gvārā*

77 Nṛtyanāth is another name for Nāsaḥḍyaḥ and also used for Lokeśvar, Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara

could be almost as old. They are accompanied with *dhā*, not *nāykhī*. The song texts of the two *gvārā* that I learned include the names of various gods and shouted or sung commands ‘*dye*’ or ‘*hā dye*’. These are meant to catch the attention of all musicians to come together on ONE. Such shouted commands are also a feature of *cacā* songs and dances. I was tempted to learn more of these *gvārā* songs with drum accompaniment but my teachers were keen on concluding the apprenticeship. So that was that.

Led by concern for their threatened heritage, in 1995 the Buddhist Heritage Society of Bhaktapur published a *gūlābājā* repertoire compiled and transcribed in letter notation by Puṣpa Ratna Śākya. This publication succeeds in preserving seven *gvarā* including text, correct pitch, rhythm and drumming syllables. It presents the following compositions:

8 *dyahlhāygu*

<i>cautāl</i>	4 <i>mātrā</i> (2 + 2)	cymbal strokes: TIN CHU
<i>pratāl</i>	7 <i>mātrā</i> (3 + 2 + 2)	CHU TIN TIN
<i>jati</i>	7 <i>mātrā</i> (3 + 2 + 2)	TIN TIN CHU
<i>palemā</i>	6 <i>mātrā</i> (2 + 2 + 2)	TIN TIN CHU
<i>lātā</i>	6 <i>mātrā</i> (3 + 3)	TIN CHU
<i>graha</i>	14 <i>mātrā</i> (2 + 2 + 2 + 2 + 2 + 2 + 2)	TIN CHU TIN CHU TIN TIN CHU
<i>bramhatāl</i> <sup>78</sup>	10 <i>mātrā</i> (2 + 2 + 2 + 2 + 2)	TIN CHU TIN TIN CHU

*gvārā yā dyahlhāygu*

Nityanāth *gvārā*, Ṣaṭapāramitā *gvārā*, Viśvantar *gvārā*, Lokeśvar *gvārā*, Maṇicuḍ *gvārā*, Mañjuśrī *gvārā*, Sāy *gvārā*, Saṅginī *gvārā*

In his publication ‘*Bailaḥ va gūlā bājā yā bol*’, Gopal Prajāpati<sup>79</sup> of Thimi transcribes one *gvarā* in letter notation, Bhūkhaṇḍa *gvārā*.

Nine *gvārā* can be resurrected from these publications. I suppose there must be quite a few more with senior Buddhists of Patan and Kathmandu. Before they disappear from memory, they should be systematically documented and recorded.

<sup>78</sup> This spelling is used consistently. Aṣṭarā is mentioned as an alternative name for this *tāl*.

<sup>79</sup> Prajāpati 2007

### 3.6 Flute, Harmonium and Violin Ensembles

Ensembles of wooden transverse flutes *bāsuri*, drums and *sichyāḥ* cymbals play seasonal folk songs *me* during processions and life cycle rituals of Newar farmers and oilpressers. Usually such flute ensembles are an appendix to a *dāphā* or a *bhajan* song group where singers conveniently take the flute parts for such processions. (Figs. 84, 85)

*Bāsuri* groups also accompany Nāgacā *pyākhā*<sup>80</sup> during the *sāpāru* week when small boys dressed as Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa enact the courting of the divine lovers through dance (Fig. 86).



Fig. 84: Cvarcā *bāsuri* group during a recording session in 1983

In the case of Sujamādhī *navadāphā* performances, their flute ensemble replaces the shawms and fipple flutes of Jugī musicians who would need to be paid, thus saving expenses.<sup>81</sup> In some processional ensembles, portable harmoniums, violins and a *magahkhī* drum are added to the transverse flutes or replace them completely. (Figs. 87, 88)

*Dhalak*, *pachimā* and *māḍal*<sup>82</sup> are the typical drums accompanying such songs. Either one of the drummers accompanies a section of the song, allowing the other drummers to rest until it is their turn. They play the simpler *tāls* among those used during *navabājā* performance, like

80 also called Rādhā Kṛṣṇa *pyākhā*

81 see chapter 5.3, p. 229

82 also called *magahkhī*, lit. 'drum of the Magar people', an ethnic group of West Nepal



*Fig. 85: Cvarcā bāsurī group at cupī ghāt during New Year morning, 1992*



*Fig. 86: Sujamādhī nāgacā pyākhā performing in front of the Dattātreya temple during sāpāru 1989*

3 Town Rituals and Processional Music



Fig. 87: Indian violins and harmoniums playing Newar folk songs during Vijayadaśamī 1990



Fig. 88: Arven (harmonium) players enriching the flute melodies with a thin wheeze during their coming-out procession after completion of *pirāne pūjā* 1987





Fig. 89: Bāsūrīkhalah visiting Svayambhū during gūlā 1986

*calti*, *dehrā* (8 *mātrā*), *rikhā* (6 *mātrā*) and *kharjati* (7 *mātrā*).<sup>83</sup> These are usually adjusted to the melodies that come in two stages and are repeated. *Me* song melodies start at a slow or medium tempo getting fast and very fast towards the end. The *bāsūrībājā* ensemble of Cvarcā plays also the more demanding *tatali* and *brahmatāl*. This is the only group that combines flutes with the *dhimay* drum. The melodies are played in parallel octaves. The long flutes *ghvar* play at the lower octave and the small transverse flutes *tīp* play the higher pitched notes. (Fig. 89)

There are hundreds of mostly undocumented folk songs that can be adjusted to their use in *bāsūrībājā* ensembles. These include seasonal songs, songs related to certain life cycle rituals, love songs, work songs, praise songs, drinking songs and ballads<sup>84</sup>.

Whenever *bāsūrībājā* plays, local people of the older generation perceive not only pleasing melodies but also meaningful song texts or at least the refrains stored in their memory. These melodies were also used by *Jugi* shawm players during festivals such as *sāpāru*. They are played on request during feasts and picnics for old men to dance or just enjoy. Also brass bands play them during processions. It is high time for these songs to be documented in a systematic and comprehensive manner before they are lost.

<sup>83</sup> The complete *tāl* are discussed in chapter 6.11

<sup>84</sup> Dieter Sulzer (2005) transcribed a few songs in his Swiss MA thesis 'Bhaktapur *bāsūri khalah*'

### 3.7 Jugi Tailor-Musicians

Jugi<sup>85</sup> musicians arrived in the Kathmandu Valley during the 17th and 18th centuries as refugees from Gujarat where the shrines of their *kuldevata* clan gods are located. One of their straight shawms is called *Gujarāti mvālī*<sup>86</sup>, pointing to their origin. These latecomers were assimilated into Newar society, but only just about. In Bhaktapur's hierarchy they range below the marginally clean subcastes, together with untouchable and essentially polluting butchers, washermen and drum-makers, just above the untouchable sweepers who were made to live outside the old city walls. Said to descend from Kānphaṭa<sup>87</sup> yogis, the Jugis are not cremated but buried<sup>88</sup>. They have this in common with Mahantās<sup>89</sup> and with the Giris of Central Nepal, who are also descendants of ascetics but enjoy a higher social standing. Ascetics are not cremated; having renounced this earthly life, they are considered socially dead. Jugis have a strong affinity with Gorakhnāth who received the special tantric teachings of the Nātha lineage via his guru, Matsyendranāth who in turn was taught directly by Lord Śiva as Ādinātha. In keeping with their mysterious origin, several Jugi families live close to the Bhairavnāth temple in Taumādhi and next to the Gorakhnāth shrine situated on a small hill in Tālākva.

Trying to capitalize on their ancestors' spiritual heritage, some Jugis went begging rice grain, dressed in the Mahādev outfit (*khaṅgi*) until the early 1980s. Going from house to house, they sang a begging song with *dabadaba* hourglass drum accompaniment (text mixed with drumming syllables):

<i>/bhugumugu/bhū tã /chã tã /ji tã /kãnemate/su tã /</i>	Come outside!
<i>/talejãki/da thẽ /talejãki/da thẽ /talejãki/da thẽ /</i>	There's rice upstairs, I hope.
<i>/halathẽ /bilathẽ /chã tã /ji tã /kãnemate/su tã /</i>	Give some more!
<i>/jay tã /jay tã /chã tã /ji tã /kãnemate/su tã /</i>	Bless you!
<i>/jakithike/bajidã /</i>	Rice is expensive, <i>baji</i> <sup>90</sup> cheap.
<i>/jay tã /jay tã /chã tã /ji tã /kãnemate/su tã /</i>	Bless you!

Refrain *kãnemate su tã* meaning 'no talking' (= I won't tell how much/how little you gave).

In Bhaktapur the Jugis were allowed to live in small straw-thatched huts and in some public *satah* gatehouses next to temples, in exchange for temple duties as caretakers and for providing ritual music. Musical duties included the playing of *sanyabhajan* music for waking up Bhairavnāth, the Aṣṭamātrkā and Taleju (playing outside *lũdhvãkhã*) in the morning and for evening *ãratĩ*. In the 1980s, this was still observed at the Bhairavnāth temple in Taumādhi where they played six curved *pũjãmvãlĩ* shawms, a *turĩbãjã horn*, a *karnãl* natural trumpet, *khvãlimãlĩ* cymbals, a *dhalak*

85 Jvagi in Kathmandu Newari. They are also known under their Nepali names as Kusle, Kapãli and Darśandhãri

86 var. *mahãlĩ*

87 lit. 'split ear', owing to their large earrings, cf. Unbescheid 1981

88 Bhaktapur's Jugi graveyard is called Jugi *gaḥ*. It lies in a small grove east of Chupin *ghãt*.

89 caretakers of magnificent *math* dwelling-places for ascetics

90 beaten rice



*Fig. 90: Jugis playing tamva and khvālimāli at Cāᅅgu Nārāyaᅅa 1985*



*Fig. 91: Four Jugi shawm players accompanying Yāchē Gaᅅeś navadāphā (Tirtha Man Nāpit playing pachimā) with Gujarāti mvāli during a Nāsaᅅ pūjā procession along Nāg pukhū in 1983*

3 Town Rituals and Processional Music



*Fig. 92: Ganesh Man Kapali, Marsya Dai, Chandranāth Darśandhāri and ? (l. to r.) seeking shelter from rain whilst accompanying Yāchē navadāphā with straight Gujarātī mvālī shawms, 1985*



*Fig. 93: Remains of a broken kahāl played during Chumā Gaṇeś jātrā 1984*



Fig. 94: Gunakāji (clarinet), Dil Bahādur and Kancha Kapāli (trumpets) accompanying Śākya *gūlābājā* in Kvāchē 1983

drum and the small *tamva* kettledrum<sup>91</sup> made of clay<sup>92</sup>. This drum was also played by Jugis living in a small settlement west of the temple courtyard of Cāṅgu Nārāyaṇa. (Fig. 90)

As tailors and players of auspicious music for town rituals and marriage music, Jugis made a meagre living. They played curved and straight shawms and fipple flutes for other instrumental ensembles like *navabājā*, *gūlābājā* and dance groups like Mahākālī *pyākhā*. (Fig. 92)

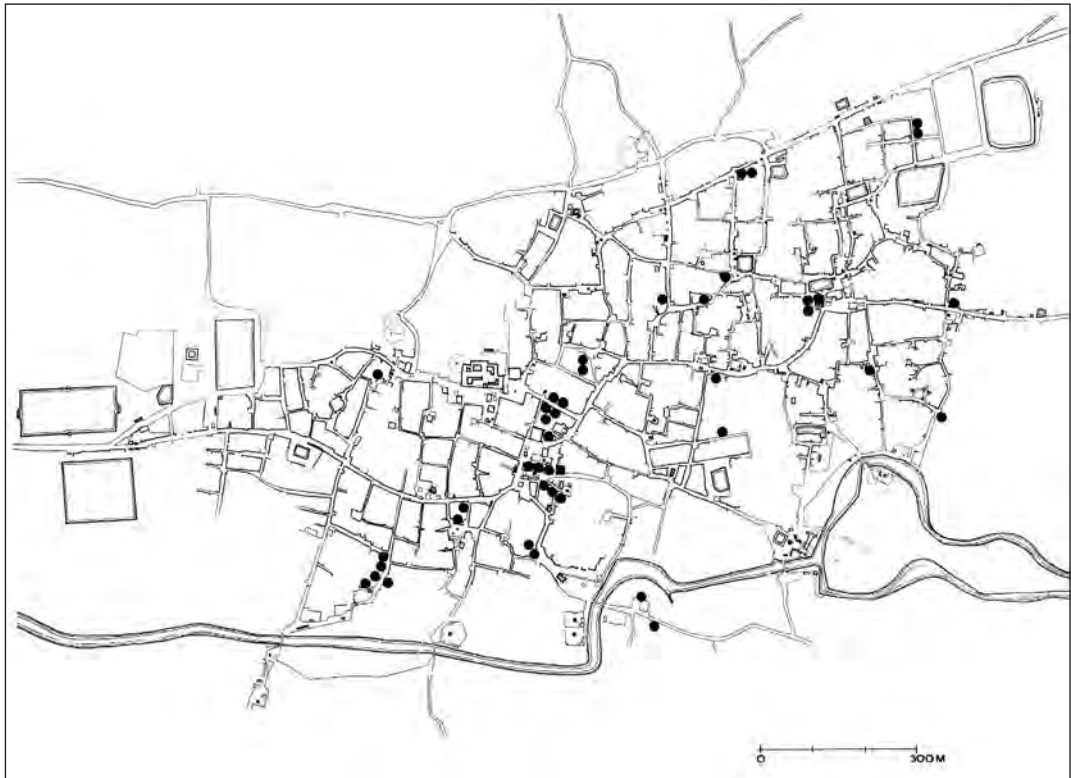
A broken *kahāl* (straight conical bore natural horn) was played in Bhaktapur to accompany Chumā Gaṇeś during his New Year *jātrā*<sup>93</sup>, in a poor attempt to imitate a trumpeting elephant (Fig. 93).

91 also called *tamvacā*, *tukumuku* or *tunumuku*

92 Ideally, all these instruments should have been played together but only three or four Jugis arrived.

93 Tingey 1994 p. 74 mentions that *kahāl* is also played by Kānphaṭa ascetics

### 3 Town Rituals and Processional Music



Map 29: The 41 Jugi households in Bhaktapur 1987 (map: Niels Gutschow, in: Levy 1990, p. 181)

Payment for musical services was very low and invariably disputed. Today (2021) there is only a single Jugi shawm player of the younger generation left in Bhaktapur. Guṇakāji Kapālī's younger son works for Kathmandu University's Department of Music and passed a BA in music. Owing to his caste, nobody was willing to let a room to this excellent young man and his small family. Being at the receiving end of social abuse, many Jugi musicians became alcoholics and died in misery and despair. Since the 1980s, much of their musical repertoire has been lost. Jealousy and suppression are the real demons of Newar society.

In contrast to other low castes, Jugi households are distributed all over Bhaktapur (Map 29). Gutschow<sup>94</sup> explains this with their ritual function as the city's 'internal absorbers of pollution'. Jugis had to serve higher castes in performing certain grisly aspects of their death rituals. Responsibilities for such client families were distributed among the Jugi families. On the seventh day after cremation of a client and then four times a year, a Jugi or his wife had to perform a so-called *cakrapūjā*<sup>95</sup> for the *preta*<sup>96</sup> in front of the house of the dead person, then accept and consume food prepared in the name of the deceased. This *Jugibvaḥi* food was offered with the hope to distract the

94 Gutschow and Michaels 2005, p. 49 ff.

95 Only Jugis can perform a *cakrapūjā*.

96 wandering souls of the dead, feared by the living who seal their homes with multiple charms



*Fig. 95: Damāi jantabājā of Katunje (bandmaster Abhin Kumār Pariyār in cardinal red costume, holding clarinet) playing for a cow procession during sāpāru, Dattātreyā 1985. Abhin Kumār learnt from his father who was a member of a Calcutta police band.*



*Fig. 96: Jyāpu farmers playing jantabājā music in Yāchē 1987*

### 3 Town Rituals and Processional Music

wandering soul from being drawn towards the earlier residence and from troubling the family's shattered peace of mind with disturbing apparitions. By swallowing this food, the Jugi was made to represent the ominous *preta*. He had to pick up used clothes and the mattress of the dead and discarded ritual offerings deposited on a carved *chvāsa* stone at a near-by road crossing. For everyone to see, these scapegoat acts stigmatised the Jugi with impurity. No wonder that this defiling duty as ritual impersonator of the dead was carried out without enthusiasm—although it fed the Jugi and his family at a time when deaths were frequent.

After much grumbling, Bhaktapur's Jugis gradually abandoned this service, now leaving it almost entirely to members of the bereaved families. When they stopped acting as ritual sponges for absorbing harm from the beyond, local people reacted with hate and jealousy. Some Jugi families were kicked out of public gate houses. As Jugis were paid less and less for their musical services, they gradually gave up playing shawms. Some struggle to make ends meet as tailors, some sell souvenirs to tourists or—during the marriage season—play clarinet, trumpet and snare drums in stylishly uniformed *jantabājā* marriage bands<sup>97</sup>. When there is a shortage of marriage bands, people hire outsiders, for example a non-Newar Damāi band from Katunje near Bhaktapur. As band music can generate a handsome income, several groups of young farmers jumped to the opportunity, founding their own bands after taking training with Guṇakāji Kapāli. Contrary to *mvālī* shawms, Western clarinets and trumpets do not affect caste purity, so the farmers found nothing wrong with this. The Nepali names for Western instruments used in the Damāi band: *iphoniyam*, *bhalb tramban*, *klāroneyaṭ*, *ḍram*, *saed ḍram*, *ḍisko ḍram*, *slāiṭ tramban* and *ṭrampet*.

(Figs. 95, 96)



Fig. 97: Chandranāth Darśandhāri  
(1944–2002)

Gutschow<sup>98</sup> gives a detailed account of Chandranāth Darśandhāri's life, listing his numerous ritual duties as a Jugi and his attempts at making ends meet (Fig. 97). In 1990 Chandranāth and one of his colleagues participated in the first European tour of the 'Masterdrummers of Nepal'. We performed in several major music festivals in Germany, France, Holland and Switzerland. (Figs. 98, 99)

Abroad, the musicians ate and enjoyed themselves together. Caste distinction appeared absent. When I asked about this, the answer was: "These things matter only at home."—Free from the usual load of worries, these must have been Chandranāth's happiest four weeks.<sup>99</sup> After Chandranāth had passed away, his family was evicted from the Mahālakṣmī *sataḥ* in 2012 and not allowed to return after the Bhaktapur Municipality had completed restoration of the building. His widow camped rough under a plastic sheet at the Gorakhnāth shrine where she perished in 2019.

97 This Indian fashion was imported in the 1960s

98 Gutschow and Michaels 2005, p. 50 ff.

99 I had made it mandatory that alcohol consumption was restricted to two bottles of beer per day.





Fig. 98: Masterdrummers of Nepal with author in Versailles 1990, Chandranāth next to me (photo: Carol Tingey)



Fig. 99: Chandranāth Darśandhāri (in white dress) and three colleagues accompanying Yāchē navadāphā with straight Gujarāti mvāli shawms, 1985

### 3 Town Rituals and Processional Music

To get an idea of their wide variety of musical and ritual duties and missing remuneration, Bhaktapur's Jugis of different locations were interviewed in 1983.

#### **Thālāchē *sanyabhajan***

5 Jugis, 1 Duicā

Instruments: 4 *mvālī*, 1 *dhalak*, 1 *jhyālicā*

- Playing every morning and evening: *sanyabhajan* at Mahālakṣmī *pith* and Mahākālī *pith* (earlier payment: 28 *pāṭhī* grain) and Taleju (earlier payment: 23 *pāṭhī* grain from Taleju *guthi*) Baiśākh 2nd playing for Mahākālī-Mahālakṣmī *jātrā*
- *Mvahani* Navami: playing for Yāchē Gaṇeś *navadāphā* during viewing of Navadurgā masks
- Ekadasi: playing for the Navadurgā on their way from Tālākva to Navadurgā *dyaḥchē*
- Dvādasi: playing for the Navadurgā on their way from Bvalāchē to Navadurgā *dyaḥchē*, standing in front of Mahākālī *dyaḥchē* (payment: 1 *mānā* grain per day)
- During *gūlā*: Playing every morning with Inācvā Śākya *gūlābājā* (Payment to be negotiated)
- Twenty-two times per year: playing for Yāchē Gaṇeś *navadāphā*
- Perform *cakrapūjā* after death and collect *chvāsa* offerings during fullmoon and festivals for 60 households in Inācvā

#### **Bulucā *sanyabhajan***

8 Jugis

Instruments: 6 *mvālī*, 1 *tamva*, 1 *jhyāli*

- Playing every morning and evening: *sanyabhajan* for Seto Bhairav (Bulucā Bhairav)
- Cait 30th and Baiśākh 1st to 3rd: playing for Seto Bhairav *jātrā*
- Perform *cakrapūjā* after death and collect *chvāsa* offerings during fullmoon and festivals for 40 households in Sākvathā, 40 households in Nāsaḥmānā, and 60 households in Tabyākhusi.
- Bālācarhe (Maṅsir) to Baiśākh 1st: *khāṅgi* begging by impersonating Mahādev (stopped in 1982, owing to poor health)

#### **1st Sākvathā *sanyabhajan***

12 Jugis

Instruments: 9 *mvālī*, 1 *tamva*, 2 *jhyāli*

- Playing every morning and evening: *sanyabhajan* for Taleju, Seto Bhairav and Dattātreyā with different group members
- *Bhagasiti* and *mvahani*: playing in front of the Navadurgā
- Cait 27th: Playing in front of the sacred sword when it is carried from Salagāri to Taumā-dhi square

- *Gū punhi*: Playing with the initial *ghētāgisi* stickdance organised by *Guṭhi samsthān* (payment: 25.- Rs. to be shared among group members)



*Fig. 100: Jugi with Gujarāti mvalī and Duī with dhā announcing the beginning of sāvāru, Sākvathā 1983. Until 1963, 32 Jugis played on this occasion. Later Guṭhi samsthān offered only 25 Rs. to the entire group. Since then, only 1 Jugi and 1 Duī participated with ill feelings.*

## 2nd Sākvathā *sanyabhajan*

9 Jugis and 1 Duīcā (torchbearer)

Instruments: 6 *mvalī*, 1 *kanhā* (*karnāl*), 1 *dhalak* (played by Duī), 1 *tamvacā*, 1 *jhyālicā*

- Playing every morning and evening: *sanyabhajan* at Surya Vināyak Gaṇeś (earlier payment: 4 *murī* grain) and Vārāhī *pith* (earlier payment: 1 *murī* and 3 *pāṭhī* grain)
- Cait 30th and Baiśākh 1st playing at Yāḥśīkhyah
- Baiśākh 1st and 2nd playing for Vārāhī *jātrā*, 3rd for Duīmāju *jātrā* (with Duī playing *dhā*)
- *Gū punhi*: Playing with the initial *ghētāgisi* stickdance organised by *Guṭhi samsthān* (payment: 25.- Rs. to be shared among ten group members—even in 1983 this was a ridiculous amount) (Fig. 100)

### 3 Town Rituals and Processional Music

#### **Taumādhi *sanyabhajan*** (Fig. 101)

9 *Jugis* and 1 *Duñcā* (torchbearer)

Instruments: 6 *mvālī*, 1 *turī bājā*, 1 *karnāl*, 1 *dhalak* (played by *Duñ*), 1 *tamva*, 1 *khvālimālī*

- Playing every morning and evening: *sanyabhajan* for *Bhairavnāth* (earlier payment: 29 *pāthī* grain)
- Performances with *Bhairavnāth navadāphā*
- Cait 27th leading *Bhairav* to his chariot
- *Sāpāru*: *Bhairav jātrā* (two days)
- *Mvahani*: Accompany the *Ekanta Kumārī* procession, playing *mārsi* (*mvālī*) and *cvakh* (*nāykhī*)
- Performing *cakrapūjā* after death and collect *chvāsa* offerings during fullmoon and festivals for 60 households



Fig. 101: Krishna Prasad Kapāli with *tamva* 1988

**Ajimā (Vārāhī) sanyabhajan**

10 Jugis

Instruments: 6 *mvālī*, 1 *karnāl*, 1 *dhalak*, 1 *tukumuku*, 1 *jhyāli*

- Playing every morning and evening: *sanyabhajan* at Vārāhī *pith* (earlier payment: 11 *pāṭhī* grain) Cait 30th and Baiśākh 1st playing at Yāḥśīkhyah
- Baiśākh 1st and 2nd playing for Vārāhī *jātrā*
- Mvahami and Sākīmā punhi: playing for *Taleju* (earlier payment: 3 *murī* 10 *pāṭhī* grain)
- Throughout winter and spring: playing for the Navadurgā (earlier payment: 30 *pāṭhī* grain)
- *Gū punhi*: Playing with the initial *ghētāgisi* stickdance organised by *Guṭhi samsthān* (payment: 25.- Rs. to be shared among 32 group members for having a feast—in reality this was the equivalent of a few bananas per person)
- Performing *cakrapūjā* after death and collect *chvāsa* offerings during fullmoon and festivals for 40 households in Tacapāḥ, 30 households in Byāsi, 20 households in Khācā and 10 households in Yātā.

**Yāchē sanyabhajan**

6 Jugis

Instruments: 4 *mvālī*, 1 *tamva*, 1 *jhyāli*

- Playing every morning and evening: *sanyabhajan* at Vākupati Nārāyaṇa (earlier payment: 1 *murī* and 10 *pāṭhī* grain)
- Instead of grain, *Guṭhi samsthān* gives only 90.- Rs., to be shared.

**Duīcā pokharī sanyabhajan**

10 Jugis

Instruments: 7 *mvālī*, 1 *tamvacā*, 2 *jhyālicā*

- Playing every morning and evening: *sanyabhajan* at Dattātreyā (earlier payment: 18 *pāṭhī* grain) and Golden Gate (earlier payment: 18 *pāṭhī* grain)
- Dattātreyā *jātrā* and with Dattātreyā *navadāphā* (earlier payment: 7 1/2 *pāṭhī* grain)

**Sujamādhī sanyabhajan**

10 Jugis

Instruments: 8 *mvālī*, 1 *tamva*, 1 *jhyāli*

- Playing every morning and evening: *sanyabhajan* at Brahmāyānī *pith* (earlier payment: 7 *murī* grain), also playing for Bhairav, Taleju, Mahākālī and Suryavināyak Gaṇeś



Fig. 102: Gaṇeś Mān Kapāli playing *rāga Dīpak* with *pūjā mvālī* and Puni Mān Duī accompanying with *dhā* at my home 1987

Despite being incomplete, this list reveals the economic catastrophe caused by the *guṭhi samsthān* act and the fact that remuneration in cash was never adjusted to inflation rates. In 1963 land endowments that financed most of the Jugis’ musical duties were taken by King Mahendra Shah’s state administration. The musicians were plunged into misery—despite all those deeds documented in countless temple inscriptions and hand-written documents. In 1990 I told Rishikesh Shah about the sad consequences for the entire Newar musical culture of the act that he had helped design. The answer was, “Oh! That was not what WE had intended.” At the time the felt social distance between Nepal’s royalty and a Jugi in Bhaktapur superseded that between sun and earth.

In the olden days, when a Malla king or a Rājopadhyāya Brahmin died, Jugis of all groups had to play *rāga Dīpak* for the funeral procession, along with Nāy butchers playing their ominous funeral music *sībājā*. In India this *rāga* is never performed, owing to every musician’s fear of being consumed by flames that could be ignited by this *rāga*. The lore of supernatural power of music and its stunning demonstration by great masters of the past are a popular part of music transmission in South Asia. However, I was able to record *rāga Dīpak* when Gaṇeś Mān Kapāli played it at my home with his *pūjā mvālī* (Fig. 102). None of us suffered any burns. Astonishingly, the knowledge of performing this *rāga* was transmitted within the Jugi family tradition for more than two hundred years after its last ritual use<sup>100</sup>.

Shawms used by Jugis included two curved varieties, *pūjā mvālī* and the smaller *bhamarā* with a more solid brass bell (Fig. 103). There were also four straight shawms, *Gujarāti mvālī*, the smaller *rasan* (Fig. 104), the smallest *kukicā mvālī* and a poor family member, *nvamat* made

100 Occasionally, *rāg Dīpak* was also played for expired descendants of Malla kings.



Fig. 103: Chandranāth Darśandhāri demonstrating the playing of the curved shawms *bhamarā* (l.) and *pūjā mvālī* (r.) 1987



Fig. 104: Chandranāth Darśandhāri demonstrating the playing of the straight shawms *rasan* (l.) and *Gujarāti mvālī* (r.) 1987

entirely of wood without metal bell. The use of *bhamarā* and *rasan* stopped in the 1950s or 1960s when Western trumpets and clarinets replaced them in their use for marriage processions and Śākya *gūlābājā*. Gaṇeś Mān Kapāli told me that long ago, the straight shawm *nvamat* was replaced by clarinet for use in marriage processions. In the 1980s, the curved *pūjā mvālī* went out of use with the end of *sanyabhajan*. Today (2021), the straight *Gujarāti mvālī* appears to be the only surviving shawm.



Fig. 105: Chandranāth Darśandhāri demonstrating the playing of *bāēcā* fipple flute, two *rasan* flanked by two *Gujarāti mvālī*, the four mouthpieces having lip discs made of bone

The six different shawms used similar sets of four reeds made by the musicians themselves of dried leaf of the *tadgola* palm, *Borassus flabellifer*. This very useful tree grows in the coastal areas of South Asia and also in the southern flatlands of Nepal. It produces excellent toddy, nourishing and refreshing nuts called ‘ice apple’ (refrigerate before serving!) and building material for tropical huts with leaf-thatched roofs. The high treetop provides nesting sites preferred by the white-headed Brahminy Kite, *Haliastur indus*.

The four different shawms in the photo documentation above do not have lip discs. During processions no *mvālī* player would dare to take part without a lip disc. Festive crowds tend to be thick and intoxicated. Musicians could wound their throats if by chance someone hits the instrument. Fipple flutes *bāēcā* made of bamboo or wood were used to accompany *kvakhīcā* during *navabājā* performances and *kvakhīcā* and the hourglass drum *dabadaba* in *Sāymi gūlābājā*. (Fig. 105)

Chandranāth demonstrated how to make shawm reeds, *tuki* (Figs. 106–126):

You need basic tailoring skills,  
*tāḍipatta* palm leaf cut into rectangular sheets,  
 a *kvēku* wooden peg for supporting the reeds during the process,  
 two tufts of *kapāy* cotton,  
 two narrow strips of *kāpāḥ* cotton cloth,  
*sukā* sewing thread, *kācīkā* cotton yarn, and  
 a conical brass pipe *sājī*.

The tip of the wooden *kvēku* peg should have precisely the same diameter as the narrow end of the *sājī* pipe.



### 3.7 Jugi Tailor-Musicians



*Fig. 106*

Cut the palm leaf and an extra one. Moisten the strips to make them soft.



*Fig. 107*

Wrap a ball of cotton around the broad end of the brass pipe, leaving the opening free. Wrap a strip of cloth around the cotton. Tie it tightly with a thread into a cushion that does not slip off.



*Fig. 108*

Wrap another piece of cotton around the brass pipe, 1 cm below the narrow opening.

3 Town Rituals and Processional Music



Wrap a strip of cloth around the cotton.

*Fig. 109*



Tie it tightly with a thread into a cushion that does not slip off.

*Fig. 110*



Fold the moistened leaf into a packet with four layers. The two sides of the leaf are different, so the correct sides must correspond or the reed is unplayable.

*Fig. 111*



*Fig. 112*

Cut it at both sides...



*Fig. 113*

...until it acquires the  
shape of...



*Fig. 114*

...a perfect trapezium (for  
American readers: trap-  
ezoid), with both legs of  
equal measure.

3 Town Rituals and Processional Music



Thread in sewing thread through the folded narrow edge of the trapezium. You could use a folded cut-off piece of palm leaf to help widen the aperture before pulling the thread through.

*Fig. 115*



If done correctly, this is the result. Pull both ends semi-tight, leaving long ends.

*Fig. 116*



Use a sharp blade to cut out a tiny crescent-shaped wedge out of the broader base of the trapezium.

*Fig. 117*



*Fig. 118*

Carefully slot the wooden peg up through from the cotton bound edge.



*Fig. 119*

The view from the side



*Fig. 120*

Tie a piece of cotton yarn around the narrow end of the trapezium, pull the ends tight and make a knot.

3 Town Rituals and Processional Music



Use your teeth to pull the knot tight.

*Fig. 121*



Pull the peg out and enter from the opposite side. Let the tip of the peg meet with the narrow end of the brass pipe and slide the reeds over the pipe until they reach the tied cotton ball. If you want a lip disc, this should come first and rest against the cotton.

*Fig. 122*



Use a sharp blade to make a final straight cut through the ends of the *tuki*.

*Fig. 123*



Fig. 124

This should be the result.



Fig. 125

After moistening the reeds, blow hard. The pipe should emit a loud squawk.



Fig. 126

Now place the complete *tuki* set on the wooden body of the instrument and start playing.

### 3 Town Rituals and Processional Music

Oboists used to mouthpieces with double reeds will be surprised how much physical effort it takes to play shawms with two double reeds as the Jugis do. Four layers of reeds guarantee that it is impossible to play softly. *Mvālī* shawms are meant for outdoor use—no matter what strain they put on a musician’s lungs. The Jugis’ response to this problem was playing as a group of three or four, occasionally up to twelve players. So the flow of the music was not interrupted when a player needed to rest for a while. The melodic repertoire of the *mvālī* repertoire was vast. It included *rāgas* for use in temple ensembles playing for the gods (*sanyabhajan* and *navabājā*), Buddhist processional music and *gvārāh* songs, seasonal songs, songs related to specific town rituals and to life cycle rituals like *kāyīā pūjā*, different stages of the marriage ritual and—only in the distant past—funeral music for Malla kings and their descendants. *Mvālī* melodies are played in accordance with the season.

The *tamva* kettledrum (approximate height: 14 cm, diameter: 17 cm) is made of clay and played with two bamboo sticks. The drumhead consists of two hides, the upper one ring-shaped. It has this in common with the *nagarā* used in *navabājā*, but the Jugi drummers don’t apply any of the technical skills that *nagarā* players know. There is no difference in sound production of right hand and left hand strokes. So the result is a kind of monotonous tapping. (Fig. 127)



Fig. 127: Jugis played *tamva/tukumuku*, a small kettledrum

In 1987 I approached Krishna Prasad Kapāli, asking him to teach me his *tamva* repertoire. He was very shy and insisted that he needed his senior colleague Gaṇeś Mān Kapāli to support him with the appropriate *pūjā mvālī* (Figs. 128, 129) melodies. That would stimulate his memory. As it turned out, both of them needed other stimulants as well. I had to serve *aylā*, a strong spirit<sup>101</sup> distilled from rice beer. Very soon I came to know that they went into a lucid state after the first peg when their memory worked but for a brief period. After the second peg my chances of learning anything became dim—and much dimmer after the third peg. I was torn between my eagerness to learn and my duty as a polite host who keeps the glasses filled until his guests croak. I must

101 up to 80 % alcohol!





*Fig. 128: Old pūjā mvālī with silver bell (photo courtesy of Christian Schneider)*



Fig. 129: Jugis from Dhulikhel with curved *pūjā mvālī* shawms accompanying Banepa Sāymi *gūlābājā* during their annual visit to Sakvalā 1983

say, we had a lovely time and after many failed attempts I finally managed to learn the drum pieces. This was not made easier by the fact that there were no drumming syllables. My teacher remembered the pieces only as a chain, being unable to isolate patterns of longer pieces. Luckily there were also short pieces:

*Svagamālī* was played long ago as part of the marriage ritual, when bride and bridegroom saw each other for the first time.

*Pūjāmālī* was played on 27th *Cait* during the *pūjā* in the Bhairavnāth temple before the god is carried across the square to take seat on his chariot during the New Year festival. After this *pūjā* the Bhaila *Nāyaḥ* gives each Jugi a flower carrying Bhairava's blessings. The piece was also played during the *pūjā* preceding *Sāymi gūlābājā* processions.

*Cvarā* was played during a goat sacrifice for Bhailadyaḥ (Bhairavnāth).

*Likārāḥ* was played on the way home after a *pūjā*.

The longer pieces are *partāl*, *caltī*, *dehrā*, *astarā*, *thata* and *calī*. Names and metric structure are similar to some *navabājā* and *lālākhī*<sup>102</sup> compositions but with that similarities end. In comparison,

102 *Cali* is an exception. For *lālākhī* the metre is 3 + 3 but for *tamva* it is 3 + 3 + 2. Names do get muddled up.

these *tamva* pieces look like faint shadows of the much richer and longer *navabājā* showpieces that were effectively structured with climaxes and embellished with dance patterns by experienced composer-drummers. To be fair, what I learnt was the last sigh of a drumming genre that must have seen brighter days. Another possibility is that those *tamva* pieces named after *navabājā* compositions were created by accompanying and listening to *navabājā* performances over twenty times per year as shawm players—later trying to remember little bits and pieces to create something fitting into those structures. Probably both guesses are not far from the truth. As there are neither stroke variants nor drumming syllables in use for *tamva* pieces, my notation uses l for left hand and r for right hand strokes. Triplets are indicated by a 3 above the respective *mātrā* box containing three syllables.

As Simonne Bailey informs me, a new genre of ‘Jugi’ music evolved during the past decade. In a few villages near Bhaktapur including Cāngu Nārāyaṇa there has been a resurgence of interest in learning the shawm and a good number of *Kapāli* youth including girls have been trained. These groups are more like youth clubs and they play together in groups of twelve to twenty or more with the *dhalak* drum. The *Kapāli* youth whom Simonne helped to train were really keen and proud of their heritage and were in the main educated. The tunes they use are not the same, more the popular ones. They were keen to wear Newar farmers dress as a uniform. Most of the instruments they used were new, made in Kathmandu. They did not like the old instruments, finding them heavier and harder to play. They were not taking the place of existing players but rather forming a new genre.

The absence of public support for Jugi musicians and their disappearance from Bhaktapur’s soundscape during our lifetime caused an irretrievable, catastrophic loss to the entire musical culture of the Newars. How could people allow this to happen?

### 3.8 *Kābājā*

*Kābājā* (var. *kāhābājā*) is an ensemble of large natural trumpets made of copper. They produce a deep, ominous roar that fits in perfectly with death processions and Aṣṭamātṛka processions. Eighteen Sāymi *kā*-players from Gvaḥmādhī (eight musicians), Tekhācva (four) and Sākvalā (six) used to accompany the Navadurgā during *mvahani* from *aṣṭhamī* to *bihi*, when the Navadurgā gather at Gvachē to perform spectacular individual dances, drink the decaying blood and eat the decaying brains of the *khame* buffalo that was sacrificed eight days earlier at the shrine of Brahmāyaṇī. They also played on Bhagasiṭī during the annual death procession of the Navadurgā from their *dyaḥchē* to Brahmāyaṇī where the masks were cremated. For this duty the *kā*-players were given five *pāṭhī* beaten rice and a feast per year. They also accompanied the mothergoddess Indrāyaṇī during her Indra *jātrā* procession and were given six *māna* rice grain and one *pāṭhī* beaten rice by the Indrāyaṇī *guthī*. There was another reward. Those oilpressers who played in this ensemble were exempt from *jhārāḥ vānegu*. This bone-breaking drudgery was forced on Sāymi and Jyāpu males during the Rāṇā period. It included the felling of trees in the Terai jungle and towing the timber all the way to Kathmandu where it was used for building Rāṇā palaces.

### 3 Town Rituals and Processional Music



*Fig. 130: Kā-players from several localities in the western part of the Kathmandu Valley gather during the Viṣṇudevī jātrā 1989. The goddess resides on a hill next to the Thānkoṭ road.*



*Fig. 131: Kāhābājā playing in front of Akāś Bhairav during Indra jātrā Kathmandu, 1990*

Farmers had to supply straw to the *kā*-players for free. Sāymi *kā*-players also had to participate in death processions of Malla kings of Bhaktapur. (Figs. 130–132)

This ensemble ceased to play during the 1970s. In 1984 there were two old men left from Gvaḥmādhi, Śaṅkhalāl and Āīta Mānandhar who played their decrepit trumpets during the Navadurgā processions. In 1985 and 1986 they played only during *navamī* night for the *khame* sacrifice at Brahmāyaṇī. Then they stopped.

In 2000 Simonne Bailey gifted eight *kā* trumpets made by a coppersmith in Maṅgalbajār, Patan, to be used for special events at Kathmandu University's Department of Music. Our staff and students played the trumpets during the annual meeting of the World Wildlife Fund in December 2000 in Bhaktapur's palace square in the presence of royalty from Nepal, Britain and Arabia.

In 2019 eight young Sāymi of Gvaḥmādhi decided to revive the half forgotten tradition, had instruments made and played with the Navadurgā during their *mvahani* processions.



*Fig. 132: Kā-players during the Viṣṇudevī jātrā, December 1989*



## 4 Dances

In South Asia dance was always considered as the visible, four-dimensional and dynamic realisation of music, *saṅgīta*. Like most other Newar gods and goddesses, Nāsaḥdyah is depicted in painting and sculpture as a dancer. Nowadays identified with the South Indian Nṛtyanātha, he is the Lord of the Dance. As dancers, the gods unleash and spread their divine powers. As dancers, humans can attain exalted states of consciousness, if there is proper music to induce the transition. There is no better device for losing human identity and the limitations of this body, than wearing a dance mask. In Newar masked dances, masks identify the gods and their entourage. Great care is required by the mask-maker when he produces the clay masks for the Navadurgā dancers of Bhaktapur. Not only the exact size and shape of a mask is prescribed but also every detail of the painting applied to it. When the dancers come out during *mvahani* to perform their annual dance cycle in and around Bhaktapur, people touch the masks to share in the blessings of the Navadurgā. Masks are the seats of the gods they represent, as Nāsaḥdyah resides in the drums.

The Navadurgā of Bhaktapur are one of the many so-called Aṣṭamātrka dances of the Kathmandu Valley, where tantric mother goddesses make their appearance together with various male gods like Gaṇeśa, Mahādeva and Bhairava—all the characters spreading the powerful blessings of the gods. Referring to the *Bhāṣāvamaśāvalī* chronicle, Veda Nath Regmi<sup>1</sup> mentions that *Jala pyākhā* of Harisiddhi could be the oldest Aṣṭamātrka dance with an obscure origin during the Licchavi period and documented revival during the reign of Amar Malla of Kantipur (1530–1538).<sup>2</sup> Amar Malla also introduced the Pacalī Bhairav *pyākhā* of Kathmandu-Tekhu, the Rudrāyaṇī *pyākhā*, the Ākās Bhairav *jātrā*, the Manamaiju *jātrā*, the Bhadrakālī *pyākhā*, Śvetakālī *pyākhā*, and perhaps also the Bāgh Bhairav *jātrā* of Kirtipur. Śrī Nivās Malla of Lalitpur started the *Gā pyākhā*<sup>3</sup> around 1563 and added nine nights of performances to the *Katī pyākhā* established by his father Siddhinarasiṃha Malla. Suvarṇa Malla of Bhaktapur (1505–1519) established the Navadurgā *pyākhā* and the Nīl Vārāhī *jātrā*/ Mahālakṣmī *pyākhā* of Bode, both dances after 1512.

The climax of the annual masked dance *Katī pyākhā* at full moon in front of the Patan palace, is the killing of the proud and powerful demon king Hiranyakaśipu by way of divine interference. When the angered demon is about to slay his own son Prahlād—a secret devotee of Lord Viṣṇu—the god comes to Prahlād’s rescue in the form of Narasiṃha<sup>4</sup>, half human half lion. The battle between god and demon takes twenty exciting minutes before the demon king falls. In the

1 Regmi 1987

2 cf. Iltis 1987

3 performed annually by the people of Naka Bahila

4 <sup>2</sup>Viṣṇu’s fourth *avatār*



Fig. 133: A painted cloth showing Nāsaḥḍyaḥ dancing and his attendants Nandi and Bṛṅgi as drummers, held in front of the Nāsaḥ shrine at Nāgbāhāḥ, Patan

1980s older people told me that they had witnessed the actual death of the dancer who danced the demon—a human sacrifice. Whenever I witnessed this dance, the dancer fell unconscious and had to be revived with a splash of holy water. The part of Hiraṇyakaśipu had to be taken by a fat member of the Citrakār painter caste whereas the god used to be danced by the *Malla* king himself. Later this role was given to a Brahman. A similar masked dance was performed in Kathmandu where Pratāpa Malla (1624–1674) is known to have danced as Narasiṃha.

In the case of Patan’s ancient masked dance *Gā pyākhāṣ*, the transition of the dancers is induced by the *Nāsaḥ pūjā* performed in Nāgbāhāḥ—prior to the initial public performance on a stone platform in the main street. The young dancers of the *Śākya* and *Vajrācārya* background—with their heads shaved and in costumes but not yet with masks—each come forward to perform a short dance in front of the Nāsaḥ shrine. Two assistants suspend a painted cloth showing the dancing god with his two dancing drummers, Nandi and Bṛṅgi between the human dancer and the shrine. (Fig. 133)

Even before their dance offering to Nāsaḥḍyaḥ, the dancers start to tremble and need to be supported and carefully led to the shrine. When they finally wear their dance masks, the transition is complete. The gods have taken seat in human shape to spread their blessings during the performance. On the *dabu* stone platform surrounded with a thick crowd, helpful chalk marks guide the dancers to find their way despite their altered state of mind and limited view through tiny eye holes. (Fig. 134)

5 founded around 1663 by Śrīnivāsa Malla, performed annually for nine days, starting *Ghaṭasthāpanā*



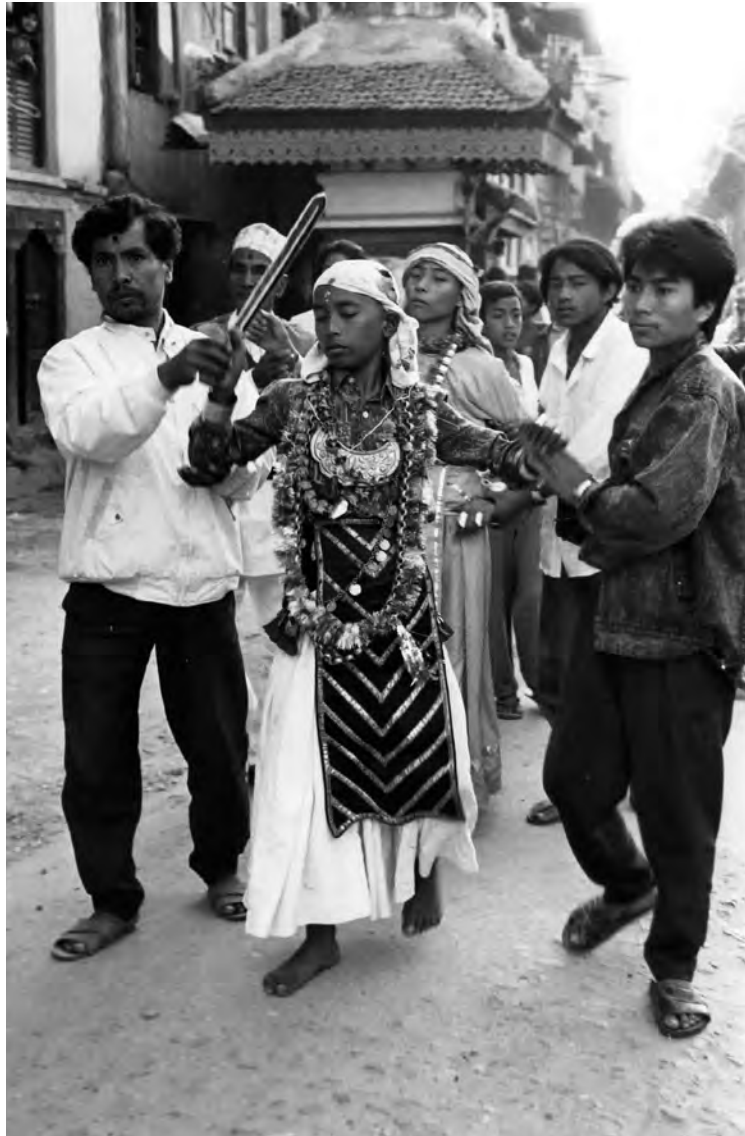
In the case of the Navadurgā *pyākhā* of Bhaktapur, trance is induced by different means. Members of the Gāthā gardener caste take turns in performing the annual Navadurgā dance cycle. Before the Navadurgā leave their *dyahchē* god house, a vertical soot line is drawn across their forehead with a nail that rests in a silver box filled with soot from the *khame* buffalo sacrifice during Mahānavami. The silver box is attached to the *dyahkhī* drum that accompanies their processions and dances. That soot suffices to induce their transition into beneficial vampires. (Fig. 135)

There are other masked dances where trance is not involved, for example the Bhaila *pyākhā* performed by the potters of Bhaktapur. There are various stick dances presented during *sāpāru* and many dances where dancers wear costumes. The ancient *cacā pyākhā* that the Vajrācārya perform in the secrecy of their clan god house *āgaṃchē* was not performed with masks—contrary to contemporary tourist shows. The dancers wore white frocks. Until recently, dances were exclusively performed by males—when required by the character, cross-dressing males. During the past twenty years, some schools trained children of both genders in performing some traditional dances adapted to this purpose. During the New Year festival 2019, a *dhimay* group included girls presenting an abysmal fantasy Bollywood style *dhimay* dance wherever few people cared to watch their presentation.

Evidently, with over twenty regular performances throughout the year, *navabājā* provided a most valuable reservoir of well-rehearsed compositions for most dance groups where musicians are likely to forget things without regular practice and need to have rehearsals before the annual performances during the *sāpāru* week or the following Indra *jātra*. Allusions to masked dances in drum compositions are not restricted to *navabājā*. The *lālākhī* drum repertoire includes dance patterns when it accompanies *dāphā* songs. For example the *cvakh* piece for *dāphā* accompaniment



Fig. 134: About to enter a state of trance, *Gā pyākhā* dancers pray to Nāsaḥdyah.



*Fig. 135: Gā pyākhā* dancers are in a trance and led carefully to the stone platform where they wear the masks to perform the initial series of spectacular masked dances

includes patterns of the otherwise forgotten *nā pyākhā*<sup>6</sup> and of *bhālū pyākhā*<sup>7</sup> that is still performed at night during the *sāpāru* week. Whenever those famous patterns are heard, everybody present associates the dances and their characters.

- 6 fish dance
- 7 bear dance

#### 4.1 *Cacā pyākhā* and *Pañcatāla*

Among the oldest surviving dance forms is the Newar Buddhist *cacā pyākhā*, *caryā* dance. Like *caryā* songs<sup>8</sup>, *caryā* dance was introduced in the Kathmandu Valley before the 15th century when tantric cults had permeated earlier Buddhist practice. *Cacā pyākhā* evolved as a medium for the dancer to embody divine qualities of the gods depicted during the dance, to become a god or a Buddha/Bodhisattva for a few moments. It belongs to the secret *āgaṃ* category of Newar ritual music and dance that is accessible only to initiates and performed in the secrecy of the clan god houses of Newar Buddhists, the *āgaṃchē*. There are exceptions to the secrecy. Starting with discussions in the 1950s, there have been attempts by some Vajrācāryas to popularize some of the less sacred *caryā* songs and dances of the so-called *bāhye* kind (about deities). These were taught to students of other castes and later even to foreigners, resulting in regular classes and performance-oriented presentations with fancy costumes and masks. Songs and dances of the *guhye* category are about highest esoteric practices and remain taboo to outsiders. When ethnomusicologist Arnold Bake made his brief silent documentary film of *caryā* dance in 1956, this was only possible in a forest near Kathmandu where nobody else could watch the proceedings.



*Fig. 136: Vajrācārya priests during a navagraha pūjā at Bhadrakālī, Kathmandu, Mahānavamī 1991 (left upper corner: Richard Widdess during fieldwork)*

8 see Widdess 1992, 1997, 2004

#### 4 Dances

A rare public event where the general public was welcome to witness *caryā* dance in a ritual context, was the annual performance of a *navagraha pūjā* for peace on the nine planets. This *pūjā* was performed with the combined forces of Vajrācārya priests of Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur on the day of Mahānavamī at Bhadrakālī, Kathmandu and included brief dances and songs. The ritual was meant to balance the harmful *karma* inflicted by the mass slaughtering of sacrificial animals all over Nepal on that very day. (Fig. 136)



Fig. 137: Vajrācārya performing the Pañcabuddha dance at Svayambhū during Buddhajayantī 1992



Fig. 138: Buddhajayantī procession of Buddha’s relic in Vaṅghaḥ, Kathmandu, 1992. A *pañcatāla* drummer struggles to play the short *tvāka dyahllhāygu*. The notation of drumming syllables has to be carried in front of him. Also the ensemble of four natural trumpets *pāytāḥ khalah* sight-reads the drumming syllables that tell them what to play.

Another public occasion occurred at the Svayaṃbhū *mahācaitya* on the day of Buddhajayantī, the day of Buddha’s birth, enlightenment and *nirvāṇa*. According to Newar calendars, this falls on Vaiśākh fullmoon in early May<sup>9</sup>. In the morning Vajrācāryas gathered at the *mahācaitya* to perform the Pañcabuddha dance<sup>10</sup> in front of the five shrines of these Buddhas, the dancers wearing brocade costumes, wigs and crowns. (Fig. 137)

On the same day, an elaborate procession with a bone relic of the Buddha started at Sīghaḥbāhā, passing through central Kathmandu. This included several music groups, among them Vajrācārya males with several natural trumpets *pāytāḥ*, *tāḥ* cymbals and the compound drum *pañcatāla*. At prescribed localities, they played the short *tvāka dyahllhāygu* invocation, trying to sight-read the drumming syllables that were written down in extra large letters and carried in front of the struggling musicians. Nobody appeared to know the piece by heart. (Fig. 138)

Similar instrumental ensembles accompany *caryā* dances in the secrecy of the *āgaṃchē*. The fact that during every public performance the *pañcatāla* drummer depends on sight-reading even a short written notation testifies to the rarity of such events and also to the extreme difficulty—as I soon came to know—of learning these compositions by heart. The pieces are almost devoid of

<sup>9</sup> Tibetans celebrate Buddhajayantī one month later, in June.

<sup>10</sup> cf. Mrigendra M. S. Pradhan 1996



Fig. 139: Pañcatāla ensemble playing *dyaḥlhāygu* during the *pirāne pūjā* of Patan's *gā pyākhā*, 1991. The drummer reads the syllables from a hand-written copy. In the background two dancers without masks are awaiting their first dance in front of the shrine of Nāsaḥdyah. Dancers and musicians are of the Vajrācārya and Śākya community.



Fig. 140: Pañcatāla instruments and copy with the notated drumming syllables, Patan 1991

rhythmic elements and repeating structures and proceed at a very slow tempo. Traditional *caryā* dances were performed in a systematic manner during a so-called *cakra pūjā*. This was an elaborate and expensive affair that could be afforded only once in a decade, if at all.

Some *cacā pyākhā* drum compositions were performed every year during the first week of *mvahani* in Patan where Śākya and Vajrācārya dancers present the spectacular Aṣṭamāṭṛkā dance *gā pyākhā* that was installed in 1563 by King Śrī Nivās Malla of Lalitpur<sup>11</sup>. Those unfamiliar with Newar culture may wonder how it is possible to have tantric Hindu gods and goddesses impersonated by Buddhist dancers with *pañcatāla* accompaniment provided by an instrumental



Fig. 141: *Gā pyākhā* dancer wearing the mask of Mahākālī during the initial performance, Patan 1991

ensemble of Vajrācāryas and Śākyas. When this masked dance was founded during the 16th century, Buddhism and Hinduism had already co-existed for centuries and were assimilated by Newar culture that offered a safe haven to a multitude of groups and cults. The worship of Bhairava and the Aṣṭamāṭṛkā mother goddesses is a central cult in every Newar town, whether Bhaktapur with its Hindu majority or Buddhist Patan. (Figs. 139–141)

11 old name of Patan



Fig. 142: Ratnakaji Vajracharya teaching at home 1992

The *āgamchē* of Bhaktapur's Vajrācāryas in Yatachē was within hearing distance from my roof terrace and I remember the muffled sounds of *cacā* singing across the courtyard between the buildings—on one occasion even during a *śraddha* ancestor ritual in a Śākya neighbour's home. But when I asked to learn their drumming repertoire, I was told that it did not exist in Bhaktapur. The door remained shut until I met the only person who was willing to teach outsiders.

The late Ratnakaji Vajracharya of Kathmandu (Fig. 142) was open-minded enough to initiate me with a Nāsaḥ *pūjā*—no blood sacrifice; an offering of eggs and flowers sufficed—at the *lāykū* Nāsaḥdyaḥ shrine next to the New Road roundabout (Fig. 143). He taught me the complete repertoire of the *pañcatāla* drum at his home, reciting the compositions from his family manuscript and demonstrating the playing techniques. The playing technique of *pañcatāla* is compatible with that



Fig. 143: Lāykū Nāsaḥdyaḥ with offerings, next to the New Road roundabout, Kathmandu 1992



of Bhaktapur's compound drum *kvatāḥ*<sup>12</sup>. But the *pañcatāla* drumming syllables and patterns do not have anything in common with the *kvatāḥ* repertoire.

In Ratnakaji's manuscript compositions are written in Devanāgarī script, with two curious signs representing frequently occurring groups of four drumming syllables. A circle with a cross stands for the four strokes *galascaka* and a circle with a curved line stands for four strokes *takūnyekū*, indicating a turn for the dancer. The manuscript includes directions for the dancer's movement along a triangular line as the clock moves. Ingeniously, these drumming syllables serve as a combined memory aid for four different areas of musical expression, recitation, drumming, playing of natural trumpets and dance with an elaborate 'language' of meaningful *mudra* gestures. (Fig. 144)

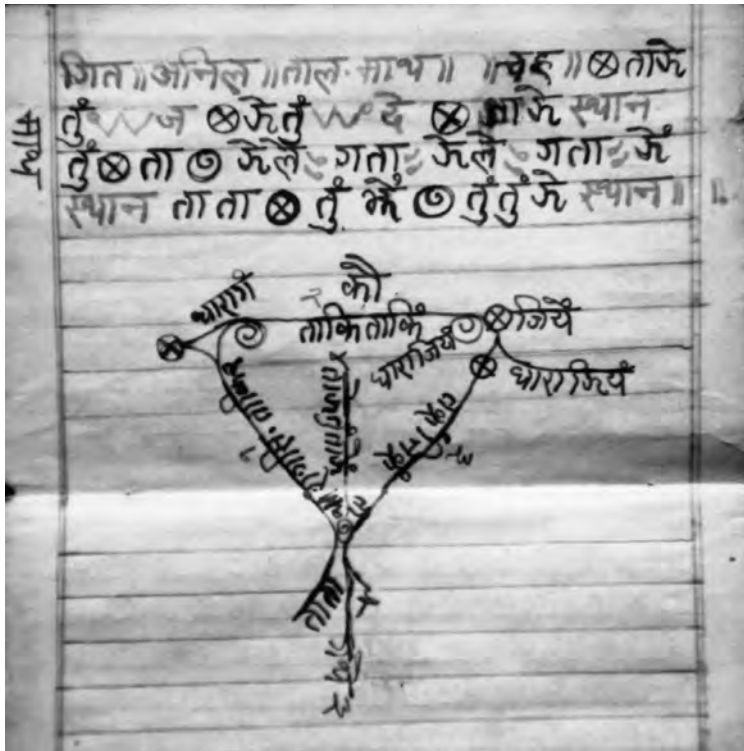


Fig. 144: Page from Ratnakaji's manuscript with drumming syllables of the piece *māthe yā kau* superimposed on a chart of the dancer's movements along a triangular line. What appears in grey, is written with red ink, indicating the dancer's movements, for example *ja* stands for *japa* (right) and *de* stands for *depa* (left).

When Ratnakaji recited the syllables, he used two different pitches, the basic note and the fifth (S and P in Bhatkhande notation). In my notation, syllables written in the lower boxes are to be recited as the basic note. Syllables written in the upper boxes are to be recited as the fifth

12 documentation of *kvatāḥ* playing technique see chapter 6.2

4 Dances

above the basic note. During recitation, almost every note was consistently presented with small inflections, little slurs and waves indicating how the natural trumpets are supposed to play. The total effect of his recitation resembled a tone language. In my notation, these embellishments appear as wiggly lines above the boxes. The following example shows the initial four lines of *mu dyahllhāygu*. The capital letters T and C above the system represent the cymbal strokes *tīn* and *chu*. Syllables in capital letters at the beginning of the piece are not drumming syllables but are sung by the drummer as a time signal to other players:

/Ā - - HĀ - - /HĀ - - HĀ - - /CA - - CA - - /CA - - HAḤ - o /

Sung time signals may appear several times within one composition. Drumming syllables are written in small letters (systems 3 and 4 in the example below). A horizontal line in a box means that the previous syllable continues to sound. A small circle in a box is a rest. (Fig. 145)

The diagram shows four systems of musical notation on a grid. Above the grid, capital letters T and C indicate cymbal strokes. The first system has notes: Ā, HĀ, HĀ, HĀ. The second system has notes: CA, CA, HAḤ, o. The third system has notes: ga las, ca ka, dhā, jī, ta ku, nā. The fourth system has notes: ga las, ca ka, nā, di o o. Wavy lines above the notes indicate inflections. Horizontal lines in the boxes indicate that the previous syllable continues to sound. A small circle in a box indicates a rest.

Fig. 145

When my *pañcatāla* apprenticeship was complete, I met the Bhaktapur Guruju who earlier had refused to teach me<sup>13</sup> and I showed him what I had learnt in Kathmandu. He admitted that the compositions were exactly the same as those that he had, as the repertoire had come from Kathmandu to Bhaktapur. According to him, those few Vajrācāryas in the Kathmandu Valley who were capable of playing the pieces, had to combine forces during important *pūjās*. In 1992, the number of initiated *caryā* dancers had dwindled to twelve individuals. Ratnakaji had already mentioned that it was this critical lack of manpower and concern for the impending end of their tradition that had caused some Vajrācāryas in 1957 to opt for teaching compositions of lesser ritual importance to outsiders. Other Gurujus had insisted on complete secrecy—whatever the consequences. The Bhaktapur Guruju played one piece for me. The syllables were mostly what I

13 He asked me to remain anonymous, fearing criticism from his community.

had learnt in Kathmandu. But his way of playing the drum was different (see second chart below), sometimes using other drumheads than Ratnakaji. Sometimes he used longer rests and different pitches during recitation. It did not significantly alter the result. Finally, he offered to teach me his complete *pañcatāla* repertoire. Chapters 11.18 and 11.19 include both, the Kathmandu repertoire and what remains of the Bhaktapur tradition of *pañcatāla*.

The following charts of drumming syllables and basic patterns of the *pañcatāla* offer comparison between the Kathmandu tradition taught by Ratnakaji Vajracharya and the Bhaktapur way of playing. Three lines represent the compound drum's three heads that are played with dampened, open and ringing strokes. (Figs. 146, 147)

#### **Kathmandu *pañcatāla*:**

Loud ringing strokes *nā* and *yā* are produced by the right hand on the higher sounding head of the horizontal *lālākhī* drum and are represented by a circle on the middle line. Open (*ki, gi, ci, tī, tye, da, nye, nva, sī, galascaka*) and dampened (*di*) strokes produced by the right hand on the same drumhead are represented by a dot and a cross on the middle line.

Open (*dha, dhā, dhye, ji*) and dampened (*di*) strokes produced by the left hand on the lower sounding head of the horizontal *lālākhī* drum are represented by a dot and a cross on the lower line.

The upper line represents the small head of the drum tied vertically in front of the *lālākhī*. It is played with both hands producing only dampened (*ta, tan, tā, takūnyekū*) sounds.

The *pañcatāla* drum repertoire of Kathmandu includes the following compositions: *Mū dyaḥl-hāygu, tvāka dyaḥlhāygu, svā chāya, jhapa tāla, jhapa yā kau, eka tāla, jati, durjamān, bhramarā, sanī, caspati, trihudā, jhāka, chādana, maṅgala, lapaha, khatākāra, vatikā, pyēgamātha, māthe yā kau* and *sunyamātha*.

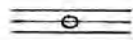
#### **Bhaktapur *pañcatāla*:**


Loud, ringing sounds never occur. The correlation between syllables and playing technique appears arbitrary and inconsistent. I take this as a proof of a sadly neglected tradition of *pañcatāla* playing in Bhaktapur and recommend using the much more dependable Kathmandu version of surviving *pañcatāla* compositions. It represents a living tradition, not a half forgotten one. Bhaktapur *bhramarā* has a brief *mantra pvaṅgā* solo, a recitation and a few drum strokes whereas the Kathmandu *bhramarā* does not have an additional drum section.

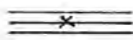
The *pañcatāla* drum repertoire of Bhaktapur includes less compositions. The following pieces of the Kathmandu repertoire were missing: *tvāka dyaḥlhāygu, pyēgamātha* and *māthe yā kau*.

**Kathmandu Pañcatāla**


Higher sounding head of lālākhī (right hand)

*nā̃, yā̃ (loud, ringing)* 

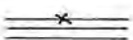
*ki, gi, ci, tū, tye, da, nye, nva, sī (open)* 

*di (dampened)* 


Lower sounding head of lālākhī (left hand)


*di, dha, dhā, dhye, ji* 


Drum tied in front of lālākhī (both hands)


*ta, tan, tā* 

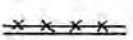
Stroke combinations

*jhī, jhē, thā* 

*dha ga, dī gi* 

*nā̃ di* 

*takunā̃, khatyenā̃* 

*takūnyekū* 


*galascaka* 

Fig. 146

**Bhaktapur *Pañcatāla***

Higher sounding head of *lālākhī* (right hand)

*ki, ci, ji, tū, tye, da, di, nā̃, nye, nva, yā, sī* (open) 

Lower sounding head of *lālākhī* (left hand)

*gi, di, dha, dhā, dhi, dhye, ra* 

Drum tied in front of *lālākhī* (both hands)

*ka, ga, gā, tā, tan, tye, thā, dā, dā, na, nye, nva, ra, sī* 

Stroke combinations

*jhī, jhē, thā* 

*dha ga* 

*nā̃ dī, dī gi* 

*takunā̃, khatyenā̃* 

*takūnyekū* 

*galascaka* 

Fig. 147

#### 4 Dances

A typical sequence of *caryā* dances performed during public shows in Kathmandu in the 1990s by dancers trained by Ratnakaji Vajracharya—including his talented son Prajwal Ratna Vajracharya and five more dancers<sup>14</sup>:

- *Ṣodaśa lāsya*—dance of sixteen offerings (for three dancers)
- *Mañjurī* (three dancers)
- *Pañcabuddha* (five dancers)
- *Āryatārā* and *Amoghasiddhi* (two dancers)
- *Maṇḍala nṛtya va yoginī*
- *Gaṇeś*
- *Nairātmā*
- *Bhairava*
- *Aṇṇapūrṇa*
- *Siṃha murthī*
- *Māyājālā* (sad, about illusion, only for ritual)
- *Bajrayoginī*
- *Bajrapāṇī*
- *Lokeśvar*
- *Āryatārā*

Performance of this programme takes approximately eighty minutes. Prajwal allowed me to photograph his demonstration of different postures and *mudrā* gestures applied during those dances (Figs. 148–154).

His father and *guru*, Ratnakaji Vajracharya told the story of the origin of *pañcatāla* compositions:

Surtavajra Vajrācārya was a powerful tantric Buddhist yogi who practised spiritual self-discipline *tapasyā* at Guhyeśvarī near Paśupatināth. He attained supernatural magic *siddhi* powers and created the drumming syllables and compositions for the *pañcatāla* drum, weaving in powerful *mantras*.

To master these *mantras*, his disciples were required to face the true nature of their existence by practicing austerities at the *masān* cremation site. They were afraid of this special *sādhana* discipline and learnt only the plain drumming syllables that they passed on. Surtavajra left the Kathmandu Valley to pursue his practice at *Kāśī* (Benares) where local people built a small *caitya* for him. Uttering a special *mantra*, he transferred the monument to Kathmandu. It stands at *Sīghaḥbāhā* (*Śīghaṭamahāvihāra*) or *Kathesībhū* as the centre of the big *caitya* later built around it. Next to this *caitya* stands the *āgāchē* where the highest *caryā* dances were performed in secrecy.



Fig. 148: Prajwal Ratna Vajracharya

14 according to their programme notes



*Figs. 149–150: Prajwal Ratna Vajracharya demonstrating caryā dance postures*



Fig. 151: Prajwal Ratna Vajracharya demonstrating *caryā* dance postures



Figs. 152–154: Prajwal demonstrating *mudrā* gestures, the most prominent element of *caryā* dance



Stylistically the *pañcatāla* repertoire stands apart from all other Newar drum traditions. It is slow and serene in character, almost entirely free of identical repetitions. With the complete absence of lively rhythms, the effect of the pieces resembles that of a slow *sūtra* recitation. The *pañcatāla* drum and the natural trumpets could be later additions to an essentially vocal practice. The number of cymbal strokes that go with the long *mū dyaḥllhāygu* is one hundred and eight—symbolizing perfection and also the number of beads in a Buddhist *mālā* rosary and of the emanations of Avalokiteśvara, et cetera. I presume that much more symbolic meaning is woven into these compositions and could perhaps be revealed after initiation into the dance practice.

## 4.2 Navadurgā *pyākhā*

Members of the Gāthā<sup>15</sup> gardener caste take turns in performing the annual Navadurgā dance cycle that was introduced by King Suvarṇa Malla of Bhaktapur (1505–1519). The caste ranges at the same ritual level as other lower occupational castes, blacksmiths, barbers, painters, oilpressers, torch bearers, dyers, palanquin bearers, etc. According to legend their musical instruments—the barrel-shaped *dyaḥkhī* drum, the hourglass-shaped *ḍamaru/dabadaba* drum, the pair of heavy *tāḥ* cymbals made of bronze and the large pair of flat *jhyāli* cymbals made of brass—were stolen in Harisiddhi and brought to Bhaktapur during the early 16th century when the Navadurgā dance started. The *dyaḥkhī* carries a small silver mask of Kālī in front of the ram's horns representing Nāsaḥḍyaḥ tied to it.<sup>16</sup> It also carries a silver container with a nail pointing into black *mvahani* soot preserved from the *khame* buffalo sacrifice during Mahānavamī. Before the Navadurgā leave their *dyaḥchē* god house for processions, a vertical line is drawn with sacrificial soot on every dancer's forehead, supposedly transporting them into another state of consciousness. (Fig. 155)

Originally, the Navadurgā roamed as bloodthirsty man-eaters in a forest near Nala. They were tamed and subdued with magic. A Brahman with rare tantric skills and strong charms succeeded in turning them into a beneficial troupe of powerful divine protectors. A scary uneasiness remains, as no charm was strong enough to suppress their vampire habits. Painted fangs on their masks betray their lust for blood gushing from the severed jugular vein of sacrificial animals. They maintain a playful but disturbing habit of catching children—reluctantly releasing them after a few seconds—with their veins intact.

Until the general use of mobile phones in Bhaktapur for the past twenty-five years, taking pictures of the Navadurgā remained strictly taboo. The dancers are bound by an oath not to reveal any detail of their sacred tradition. This concerns also their music. As a resident of Bhaktapur I was obliged to respect their rules and over the years we became friends. In 1988, ten young Gāthā men chose me as their teacher of the *dhimay* drum. But discretion had to be maintained. Sorry, dear reader, but the study of the music of the Navadurgā remains to be documented by a future ethnomusicologist—possibly of educated Gāthā background. My colleague under the German Nepal Research Programme, the architectural anthropologist Niels Gutschow is much

15 Gathu in Kathmandu Newari.

16 The only other drum carrying such horns is the *kvakhī/dhā* played during *navabājā* performances.



*Fig. 155:* Harsha Prasad Banmala playing the *dyaḥkhi* during a ram sacrifice in Jēlā on Mahāṣṭamī 1983. The drum carries ram horns representing Nasahdyah and a small silver mask of Mahākālī. Then ignorant of the rules, I contributed the sacrificial animal against permission to take pictures during the ritual. After the first picture, this was prevented by an angry mob. The incident stifled my urge to document the music of the Navadurgā.

taller than I and capable of staring down a charging elephant, let alone an angered Bhaktapur mob. His impressive photo documentation of Navadurgā dancers and maps of their processional routes provide rare insight into this cult.<sup>17</sup> In 1990 and 1991 the Norwegian anthropologist Tordis Korvald applied her considerable charm as a fearless young lady from Bergen, and the Navadurgā instantly adopted her as permanent company.<sup>18</sup> A miracle!

17 cf. Gutschow and Basukala 1987 and Gutschow 2017 vol. 1, part II, pp. 42–109

18 Korvald 1993

During the rainy season Bhaktapur is left without protection of the Navadurgā. The dance masks are cremated on the day of Bhāgasiti (May/June). During monsoon the gods await reincarnation whilst people suffer from seasonal infectious diseases. This is regularly highlighted by the Municipality's efforts in spraying white chlorinated lime powder in the mucky areas bordering the brick pavement of Bhaktapur's less populated roads. On the day of Ghatāmugaḥ carhe (July/August) the advent of the new life cycle of the gods is heralded by a procession of Navadurgā dancers clad in white frocks and preceded by four Jugi shawm players and Sāymi oilpressers playing natural *kā* trumpets. They proceed from their *dyaḥchē* in Gachē to the potters' quarter Tālākva. The Navadurgā *nāyaḥ* draws a *maṇḍala* on the head potter's hand, blesses him for successful work and gives him a silver coin as an advance for various clay vessels that the Navadurgā are going to collect on Mahāṣṭhamī. The Navadurgā collect black clay to deliver it at the mask-maker's workshop in Yāchē. There they kneed the clay and divide it into proper portions, before consecrating the clay portions with a chicken sacrifice and returning to their *dyaḥchē* where the Jugi and Sāymi musicians are invited for a feast. Also the *kame* buffalo arrives at the Navadurgā *dyaḥchē*, to be fattened up and taken good care of until it is sacrificed on Mahānavamī at Brahmāyaṇī.

On the same day of Ghatāmugaḥ carhe people build ninety Gathāmugaḥ disease demons<sup>19</sup> in different localities of Bhaktapur. They use straw bundles and sticks for limbs, a painted round tray for a menacing face and a prominent arrangement of two grapefruits and a whopping straw phallus for male sexual organs. At dusk, the naughty effigies are pulled out of town and burnt at the periphery to the cheers of the crowd. Mothers purify their babies in the smoke. It is the beginning of the festival season.

Until *mvahani* (September/October), the mask-maker Purṇa Chitrakār builds the dance masks to prescribed size and paints the glorious faces of the gods. The Navadurgā masks include the gods Śiva, Gaṇeśa, Maheśvarī, Brahmāyaṇī, Kumārī, Bhadrakālī, Vārāhī, Indrāyaṇī, Mahākālī, Siṃha, Bhairava, Duṃha and Śveta Bhairava. Arguably they are the most beautiful and perfect dance masks made in the Kathmandu Valley. They differ in material, size and painted detail from similar masks sold in tourist shops. Dancers support the heavy masks with a turban protecting their heads.

Apprenticeship of new dancers starts during the month of Śrāvaṇ (July/August). Every morning at 3 a.m. they wash their face and offer prayer at Brahmāyaṇī. In the evening they visit Jēlā Nāsaḥḍyaḥ with small offerings and prayer. The guru teaches them in their respective homes where both aspects of the music god, Jēlā Nāsaḥḍyaḥ and Haimāḍyaḥ are present in the form of betelnuts on rice mounds kept in clay cups<sup>20</sup>. Each dancer practises alone at home until one month before Mahāṣṭhamī. During this final month all dancers rehearse together in the courtyard behind the Navadurgā *dyaḥchē*. In the evening of Mahāṣṭhamī, the dancers are initiated at the shrine of Nāsaḥḍyaḥ in Jēlā. The drum, the two pairs of cymbals and the ankle bells for the dancers are placed on diagrams prepared with flour by the officiating tantric Ācāju ritual specialist. The instruments are decorated with flowers and other offerings to Nāsaḥḍyaḥ who resides in them and enables the annual re-appearance of musical sound.<sup>21</sup> In turn, the dancers receive their ankle-bells

19 cf. chapter 3

20 cf. chapter 2

21 cf. photo on p. 159

from the Ācāju who then proceeds to prepare the sacrificial ram for the sacrifice. As soon as the ram is sacrificed at the shrine of Nāsaḥḍyaḥ, the dancers rush to be the first one to drink warm blood from the animal's severed throat. Accompanied with *dyaḥkhī* and cymbals they perform the initial dance of their annual cycle—still without dance masks—before returning to their *dyaḥchē* for a feast. In a niche on the ground floor of the *dyaḥchē* the huge *khome* buffalo munches his fodder. He has another day to live.

In the late afternoon of Mahānavamī, the mask-maker displays the finished masks in the courtyard below his workshop in Yāchē. Thousands of Bhaktapurians pass through this courtyard to worship the masks and behold them in their glory. On the following day the masks will be soiled with sacrificial blood and red powder. In front of the temple of Yachē Gaṇeśa the local *navadāphā* group performs. Gradually people disperse until the Navadurgā dancers arrive late at night to collect the masks and carry them to the Brahmāyaṇī shrine east of Bhaktapur. It is inauspicious to watch them in the process. People keep away. Outsiders are prohibited from watching the earlier proceedings at Brahmāyaṇī. With the expert assistance of a senior Nāy butcher<sup>22</sup>, the *khome* buffalo is sacrificed as part of the ritual of the annual rebirth of the Navadurgā in their new masks. Carrying chunks of buffalo meat, seven Navadurgā dancers proceed to Yachē to provide meat as payment to the mask-maker before returning to Brahmāyaṇī with the new set of masks in their baskets.

In the early morning hours of Vijayā Daśamī a huge crowd arrives to take a purifying dip in the river—nowadays only a brief sprinkle of polluted river water or only a gesture suggesting sprinkling—and receive blessings from the Navadurgā. After a sleepless night and soaked with buffalo blood, the Navadurgā dancers distribute blessings in the form of flowers, food and ritual *pasūkā* garlands of differently coloured threads. The dancers rest until the late afternoon when the festive crowd returns to witness the sacred moments when at dusk the dancers put on the masks one after another and enter Bhaktapur in a glorious procession. The masks are brimming with powerful divine presence. The crowd escorts the gods into Bhaktapur in a grand manner. Cotton sheets are spread for the shivering dancers to proceed on with their bare feet.<sup>23</sup> People touch the masks, then their forehead with their right hand to partake in the divine energy. Processional music groups arrive with flowers and edible offerings. The arrival of the Navadurgā is a supreme moment of bliss. Until the early 1960s an ensemble of eighteen Sāymi oilpressers preceded the gods with natural *kā* trumpets, producing an ominous, powerful roar. Behind them followed the percussion ensemble of the Navadurgā with their rattling hourglass-drum and the scattered rhythms produced by *dyaḥkhī* and special cymbals. No other music sounds like that of the Navadurgā. At night it is instantly identified from a distance. Other music ensembles escort the Navadurgā at times, starting with the butchers' *nāykhībājā*, the natural trumpets played by oilpressers, further *dhimaybājā*, *dhābājā* and ensembles of transverse flutes *bāsuri*. These processional music groups play at the same time but never together with the *Navadurgā*. Stylistically apart, the music of the gods appears to come from another source beyond musical compatibility. People love making funny allusions based on drum patterns. The following citation of the basic

22 For several decades, this was the duty of my teacher of *nāykhībājā*, the late Kajilal Shahi.  
23 shivering indicates being possessed

processional Navadurgā pattern is a joke referring to the notorious alcohol consumption of the dancers. The words imitate the five beat metre and the cymbal strokes:

/ 1    2 / 3    4    5 / 1    2 / 3    4    5 /  
 / khē   o / kāl   o    o / bhatti o / thvā   o    o /

*Khē kāl* translates as ‘fry scrambled egg’, *bhatti thvā* as ‘local rice beer bar’, meaning:

‘Here comes the bar!’

Having entered Bhaktapur at the eastern gate, the Navadurgā attend their first invitations for ritual *dyaḥbhvaykegu* feasts, before proceeding to the Golden Gate leading to the Taleju temple in the palace compound of the Malla kings. The Taleju priests meet the Navadurgā in front of the gate, before they proceed to the inner *mūlcok* to greet Taleju. It was on this occasion when King Raṇajit Malla and his royal guest from Gorkha, Pṛthvīnārāyaṇa Sāha awaited the Navadurgā, that Bhairava presented *prasād* not to the King of Bhaktapur but to his cunning guest who was already planning to conquer the Malla kingdoms<sup>24</sup>. Every year the priests come outside with two insignia of the Malla kings, a sword and a horse. Together with the gods they walk along the *pradakṣiṇā*, first through the Lower Town, then the Upper Town. Hindu kings were considered *avatārs* of Lord Viṣṇu. So it was natural for them to keep good relations with other gods—definitely excellent publicity. If after 1769 the deposed Malla kings were reduced to symbolic representation in absentia, the *Sāha* (Shah) kings of Nepal and their queens visited the Navadurgā every Daśamī full moon in their *dyaḥchē*, to receive blessings in the form of a *tika* mark on the forehead and *prasād*. Every year, King Birendra Shah and later his brother Gyānendra donated a new set of costumes to the dancers. When monarchy was abolished in 2008, the Navadurgā lost important royal sponsors.

During private invitations to the Navadurgā people welcome the gods to feast and dance in front of their homes. Usually a piglet is sacrificed by ripping out its little heart. After a brief dance, Bhairava slits the skin open with a sharp fingernail, tears out the heart and throws it in front of the roofed palanquin of the oleander goddess Siphvadyaḥ. In front of the pot with oleander branches stands a wrought silver plaque depicting Mahālakṣmī. The mask of Mahādeva is tied to the roof pinnacle. This palanquin is always carried along when the Navadurgā attend private invitations and during their twenty-one neighbourhood visits. Immediately the other dancers arrive, keen on drinking their share of fresh blood. On special occasions, a family may offer *pañcabali*, five different sacrificial animals. In 1984 I witnessed a *pañcabali* offering in Kvāchē where the horrified buffalo calf watched with bulging eyes as the frenzied dancers sunk their teeth into its neck. During *dyaḥbhvaykegu* food and drinks are offered in excess. The dancers drink much, eat little and carry the rest home. Each of them has a grubby cotton bag attached to the right side of his coat, containing a mixture of food, raw meat and fruit. When the dancers want to offer a special treat to someone they are fond of, their hand disappears in the bag and emerges with a squeezed

24 according to Nepālikabhūpavaṃśāvalī 108–111, see Bajracharya and Michaels, 2016, p. 97

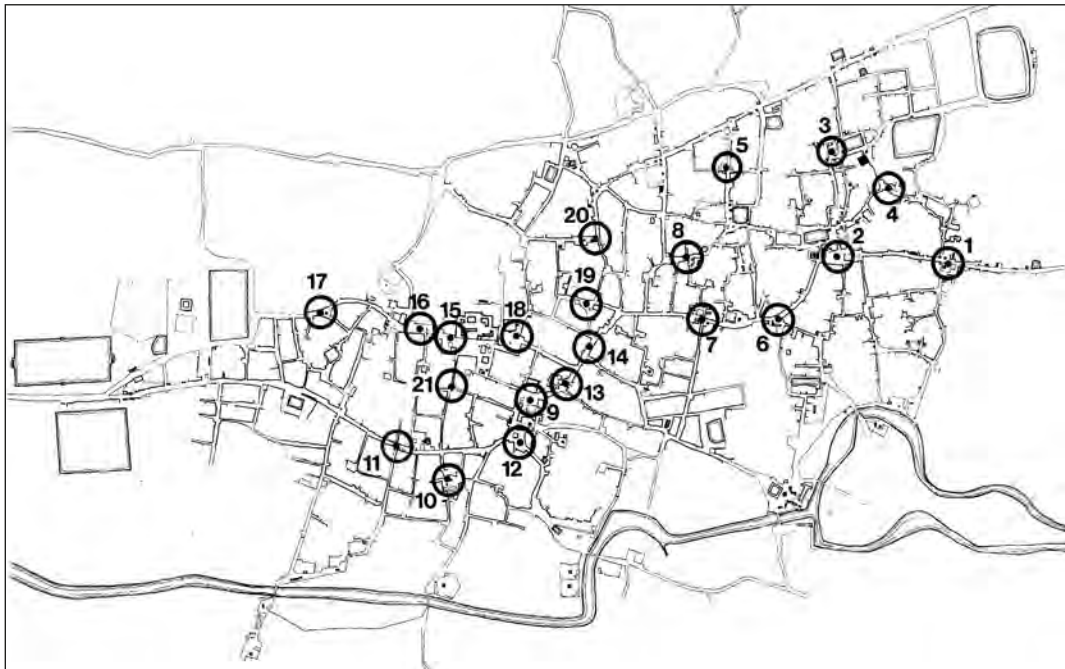
mixture of its contents that is offered as *prasād*, edible blessing. It should be eaten only by those who know exactly what they are doing.<sup>25</sup>

Before the 2015 earthquake, every full moon after *mvahani* was the day when the Navadurgā visited my home, a splendid 19th century structure inhabited by various descendants of the wealthy Śākya merchant who had built the house and had donated massive silver waist bells to the dancers. On this full moon occasion the dancers arrived not only wearing those precious waist bells but also with their portable palanquin and the severed head of the *khame* buffalo. A drummer and a *sichyāḥ* cymbal-player of the Nāy butcher caste used to walk in front of the Navadurgā, playing the *nāykhī* piece *pūjākhī* whilst carrying the reeking buffalo head. From personal experience as *nāykhī* drummer I can certify to the physical challenge of playing the *pūjākhī* piece during the procession from the Navadurgā *dyaḥchē* to my home in Yatāchē, with a bamboo pole resting on my right shoulder, carrying the dangling buffalo head. The gods receive offerings in exchange for distributing blessings. Before the feast begins, Kumāri holds a skull cup filled with rice beer and dances a polite beer-offering dance in front of the palanquin of the oleander goddess Siphvadyaḥ with the silver plaque of Mahālakṣmī. Having had their feast and a taste of fresh piglet blood, the Navadurgā used to come upstairs for a sip of cognac—their stomach lining being in superb condition.

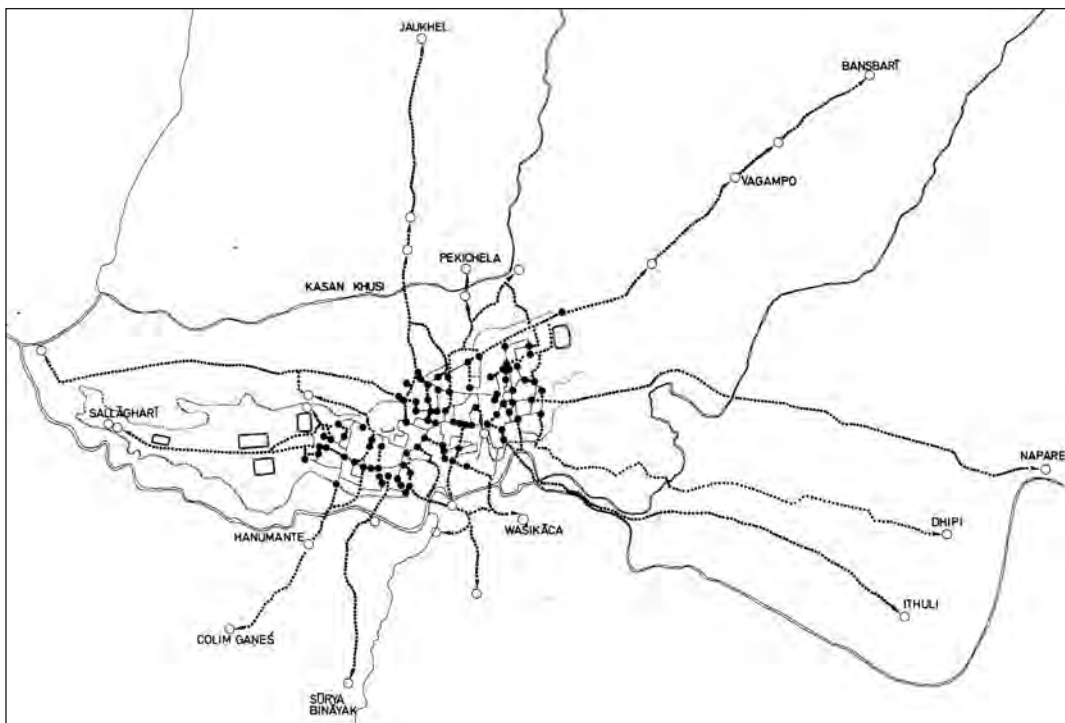
The most significant event after the *khame* buffalo sacrifice follows eight days after Mahānavamī. It is called *bihi*, the blood-drinking ritual. For a week after the sacrifice, the *khame* blood and brains are left to decay in big clay pots kept in the Navadurgā *dyaḥchē*. The *bihi* ritual starts in the evening with Kumārī dancing in the courtyard of the *math* next to the Dattātreya temple, before the Navadurgā proceed to Gaḥchē where the remaining gods dance spectacular individual dances until those ghastly refreshments arrive from the Navadurgā *dyaḥchē*. During gaps between the individual Navadurgā dances, the butchers entertain onlookers by playing their lively dance piece *calti*. In the 1980s, the blood drinking ritual combined five different music ensembles playing simultaneously, lending significance to this event. It was the prime occasion for the earlier Gaḥchē *navabājā* to play. The ensemble did not survive King Mahendra's 'land reform'. Owing to the late hour, the climax of the ritual attracted only a handful of onlookers. On the arrival of the decayed blood and brains, the Navadurgā reveal their lust for blood in a telling display of frenzy.

When I trained ten Navadurgā dancers as *dhimay* drummers, I asked them casually how they could possibly consume those revolting things with such relish. "In everyday life we would not touch such things. When the goddess possesses us, it tastes like the most delicious food. It happens as soon as the mark of soot from the silver container tied to the drum touches our forehead," was the answer. Before the Navadurgā leave their *dyaḥchē*, a vertical soot line is drawn across their forehead with that nail in the silver soot container. That suffices to induce their lucid state as divine beings—their beneficial powers mixed with a streak of the old vampire habit. Communicating with them when they were in this state reminded me of certain situations in the psychedelic age back in the late 1960s. (Map 30, 31)

25 *Prasād* must not touch the ground. My advice: If you are not equipped with a resilient stomach lining, give the clammy lot to a child, make big eyes and say '*prasād*'. Children love this.



Map 30: Navadurgā annual visits to twenty-one neighbourhoods (map: Niels Gutschow, in Levy 1990, p. 233)



Map 31: Navadurgā visiting localities in and around Bhaktapur (map courtesy of Niels Gutschow)



Fig. 156: Gaṇeśa dances, supported by watching mother goddesses Brahmāyānī, Maheśvarī, Kumārī and Indrāyaṇī with *mudra* gestures. The masks of Mahākālī and Vārāhī are kept hanging at the wall. Annual Navadurgā visit to Sākvalā 2018 (photo: courtesy of Rajkumar Manandhar)

During winter and spring the Navadurgā observe a demanding schedule of visiting twenty-one neighbourhoods of Bhaktapur where they perform their popular *ṅalakegu* ritual, literally ‘fishing’.<sup>26</sup> This abbreviation for ‘catching a victim’ hints at earlier human sacrifice in the olden days. Invariably, a local processional music group proceeds to the Navadurgā *dyaḥchē* to escort the gods to their neighbourhood and back. In addition to neighbourhoods the Navadurgā visit nineteen villages within the realm of the old kingdom of Bhaktapur and beyond. They go to Paśupatināth at night to bang against the door of the locked shrine, in a robust greeting to Lord Śiva who prefers to avoid direct encounter. The doors remain shut.<sup>27</sup> They also visit the distant Nāsaḥḍyaḥ cave at Kabilās near Nuwakot. (Fig. 156)

The annual cycle of Bhaktapur’s Navadurgā terminates on the day of Bhāgasiti (May/June). The dancers enact their death in the *dyaḥchē*, falling on their back like May beetles. The tuning paste attached to the left drumhead of the *dyaḥkhī* is scraped off and the sacred music dies,

26 Gutschow 2017 offers an exhaustive photo documentation of the *ṅalakegu* ritual and the compulsory pantomime, a love scene or pas-de-deux of Śveta Bhairava and Mahākālī.

27 cf. Michaels 1994, chapter IV





Fig. 157: Shankha Bahadur Kulu performing *chemā pūjā* for the repaired *dyaḥkhī* drum. The ancient ram horns representing Nāsaḥdyaḥ, the silver mask representing Mahākālī and the metal container for sacrificial soot are tied to the drum after delivery to the Navadurgā. September 1990

too. A death procession heralded by butchers playing their death music *sībājā* and—up to the 1960s—eighteen oilpressers playing *kā* trumpets proceeds to Brahmāyaṇī where the masks and the tuning paste are cremated on a lotus-shaped carved stone in front of the shrine. The gods are dead, but not completely. They are said to reside in the flooded paddy fields, taking a temporary appearance as tiny little fish until the dry season arrives and the time for reincarnation as powerful protectors of Bhaktapur.

Before *mvahani* the Kulu drum-maker repairs and tightens the sacred *dyaḥkhī* drum. Both drumheads are made of *nāk* hides.<sup>28</sup> Owing to its special status as the seat of Nāsaḥdyaḥ during the annual dance cycle, the Kulu has to perform a *chemā pūjā* on completion of the drum repair, asking the god for excuse for having touched the drum with his feet in the process of tightening the drum straps. Before the 1980s this required a blood sacrifice. Later the god had to be content with an egg—for economic reasons. The original *dyaḥkhī* drum from the early sixteenth century must have been replaced at least once. This one carries the inscription (*siddham*) *śrī śrī sumati (ja)ya jitāmitra malla devasana dayakā samvata (N.S. 805?) vaiśākha śu di śubha*. Unfortunately the carving of the date is damaged but it is clear that King Jitāmitra Malla (r. 1673–1696) donated this drum that is still in use. (Fig. 157)

28 *nāk*: female domestic *yāk*, *Bos gruniens*

Not only musical instruments have a symbolic function. It appears to be typical of Newar culture that almost everything can have another meaning or several layers of meaning. This was very confusing when I began to learn the language. A ‘flat elephant’ means one thousand rupees, a ‘*pirāne pūjā*’ of a drumming apprenticeship means that someone became pregnant, having stomach pain means being jealous, etc. Almost everything can have sexual meaning—definitely when it comes to ‘drums’ and ‘drumming’. It takes years before one can speak Newari with confidence and without causing perpetual merriment. Until then it feels like treading on thin ice.

### 4.3 *Sāpāru* Dances

*Sāpāru* is a major town ritual for the living to celebrate the dead, escort them to heaven and dance away grief and sadness caused by the loss of a family member. Conceived to bring a smile to the face of a mourning princess, *sāpāru* required the combined efforts of all Bhaktapurians who exploded on royal command into a hilarious carnival with dances, cross-dressing and theatrical entertainments. The remedy worked. When the princess observed the proceedings, the corners of her mouth began to twitch. She smiled, she giggled and soon lost all regal reservation, roaring with laughter and producing tears of mirth, causing the entire court to indulge in general merriment. Her cure became immensely popular and had to be repeated every year on the day after *Gū punhī* (July/August). The festival is announced on full moon evening by a pitiful little stick dance organised by the local *guṭhi samsthān* office. An underpaid Jugi shawm-player and a *dhā*-drummer play an instrumental version of the identifying song, a dialogue:

*Tāhāmacā ganā taye?—Gvakhā pvāle taye.*  
*Gvakhā pvāle manhyā sā.—Khusī cūka chve.*

Where to dump the tall cow?—Put it into the wall niche.  
 It will not fit in the niche.—Dump it in the river.

Could there be a gentler vehicle for leading departed souls to *vaikuṇṭha*<sup>29</sup> than a cow? Every bereaved family prepares a cow effigy to be carried along the *pradakṣiṇa* route. These ‘cows’ can be of six varieties<sup>30</sup>. The most common variety is called *tāhāsā*, literally ‘tall cow’—in comparison to the small cow effigy used for dead children and shouldered by one person, with eyeholes for orientation. It carries a painted face of a cow, straw horns and a photo of the person who passed away during the past twelve months. In front of the *tāhāsā* cow effigy, family members and friends dance the popular *ghētāgiśi* stick dance<sup>31</sup> (Fig. 158). Small cow effigies for children are carried along the *pradakṣiṇa* route without music and dance during the night before the main festival day. In the 1980s the festival extended to an entire week of masked dances, theatrical sketches and

29 abode of Nārāyaṇa

30 cf. chapter 3

31 cf. Widdess 2006



*Fig. 158: Ghētāgīśi stick dance during sāpāru, preceding two tall cow effigies (in the background), 1988*

ballad singing. These were presented every night along the *pradakṣiṇa*, for a maximum number of people to watch at leisure. For the past thirty years stick dances have been performed not only on the first day in front of approximately five hundred cows leading departed souls to heaven but also without cows for the entire week, with banners highlighting some political agenda or just for the fun of it, the ‘Look at me!’ agenda. It is said that there was freedom of speech guaranteed during presentations—an exception during the absolute monarchy before 1990 and even more so during the restrictive Rāṇā regime (1846–1951). Even today, actors proclaiming political criticism prefer to remain unidentified and on the safe side, wearing masks or cotton bands covering their face. When we reconstructed the Dhaubhadel Śivalaya in 1995 to accommodate Kathmandu University’s Department of Music, some members of the local Stalinist party attacked me in style, using Gāicā *pyākhā* as their propaganda mouthpiece during *sāpāru* week. Those who insisted on complete control of Bhaktapur perceived the university department as an intruder. Fortunately things calmed down over the years into relaxed co-existence.

The gods, too, make their appearance during the first days of the *sāpāru* week. The cow processions end with Bhairava participating as a giant straw cow effigy together with his consort, Ajimā<sup>32</sup>. Two days later Bhairava in the company of a smaller palanquin with a statue of King Girvāṇ Shah are carried along the *pradakṣiṇa*, on the first day through the lower town and on the second day through the upper town. Other processions of gods include Sūrya Vināyak Gaṇeś, Lokeśvar, Caṇḍeśvarī (every twelve years), Dattātreyā and Vārāhī. These processions are announced by several music groups walking in front, raising expectations with a deafening mixture of various processional music genres—all playing and singing simultaneously at maximum volume that makes even the buildings tremble in the presence of the gods. In 1983 we identified the following dances presented during *sāpāru* week. They proceed stepwise along the *pradakṣiṇa*, every night performing in two or three squares where instantly audiences gather to enjoy the spectacle. (Figs. 159–171)

- *māka pyākhā* (monkey dance, virtuosic stick dances with special costumes and choreography, with *dhā* and *lālākhī* accompaniment): 2 or 3 groups,
- *bhālū pyākhā* (bear dance with *lālākhī* accompaniment),
- *mhvayakhā pyākhā* (peacock dance),
- *salācā pyākhā* (horse dance),
- *kalālicā pyākhā* (old ‘woman’ dancing with basket used for ritual offerings with): 3 groups,
- *jaṅgalī pyākhā* (thug dance),
- *khyāḥ pyākhā* (naughty spirits dance with *lālākhī* accompaniment): 3 groups,
- *ṇā pyākhā* (fish dance),
- Hanumān *pyākhā* (dance of the monkey hero with *lālākhī* accompaniment),
- *khicā pyākhā* (dog dance with *lālākhī* accompaniment): 3 or 4 groups,
- *nāgācā pyākhā* (dance of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa with flute ensemble): 6 or 7 groups,
- *phākādālī pyākhā* (butterfly dance with *lālākhī* accompaniment): 3 or 4 groups,
- *lusi pyākhā* (pestle dance): 3 groups,

32 cf. chapter 3



Fig. 159: *Bhālū pyākhā* during *sāpāru* week 1988. The sleeping ‘bear’ crouching in the centre is ready to pounce when angered by two clowns.

- *kavācā pyākhā* (skeleton dance with *lālākhī* accompaniment): 5 or 6 groups,
- *natuvācā pyākhā* (dance with taro leaves): 3 groups,
- *kapāy phenigu pyākhā* (cotton spinning song sung by ‘ladies’ at spinning wheels with *māḍal* and harmonium accompaniment): 6 or 7 groups,
- *Jyāpu-Jyāpunī pyākhā* (farmer ‘women’ serving drinks to farmers with *lālākhī*): many
- *Bhaila pyākhā*<sup>33</sup> (masked dance of the potters, with *dhā*, *lālākhī* and *pvaṅgā*): 3 groups,
- *Gāīncā pyākhā* (Gāine bard with toy *sāraṅgī* or sticks accompanying the song): many groups,
- *jhyāure pyākhā* (‘modern’ dance with pairs representing various ethnic groups): many groups,
- *Rāmāyaṇī pyākhā* (*bhajan* with children dressed as *Rāmāyaṇa* heroes, with *tablā* and harmonium): 3 groups,
- *khyāla pyākhā* (song with *māḍal* accompaniment and pair dances of farmers, mendicants, joker and quarreller): 2 groups,
- *nāṭak* (street theatre): many groups, and
- *kha pyākhā*<sup>34</sup> (opulent dance drama about *Mahābhārata* episodes accompanied with song, several drums, cymbals, *bāsuri*, *pvaṅgā* and *mvālī*).

33 see chapter 4.4

34 see chapter 4.6



*Fig. 160: Sujamādhī bāsuri khalah* accompany their grandsons' Rādhākṛṣṇa *pyākhā* during *sāpāru* 1988. Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa pinch each other's cheeks as part of their foreplay.



*Fig. 161: Salācā pyākhā* (horse dance), 1987



*Fig. 162: Khyāh pyākhā (naughty ghosts dance) 1988*



*Fig. 163: Māka pyākhā (monkey stick dance) 1988*



*Fig. 164: Cross-dressing (Jyāpu-Jyāpunī pyākhā), 1986*



*Fig. 165: Lākhe pyākhā (man-eating rākṣasa dance), 1986*





*Fig. 166: Gāicā pyākhā* (singing bards' dance), 1988



*Fig. 167: Garuḍa eagle*, a character of *kha pyākhā*, 1987



*Fig. 168: Kapāy phenigu pyākhā (cotton spinning song with beautiful 'ladies' at spinning wheels), 1990*



*Fig. 169: Bhaila pyākhā (Bhairava dance), 1988*



*Fig. 170: Khicā pyākhā (dog dance), 1988*



*Fig. 171: Kavācā pyākhā (skeleton dance), 1988*

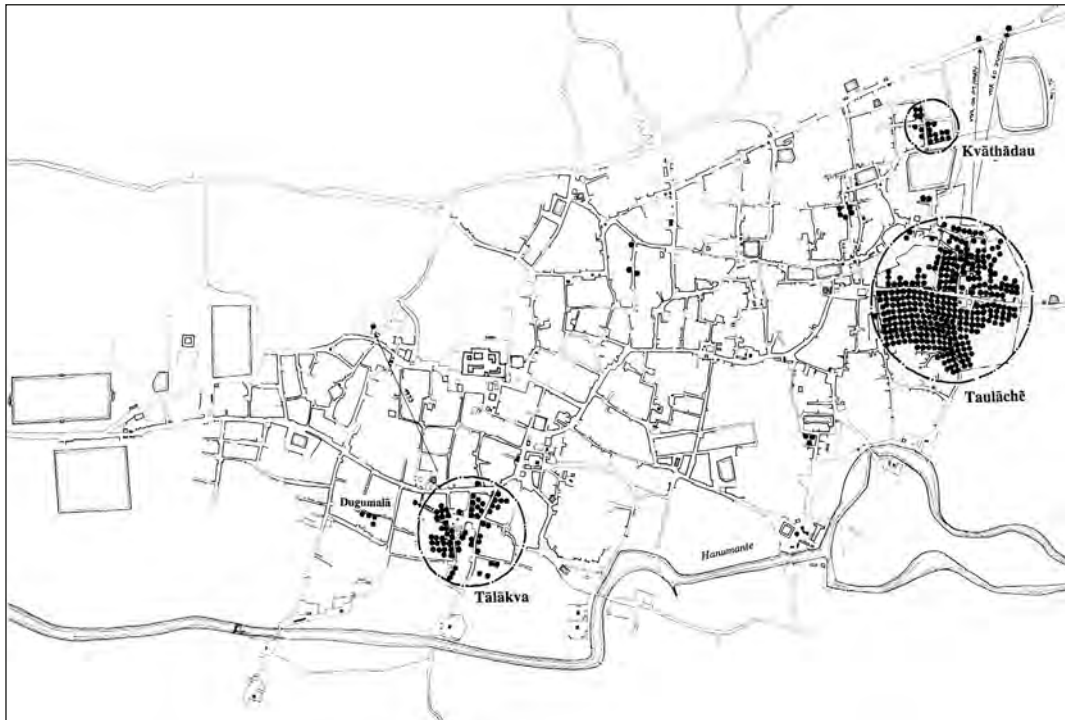
For the past twenty-five years, girls have increasingly participated in stick dances and theatre presentations. Some private schools prepared parades, theatre and dances presented by boys and girls.

The *ghētāgīsi* stick dance is accompanied with two alternating percussion ensembles, one or several *dhā* drums with pairs of *bhuchyāḥ* and *sichyāḥ* cymbals and the *lālākhī* drum with *tāḥ* cymbals. The notations of each drum's patterns are included in chapter 11.17. Before the procession starts, both percussion ensembles play their respective *dyāḥlhāygu* invocations. The dance begins when either one ensemble starts with the basic dance pattern and some of its variants in an even metre. Each pattern is repeated. On the final *tā* stroke of each line, the pair dancers' sticks meet with a clacking sound. When the lead drummer feels that the situation asks for more fire, he switches to a shorter version of the basic pattern that comes in triple metre, having shorter intervals between the clashing stick climaxes. Before everybody gets exhausted, the drummer plays an accelerating roll, signaling a change of percussion ensembles. The other group starts the same procedure from the beginning, allowing the earlier drummers to rest for a few minutes. In this way the procession trundles along the *pradakṣiṇā* route—with necessary interruptions for drinking water. Whenever they pass a temple or a shrine, the respective god or goddess is honoured with *dyāḥlhāygu*. After two to three hours the procession reaches the starting point where the organising family invites all participants for food and drinks. The drums and cymbals are immediately passed on to another procession. On this day, drums are in high demand and may take the round several times. The cow effigy is dismantled and unusable parts are dumped in the river—as the song suggests. Now everybody looks forward to the colourful performances of song, dance and theatre at night, anticipating an entire week of joyous entertainment.

#### 4.4 Bhaila *pyākhā*

One of the most spectacular masked dances performed during *sāparu* week at night, Bhaila *pyākhā* deserves a special chapter in this publication. Rather than telling a story, this is a set of different masked dances presenting Bhairava and his entourage of mother goddesses (Mahākālī, Kumārī, and Vārāhī) and demonic characters infesting cremation grounds—several bloodthirsty Vetālas, a Bhūcā, two dogs and two skeletons. Two acrobats in furry costumes are the undisputed highlight of the show. These Khyāḥ dancers present an instructive variety of erotic acts to the cheering crowd, highlighting sex as an antidote against death. At the finale of the show, a joker cum lion tamer appears with his beasts, a lion and a tiger. He teaches them to bow in front of the gods and serve them as vehicles. The gods dance to the raucous sounds of several *dhā* drums, *bhuchyāḥ* and *sichyāḥ* cymbals and natural trumpets *pvaṅgā*. *Nāykhī* is played only for one short piece before *dhā* drums take over again. The dancers who perform in pairs, Khicā (dogs), Kavācā (skeletons) and Khyāḥ need the softer accompaniment of *lālākhī* and *tāḥ* cymbals. Other drum patterns are also part of the *dhābājā* and *navabājā* repertoires. In the context of Bhaila *pyākhā* they are played much slower, allowing dancers to synchronize their movements with the drumming. Some key patterns appear also in the *lālākhī* accompaniment of *dāphā* songs, reminding singers of the dancing gods. (Figs. 172–181)

Kumāḥ potters live mostly at the southern and eastern end of Bhaktapur, where they produce household ware burnt in small straw-fired kilns (Map 32). Bricks were produced outside the old



Map 32: Kumāh potters' homes are clustered around their kilns and potting wheels (map: Niels Gutschow, in: Gutschow 1982, p. 50)

town. After the 1988 earthquake and with massive building construction taking off during the following decades all over the Kathmandu Valley, brick production became a huge business that brought handsome revenues to the town council issuing permits for installing industrial brick kilns. Vast agricultural farmland around Bhaktapur was lost, polluted or built on. Farmers had sold their land, many finding themselves as a new proletariat. Food prices soared, as it had to be imported. Looking from my rooftop in 2002, we counted one hundred and thirty ring kilns with their chimneys belching out black soot and sulfur dioxide. Air pollution had become a deadly menace. Respiratory problems were the chief cause of death. Industrial ring kilns needed hundreds of cheap workers who lived on the site. Wages were so low and working conditions so abysmal that this attracted more and more seasonal workers from extremely poor rural areas of West Nepal. Despite getting skin eruptions caused by the acidic fumes, needy Bhaktapurians used to knead mud and bake bricks ahead of the expensive New Year festival, to afford sacrificial animals and compulsory gifts for family members. All this made some potters rich whereas most of them remained poor.

It has been the pride and privilege of Bhaktapur's potters to organise and present the spectacular masked dance *Bhaila pyākhā* during the nights of the *sāpāru* week (July/August). The dance group of Tālākva collaborated with tourism entrepreneurs to present staged performances combined with stylish dinners. The potters of *Taulāchē* had always financed their annual masked dance with difficulty. In 1988 Jagadish SJB Rana decided to help this dance group with new costumes, wigs and a set of eight new *pvāṅgā* trumpets.



Fig. 172: Kumāh potters of Taulāchē performing Bhaila pyākhā with dhābājā (sāpāru 1988). Mahākālī (left) and Varāhī (right) threaten demons with swords and skull cups.



Fig. 173: The new pvaṅgā trumpets accompanying a Bhaila pyākhā performance in Yātāchē (1989)



Fig. 174: *Bhaila pyākhā* performance in Yātāchē (1989): Bhūcā, Kumārī, Mahākālī and Bhairava brandishing their swords. Characters in the foreground: Khicā (dog), Betāḥ (Vetāla), Kavācā (skeletons)

Two dogs are part of Bhairava's entourage. They dance a popular duet where the least appealing habits of dogs occupy a prominent place. They frighten children with growling and barking. They even pee on the audience—everything in rhythm, of course.

The composition *dhamāk* for the *navabājā* drums *dhimaycā*, *nāykhīcā*, *dhalak*, *pachimā* and *nagarā* uses the typical patterns of *Khyāḥ pyākhā*, the dance of naughty ghosts that lurk on rooftops at night and paralyze people in their sleep. The victim is unable to move and unable to shout. Paralysis begins in the lower legs before it swiftly moves upwards. Before morning arrives, it vanishes. This kind of nightmare appears to be a common experience with Bhaktapurians—perhaps reflecting the tight rules and restrictions of traditional Newar society. The dance is performed by equally naughty and capable young men wearing fur costumes and dangling tongues. Their acrobatics and demonstrations of erotic postures are a favourite with audiences—everything in rhythm, of course.

Simonne Bailey accompanied the Taulāchē dancers over a decade with the natural trumpet *pvāṅgā*. She observed how all the children in the neighbourhood practised the moves and were clearly impressed by the selected cast members. The skeletons were always the youngest boys. Later they graduated up to be dogs and after they might become other minor gods like Vetāla, Bhūcā or Kumārī. She was impressed with the strong community spirit but noticed also that this was changing by 2014 because of school homework. Some of the boys were barred from dancing because school became more important to families paying school fees. The Taulāchē group surpassed the other *Bhaila pyākhā* groups because they used mature men for the main characters and not callow youth which lacked stature.



*Fig. 175: Bhaila pyākhā performed by potters of Taulāchē: Bhairava leading his entourage through a circular dance, brandishing a sword and a skull cup for collecting sacrificial blood (August 1988)*



*Fig. 176: Silver bracelets worn by Mahākālī*





*Fig. 177: Bhaila pyākhā: Fastening Khīcā's ankle bells during a performance by potters of Taulāchē 1988*



*Fig. 178: Khyāḥ pyākhā performed by potters of Taulāchē, August 1988. A pair of Khyāḥ doing it to public glee.*



*Fig. 179: Bhaila pyākhā: mask of Mahākālī made by Purna Chitrakar*



Fig. 180: Bhaila *pyākhā*: Kavācā *pyākhā* performed by potters of Taulāchē, August 1988



Fig. 181: Potters of Taulāchē accompanying Bhaila *pyākhā* with *dhā*, *bhuchyāh* and *tāh*, 1988

## 4 Dances

The complete transcribed drum repertoires of Bhaila *pyākhā*, Khicā *pyākhā*, Kavācā *pyākhā* and Khyāḥ *pyākhā* are included in chapter 10.6. Drumming syllables differ a little in comparison with similar *navabājā* compositions. The number of pattern repetitions depends on the dancers completing a circle or a specific movement. When I learnt this repertoire and was allowed to accompany the dances, it struck me like a revelation that I was watching a four-dimensional realisation of the drum patterns and their sacred meaning—all this generated by music emanating from my drum. The beauty of this experience was overwhelming.

### 4.5 Mahākālī *pyākhā*

Mahākālī *pyākhā* is a masked dance based on an episode of the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa where the mothergoddesses slay arrogant *daitya* demons. Despite contradictory legends of origin narrated by dancers<sup>35</sup>, there is no evidence that the music is older than the late 17th or 18th century. Unlike the ancient cult of the Navadurgā with their masks containing the power of the gods, Mahākālī *pyākhā* is a spectacular entertainment celebrating the popular triumph of good over evil. It sets the mood for the advancing *mvahani* festival that celebrates the victory of the goddess Bhagavatī over the demon. The masks are briefly worshipped by the dancers before the performance but not by the public. In contrast to the Navadurgā masks, they are treated as part of the costumes, not as vessels of divine bliss.

The programme of a Mahākālī *pyākhā*<sup>36</sup> includes mostly complete *navabājā* compositions to highlight characters and stages of the drama:

1. *ḍyaḥllhāygu* (all dancers pray to Nāsaḥḍyaḥ for a successful performance)
2. *jati* (the mothergoddesses: Mahākālī, Mahālakṣmī and Kumārī)
3. *partāl* (Mahākālī dances with one Betāḥ, two Khyāḥ and two Bhvucā)
4. *dehrā* (Mahālakṣmī dances with one Betāḥ and two Kavācā)
5. *calti* (Kumārī dances with one Betāḥ and two Khyāḥ)
6. *kavācā khīpvu* (two Kavācā)
7. *dhamāk* (two Khyāḥ)
8. *jaṅgali khīpvu* (two humans from the jungle)
9. *partāl* (Lākhe, a scary but fascinating ogre)
10. *calti* (Kumārī slaying the demon Sumbha)
11. *dehrā* (Mahālakṣmī slaying the demon Nisumbha)
12. *partāl* (Mahākālī slaying the demon Mahesāsūr)
13. *dehrā* (the three goddesses Mahākālī, Mahālakṣmī and Kumārī combined)
14. *kvakhīcā me* (the three goddesses receive offerings from a ‘farmer woman’)
15. *dhētidhā dhā* (a lion trainer cum joker teaches Śiṅgha and Śer how to bow to the goddesses)

35 see Okuyama 1981

36 also called Devī *pyākhā*



Fig. 182: Surya Shankar Manandhar playing a painted *pachimā* with accompaniment of two Jugi shawm players (Kamal and Maṅgalāl Kapālī) and *sichyah* cymbals for a performance of Bahatāle Devī *pyākhā* in 1989

Among fifteen items, eleven are also *navabājā* compositions played by *dhā*, *pachimā* and *nagarā* drums with cymbals and—the latter two drums—shawm accompaniment. *Jati* is a special piece for the mothergoddesses and their entourage—without demons, of course—to dance a circular dance where the goddesses proceed into the centre and end with a united stamp, telling all demons to take heed.

In the 1980s, Bhaktapur's six Mahākālī *pyākhā* groups performed in Bhaktapur only for touristic events, like 'Traditional Dinner & Masked Dances'. Traditionally Mahākālī *pyākhā* was presented during Indra *jātrā* in Kathmandu where the Mahākālī *pyākhā* dance groups from Bhaktapur performed for local sponsors. After registration at the Hanumān Dhokā palace the groups moved from neighbourhood to neighbourhood. All the groups received payment by His Majesty's Government (HMG). Some of these groups gave weekly tourist performances in Kathmandu hotels. This could explain the odd inclusion of *Lākhe* dance that was never a Bhaktapur tradition. *Lākhe* dance is popular in Kathmandu and in the western part of the Kathmandu Valley. The ogre is said to spontaneously grab a child for human sacrifice from amongst fascinated onlookers—only in the olden days, of course. But *Lākhe* dance with its wild and erratic movements has lost none of its fascination. During the 1980s and 1990s the most professional group was Bahatāle Devī *pyākhā*. Contrary to other groups where children take the minor roles, this group used only adult male dancers who were handpicked from different localities and different castes on the basis of their performance skills. This group was paid Rs. 2,500 for a hotel performance. His Majesty's Government paid Rs. 3,450 for four performances at Hanumān Dhokā during Indra *jātrā*. The group received a minimum of Rs. 500 for performances on private invitation during the Indra *jātrā* week. A *phalicā* porch was supplied for dancers and musicians to sleep in. (Figs. 182–191)



Fig. 183: Mahākālī slaying an evil Daitya demon to the accompaniment of *pachimā* (Bahatāle Devī *pyākhā*)



*Fig. 184: Lākhe dance during a recording session of Bahatāle Devī pyākhā in Yātāchē 1988*



*Fig. 185: Jagadish Rana (far right) watching the apotheosis with lion and tiger (Bahatāle Devī pyākhā)*



*Fig. 186: Kumārī (Bahatāle Devī pyākhā)*





*Fig. 187: Kavācā mask (Bahatāle Devī *pyākhā*)*



*Fig. 188: Demon making noise with his waist bells (Bahatāle Devī pyākhā)*



*Fig. 189: A strapping Kavācā (Bahatāle Devī pyākhā)*



*Fig. 190: Charging Lākhe demon (Bahatāle Devī pyākhā)*



*Fig. 191: Giving the lion a final touch (Bahatāle Devī pyākhā)*

#### 4.6 *Kha pyākhā*

An astounding achievement among Newar dance dramas created during the Rāṇā period, *kha pyākhā* was put on by one hundred and fifty farmers of Byāsi. *Kha pyākhā* enacted the Mahābhārata episode of King Virāṭa at whose court—the ruins lie east of Birātnagar—the exiled *Pāṇḍava* brothers found refuge. Starting with the *sāpāru* week, it took twenty-eight days to perform and was presented on *dabu* stone platforms in four localities of Bhaktapur. Dancers acting as royals wore embroidered Rāṇā style costumes. Owing to immense production costs involved and no external funding available, *kha pyākhā* was not sustainable. In 1987 there was an attempt to revive a few dances that allowed me to document a rehearsal in Byāsi. Most of the accompanying drumming pieces were compiled from the *lālākhī* and *navabājā* repertoires. As with the earlier foundation of *navadāphā* groups, a similar concept of including all possible sources of musical sound must have been at work. This extravagant dance drama required singers, two *lālākhī* drums with four *pvaṅgā* natural trumpets, *dhā*, *dhalak*, *pachimā*, *nagarā* drums, *bhuchyāḥ*, *sichyāḥ*, *tāḥ*, *baucā* (*jhyālicā*) cymbals, ten transverse flutes *bāsuri*, four *pvaṅgā* trumpets and four Jugī musicians playing *mvālī* shawms. (Figs. 192–194)



Fig. 192: Character from *kha pyākhā* of Byāsi, 1987



*Figs. 193–194: Characters from kha pyākhā of Byāsi, 1987*

#### 4 Dances

A complete performance of *kha pyākhā* comprised of sixty-six different dances and drumming pieces:

Dances/Characters <sup>37</sup>	Accompaniment
1. Gaṇeśa	<i>jati</i>
2. Sarasvatī	<i>maṇḍala</i>
3. Sutra	<i>jati</i>
4. Nati	<i>maṇḍalā</i>
5. Yudhisthira and five others	<i>jati, cvakh, tipā, maṇḍala</i>
6. Dhritadāsa and army (100)	<i>cvakh</i>
7. Dhauma Ṛṣi (3)	<i>rabi sikha</i>
8. Durapaḍa Rājā and four others	<i>partāl, tipā</i>
9. Rādhikā	<i>tipā</i>
10. Kutyādi	<i>kharjati</i>
11. Birāt Rājā	<i>jati</i>
12. Śedume Dhāgo	<i>kharjati</i>
13. Jimuta Madi	<i>cvakh</i>
14. Achau	<i>kharjati, tipā</i>
15. Bindubāsinī	<i>jhākā, tipā, partāl, palimpi</i>
16. Mu	<i>tipā</i>
17. Birātādī	<i>palimpi, tipā, maṇḍala, partāl</i>
18. Kṛṣṇa Khalag	<i>jati, partāl</i>
19. Bhimādhī	<i>palimpi</i>
20. Bhimasena	<i>partāl</i>
21. Kāsī Rājā	<i>cvakh, tipā</i>
22. Arjunādi	<i>maṇḍala, tipā</i>
23. Draupadi	<i>tipā</i>
24. Meghāṣedu	<i>palimpi</i>
25. Saha	<i>partāl</i>
26. Nakula	<i>tipā, partāl</i>
27. Arjuna	<i>tipā</i>
28. Sudeśa Nādi	<i>tipā, palimpi</i>
29. Anupā	<i>partāl, tipā</i>
30. Utarādī	<i>cvakh</i>
31. Bṛheta Bala	<i>tipā</i>
32. Kṛṣṇa Arjuna	<i>partāl, tipā, palimpi</i>
33. Kāligara	<i>cvakh</i>
34. Upakīcaka	<i>mandala, palimpi</i>
35. Kīcaka	<i>tipā, palimpi, partāl</i>

<sup>37</sup> spelling as given by Byāsi informant



36. Sikārī	<i>tipā</i>
37. Sidhārī	<i>palim̐pi</i>
38. Sudesnā	<i>palim̐pi</i>
39. Mallāḍī	<i>tipā, cvakh</i>
40. Bindu	<i>tipā, palim̐pi</i>
41. Sairandī	<i>tipā, kharjati</i>
42. Rākṣasa	<i>jhākā</i>
43. Ballaba	<i>palim̐pi, tipā, partāl, jhākā</i>
44. Duryodhana	<i>partāl, palim̐pi, tatali, tipā, thatā</i>
45. Cāhārgana	<i>tipā</i>
46. Caukidār	<i>palim̐pi, maṇḍala, tipā</i>
47. Nakali Kīcaka	without drumming
48. Raṇa Macharṇa	<i>tipā</i>
49. Surasena	<i>palim̐pi, cvakh, dukha tipā, tipā</i>
50. Susarmā	<i>cvakh, tipā, palim̐pi, maṇḍala</i>
51. Cāhāra	<i>tipā</i>
52. Khargi (Nāy)	<i>ravisikha, cvakh</i>
53. Prajā	<i>maṇḍala</i>
54. Kāsi Rājā	<i>palim̐pi</i>
55. Gopāla	<i>cvakh, maṇḍala, dukha tipā</i>
56. Bṛhamnalāḍī	<i>palim̐pi, tipā, kharjati, cvakh, maṇḍala</i>
57. Utarāḍī	<i>tipā</i>
58. Utara Kumār	<i>tatali</i>
59. Birgaṇa	<i>maṇḍala</i>
60. Rath ko lāgi	<i>maṇḍala</i>
61. Mantri Ādī	<i>tipā, palim̐pi</i>
62. Yudhisthīra	<i>palim̐pi, partāl, ektā</i>
63. Kabīr	<i>tipā, cvakh</i>
64. Debagāyani	<i>tipā</i>
65. Dhumemāyani	<i>maṇḍala</i>
66. Prajā	<i>jhākā</i>



## 5 Song Groups, Bards and Beggars

The South Asian song genre *bārahmāsa* depicts human emotions in relation to the changing moods and characteristics of nature during the twelve months of the year. The twelve months fall into six seasons *ṛtu*. The six seasons are called *vasanta*<sup>1</sup>, *grīṣma*, *varṣa*, *śarad*, *hemanta* and *śiśira*. There are additional songs related to festivals and to stages of fieldwork. Newar song genres and their seasons:

*Vasanta*: *basanta me* and *rāg sārāṅg* were sung/played from Śrī *pañcamī* up to *hvali* fullmoon during the month of *phāgun*. *Hvali me* were sung from *aṣṭami* to fullmoon, *cīr sāskār* and *cīr dāhā* only during fullmoon night. After *hvali* fullmoon *ghātu* songs were sung.

*Grīṣma*: *ghātu* songs were sung up to the Bhaktapur New Year. After the *liṅga* fell on Baiśākh 1st (*biskāḥ*), *svarat* songs followed for one month.

*Varṣa*: The rainy season began with rice planting songs *pvāre me*, then transplanting songs *sinā-jyā me*, then weeding songs *thukājyā me*. These were only sung in the fields. To ensure fertility<sup>2</sup>, fertile women had to sing planting and transplanting songs. *Silu me* was sung during the month of Śrāvaṇ, as Śrāvaṇ fullmoon is the time for pilgrims to reach the sacred *tīrtha Silu* (Gosāiṅkuṇḍa). In the 1980s, during the evenings of the *sāpāru* week, a group of farmers living in Sujamādhi proceeded along the *pradakṣina* route, singing two of the most famous ballads, *silu me* and *sādeś* whilst carrying a large hand-written songbook with the complete text. The ballads were presented with much emotion, gesturing, even weeping at the tragic climaxes. This is but one example of the vast repertoire of *me* that *bāsuri bājā* draws their repertoire from. (Figs. 195, 196)

*Śarad*: The festival season was the time for *mārsi* songs in *rāg mālāśrī*.

*Hemanta*: *Burājyā me* were sung when preparing rice grain to ferment for beer production. When carrying the major amount of harvested rice grain home for sun-drying and later storage, a big mound of rice was left in the field and covered with bundles of straw where it fermented for two weeks until the grain reached the desired brown colour<sup>3</sup> and moldy flavour for rice beer (*thvā*)

1 Spring starts on the day of Māgh *pañcamī* (middle of January).

2 the exception being *Cvarcā bāsuri-dhimay-khalaḥ* who took all their instruments to play in the field in support of their women who did the sowing

3 called *hākuvā*, lit. black rice



Fig. 195: Jyāpunī singers Surya Lakshmi Kaju, Indra Lakshmi Duval, Buddha Lakshmi Kusi, Chandramaya Kusi, Subindra Layba and Puneshvari Kusi of Sujamādhī during a strictly private recording of rice transplanting songs *sinājyā me* at my home, 18/8/1987. Ladies were not supposed to be heard singing in the streets. So the recording had to proceed with subdued voices—and much giggling.

production. When there were no vehicles, this grain was carried home after a *pūjā* for Lord Gaṇeśa. These joyous grain-carrying processions were held with song and panache. All this joy vanished in the late 1980s when real estate business and brick factories uprooted agriculture. (Fig. 197)

*Śīśira*: During the cold season, praise songs for the gods were helpful for keeping warm. These could be sung during any season, for example *Dasavatār me*. During marriage processions, one heard *duḥ dhānkegu me*. This song refers to the earlier custom of the groom's party that carries the bride to the groom's home in a hammock. The song was sung as soon as they leant the bamboo pole *duḥ* with the hammock against the bride's house, to announce the time of her departure. All this has been replaced long ago with decorated vehicles and Hindi film songs. *Tvaphā me* and *mārā me* were sung during the month of Māgha. There were countless songs relating to gods—useful during any season. As some gods have their special day or days of the week, those songs were sung on the appropriate day.

During the 1980s, itinerant Gāine bards with their *sāraṅgī* fiddles sang their Nepali song repertoire in villages and at bus stops all over Nepal. Perceived as a typical aspect of Nepali folk culture, these professional musicians belong to the untouchable Gandharva caste. During the 19th century, five Gāicā—as they were called in Newari—and their families had been permitted to settle at the northern periphery of Bhaktapur in Bhvalāchē Ligācā, arguably the filthiest lane in town. Before



Fig. 196: Farmers of Sujamādhī singing *silu me* during a recording session 19/8/1983.



Fig. 197: Farmers of Sujamādhī, each person carrying 80 kg of grain whilst dancing and singing *burājyā me*, 1986



Fig. 198: Kṛṣṇa Gopāl Gāine (1934–1993) with *sāraṅgī* (bow with five tiny brass bells) and cigarette, 1988

the land reform in 1963 there was land that supported their musical duties during Newar festivals. During *mvahani* nights they had to sing *mārsi* songs in Newari in front of houses assigned to them. As this happened between midnight and 3 a.m., most people perceived these songs in their dreams. During an age without motorized traffic, this had a lovely, soothing effect—a surprise gift<sup>4</sup> to an audience that was only half awake and went back to slumber with a smile. What luxury!

4 This was much nicer than the aggressive stomping routine of night watchmen disturbing everybody's sleep in Indian suburbs, demonstrating that they are on duty and making sure that they do not encounter burglars.

The last active singer, Kṛṣṇa Gopāl Gāine sang *mvahani* songs in Newari, starting during the first night of *mvahani* at the Taleju temple. During the following festival nights he sang for twelve neighbourhoods in the upper and lower town. During Mahāṣṭhamī he sang in front of the Taleju temple in Kathmandu, during Mahānavamī in the Taleju courtyard in Bhaktapur. Two weeks later he sang during *dugupūjā*, and during Bhaktapur's New Year festival on 3rd of Vaiśākh for the Mahākālī-Mahālkṣmī *jātrā*, all this amounting to performances in sixty-six localities.<sup>5</sup> People living in the assigned houses used to give him grain and straw after the rice harvest. To feed his family, Kṛṣṇa Gopāl went fishing in ponds and rivers. Endowed with exceptional charisma, he also worked as a *vaidya* healer, a skill learned from his father. He also toured villages around Bhaktapur to play and sing in Nepali. In 1988 we recorded his complete repertoire, fifteen hours of songs. He had written down the song texts in five thick volumes. They were photocopied and bound and later kept in the library of Kathmandu University's

Department of Music—along with his *sāraṅgī* that I was able to purchase from his family after he passed away. His nephew Bharat Nepali works at the department as *sāraṅgī* teacher and is much in demand as a studio musician in Kathmandu. (Fig. 198)

During the 1990s, many Gandharvas had left their traditional occupation in search of alternate ways of survival. One exceptionally talented Gandharva, Ram Saran Nepali achieved international fame during concert tours with the *tablā*-player Homnath Upadhyaya. They played mostly for expatriate Nepali audiences in the U.S. and other countries. In 1990, Ram Saran suddenly arrived at my home and poured out his troubled feelings. He suffered from the conflict between his artistic vision of beauty and peace that he found in nature and the depressing social reality in Nepal as an uneducated member of his despised caste. He sang for us a *dukha* song that exposed his intense suffering. It was presented with sublime artistic conviction. Ram Saran Nepali passed away in 1995. (Fig. 199)

In 1986 an itinerant bard arrived at the Dattātreya temple, to stay with his small family, a Baul from Bengal (Fig. 200). He and his wife sang ecstatic *bhakti* songs of longing of the human soul for union with Lord Viṣṇu, accepting occasional offerings from locals and tourists. They



Fig. 199: Ram Saran Nepali singing a *dukha* (anguish) song at my home 18/8/1990

5 In 1988 Niels Gutschow produced a map of these locations. Gutschow 2017, p. 426



Fig. 200: Baul Dās playing *ānanda laharī* and ankle bells during a recording session, 31/3/1986

accompanied themselves with the typical Baul instruments, plucked drum *ānanda laharī*, *dotār* lute and *ghuṅgrū* ankle bells. Poorly equipped to cope with the Himalayan winter, they left Bhaktapur after much shivering and coughing. (Fig. 201)

In 1983 two destitute Brahmācārī singers arrived from Far West Nepal to stay for two years. They came from one of the country's poorest regions where some families were forced to sell their children into prostitution or slavery in India, as they were unable to feed them. These undernourished boys had been told to leave their village for seven years and spend a pious life in purity on their path in search of divine help. Their only equipment was a small *ektāra* drone





Fig. 201: The *ānanda laharī* chordophone, a plucked drum



Fig. 202: Brahmācārī singers Hari Prasād and Kṛṣṇa Prasād with *ektāra* during a recording session, 17/8/1983

instrument (Fig. 202), to accompany two begging songs that they learnt before being sent away. The two songs were loosely based on episodes of the Rāmāyaṇa epic, one of them a gruesome ballad of a beheaded damsel. Neither the songs nor their rendition appeared effective in feeding the boys. When those seven years were over, they returned to their village—accompanied by Axel Michaels who wanted to know what would happen. They were treated as unwelcome visitors and left to continue their journey into nowhere.

### 5.1 *Dhalcā* and *Bhajan*

*Dhalcā bhajan*, *rās bhajan* and *gyānmala bhajan* are the Newar equivalent of Indian devotional group singing at temples and religious congregations. It is the standard musical and emotional expression of *bhakti*, loving surrender to God. *Dhalcā bhajan* uses the *dhalak* drum and cymbals as accompanying instruments, playing the *tālas calti* (4 + 4 *mātrā*), *dehrā* (4 + 4 *mātrā*), *partāl* (3 + 2 + 2) and *kharjati* (3 + 2 + 2). *Rās bhajan* and the Buddhist *gyānmala bhajan* use *tablā* and harmonium<sup>6</sup> as accompanying instruments. The more recently imported genre *rās bhajan* uses the Indian *tālas kaharvā*, *dādarā* and *dīpcandī* or local variants of these *tālas*. It has this in common with *gyānmala bhajan* that was introduced during the 1940s by Buddhist monks in Svayambhū and initially banned by the ruler Juddha SJB Rana who perceived the new genre as a threat against Hinduism. Participation in *bhajan* singing transcends the limits of caste—nowadays also of gender. It is open to all. The map below testifies to the enormous popularity of these genres during the 1980s as the general evening occupation of Bhaktapur males. This changed abruptly with the introduction of television. Most groups stopped performing, with the exception of town rituals. (Map 33)

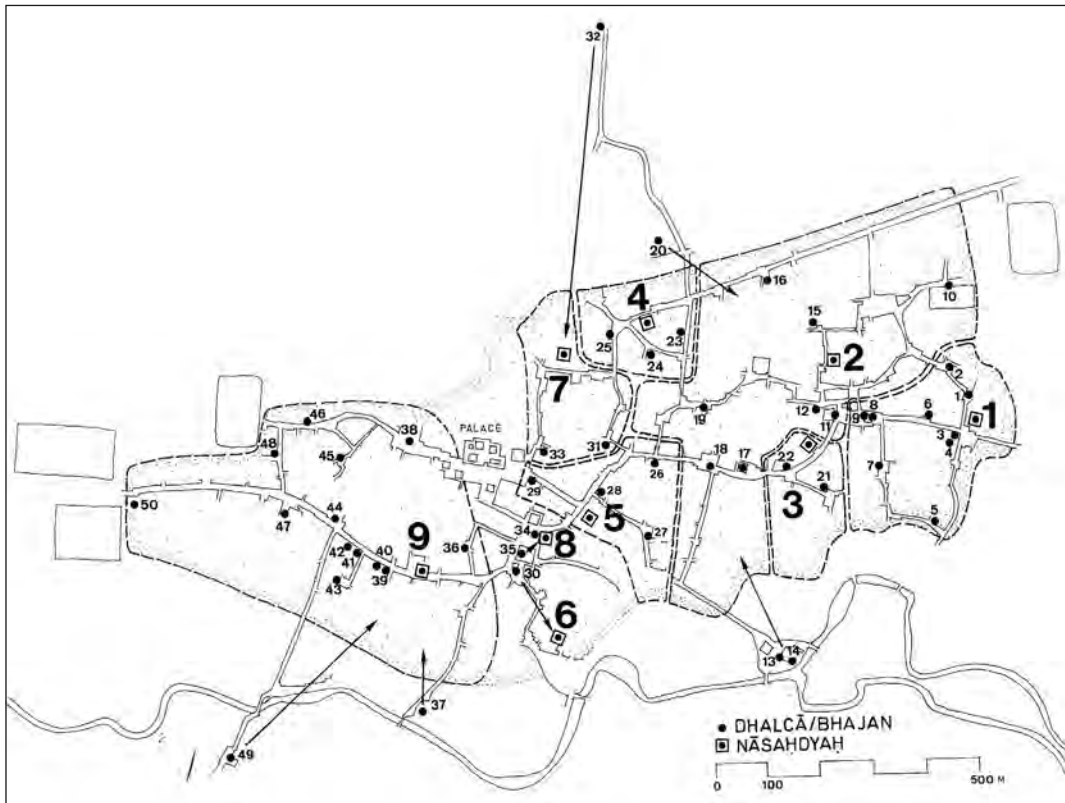
During processions *bhajan* groups turn mobile with the help of transport bicycles. In the case of *rās bhajan*, the accompanying instruments are placed on a cart that is pushed along the processional route in front of the palanquin carrying the god. The players walk directly behind or next to the tray where they can reach the *tablā* and the harmonium. This is a recent fashion. Before 1951, the use of the wheel was restricted to chariots carrying gods during town rituals. The only exceptions were luxury cars for the Rana rulers. Those vehicles and also grand pianos were status symbols that had to be carried to Kathmandu by manpower. (Figs. 203, 204)

The only *kvakhīcā-dhalcā* group in Bhaktapur uses a *kvakhīcā* instead of a *dhalak* drum, playing the same *tālas* as other *dhalcā* groups. These compositions are also played as part of the masked dance and *navabājā* repertoires. (Fig. 205, Map 34)

A typical *dhalcā bhajan* performance in the courtyard of Vākupati Nārāyaṇa included the following *dhalcā bhajan* songs and Newar *tāls*:

1. *Dyaḥlhāygu* (instrumental)
2. *Sitakamalā* (*rāg*: *maru*, *tāl*: *dehrā*)
3. *Mālāsama* (*tāl*: *dehrā*)
4. *Devī Bhavāni* (*tāl*: *calti*, *kharjati*)
5. *Jaya jaya Machendranāth* (*tāl*: *dehrā*)
6. *He Mahādeva* (*rāg* *vasanta*)
7. *Badvachaba* (*tāl*: *dehrā*)
8. *Janāni yā hune* (*tāl*: *calti*)
9. *Taleju bina nā* (*tāl*: *kharjati*)
10. *Āratī* (*tāl*: *calti*)
11. *Jaya jaya Nārāyaṇa*

6 in Newari: *tamal* and *arven*



Map 33: Dhalcā and bhajan groups in relation to shrines of Nāsaḥḍyaḥ worshipped during apprenticeship, 1984 (map courtesy of Niels Gutschow)



Fig. 203: Rās bhajan group of Yāchē Gaṇeś with tablā (Tirtha Man Nāpit) and harmonium on wheels, sāpāru 1991

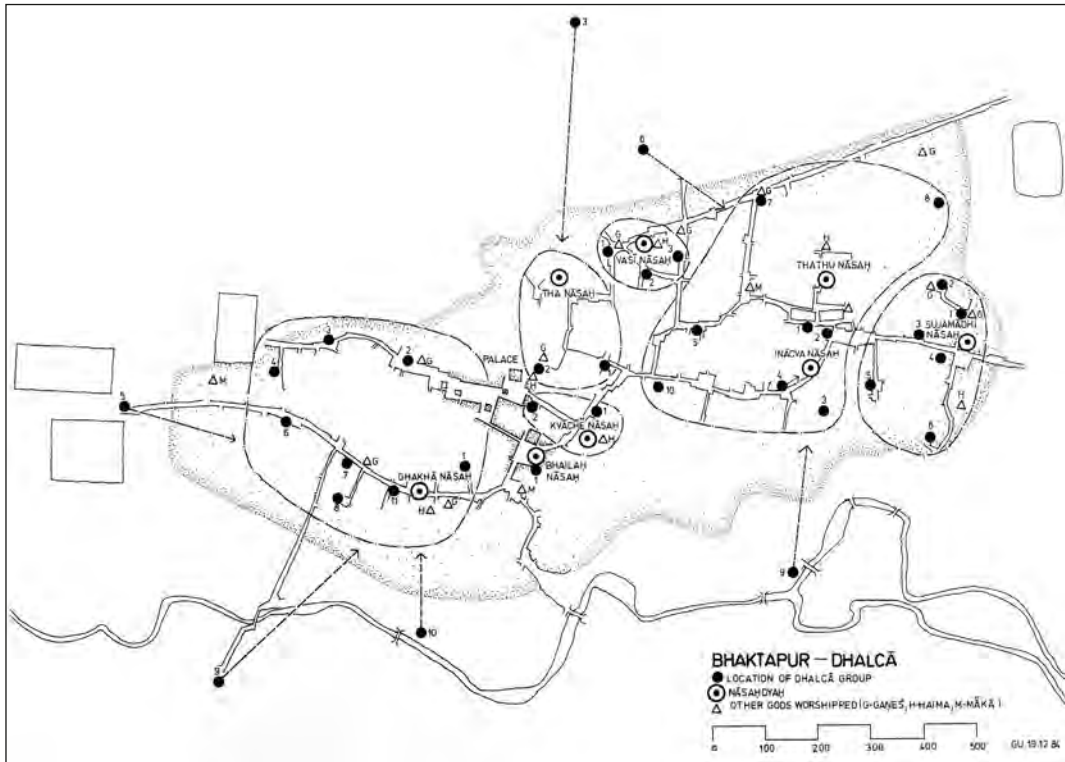
5 Song Groups, Bards and Beggars



*Fig. 204: Dhalcā-bhajan group singing on New Year's morning at Yaḥṣīkyah 1985*



*Fig. 205: Bhairavnāth kvakhīcā dhalcā performing on New Year's morning at Yaḥṣīkyah 1985*



Map 34: *Dhalcā* groups in relation to shrines of *Nāsaḥḍyaḥ* worshipped during apprenticeship, 1984 (map courtesy of Niels Gutschow)

During the 1990s, a few *bhajan* groups began to amplify their presentations with abominable technical equipment. It did not occur to them that neither the gods nor the neighbours needed a hearing aid. Drowning the neighbourhood with electronic noise is of no consequence in a culture where there is not even a word for ‘disturb’. Someone must have seen this in India where amplified prayer and call to prayer have been common nuisance for decades as a means of dominance. Mercifully, power cuts are a daily occurrence in Bhaktapur. (Fig. 206)

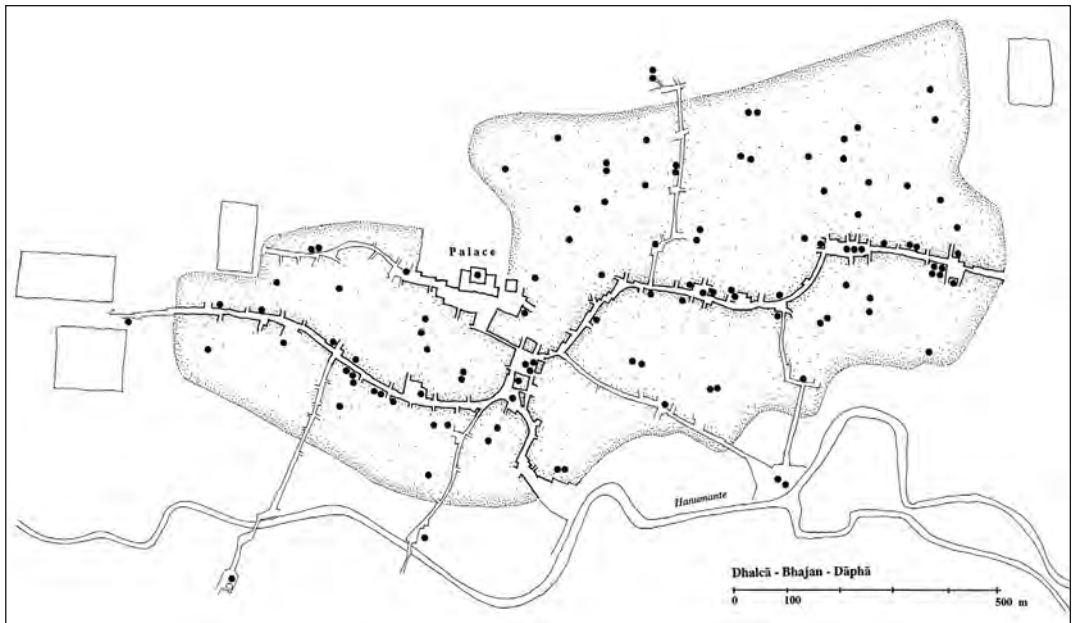
Dominance and competition are and should remain alien to religious group singing. This applies to *bhajan*, *dhalcā* and *dāphā*<sup>7</sup> as well. The essential value is not perfection but participation, being part of the community. This was definitely consolidated during daily performances. The joy and peace of mind that members of a song group experience together were an invaluable factor in maintaining peace and happiness in the neighbourhood. This is even more important in a society where hierarchy can be a cruel obsession and where jealousy and hatred among siblings and neighbours can sever relations for generations. Music making keeps those destructive passions at bay—at least during the performance. Singing and drumming together gives new energy to socialization and is—was—valued for its cleansing, rejuvenating effect on Newar society. (Map 35)

7 Widdess 2013, chapter 4 offers a detailed and enlightening discussion about the relationship of *dāphā* and the social order.

5 Song Groups, Bards and Beggars



Fig. 206: *Bhajan* group in Tilāchē having a fashionably amplified performance for the gods, 1990



Map 35: In 1983, 113 song groups of the three immensely popular genres *dhalcā*, *bhajan* and *dāphā* were singing daily for the gods, maintaining peace and happiness. With a few exceptions, all this has been lost. (map courtesy of Niels Gutschow).

## 5.2 *Dāphā* and *Lālākḥī*

With over sixty active groups in 1983, *dāphā* was the most popular genre of devotional group singing at temples and shrines. Descending of the ancient South Asian *prabandha gīta*, *dāphā* songs are set to *rāga* and *tāla*. The most experienced singer starts with a short vocal solo introduction called *rāg kāyegu*<sup>8</sup> that proceeds without fixed rhythm for approximately three minutes.



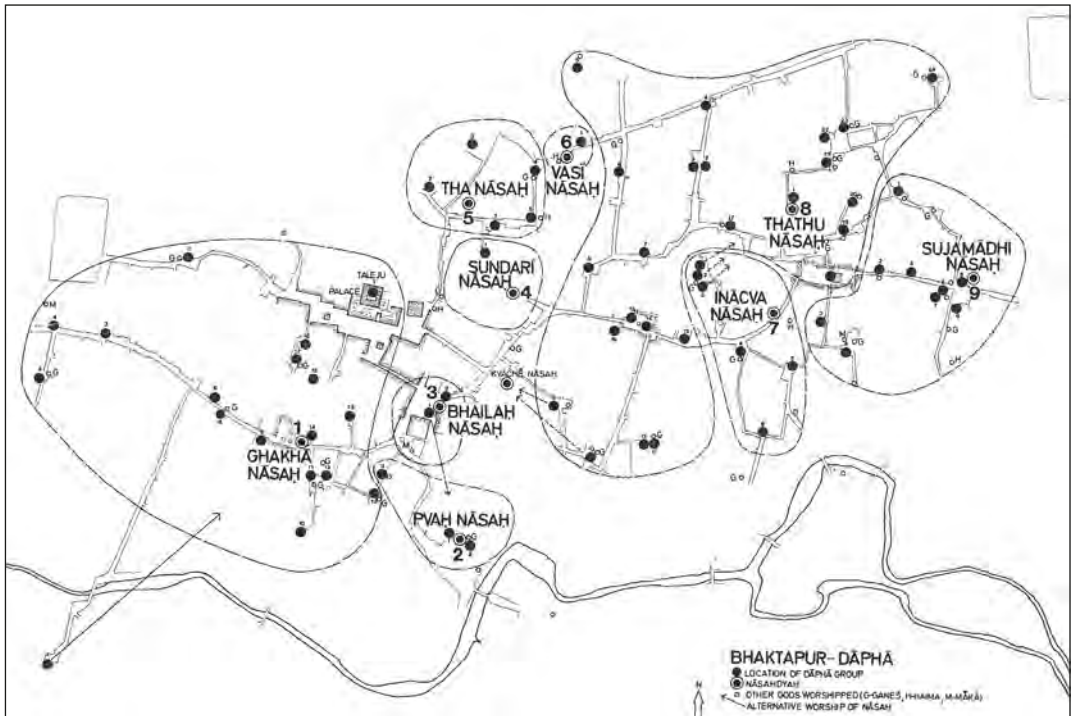
Fig. 207: Hand-written songbook of *Yāchē navadāphā* with song texts in black ink and names of *rāga* and *tāla* in red

The song begins in a set *tāla* with the accompaniment of one or two *lālākḥī* drums, cymbals (*tāḥ* and *ḥyālicā*) and—at the climaxes—two or more natural trumpets *pvaṅga*. The *pvaṅga* players maintain one main pitch with continuous undulation within a narrow area around this pitch. There are two groups of singers who sit facing each other, each group having a hand-written songbook lying on the floor in front of the lead singer in the centre of each row. (Fig. 207)

8 lit. taking or exposing the *rāg*

## 5 Song Groups, Bards and Beggars

Burning pairs of oil wicks resting in ornate brass lampstands help to illuminate the songbooks. Only song texts are written down and the names of *rāga* and *tāla* given. The rest is orally transmitted. One group sings the refrain *dhuvā* of the song, the other group responds by repeating this. This exchange continues several times until they join forces in a livelier tempo, *nhyāḥ*. The final stanza may include the composer's name, among them kings of Bhaktapur like Bhūpatīndra Malla or Raṇajit Malla—both passionate *dāphā* composer-singers. *Dāphā* sessions start with a long *dyaḥllhāygu* drum piece as an invocation of Nāsaḥdyāḥ. The session ends with *ārati* during which a special oil lamp with a statue of the donor is lit and briefly held in front of every musician who offers the *praṇām* gesture with folded hands, showing respect to Nārāyaṇa. (Map 36)



Map 36: Bhaktapur's 63 *dāphā* song groups, in relation to the various shrines of the music god Nāsaḥdyāḥ worshipped by group members during apprenticeship (map courtesy of Niels Gutschow)

*Dāphā* song texts are in Sanskrit, Maithili and Newari. Some groups sing the complete *padas* of Jayadeva's *Gītagovinda* (Fig. 208). The rarely literate older farmers of the early 1980s could not be expected to understand the subtleties and the dazzling beauty of the 12th century Sanskrit poem describing the love play of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. They were aware of the outlines of the story and recognized the names of the divine couple. The poem's age and immense popularity sufficed to hold it sacred. For a fascinating and detailed study of *dāphā* in Bhaktapur I strongly recommend Richard Widdess's brilliant publication<sup>9</sup>.

9 Widdess 2013





Fig. 208: *Dāphā* singers singing about the love play of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, 1989

The barrel-shaped *lālākhī*<sup>10</sup> drum accompanies *dāphā* songs, processions and several masked dances, for example Rādhākṛṣṇa *pyākhā*, *kavācā pyākhā*, *khīcā pyākhā*, *kha pyākhā* and the identifying stick dance of the *sāpāru* festival, *ghētāgiśi*. *Lālākhī* accompaniment of *dāphā* songs includes numerous citations of dance patterns that singers instantly identify<sup>11</sup>. The drum has black tuning paste *khau* permanently stuck onto both drumheads. It contains powdered iron ore. This allows for an elaborate finger technique and a variety of sound productions. Each drumhead consists of two hides—the lower one carrying the *khau* paste and the circular one on top. Both hides are woven into the outer leather ring with holes for the drum straps with V-lacing. Three pieces of cow hides are used and female goat hide only for the lower hide of the Nāsaḥ drumhead.

The accompaniment varies a little between different *dāphā* groups. The compositions transcribed in this publication are the complete *lālākhī* repertoire of Yāchē *navadāphā*. Ganesh Bahadur Sijakhva taught them to me in 1983 and 1984. What he taught were—with the exception of the *dyaḥllhāygu* invocations and *thata*<sup>12</sup>—not entirely fixed compositions but models that need minor adjustments to the various *dāphā* songs during performance. Ideally, a *lālākhī* drummer learns both the songs and the drum repertoire. Before a new *tāl* is taught during drumming apprenticeship, a blood sacrifice must be performed at the respective Nāsaḥ shrine. (Fig. 209)

10 also called *dāphākhī* or just *khī*, which is also the generic term for ‘drum’

11 Widdess 2013 mentions that *dāphā* singers sometimes perceive gods dancing in their midst, perhaps looking like masked dancers. Those associations and visualizations could have been triggered by respective dance patterns woven into the drum accompaniment. The names of such patterns are mentioned in chapter 11.12.

12 *Thata* can be played as an alternative to *dyaḥllhāygu* at the beginning of a *dāphā* performance, before the singing starts. It is ideal for the drummer to warm up.



Fig. 209: Ganesh Bahadur Sijakhva (with cap, next to the left stone lion) supervising his *lālākhī* students during their coming-out ritual *pirāne pūjā* of Yāchē *navadāphā* at the shrine of Thāthu Nāsaḥḍyaḥ 1987. The young *dāphā* singers proudly wear Nepali caps presented to them as a token of successful completion of their apprenticeship. Despite the fact that the sun is shining, lamp stands with burning oil wicks are kept in front of the songbooks. The lamp stand with the donor's figure in the centre is lit only at the end of the performance.

As far as I could see, most *dāphā* groups of Bhaktapur have a similar set of compositions for *dāphā* accompaniment. Only one farmer of Inācva, the late Hari Bhakta Kasichvah (Fig. 210), knew six more pieces that he allowed me to record before he passed away. During processions with *dāphā* singing, the drum is carried in a sling around the neck. The *ghētāgiśi* stick dance performed during *sāpāru* is based on a basic pattern and its variants, played by the two drums *dhā* and *lālākhī* alternating. (Fig. 211)

Before teaching compositions, Ganesh Bahadur gave me an exercise, *lāhā jukegu*, to create the habit of precise sound production. *Dyaḥlhāygu*, *cicāhāygu* *dyaḥlhāygu*, or *thata* are played as an offering before the *dāphā* singing starts. As indicated in the songbooks after the song text and the name of the *rāga*, the following compositions accompany the *dāphā* songs, *ghvasāh*, *astarā*, *ektā*, *cvakh*, *kharjati*, *partāl*, *lagasikha*, and *cālī*<sup>13</sup>. *Āratī* is played during the final light offering. The three examples of *rāg thvakegu* are not fixed compositions but flourishes that the drummer intersperses during the solo singer's *rāg* presentation before the *dāphā* song proceeds in a fixed *tāl*.

In the photo series below, Hari Govinda Ranjitkar demonstrates the *lālākhī* drumstrokes (Figs. 212–220). As a youth he learnt the *dāphā* compositions together with a group of farmer boys. When one of the Jyāpu farmers was honoured as the best drummer, Hari Govinda was

13 These pieces are not compatible with *navabājā* compositions of similar names. Similarity extends to meter, not to patterns.



Fig. 210: Hari Bhakta Kasichvaḥ playing my *lālākhī* during a recording session in 1984



Fig. 211: Ganesh Bahadur Sijakhva and his neighbours playing *lālākhī* and *dhā* during *sāpāru* 1990

convinced that—owing to his lower caste as a Chipā cloth-dyer—his obvious talent had been bypassed. Feeling piqued, he decided not to play *lālākhī* but to focus on the solo repertoire of the *navabājā* drums that he presented so admirably during *navadāphā* performances—unequaled by any other drummer in town. As his inherited cloth-dyeing craft went out of fashion, he worked as a stonemason for the German Bhaktapur Development Project. Although his hands must have suffered during manual work, his playing was that of an exceptionally talented musician.

5 Song Groups, Bards and Beggars



*Fig. 212*

*tā, tān, nā*



*Fig. 213*

*tīn*



*Fig. 214*

*dī*



*Fig. 215*

*nī, li*



*Fig. 216*

*tī*



*Fig. 217*

*drakha*



*Fig. 218*

*ghē*



*Fig. 219*

*kha*



*Fig. 220*

Silent dampening for added brilliance of right hand stroke *tā*

**Stroke combinations***dhā* = *tā* + *ghē**dhe* = *di* + *ghē**dhin* = *tin* + *ghē**dha* = *tin* + *kha* (only in the combination *dha li tā ghē*)**5.3 Navadāphā and Navabājā**

The term *navabājā*<sup>14</sup> refers to a set of nine different drums played in succession with varying accompaniment of different pairs of cymbals, *Gujarāti mvālī* shawms, *bāēcā* fipple flutes and *pvaṅgā* natural trumpets. The town's four remaining *navabājā* groups<sup>15</sup> are all part of larger ensembles of singers and instrumentalists, performing *dāphā* songs at specific temples and shrines. These combined ensembles of *dāphā* plus *navabājā* are called *navadāphā*:

$$dāphā + navabājā = navadāphā$$

An ancient Newar form of responsorial group singing (*prabandha gīt*), *dāphā* songs<sup>16</sup> are accompanied with *tāḥ* and *jhyāli* cymbals, two natural trumpets *pvaṅgā* and the double-headed drum *lālākhī* which is not part of the set of nine *navabājā* drums. Approximately twenty times per year during certain auspicious lunar phases and important town rituals, the *navabājā* drums participate in the *navadāphā* performance as a special highlight sandwiched between pairs of *dāphā* songs. The nine drums are always played in a given succession, each drum playing a complete composition selected from a vast repertoire. The nine *navabājā* drums and their impressive repertoire are of central interest for this publication.

The chart below lists the nine drums starting with *dhā* and ending with *nagarā*, in the order of their appearance during performance (Tab. 1). In keeping with their dominant role, the name *navabājā* refers only to the drums, not to accompanying idiophones (cymbals and brass disc) and wind instruments (shawms, fipple flutes and natural trumpets). They are listed according to their prescribed combinations during performance. Only the inclusion of the brass disc *kāēpā* may or may not be omitted, depending on the number of musicians.

14 Nepali: *naubājā*, lit. 'nine drums'

15 survey 2007

16 see Richard Widdess 2013

## 5 Song Groups, Bards and Beggars

Tab. 1: Combination of nine navabājā drums with accompanying instruments.

	kāēpā	tāḥ	jhyālicā	sichyāḥ	bhuchyāḥ	pvaṅgā	mvālī	bāēcā
dhā				+	+	+		
kvatāḥ				+	+	+		
dhācā	+	+		+			+	
dhimaycā				+	+	+	+	
nāykhī		+		+		+*	+	
pachimā	+	+		+			+	
dhalak	+	+		+			+	
kvakhīcā		+	+					+
nagarā	+	+		+			+	

\*only at the end of *caltī* and *ektā*

Until 1980, there were six *navadāphā* groups among the sixty-three *dāphā* song groups of Bhaktapur (Map 37):

name	location
Taleju <i>navadāphā</i>	Mūcuka of Lāykū (palace)
Bhairavnāth <i>navadāphā</i>	Lākulāchē
Bhadrakālī <i>navadāphā</i>	Icchu
Dattātreya <i>navadāphā</i>	Tacapāḥ
Vākupati Nārāyaṇa <i>navadāphā</i>	Sujamādhi
Yāchē Gaṇeś <i>navadāphā</i>	Yāchē

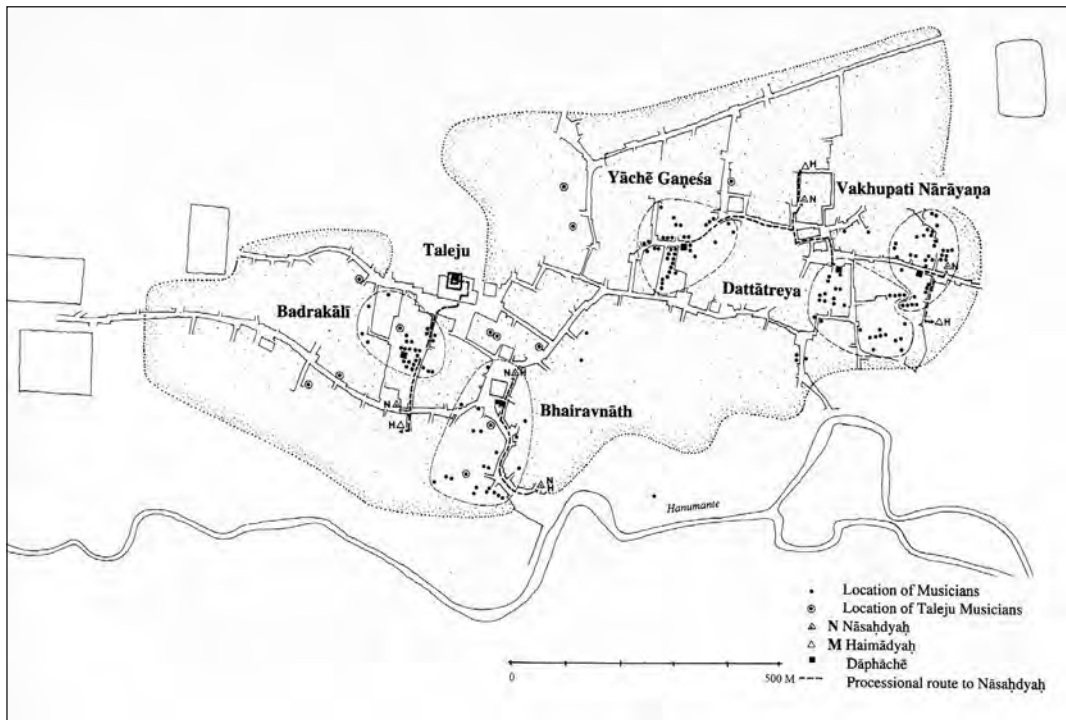
One more *navabājā* group had existed in Gvachē. It was disbanded in 1972. Previously it had played for the *Navadurgā* of Bhaktapur, during their annual gathering on the day of *bihī*,<sup>17</sup> in *Gvachē* square where the gods drink the blood and consume the decaying brain of the *khame* buffalo that is sacrificed eight days earlier at the shrine of Brahmayāñī.

Each Bhaktapur *navadāphā* group has a *dāphāchē*, a building next to the shrine of the god for whom the group performs. Here musical instruments, song books and lampstands are kept, meetings are held, quarrels are fought, students are taught, and feasts are eaten. The management of *navadāphā* affairs involves plenty of discussion over ritual feasts. Sometimes one gets the impression that these groups serve more as a platform for neighbourhood quarrels than for making music. Occasionally such quarrels led to a group splitting into two<sup>18</sup> or ceasing to play regularly. The function of the group leader (*nāyaḥ*) circulates annually. As every individual who passes the

17 cf. chapter 4.2

18 Dattātreya *navadāphā*





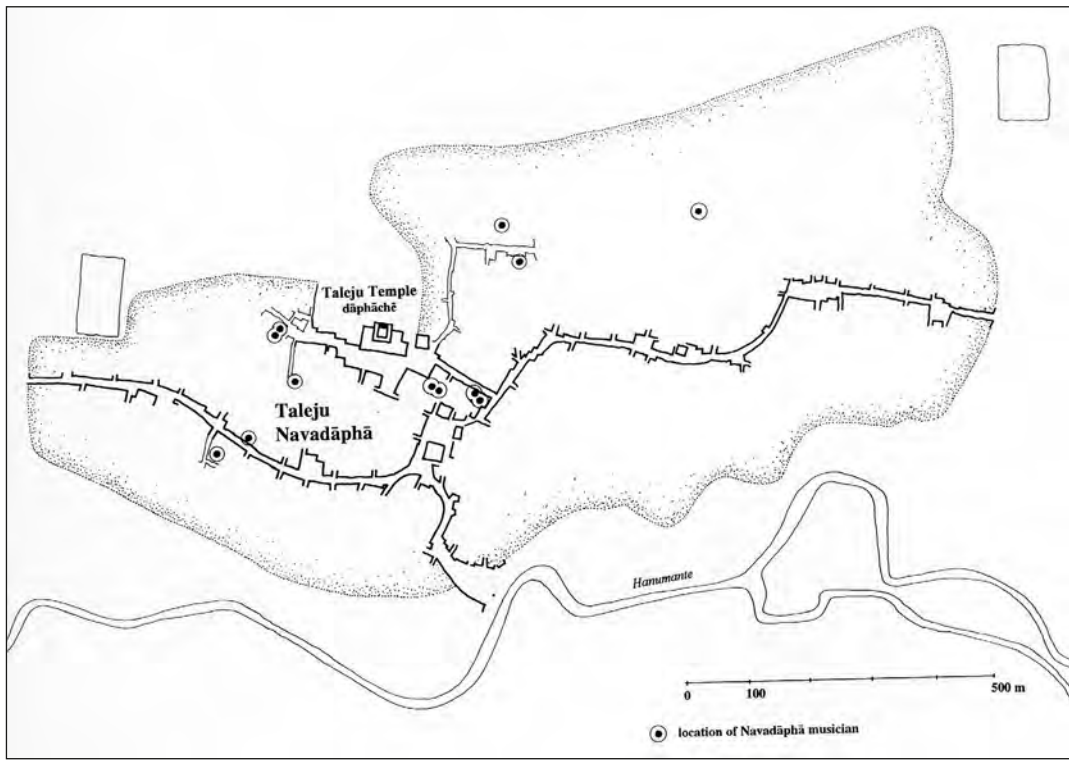
Map 37: Location of 5 remaining *navadāphā* groups and their members' homes (1983 survey), in relation to *Nāsahdyah/Haimādyah* and other gods worshipped during apprenticeship. (courtesy of Niels Gutschow)

singing apprenticeship or any of the instruments becomes a life member, some groups have the tendency to grow beyond capacity. In fact, many members do not participate in the performances, appearing only during annual feasts and the habitual drunken brawls that ensue with predictable regularity and regrettable results. Already in the 1980s, the younger generation's cultural ideals were dominated by the Bollywood film industry with their escapist dream productions and by other influences from abroad. For them, making traditional music in the local community as an expression of cultural identity was definitely not their chief interest.

Taleju *navadāphā* was the first *navadāphā* group to be afflicted by the generation gap (Map 38). The group managed to survive the land reforms, when each member had two to four *ropanis* of *guṭhī* land transferred to his name just in time. Farmers cultivated the land and received fifty per cent share of the annual yield as payment. All the group members were from the upper strata of the caste hierarchy. During the Malla period their ancestors served as courtiers at the royal palace and their homes were scattered in a wide circle around Bhaktapur's palace square. In 1983, the fifteen remaining members were all old men in their sixties<sup>19</sup>. None of them succeeded in stimulating their younger relatives' interest. This, the oldest among Bhaktapur's *navabājā* groups stopped performing in 1985. Among their active *dāphā* repertoire they had one praise song for

<sup>19</sup> In those days, a person above forty was considered 'old'

## 5 Song Groups, Bards and Beggars



Map 38: Performance site of Taleju *navadāphā* in front of their *dāphāchē* facing the Taleju temple. Residences of the high caste group members are spread in a wide circle around the palace (map courtesy of Niels Gutschow)

Jaya Prakāśa Malla of Kāntipur<sup>20</sup>. Earlier there were several songs for other Malla kings—in 1983 already forgotten.

Bhairavnāth *navadāphā* faces similar problems but they do remember their songs—among them praise songs for Jayaprakāś Malla, Bhūpatīndra Malla and Ranjīt Malla. Group members are mostly farmers and a few of higher castes. Only twenty-two musicians remained in 1983 (in 1975 there were thirty-two members). In 1999, 2006 and 2014, this *navadāphā* trained a group of young drummers and singers. The most successful students in 2014 were two of the girls who also learnt *lālākhī*. The group has an important performance during the New Year festival on 27th Baiśākh, just before Bhairava leaves his temple bordering Taumāḍhi square to enter his chariot that has been prepared for the annual tug of war between upper and lower town. Whilst members of the *Sāymi* oilpresser caste decorate the chariot, Bhairavnāth *navadāphā* starts playing on the large stone platform (*dabu*) at the southern end of Taumāḍhi square. As soon as the god's arrival is heralded by a group of Jugī shawm-players emerging from the gate house next to the Bhairavnāth temple, the performance is interrupted, and the *dhā*-drummer pushes through the

20 ruler of Kathmandu 1736–1746 and 1750–1768



*Fig. 221: The nāyaḥ (leader) of Bhairavnāth navadāphā playing dhā in front of Bhailadyaḥ (Bhairava), leading the procession of the god on his way from the sataḥ gate house next to the temple to the chariot. The drummer has to drum his way through a massive crowd of devotees keen on touching the silver head of the god. Taumādhi, 10/4/1985 (photo courtesy of Ada Wilson)*

excited crowd to precede the god on his way to the chariot. Enthusiasts compete in touching or at least having a glimpse of the Bhailadyaḥ's silver head. (Fig. 221)

According to legend, Kāśī Bhairava attended Bhaktapur's New Year festival incognito. When the god was recognized, he began to disappear by sinking into the earth. Just before he was gone, someone beheaded him with a sword. So Bhairava's head remained in Bhaktapur for people to worship him in the Bhairavnāth temple and during processions. When Bhairava takes his seat on the chariot, the spectacular chariot-pulling contest starts, which invariably erupts into serious brick-throwing causing a stampede. Upper town youths fight against lower town youths, always keeping an eye on non-Newar armed forces in battle gear looming in the background—lest they become the target of raining bricks.



Fig. 222: Bhairavnāth *navadāphā* performing during New Year's morning at Yaḥśikhyāḥ. Bhairava left his chariot (background, left), receiving offerings in the eight-cornered pavilion.

Bhairava makes another appearance in town during his grand Bhairavnāth *jātrā* along the *pradakṣiṇa* on two successive days of the *sāpāru* week.<sup>21</sup> On this occasion, the god is accompanied by a smaller procession carrying a donor statue in the adoration pose of King Girvāṅ Yuddha Vikrām Śāha of Nepal (r. 1799–1816). Girvāṅ Śāha wanted to be remembered as a devotee of the most prominent god of the Kathmandu Valley and ordered the Bhairavnāth *navadāphā* to organise his annual Girvāṅ *jātrā* in such a way that it accompanied the god on his sacred route. To date, the *navadāphā* group keeps the original deed specifying details and conditions. It includes forty-one and three quarter ropanies and exempted the members of the group from different kinds of forced labour and different types of taxes. The group has to continue singing for Bhairavnāth every day, playing the *navabājā* instruments on special days and “...perform the *Pañcopacārapūjā* for Śrī Mahābhairava on the second day of the waning moon of the month of Bhādra, wishing the victory and prosperity of Ours”. The deed ends with a warning, “...the evil eye of the same deity shall be cast on the person and persons misappropriating the income.”—In 1822, another deed of twenty-five ropanies was allocated to the group on command of Chautariya Rana Udyota Śāha for observation of the Girvāṅ *jātrā* and “...to perform daily rituals and pray for Our everlasting prosperity.” (Fig. 222)

Another occasion, of serene beauty, is *Sakimānā* fullmoon in November, at the end of the harvesting season. In front of the Bhairavnāth temple, the *navadāphā* group members prepare a huge mosaic with rice, popcorn, soya beans and other grains, depicting Bhairavnāth and Betāḥdyah

21 see processional route in chapter 3.



Fig. 223: Bhairavnāth *navadāphā* performing during Sakimā punhī, looking at the completed grain mosaic (*nāsaḥ bvegū*) showing Bhairavnāth's chariot (*rath*) and the New Year pole.

on the chariot as well as the New Year *yaḥṣī* pole at Yaḥṣīkhyah (Fig. 223). The mosaic is decorated with oil lamps and the group settles around it for their *navadāphā* performance. During this evening, all other song groups prepare similar mosaics depicting the local gods. People walk quietly from temple to temple to admire the pictures. Before the 1963 land reforms, Bhairavnāth *navadāphā* received 72 *murī* grain from their land and 24 *pāthi*<sup>22</sup> mustard oil delivered by Sāymi oilpressers of Gvaḥmādhī. In 1963 they lost twenty-two *ropanī* land<sup>23</sup>, as there were no deed documents. Here is a list of their major annual expenses:

- Sakimā punhī (grain mosaic for Bhairavnāth): 12 *pāthi* wheat, 1 *pāthi* black soya, 4 *pāthi* corn, 4 *pāthi* popped rice, 2 *dhārni ghī*, 1 *pāthi* 4 *mānā* mustard oil, 1/2 *dhārni* sugar, 1 *pau* black pepper, fennel seed, 150 kg firewood
- Māgh Kṛṣṇa parevā (*pūjā* for Bhairavnāth): 1 buffalo, 1 goat, 1 duck, 9 *pāthi* fried beaten rice, 16 *pāthi* beaten rice
- Māgh dutiya (next day, *pūjā* for Bhairavnāth): 1 goat
- Māgh tritiya: preparing and eating things sacrificed during previous days
- Māgh Kṛṣṇa cauthi (*pūjā* for Surya Vināyaka Gaṇeśa): 1 goat
- Puṣ Kṛṣṇa prati pradāḥ (*pūjā* for Bhairavnāth): 1 goat
- Phālgun śukla dvādaśī (*pūjā* for Bhairavnāth): 1 goat
- Cait 27 (*pūjā* for Bhairavnāth and *guṭhī* feast): 1 goat
- Baiśākh 1 (*pūjā* for Bhairavnāth): 1 goat
- Baiśākh 2 (cleaning brass lamps and offering oil lamps, *pūjā* for Bhairavnāth): 1 goat

22 1 *murī* equalled 91 litres (now less), 1 *pāthi* equals 1 imperial gallon = 4,55 l, 1 *dhārni* equals 2.400 g, 1 *mānā* equals 0,56 l

23 1 *ropanī* equals 5476 square feet or 508,72 square metres

## 5 Song Groups, Bards and Beggars

- Baiśākḥ 4 (*pūjā* for Bhairavnāth): 1 goat
- Baiśākḥ 5 (*pūjā* for Bhairavnāth): 1 goat
- Bhādra Kṛṣṇa tritiya and cauthī (*pūjā* for Bhairavnāth, Girvāṇ *jātrā*): 2 goats
- Bhādra śukla punhi, Indra jātrā (*pūjā* for Bhairavnāth): 1 goat
- Dīpāvalī, *dugu pūjā* (*pūjā* for Bhairavnāth): 1 goat

The fate of the Bhadrakālī *navadāphā* appears to be exemplary of the general decline. Since the Malla period, this group had been supported by a royal land endowment. After the Land Reform Act in 1963, the contractor Biśva Khardār agreed to entertain the group members with a ritual feast nine times a year. The thirty-two group members were supposed to contribute oil for burning the lamps during performances. So far, so good. The group retained one last plot of land which yielded just enough rice to pay the Jugī shawm players and the drum-maker for repairing the nine drums. Unfortunately this land was lost in 1980 when it became part of the Small Industrial Area (SIA) set up by the German Bhaktapur Development Project. Compensation never reached the group, as they were not able to produce written documents supporting their claim. Without payment, the shawm players boycotted all further performances. The drums were left to decay. The contractor died. His son became a highschool teacher, his grandson a finance clerk in a Kathmandu tourist hotel. They lost interest in the affairs of an ancient music group in Bhaktapur. Bhadrakālī *navadāphā* stopped playing their nine drums around 1980. Only the *dāphā* group remains. After this, the complete group is reported to have played only once, on New Year's morning 1986 (13th April) at Yaḥśīkhyah. On this occasion, the entire population of Bhaktapur worships Bhailā, Betāḥdyaḥ and Bhadrakālī whilst the gods recover from their brutal chariot ramming during the previous night<sup>24</sup>.

The three remaining *navadāphā* groups of the upper town are those of Dattātreya, Vākupati Nārāyaṇa, and Yāchē Gaṇeś. They were founded by private donors, and their members are almost exclusively farmers. Only Yāchē *navadāphā* included a barber (Nau) and a cloth-dyer (Chipā). The latter was Hari Govinda Ranjītkār, Bhaktapur's most outstanding *navabājā* drummer.

Founded by a Mahantā caretaker of the Pūjāri math, Dattātreya *navadāphā* still performs during festivals in front of the Dattātreya temple—thanks to the Lachimasyu family's four generations of talented drummers (now male and female), living as caretakers in the *dāphāchē* next to the Dattātreya temple. The first Rāṇā ruler, Jang Bahādur Rāṇā (1817–1877) donated twenty-eight *ropanī* land. In 1983, the group comprised of twenty-eight, in 1993 of thirty-six farmers. Jugis from Taumādhī came to provide shawm accompaniment against an annual remuneration of seventy-two *pāthi* rice grain. The Kulu drum-maker was supposed to tighten and repair the drums every month. In return, he received 1 *murī* of grain and participated in the annual *dāphā pūjā* feast of the group. Dattātreya *navadāphā* sings *dāphā* songs every day—with the exception of six early monsoon weeks when rice transplanting leaves no extra time for music. The nine drums were played every full moon, four days during the New Year festival, including the *jātrās* of Bhīmasena and Chumā Gaṇeśa, during the Dattātreya *jātrā* (*sāpāru* week), Mahāṣṭhamī, Mahānavamī and

24 This joyous fertility ritual happens immediately after the erection of the *yaḥśī* pole that signals the beginning of the New Year.



Fig. 224: Dattātreya *navadāphā* performing during *vijayā daśamī* 1998, with Panchalal Lachimasyu (left *lālākhi* player). Women returning from Brahmayāni leave offerings before a painted cloth depicting mothergoddesses under a helpful *PŪJĀ* soap advertisement. Coca Cola and Pepsi Cola had already extended their global competition with huge advertisement boards disfiguring the entire Kathmandu Valley.

Vijayā Daśamī (*mvahani*), and Śivarātri. On the day after Śivarātri, a group of ascetics used to camp around a log fire smouldering in front of the Dattātreya temple where they gave yogic advice to the general public for a few days. (Fig. 224)

Until 1995, there were only male drummers in Bhaktapur. When I taught *dhimay* drumming to Gopal Lachimasyu and his friends, his sister Indira surprised me by having picked up the initial lessons by listening from the kitchen. When her parents agreed, she joined the boys group, surprising the town during their coming-out procession. Instantly, all her female classmates wanted to learn from her. Nowadays it is not uncommon for girls to participate in many genres of processional music. Gopal, Indira and their younger sister Julum took part in several concert tours with the ‘Masterdrummers of Nepal’, presenting Newar drumming traditions and dances to European audiences. Indira was recruited as a judge during several drumming competitions organised by the Bhaktapur Municipality and fills a significant role as a teacher of *dhimay* and *navabājā*.

The shawm players of the impure but touchable Jugi tailor-musician caste are not members of the *navadāphā* groups. They were paid for their musical service with a fixed amount of grain per year and a share in the feast. Sadly, the tendency was to withhold their payment or at least to keep it as low as possible. No wonder that the Jugi musicians felt exploited and tended to stay at home. Over the past two decades it became increasingly difficult to find capable shawm players



Fig. 225: Vākupati Nārāyaṇa *navadāphā* performing during *pancadān carhe* 1986 at Sujamādhi. The group's transverse flutes *bāsuri* replace Jugī shawm players, owing to lack of funds.

to support all scheduled performances, especially during major festivals. Groups had to manage without shawms. Vākupati Nārāyaṇa *navadāphā* solved the problem by replacing the missing shawm players with their own processional ensemble of transverse flutes. (Fig. 225)

This group comprised of thirty-five farmers singing *dāphā* songs every day and playing their set of *navabājā* drums every full moon, the lunar phase sacred to Nārāyaṇa. During The New Year festival (Vaiśākh 3) the group participates in the Brahmayānī *jātrā*, singing *dāphā* songs between a double row of impressive ancient torches. Their repertoire includes an interesting praise song for Bhūpatīndra Malla, telling the following story: The king and his colleagues from Kāntipur and Lālīpur undertook a pilgrimage to *Silu* (Gosainkunda), to offer three beautifully carved bulls to Lord Śiva. Those from Kāntipur and Lālīpur were of wood and metal and sank into the holy lake at once. Only Bhūpatīndra's carved stone bull kept drifting on the surface, indicating that his offering was not accepted. Bhūpatīndra was a good swimmer and jumped into the lake, pulling the bull under water. In that very moment the god spoke to him, revealing the reason for being displeased: “Bhūpatīndra, you composed so many praise songs but not a single one for me.”—Presuming that Bhūpatīndra had drowned in the cold mountain lake, the other two kings returned to Nepal, discussing full of happy anticipation how to divide the kingdom of Bhaktapur among themselves. They worshipped at Paśupatināth and went to Bhaktapur. Having reached the fifty-five window palace, they perceived Bhūpatīndra sitting comfortably at a window, smoking a hookah and inviting them upstairs to listen to his latest song for Lord Śiva.

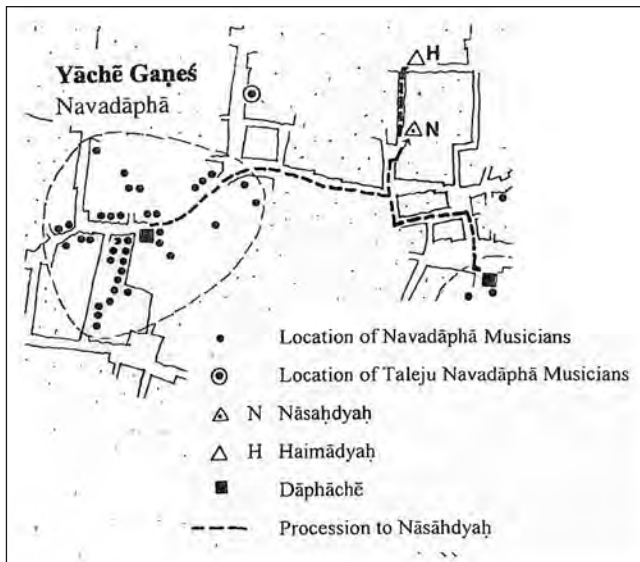


Like Vākupati Nārāyaṇa *navadāphā* with their nine drums and their additional flute ensemble *bāsuri khalah*, quite a few *dāphā* groups incorporate additional instruments. This allows the groups to put on impressive processions with additional *dhimaybājā*, transverse flutes, harmoniums, and violins. Vākupati Nārāyaṇa's *bāsuri khalah* used to accompany their charming Rādhākṛṣṇa *pyākhā* dance performed during the annual *sāpāru* week of stick dances, masked dances and singing of ballads. Vākupati Nārāyaṇa *navadāphā* have their most spectacular performance during a Buddhist town ritual on the day of *pañcadān carhe*, one day before the Buddhist processional month of *gūlā* ends. In the morning, decorated metal busts of the five Dīpaṅkāra Buddhas are carried to their meeting place at Sujamādhi where devotees gather to offer grain, fruit and flowers, before the Buddhas proceed to visit those families who vowed to give *pañcadān* offerings on an annual basis. Vākupati Nārāyaṇa *navadāphā* starts their performance before the Dīpaṅkāra Buddhas arrive one by one and are seated on the high stone platform at the eastern end of Sujamādhi square. Tragically, the entire neighbourhood of this ensemble and the local shrine of Nāsaḥdyaḥ were devastated during the 2015 earthquake.

Considering the importance of the gods in whose praise *navadāphā* groups were established, it is surprising that the local *Ganeś* of Yāchē was endowed with such an auspicious music ensemble. Unlike Taleju, Bhairavnāth, the Navadurgā, Dattātreyā, or even Vākupati Nārāyaṇa, the realm of Yāchē Gaṇeśa extends only to the boundaries of his quarter and is of little importance to the rest of the town (Fig. 226). K. K. Nākhana, a group member of Yāchē *navadāphā*, told us the legend of the god's golden image arriving during the course of an infamous robbery, testifying that the



Fig. 226: Hari Govinda Ranjītkar playing *pachimā* with Chandranath and two more Jugi shawm players playing *Gujarātī mvālī* during a performance of Yāchē *navadāphā*, February 1989



Map 39: Yāchē *navadāphā* (map courtesy of Niels Gutschow)

disappearance of religious artefacts from their original shrines has a long history. Previously, this Gaṇeśa statue resided in a temple in Basantapur, Kathmandu, which came to be known as *Maru* (‘lost’) Gaṇeśa. Miraculously, the statue emerged in Yāchē, where it was instantly installed in a temple built by Dil Bahādur Suba from Sukul Dvakā. His family worships Gaṇeśa as their clan god and sacrifices a goat whenever Yāchē Gaṇeśa visits his realm during the New Year festival. This happens every 2nd Baiśākh between 9 and 12 a.m. The group is scheduled to play every *cauthi*, the lunar phase significant for Gaṇeśa, whereas other *navadāphā* groups perform during fullmoon. (Map 39)

Before the land reforms in 1963, the group was supported with 35 ropani of land that were confiscated. Chandramān Tapol, descendant of the founder family of Yāchē *navadāphā*, did not participate in performances. Usually he came to check if a scheduled performance actually happened, distributed 18 *muri* rice grain<sup>25</sup> per year and gave two feasts for all the members. After his death in 1986 his heir withdrew the donation, causing the *navadāphā* to stop performing for more than a year after a final, memorable quarrel. In this desperate situation, an unexpected patron of the Nepalese aristocracy, the late author Jagadish SJB Rana came to the rescue. He spontaneously decided to help with an annual cash donation that covered the requirements of the group. The initial year proved successful. The scheduled twenty-four annual performances happened, and group members derived encouragement from the new patron’s regular visits and enquiries into their needs. The drumming gurus Hari Govinda Ranjītkār and Gaṇeś Bahādur Sijakhvāḥ administered the donation. Later I came to know that they were bullied by otherwise inactive group members—in 1983 already fifty-five individuals—who wanted the donation to be spent entirely on feasts. Intimidated by threats of physical violence, the gurus refused to accept the next instalment. After this, the neighbourhood of Yāchē had the feeling of a battlefield. *Navadāphā* performances

25 1 muri = approx. 160 lbs.



Fig. 227: Hari Govinda Ranjtkār playing *dhimaycā* during a performance of *Yāchē navadāphā* (28/2/1985)

happened irregularly and without enthusiasm. Hari Govinda trained some young *navabājā* drummers, including his talented daughter Manesa who is leading her married life in Pāngā. Several training sessions were held over the years for young men. Young girls also learnt to play *dhābājā* and *pvaṅgā* and did so for a few public *navadāphā* occasions<sup>26</sup> until they were married in other neighbourhoods. No adequate replacement was found for the ageing *pvaṅgā* players. The group seems doomed, a victim of greed and jealousy among neighbours. For the last fifteen years of his life, Hari Govinda turned his back to the *navadāphā* group, playing *tablā* (*tamal*) or harmonium (*arven*) with a *bhajan* group that performed in a shelter opposite to the performance site of the *navadāphā* group.

Hari Govinda Ranjitkar (1934–2019) was the solo drummer of *Yāchē Gaṇeś navadāphā* (Figs. 227, 228). Many consider him to be Bhaktapur's master drummer. He learnt the art from his paternal uncle who was a fine player and also from the leading drummer of Bhairavnāth *navadāphā*. Hari Govinda's humble ways and modest bearing, in combination with his achievement as a musician and stalwart of his tradition have been admired by European audiences during several concert tours. Unfortunately, due to the total disregard of this genre in present day Nepal, his fame did not even extend beyond his nearest locality. He had to adjust to problems of survival when his inherited block-printing craft ceased to be in demand. For a few years he found temporary employment as a stone-cutter in road construction work carried out by the German Bhaktapur

26 during *biskāḥ* and *mahānavami*



Fig. 228: Hari Govinda Ranjitkar playing *nāykhicā* at my home 1983

Development Project. From 1996 to 2019, he worked as a drumming teacher at Kathmandu University's Department of Music, training a large number of students. In 1983 and 1984, he taught me the complete *navabājā* repertoire, as it is transcribed in this publication.

Seven years Hari Govinda's junior, Gaṇeś Bahādur Sijakhvā of Yāchē (d. 2019) was a prominent guru of *dhimay* and *lālākhī*. He devoted more time than any other drummer in Bhaktapur to train a large number of *dhimay* players, including the author, and received huge applause for his brilliant *dhimay* drumming during the 1990 European tour with the 'Masterdrummers of Nepal'. After his father's fields and house were distributed among the three brothers, Gaṇeś Bahādur's earthquake-damaged part of the house was too tiny to allow him and his family to sleep there<sup>27</sup>. After the 1988 earthquake, he found refuge in the *ḍyaḥchē* of Yāchē Gaṇeś and—in exchange

<sup>27</sup> When a Newar father dies, the house is often cut vertically into as many parts as there are sons, each of them insisting on building their separate entrance and staircase.



Fig. 229: Ganesh Bahadur Sijakhvā playing *dhimay* during a *navarāt* visit to Indrayānī 1988 (photo: Kevin Bubriski)

for free lodging—had to perform daily *pūjā* offerings and protect the golden statue from armed robbers, warding off several attempts at night. When he retired from this scary occupation, he lived with his sons near the Arniko Highway. He received no community recognition for his outstanding services as teacher and drummer. (Figs. 229, 230)

A *navadāphā* performance is an auspicious and elaborate musical offering to the god for whom the respective ensemble of musical instruments was bestowed. In the case of Yāchē Gañés *navadāphā*, most performances in front of the shrine happened monthly during *cauthi*, the lunar



Fig. 230: Ganesh Bahadur's hands after a drumming procession



Fig. 231: Yāchē Gaṇeś *navadāphā*: The solo drummer faces the shawm players (l. to r.: Chandranath, Marsya Dai, Chandra Bahādur) and Yāchē Gaṇeś *pīth* (shrine in the left upper corner, with two young men occupying the entrance). A *dāphā* singer assists with broken *sichyāḥ* cymbals. 1989

phase relating to Lord *Gaṇeś*. The musicians sat cross-legged on straw mats, leaving in the centre an open square for the nine drums, a round brass box for keeping cymbals and song books, and the big sacred lamp stand *ārātī* that is used exclusively by *navadāphā* groups just before the performance ends. Two small lampstands with pairs of burning cotton wicks illuminated the folded song books *thyāḥ sāphū* that were placed in front of the lead singer of each of the two rows of singers facing each other. Other indispensable paraphernalia were an oil container filled with mustard oil to replenish the lamps when needed and a small portable lampstand with a brass figure of a Malla king with folded hands in adoring posture. At the very end of the performance it was lit and shown to every participant, giving them an opportunity to visualize and greet Nārāyaṇa with folded hands. Owing to their low status, the three or four Jugī shawm players sat in a row on a torn straw mat and with their backs inauspiciously turned towards the Gaṇeś temple<sup>28</sup>. For the past twenty years, motorized traffic has pushed the group to perform in the *phalcā* porch next to the square. (Fig. 231)

The performance begins with three loud strokes of the thick-walled *tāḥ* cymbals. Musicians gesture *namaskār* towards the cymbals, addressing Nāsaḥḍyaḥ. The god manifests through the ear-splitting sound of the cymbals. After this auspicious beginning, the musicians salute each other, using the ritual expression ‘*bhāgya*’ to ask permission to sing or play, expressing mutual respect.

28 similar sitting arrangements are observed by the other groups



Fig. 232: Yāchē Gaṇeś *navadāphā* lead singer starting a *dāphā* song (1988)

The gesture is repeated after the light offering *āratī* that concludes the performance. Following this mental preparation, the drummer of the two-headed *dāphā* drum *lālākhī* plays a long *tāhā dyaḥlhāygu* invocation addressed to Nāsaḥdyaḥ and the main god of the respective *navadāphā*. The *lālākhī* drum is accompanied with cymbals and natural trumpets. The invocation addresses not only the gods but also calls missing musicians from their homes nearby. The ensemble is hardly ever complete when a performance begins. The *tāhā dyaḥlhāygu* allows musicians to finish their dinner, rinse their mouths, clear their throats and arrive at the performance site in time before it is their turn to sing. After the invocation, the musicians salute the gods again with *namaskār* gestures, before starting with the initial *dāphā* song. The invocation opens a portal to the blissful presence of the music god whose inspiring energies inspire the performance. Two *dāphā* songs with *lālākhī* and *pvaṅgā* accompaniment precede each set of nine *navabājā* drumming pieces. (Fig. 232)

The role of the solo drummer resembles that of a decathlon athlete. He has to play the nine drums in quick succession, each with different playing techniques and compositions, and remember the vast repertoire with the help of drumming syllables. These syllables imitate the sounds of the drum strokes, so each drum has a slightly different set of syllables. During a complete performance each drum plays two longer composition selected by the solo drummer, lasting for several minutes. During the third and final round each drum plays only a few typical strokes. These tailpieces are called *svachā*. This term is also used for a complete *navabājā* performance with three rounds of *navabājā* drumming. The nine *navabājā* drums are always played in the following



Fig. 233: *Pvaṅgā* trumpet players Khaḍga Bahādur Koṇḍā and Mukti Sijakhvā produce between them a continuous ululation that switches between the basic note and the fifth mimicking the *navabājā* drum compositions. During *dāphā* accompaniment only the lower pitch is maintained with undulations again mimicking the drum. 1985

succession: *dhā*, *kvatāḥ*, *dhācā*, *dhimaycā*, *nāykhīcā*, *pachimā*, *dhalak*, *kvakhīcā*, and the pair of *nagarā*. Each of these drums is combined with characteristic instruments to achieve the desired timbre. These instruments are the optional brass disc *kāēpā*, the cymbals *taḥ*, *jhyālicā*, *sichyāḥ*, *bhuchyāḥ*, the natural trumpets *pvaṅgā*, the straight shawms *Gujarāti mvālī* and the fipple flutes *bāēcā*. With the exception of the first two *navabājā* drums, *dhā* and *kvatāḥ*, all other *navabājā* drums require accompaniment by specially hired Jugī tailor-musicians with their shawms and fipple flutes. (Fig. 233)

The two drums *dhā* and *kvatāḥ* share a similar repertoire and are played with the same accompanying instruments, *bhuchyāḥ*, *sichyāḥ* and *pvaṅgā*. *Dhā* and *kvatāḥ* are the only drums that play invocations during the initial round followed by other compositions. *Dhā* and *kvatāḥ* with their archaic repertoire and their significance as sacred tools, differ widely from those drums which were imported during the eighteenth century from India, namely *pachimā*, *dhalak*, and *nagarā*. *Pachimā*, *dhalak*, and *nagarā* form another group of drums with similar repertoire and accompanying instruments, in this case *kāēpā*, *taḥ*, *sichyāḥ* and *mvālī*. If there are several *navabājā* drummers present, they may play two drums of this group with contrasting sound qualities, taking turns in dividing the same composition between them. (Fig. 234)

After the third set of short *navabājā* pieces the big *āratī* lampstand is prepared for the light offering ritual. Whilst the lamp holders of the *āratī* are filled with mustard oil and pairs of cotton wicks soaked with oil and lit, the musicians sing a final *dāphā* song. Then everybody gets up to circumambulate around the performance square with the big *āratī* lamp spectacularly illuminating the centre. Whilst proceeding with a slow gait they sing a *bhajan* song in praise of Nārāyaṇa. Towards the end of the song, the *dhā* and the *lālākhī* drums with *pvaṅgā*, *mvālī* and cymbals play their respective *āratī* pieces simultaneously before ending each with one *dyahllhāygu* invocation.





Fig. 234: Yāchē Gaṇeś *navadāphā* performing a duet of *dhalak* (l.: Tīrtha Man Nāpit) and *pachimā* (r.: Hari Govinda Ranjitkar), 28/2/1985

The *ārātī* and *dyahlhāygu* pieces of both drums and of shawms differ in duration and structure, creating a musical chaos that appears fit to please the gods. Musical synchronization is clearly not intended. The music makes sense because of the function of the different invocations as musical offerings to the gods—whatever the specific drumming patterns happen to be.<sup>29</sup> Following this noisy finale, the musicians sit down for a moment of shared spiritual bliss and purification. The small lamp with the brass figure is lit and in turn presented to every participant who passes his right hand through the flame before gesturing *namaskār* first towards the flame in reverence of Nārāyaṇa, then to each group member, thus saluting the divine essence in every participant. (Fig. 235)

This underlines the meaning and the spiritual benefit of the *navadāphā* performance: realised communion with the divine presence that the group performance brings about. The music reveals its special qualities as a spiritual focusing tool that can open the portal.

Finally, instruments and utensils are collected and stored in the *dāphāchē* drum house and people go home to sleep. With the exception of a few performances during annual town rituals,

<sup>29</sup> In this context it may be helpful to know that neither Newari nor the national language Nepali know a word for 'disturb'. Whatever happens, happens of its own right. 'Disturb' can be a problem that visitors from Western countries may encounter during their stay in Nepal. To explain this, the English word 'disturb' is linked with Nepali *garne* (= make). Foreigners are known to suffer for mysterious reasons.



Fig. 235: Āratī procession around the lampstand 1984

there is almost no visible audience. An exception is, for example, the evening of *navamī* during the *mvahani* festival, when the entire population of Bhaktapur mills through Yāchē to look at the new Navadurgā masks<sup>30</sup> displayed below the mask-maker's workshop in a courtyard behind the performance square. Only during such occasions, a crowd surrounds the *navadāphā* musicians to enjoy the music. Another important town ritual for all *navadāphā* groups is the morning of *dyaḥ svagā biyegu* on the fourth day of the Bhaktapur New Year when the entire population proceeds with a maximum number of music groups along the *pradakṣiṇā* processional route to visit all the gods that make their annual appearance in the form of golden statues arranged for general worship in front of the aniconic stone that represents the god in the open shrine throughout the year. This is a major occasion for every song group to perform next to the respective temple or shrine. On this day, Bhaktapur vibrates with joyous tremors of drumming and sacred singing.

In response to the need for an internationally presentable ensemble of Newar drummers, I founded the 'Masterdrummers of Nepal' in 1990. Initially, this ensemble included two senior drumming Gurujus, Hari Govinda Ranjitkar and Ganesh Bahadur Sijakhva, two senior *pvaṅgā* players of Yāchē *navadāphā*, two Juḡi shawm players and four younger drummers including myself. During summer 1990, we toured Germany, France, The Netherlands and Switzerland for a month packed with concerts, presenting *navabājā* and *dhimaybājā* to European audiences.

30 Navadurgā masks are cremated at the end of the annual dance cycle.



*Fig. 236:* Members of ‘Masterdrummers of Nepal’—among them four K.U. staff members Raju Hyaumikha, Buddhalal Manandhar, Bishnu Bahadur Manandhar, Ravi Kapali and Maṅgalāl Kapali (not playing)—rehearsing at Kathmandu University’s Department of Music at Chupin Ghāt, 2014

With a little help, most of the musicians were able to adapt to the requirements of Western stage performances and a disciplined code of conduct as ‘cultural ambassadors’ of Nepal. (Fig. 236)

Following the foundation of Kathmandu University’s Department of Music at Chupin Ghāt, Bhaktapur in 1996, this department became the base for the ‘Masterdrummers of Nepal’. By then, the group had grown into a younger ensemble including several teachers and staff members of the Department of Music. In contrast with the traditional ensembles in town, the Masterdrummers had many practice sessions focusing on improving the technical standard and enlarging their repertoire. All group members had their say in criticizing and contributing to improvements. From the beginning I made it a condition that payment was accounted for openly and distributed on equal terms among all members. All this resulted in a lasting friendship and bonding as a group and helped to present model performances of *navabājā*, *dhimaybājā* and traditional dances during staged performances in Kathmandu and Bhaktapur and during a number of successful European tours to Italy, France, Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Czech Republic. Abroad, limitations of caste proved superfluous. Absence of suppression and exploitation is the key to joyful music making.



## 6 Royal Kettledrums and *Navabājā*

A combined ensemble of *dāphā* plus nine additional *navabājā* drums is called *navadāphā*, distinguishing it from the sixty-three *dāphā* groups of Bhaktapur<sup>1</sup>. Bhaktapur *navabājā* includes a medium-sized pair of kettledrums (*nagarā*) played in combination with shawms and cymbals as the climax of a *navabājā* performance.

A historical link suggests itself with the *naubat*, an ensemble of shawms, natural trumpets and kettledrums that entered North India with Muslim invaders and became established there during the 14th century. Miniature paintings and historical accounts give evidence of Mughal emperors adorning their courts with such impressive ensembles. As a result of this imperial Mughal example, the playing of large *naqqārā* became a daily affair at many South Asian local courts, important Hindu temples and Sufi shrines, a fashion that reached the Kathmandu Valley during the 15th century (Fig. 237).

In her study of *pañcai bājā*, Carol Tingey<sup>2</sup> examines Rajput migration to Nepal and *nagarā* playing in temples and as part of military bands. According to her, the earliest evidence of kettledrums is provided by the *dam nagarā* of Gorkha palace installed in 1609. In the Dattātreyā temple<sup>3</sup> of Tacapāḥ, Bhaktapur, an ancient *nagarā* (diameter 46 cm) is played twice a day during *nitya pūjā* along with the big bell suspended in front of the temple. Anybody is welcome to play the drum as an act of worship. This is rewarded with *prasād*, a plate of yoghurt and beaten rice. Local people say that this *nagarā* was donated by the first Mahanta caretaker of the original Pūjārīmath built in 1471 by the Sannyāsin Gosain Gurubaska Giri during the reign of King Jayayakṣa Malla (r. 1428–1482). If this information can be trusted, this would be the earliest evidence of a *nagarā* in Nepal, antedating Tingey's assumed 'earliest evidence of kettledrums' by one hundred thirty-eight years.

Visiting Benares in 1989, I found a large pair of decaying *naqqarā* kept in a porch in the lane bordering the Kāśī Viśvanāth temple (Fig. 238).

Above, on a balcony overlooking the temple courtyard, musicians observed their hereditary duty that started after the rule of Emperor Aurangzeb (1658–1707). They played *śahnai* shawms and a pair of small kettledrums *khurdak*<sup>4</sup> during daily rituals in the Hindu temple. The shawm player, Dulare Hussain Khan astonished me by reciting the names of twelve generations of his

1 survey period: 1983–1985

2 cf. Tingey 1994 pp. 23–37

3 built in 1471 by King Jayayakṣa Malla

4 The *khurdak* pair of drums combines the individual drums *zil* and *bāyām*, both played with finger technique similar to *tablā*.

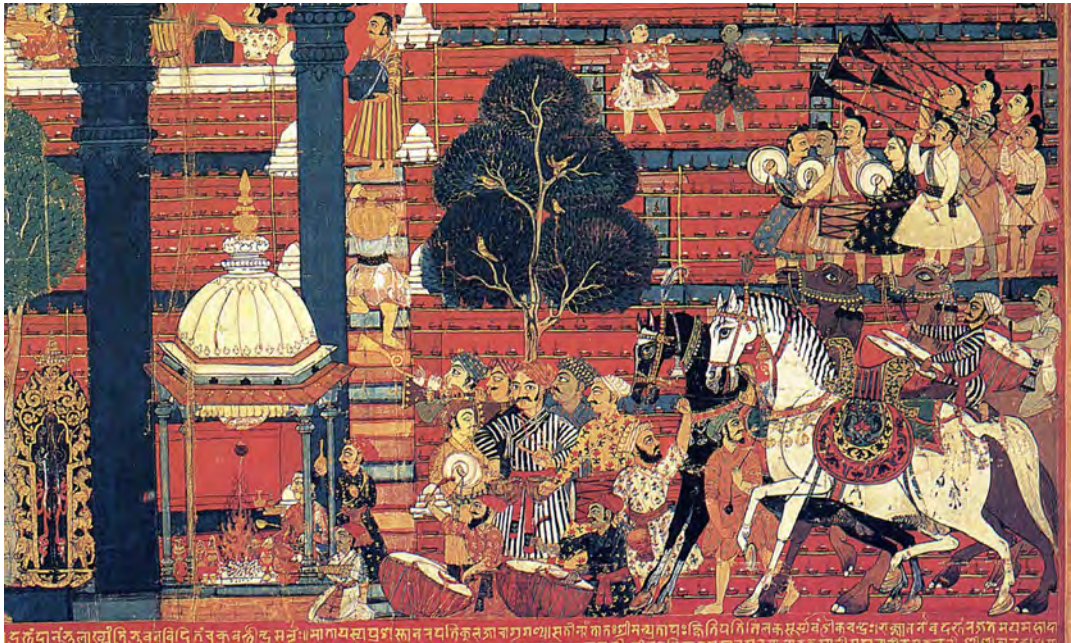


Fig. 237: *Nagarā* drumming (also on camel back) during a grand royal *tuladana* ritual in 1664 on the steps of Kathmandu's Taleju temple. As part of a Mughal-style *naubat* ensemble on the ground floor, two pairs of *nagarā* face the fire ritual in the pavilion. A man wearing a striped coat plays a pair of small kettledrums tied to his belt, with two shawm players and another one with a natural trumpet standing behind him. Next to him a pair of *bhusyāh* cymbals accompany a cylindrical drum of the *dhol* category. Two camels carry drummers and kettledrums. (detail of painting publ. by Anne Vergati in *Marg* 56/2 p. 47)



Fig. 238: Benares *nagarā* shells opposite the temple of Kāśī Viśvanāth in 1989



Fig. 239: *Śahnāi* (Dulare Hussain Khan), *khurdak* (Shankar Lal) and harmonium (Sajit Raza) playing daily at 4 a.m. and 11 a.m. for *pūjā* at the temple of Kāśī Viśvanāth, Benares 1989



Fig. 240: Detail of a watercolour by H. A. Oldfield (1858), showing Jitāmitra Malla's pair of *nagarā* in their original location on the first floor of the *lāykuphalcā*. (in: Bajracharya, Gutschow, Michaels 2016. *History of Kings of Nepal, Maps and Historical Illustrations*, p. 80)

male ancestors in charge of this musical duty at the Hindu temple. The family tree extended to a Hindu named Singh who was forced to convert during Aurangzeb's rule. Some aspects of music practice in the holy city could have inspired royal pilgrims from Nepal, keen on upgrading their residences with a majestic boom for every citizen to hear.

In 1690 King Jitāmitra Malla of Bhaktapur donated two large copper *nagarā* kettledrums to his tutelary deity, the goddess *Taleju* whose temple is located on the south side of the *mūcukva* courtyard in the Bhaktapur palace compound. The drums were installed on the first floor of the *lāykuphalcā* arcade in the room facing the grand *Taleju* bell *tagva gā* erected in 1737, reflecting



Fig. 241: *Nagarā* shells held in position by friendly woodcarvers, *bekvacukva*, Bhaktapur 1989

similar arrangements in the vicinity of the magnificent Taleju temples at the Malla residences in Kathmandu and Patan with their giant bells and kettledrum pavilions.

Jitāmitra Malla's donation included farmland. The annual yield of rice from this land was utilized in part as payment to a Damāi family from Nala. These Nepali-speaking tailor-musicians had been assigned the duty to play the big kettledrums during *nitya pūjā*, the daily ritual for Taleju. Since the 1960s this duty had been neglected and the uncovered *nagarā* shells were lying upside down in the *bekvacukva* courtyard. (Figs. 239–243)

In 1992 the late Italian filmmaker Bernardo Bertolucci decided to use the royal kettledrums for his film 'Little Buddha'. The scene shot in Bhaktapur's Dattatreya Square shows Prince Siddhartha Gautama (Keanu Reeves) leaving the enclosures of his father's palace in regal style, ready to encounter the facts of life. Outside the gate he was cheered by a crowd of six hundred extras and a band of frantic *dhimay* drummers—in real life my students. Through the combined effort of ten Kulu drum makers from Bhaktapur, Patan and Kathmandu, the drums were restored with new water-buffalo hides. A local woodcarver made sixteen extra large drumsticks. Eight members of the Royal Nepal Army were ordered to play not only Jitāmitra Malla's *nagarā* drums from Bhaktapur but also another six slightly smaller kettledrums flown in from South India. I arranged a pattern based on the *nāykhī* piece *pūjākhī* to be played by the *nagarā* ensemble during shooting. After the film crew left, the refurbished local pair of *nagarā* was exposed to the weather and to visiting crowds of tourists in the *bekvacukva* palace courtyard.

In an attempt to preserve the drums and revive their performance during the daily temple rituals, I trained two young farmers to play the *nagarās*, using the *pūjākhī* pattern. With the help





Fig. 242: Jitāmitra Malla's *nagarās* (diameter of drum head: 147 cm) before restoration



Fig. 243: Carved inscription on *nagarā* shell mentioning the donor, Jitāmitra Malla

of foreign friends and the Nepal Heritage Society, we raised money to pay the drummers for their daily service. The Bhaktapur municipality agreed to supervise the playing and administer the payment. There was the need to find a shelter for the drums. During earlier centuries the drums had resided in a room facing the *tagva gā* bell. Recently, this room had been occupied by a branch office<sup>5</sup> of the Department of Archeology and they were not willing to vacate it. The only temporary alternative was *janḡī paharā*, an empty room on the ground floor of the *lal baiṭhak* palace wing housing the National Gallery. There the drums were installed during a televised public gathering on 24th December 1992. They were played during *nitya pūjā* for the following three years. When the funding was exhausted, the Bhaktapur Municipality decided to put the royal kettledrums at



Fig. 244: Inauguration of the daily drumming service with the restored royal *nagarā*-s in front of the palace (24/12/1992). I taught two young farmers the patterns that they played for several years during *nitya pūjā*. (photo courtesy of Bikas Rauniyar)

rest in two guard niches between the *yamadvāracukva* and *bekvacukva* courtyards. Hidden behind wooden screens, they were left to decay. (Fig. 244)

For over a decade, the invaluable drums donated by King Jitāmitra Malla remained in these dank holes infested by rats, silent witnesses to local ignorance until April 2019, when I was able to convince the President of the Nepal Workers and Peasants Party, Narayan Man Bijukchen to exercise his influence. On 31st December 2019, the drums were given a public resurrection celebration in Bhaktapur's Durbar Square. The Mayor played the royal *nagarās* to public acclaim, before having them installed in their original room opposite the big bell with the assistance of thirty sturdy soldiers of the Nepal Army.

Another, even bigger *nagarā* donated by Jitāmitra Malla's grandson Raṇajīt Malla in 1727 was played until the 1950s in a niche in the Taleju *mūcukva* courtyard. Although none of the gates were wide enough to let the drum pass, it mysteriously managed to vanish overnight in the late 1980s—despite the courtyard being under twenty-four hour surveillance by the Royal Nepal Army. Even in those days, the price of copper was high.

Owing to their outlandish size and volume, the musical scope of the royal kettledrums with their thick buffalo hides is limited. To play fast, the drummer himself would have to be of superhuman proportions and strength. The fact that the *nagarā* pair donated by Jitāmitra Malla includes two drums of almost the same size (diameter: 147 cm and 146 cm) causes them to be of the same pitch. The next step in the evolution of kettledrums would be, to have two drums of different size and pitch, allowing for more varied patterns. When the drums and the drumsticks are smaller, they

allow for faster playing. These advantages were applied in the pair of *nagarā* that is part of the *navabājā* ensemble, to create an impressive repertoire of musically satisfying compositions. The South Asian evolution of kettledrums would go much further, resulting in the pair of the Indian concert drums *tablā* and *bāyāṃ* (in Bhaktapur Newari: *tamal* and *bām*), two drums of different material and size, with complex drum heads made of goat skin, carrying a tuning paste with powdered iron ore in the centre and a refined finger technique that takes advantage of contrasting pitches and a vast variety of sound production. This opened the road towards the impressive virtuosity of contemporary *tablā* playing with its limitless repertoire of beautiful compositions<sup>6</sup> and application in various musical genres.

*Pañcai bājā*, the auspicious instrumental ensemble of Nepali-speaking Damāi musicians living in the hills of central and east Nepal, includes the kettledrum *damāhā* that gave the caste its name.<sup>7</sup> In the 1980s, *Damāi* musicians were still playing kettledrums for temple rituals at important Hindu shrines, for example at Gorkha (Kālikā Darbār and Gorakhnāth cave), Cāngu Nārāyaṇa, Manakāmanā, Nuvākoṭ (Bhairavī temple) and Tripureshwar (Rānī Lalitā Tripurasundarī Śivalaya). Owing to the almost nonexistent remuneration of low-caste temple musicians, most of these traditions disappeared during the 1990s. As far as I was able to document since 1982 in various parts of central Nepal, larger temple kettledrums were mostly played without rhythmic variety, continuous strokes at a medium tempo.

In front of the Nārāyaṇa temple at Cāngu Nārāyaṇa a large *nagarā* was played by a member of the Nepali speaking Damāi caste of tailor-musicians. This temple courtyard had another ensemble of Newar Jugis playing shawms together with a small kettledrum called *tamva* or *tukumuku*<sup>8</sup>. These Jugi musicians lived in a small isolated settlement just outside the western gate of the courtyard whereas the village of Cāngu Nārāyaṇa lies below the opposite side of the temple complex. This arrangement underlines the low status of shawm players in the Newar caste hierarchy. Members of higher castes lived at a safe distance outside the eastern gate. (Fig. 245)

The *nagarā* pair of kettledrums used in the large instrumental ensembles of Bhaktapur *navabājā* are much smaller than most temple *nagarās*, allowing for faster playing and a technically demanding repertoire of drumming compositions. The drumheads of the three hundred years old pair of *nagarā* used by Bhairavnāth *navadāphā* measure 34,5 cm and 28,5 cm in diameter, a perfect size for this purpose. *Nagarā* drumming is only one aspect of Bhaktapur's *navabājā* that includes eight more drums. The *nagarā* pair is played as a spectacular highlight at the end of a *navabājā* performance. It is accompanied with *sichyāḥ* cymbals and by Jugi tailor-musicians playing *Gujarāti mvālī* shawms. (Fig. 246)

The idea of combining all available sources of musical sound to create a new auspicious musical ensemble is likely to have sprung from the mind of a king and his impulse to adorn his tutelary goddess, Taleju—possibly following the example set by Pratapa Malla in Kathmandu during that grand *tuladana* ritual in 1664. It appears that nine drums of different origins and functions were combined in the Bhaktapur *navabājā* ensemble to fulfil a new purpose. Seven of

6 cf. Wegner 2004

7 for a detailed study of this ensemble see Tingey 1994

8 diameter of drum head: 17 cm



Fig. 245: *Jugi* shawm players with *tamva* kettledrum (also called *tukumuku*) at Cāngu Nārāyaṇa (1987)

these drums were already played in the context of other local ensembles. The unlucky number seven would not do. Nine being an auspicious number, there had to be a total of nine drums. This was—I imagine—how two more drums, *dhācā* and *dhimaycā* could have been created for the sake of the perfect number. Already, the larger drums *dhā* and *dhimay* existed in various sizes. Making smaller versions was an easy task for a skilled drum-maker. Even in the 1980s, there was no standard size and pitch for Newar drums. Several times my drum-maker, the late Dil Bahādur Kulu pointed at a half-decayed *lālākhī* drum in his workshop, suggesting that this could become a good *dhā* or *dhimaycā* after sawing off the worm-eaten parts. With his practical sense of economy he always succeeded admirably in producing drum reincarnations with the seasoned wood that I preferred—never minding the slightly odd size or the occasional wormhole<sup>9</sup>.

Owing to the lack of precise historical data we can only speculate who was the originator of the first *navadāphā* groups. The two oldest *navabājā* ensembles were those that played until 1983 for Taleju in the *mūcuka* courtyard, and the group performing for Bhairavnāth, sitting on a *dabu* stone platform in front of the entrance gate (*satah*) to the inner sanctuary of the Bhairavnāth temple bordering Taumādhi Square to the east. In 1717 Bhūpatīndra Malla (ruled 1696–1722) commissioned construction of the *Bhairavnāth* temple in *Taumādhi*, Bhaktapur. Significantly, all the plots of land bestowed on the *navadāphā* ensembles of Taleju and Bhairavnāth are situated

9 Deforestation around the Kathmandu Valley made it increasingly difficult to find suitable wood for making local drums. Nowadays all *dhimay* drums are made of tin or brass



*Fig. 246:* Hari Govinda Ranjitkar playing a V-laced pair of *nagarās* during a *navadāphā* recording in Byāśi, April 1983

next to each other and are of equal size. Performance schedules of these two groups never overlap. The reason could be that both bestowments were initiated at the same time, probably between 1717 and 1722 to the first *navadāphā* group that had to perform in both places and later was divided into two separate groups for practical reasons.<sup>10</sup> Another—unlikely—possibility could be that Girvāṅ Śāha founded the Bhairavnāth *navadāphā* when he created the Girvāṅ *jātrā* in 1822 with a special land deed mentioning the playing of the nine drums. But then, the land that Bhairavnāth *navadāphā* lost to Mahendra Shah's administration in 1963 was of an older deed. So Girvāṅ Śāha's contribution of 1822 must have been an additional deed to the already existing group.<sup>11</sup> A singer and composer of *dāphā* songs, Bhūpatindra Malla took a keen interest in the musical life of his capital. Some of his songs are still sung today by local *dāphā* groups.<sup>12</sup> He modified the Bhairavnāth temple into a triple roofed temple at around N.S. 837–838 (1718 AD) with seven golden pinnacles. He added major dynamic aspects to the New Year festival created by Jagajjyotir Malla (1613 to 1637). The festival starts after the performance of Bhairavnāth *navadāphā* with the spectacular tug of war in front of the Bhairavnāth temple. All this leaves little doubt that Bhūpatindra Malla was the source of inspiration and financing of the initial Taleju *navadāphā* group, probably also the Bhairavnāth *navadāphā*. Unfortunately it is not known who conceived of the fascinating drum compositions and who played the initial sets of *navabājā*.

*Navabājā* drums and some of their repertoire were also included in the huge processional music groups of the Sāymi oil pressers of Bhaktapur, who during the Buddhist processional month of *gūlā* used to proceed through the town with their raucous horn and drumming signals. Similar groups existed in the two neighbouring towns, Thimi and Banepa that were part of the earlier Malla kingdom of Bhaktapur.

In 1963 King Mahendra Shaha ordered the land reform *bhūmi sudhār*<sup>13</sup> that deprived all Newar music groups and temple trusts of their land endowments. The state of Nepal confiscated the so-called *gūthi* land without refund. With their financial basis gone, most music and dance groups found it very hard to continue. Without money to repair musical instruments and *dāphāchē* drum houses, rewrite decaying song books, buy lamp oil, pay participating Jugī shawm players, organise new apprenticeships, etc., many groups were forced to give up and collapsed—usually after nerve-wrecking internal quarrels. Others had to minimize their performance schedule. Unless an alternative way of sponsoring can be found, the end of the most impressive among Bhaktapur's ensembles appears imminent.

Another kind of *navabājā* survives in Patan. It performs during the Buddhist processional month in July/August and includes more than nine drums, among them a single *nagarā* and the pair of *jvaḥ nagarā*<sup>14</sup> (Fig. 247). Comparison with the *nagarā* and the *jvaḥ nagarā* of Patan *navabājā* makes it clear that the pair of *nagarā* used by Bhaktapur *navabājā* groups has an important musical advantage. Contrary to *jvaḥ nagarā*, the pair of kettledrums used in Bhaktapur produces

10 This is what Daibagya Raj Joshi—earlier a member of both groups—remembered

11 cf. chapter 5.3 for details of the deed

12 cf. Widdess 2013

13 also known as *gūthi samsthān* act

14 for a detailed description of the instruments used in this ensemble, cf. Wiehler and Wiehler-Schneider 1980



Fig. 247: Different kettledrums used by Patan *navabājā* for separate compositions: Y-laced *nagarā* and the pair of V-laced *jvaḥ nagarā* (1984). The painting of the royal *tuladana* ritual in 1664 on the steps of Kathmandu's Taleju temple shows a musician playing a pair of small kettledrums tied to his belt. That could have been an ancestor of the pair used in Patan.

different pitches. This advantage allows for much more varied compositions calling for a virtuoso playing technique that Hari Govinda Ranjitkar had clearly cultivated.

### 6.1 *Dhā/Kvakhī*

The double-conical or barrel-shaped *dhā* is made of wood. Shape, size and weight vary. The drum in the photo below is 46 cm long. The height in the centre of the body is 36 cm. The drum heads measure 24 cm and 25 cm. The right hand plays the lower sounding Haimā head made of cow hide with a carved *dhā kathī* drum stick. The higher sounding Nāsaḥ head made of mountain goat hide is played with the left hand.<sup>15</sup> Among all *dhā* drums of Bhaktapur, only those played in the context of *navabājā* carry an impressive pair of ram's horns (Figs. 248, 249). Therefore these drums are also

15 Buddhist processional groups hold the stick in the left hand, playing the Nāsaḥ head with the right hand, as they apply a special finger technique for the *drakha* ornament.



*Fig. 248:* Hari Govinda Ranjitkar playing a big *dhā* decorated with ram horns, Yatāchē 1987



*Fig. 249:* Decorated *kvakhī* (*dhā* with ram's horns, collection of the then Royal Nepal Academy)



called *kvakhī*, ‘horn drum’. There is a story remembered in Yāchē about the ram horns decorating the *dhā* of Yāchē Gaṇeś *navadāphā*. During the final years of the Rana period a Mr. Joshi of Yāchē owned a valiant mountain ram that defeated the Rana ruler’s animal in a staged ram fight. The ruler decided that he must own that victorious ram and bought it. Soon it came to his notice that the new animal refused to eat. It rejected even the juiciest leaves from the kitchen garden. Clearly, that ram was homesick. The ruler respected its suffering and returned the animal to its former owner in Yāchē where it instantly developed a healthy appetite. When it finally died, the horns that defeated the Rana’s animal were mounted on the drum. Animal horns decorate many shrines of Nāsaḥḍyaḥ who is believed to reside in drums. The only other drum in Bhaktapur carrying ram horns is the unique *dyakhī* drum that accompanies the Navadurgā during their annual dance cycle—an instrument of singular ritual significance. *Dhā* and *kvatāḥ* are said to be the oldest Newar drums still in use. During *navadāphā* performances they are invariably played as the first and second drum. *Dhā* is played again during the concluding *āratī* ritual. Their ritual significance is underlined by the fact that they are the only *navabājā* drums that start with an invocation to Nāsaḥḍyaḥ, before playing other pieces.



Fig. 250: As a guest appearance on *pañcadān carhe*, a *gūlābājā* group led by Gopal Prajapati from Thimi plays *dhā* for the Dīpaṅkara Buddha at Yāchē 1999

*Dhā* is often used as a processional drum in an ensemble called *dhābājā*, where the drum is combined with *bhuchyāḥ* and *sichyāḥ* cymbals and with *pvaṅgā* natural trumpets, if available (Fig. 250).<sup>16</sup>

16 cf. chapter 3.2



Fig. 251: Kumāḥ potters playing *dhābājā* during August 1988 in Taulāchē, Sujamādhī

Two different Buddhist processional *gūlābājā* ensembles play *dhā* in the reverse way, holding the drumstick with the left hand. Sāymi oilpressers play animal horns capable of producing the mantra *Ārya Tārā Tārā Buddha Dharma Saṅgha* with the accompaniment of *dhā* drums.<sup>17</sup>

A complete *dhābājā* ensemble including several *pvaṅgā* trumpets accompanies the masked dance *Bhaila pyākhā* of the Kumāḥ potters during *sāpāru* week.<sup>18</sup> (Fig. 251)

Among many dances and processions involving *dhābājā* is the popular *ghētāgiśi* stick dance preceding cow effigies that are said to lead the souls of the dead safely to heaven.<sup>19</sup>

The photo documentation of drum strokes in this and the following chapters was carried out with Hari Govinda Ranjitkar, a right-handed person. A left-handed person holds the drums and the drum stick the other way. Exact measurements of drums are not always mentioned, as there are no standard sizes in Newar drum-making. The following details of playing-technique concern the use of *dhā* as part of *navabājā*. With all Newar drums, the variety of drumming syllables is larger than the number of strokes. (Figs. 252–256)

17 cf. Wegner 2009

18 cf. chapters 4.4 and 11.16

19 cf. chapters 4.3 and 11.17



*Fig. 252*

Resonant sound *ghē*, *dhū* or *kā*



*Fig. 253*

Dampened sound *ga* or *du*



*Fig. 254*

Fingers 3, 4, 5 stop the hide from resonating



*Fig. 255*

Resonant sound *tā* or *nā*



*Fig. 256*

Dampened sound *tī*, *tū* or *rī*

### Stroke combinations and fixed patterns/formulas

*jhī* or *dhā* = *tā* + *ghē*

*drakha* = *ghēghēti* (usually a rapid flourish/ornament)

*kāghē* = *ghēghē* (usually in fast repetition)

*tāghemītā* = *tāghēdutā*

*garajaka* = *tākāghētā*

## 6.2 *Kvatāḥ*

The compound drum *kvatāḥ* consists of two drums tied together, a small *lālākhī* and a small *nāykhicā* tied vertically in front of the horizontally played *lālākhī* (Fig. 257). Only three drum-heads are played in combination with natural trumpets *pvaṅgā* and *bhuchyāḥ* and *sichyāḥ* cymbals.



Fig. 257: Hari Govinda playing *kvatāḥ* during a *navabājā* recording in Byāsi 1983

The drum has different names and repertoires, depending on context and genre. In Bhaktapur the name *kvatāḥ* is used only for the *navabājā* drum. The oldest name and use must be the *pañcatāla* drum that accompanies tantric Buddhist *cacā* dances traditionally performed in secrecy in the *āgaṃchē* clan god house of Buddhist priests and goldsmiths. A rare occasion<sup>20</sup> for observing *cacā* dance in public occurs on the morning of Buddha *jayantī*<sup>21</sup> at Svayaṃbhūnāth.<sup>22</sup> On the same day around noon, young Śākya and Vajrācārya men of Kathmandu play *pañcatāla* in combination with pairs of *pāyṭaḥ* natural trumpets and *tāḥ* cymbals, leading a procession of devotees bearing Buddha's relic through the heart of the old city.

20 Leaving aside recent attempts at popularising a few *cacā* dances for insufferable tourist presentations

21 Jyeṣṭh fullmoon, Buddha's birth, enlightenment and *nirvāṇa* fall on this day—at least in Nepal. In Tibet it is celebrated one month later.

22 cf. chapter 4.1

Probably commissioned by King Jagajjyotir Malla of Bhaktapur (1614–1637), a Newar *rāgamālā* consisting of fifty-four miniature paintings was produced by a local artist of the Pūṃ caste of ritual painters. Painting no. 4 shows a *kvatāḥ* drummer and a cymbal player in the then fashionable Rajput style court dress (Fig. 258).



Fig. 258: Painting no. 4 of a Newar *rāgamālā* commissioned in the early 17th century by Jagajjotir Malla shows a *kvatāḥ* drummer and a cymbal player (courtesy of Jagadish SJB Rana)



Fig. 259: *Gā pyākhā pañcatāla* playing *dyaḥlhāygu* for *Nāsaḥḍyaḥ*

Another *pañcatāla* ensemble accompanies the masked dance *gā pyākhā* that is performed every twelve years in Patan—in this genre also in combination with *pāyiaḥ* trumpets and *tāḥ* cymbals (Fig. 259).<sup>23</sup>



Fig. 260: *Sākvalā Sāyṁi gūlābājā* with *pastāḥ* and *pvaṅgā* 1985

During *gūlā Sāyṁi* oil pressers living in *Sākvalā*, *Gvaḥmādhi*, *Bāsagvapāl* and *Banepa* use this drum under the name *pastāḥ* in combination with natural trumpets *pvaṅgā* and *tāḥ* cymbals to play *dyaḥlhāygu* invocations when they pass or circumambulate a Buddhist monument with their processional *gūlābājā* ensemble.<sup>24</sup> (Figs. 260–264)

<sup>23</sup> cf. chapter 4  
<sup>24</sup> cf. chapter 3.4



Fig. 261: Bāsagvapāl Sāymi *gūlābājā* with *pastāh* and *pvaṅgā* 1985



Fig. 262: Banepa Sāymi *gūlābājā* with *pastāh* and *pvaṅgā* during their visit to Sākvalā 1985





Fig. 263: Painting no. 5 of a Newar *rāgamālā* commissioned in the early 17th century by Jagajjotir Malla shows a *bhuchyāḥ* player and a *pvaṅgā* player with painted palms and elongated nails of their little fingers—the *Kāmasūtra* instructs us in the use of this fingernail as an erotic device. (courtesy of Jagadish SJB Rana)



Fig. 264: Painting no. 6 of a Newar *rāgamālā* commissioned in the early 17th century by Jagajjotir Malla shows a *pvaṅgā/pāyṭāḥ* player and the imagined author of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, Bhāratamuni—here spelled incorrectly as Bharatamuni—holding what must be the manuscript of his famous treatise. The legendary author is fashionably seated on a tiger skin—as befitting an accomplished and enlightened ṛṣi or sage. (courtesy of Jagadish SJB Rana)

Hari Gavinda Ranjitkar demonstrates the playing techniques used for *kvatāḥ* in the *navabājā* context. (Figs. 265–272)



Fig. 265

*tā*



Fig. 266

*tuganuga*



Fig. 267

*jhē*



Fig. 268

*tā*



Fig. 269

*dhū* (with left hand *ghē*)



Fig. 270

*dī, tī*



Fig. 271

*tu, nu* (in *tuganuga*)



Fig. 272

*ga* (in *tuganuga*)

### Stroke combinations and fixed patterns/formulas/alternatives

*tuganuga* can be played

- a) with alternating hands on the *nāykhī* head or
- b) with alternating fingers 2 4 2 4 producing four undampened sounds on the Nāsaḥ head of the *lālākhī*

The syllable *tā* is used for two different strokes

- a) on the *nāykhī* or
- b) on the Nāsaḥ head of the *lālākhī*

### 6.3 *Dhācā*

As the name *dhācā*<sup>25</sup> suggests, this drum looks like a miniature *dhā*. Its repertoire has nothing in common with what farmers play on the big *dhā* drum during processions or what Kumāḥ potters play when they accompany their masked dance Bhaila *pyākhā*. There is no evidence for any other use of this drum but in *navabājā*. Perhaps the first *dhācā* was created by a drum-maker on royal command. Or it was used for some undocumented purpose at the time when the first two *navadāphā* groups were introduced. The drum is smaller than *dhā* and played with a lighter



Fig. 273: *Dhācā* with drumstick and *dhimaycā* (right, 45 cm high) photo: Bernd Karl Rennhak

drumstick. The Nāsaḥ drumhead is made of female goat hide, the Haimā drumhead of mountain goat hide. Playing technique has much in common with *nāykhīcā*. In fact, *dhācā* looks and sounds like a slightly older brother of the *nāykhīcā*. *Dhācā*, *dhimaycā*, *nāykhīcā* and *dhalak* have a tuning paste permanently stuck against the Haimā drum hide. It is made of crushed castor seeds, resin and mustard oil.<sup>26</sup> (Figs. 273–278)

25 lit. small *dhā*

26 cf. chapter 6.12 for documentation of drum-making



Fig. 274

Fingers 3, 4, 5 stop the hide from resonating



Fig. 275

Dampened sound *kha*



Fig. 276

Resonant sound *ghē*



Fig. 277

Resonant sounds *tā, nā*



Fig. 278

Dampened sounds *tī, nī, mī*

### Stroke combinations and fixed patterns/formulas

*dhā* = *tā* + *ghē*

*drakha* = *ghēghēti* (usually a rapid flourish/ornament)

*kāghē* = *ghēghē* (usually in fast repetition)

*tāghemitā* = *tāghēnitā*



6.4 *Dhimaycā*

Contrary to what the name *dhimaycā*<sup>27</sup> suggests, this drum has almost nothing in common with the big *dhimay* drum played by farmers during processions. There is no evidence for any other use of this drum but in *navabājā* and—with one tiny *dyaḥlhāygu* as the only piece—in *gūlābājā* of the Sāymi oil pressers. Perhaps it was used for some undocumented purpose at the time when Bhūpatīndra Malla founded the first two *navadāphā* groups. The oilpressers seem to have incorporated several *navabājā* drums and Jugī shawm-players at a later stage as a fashionable addition to their much older processional ensemble of horns, *dhā*, *pastā* and natural trumpets. The Haimā drumhead is made of cowhide, the higher sounding Nāsaḥ is made of softer calf hide. Unlike



Fig. 279: Hari Govinda Ranjitkar playing *dhimaycā* during a film shooting at Yāchē 28/2/1985

the processional drum *dhimay*, the *dhimaycā* is played with hands and finger technique similar to *dhalak* playing (Fig. 279, Figs. 280–284). *Dhimaycā* sounds like a bass *dhalak*. The *dhimaycā* compositions *dhamāk* and *kharjati* are somewhat similar to the *nāykhīcā* pieces under the same names. Only two patterns of the *dhimaycā* piece *cvakh* can be seen as derived from the *dhimay* compositions *mā* and *nhyāḥ*.

27 lit. small *dhimay*

6 Royal Kettledrums and *Navabājā*

For example, the popular *dimay* pattern

/tā dhā/nā dhā/nā dhā/nā dhā/  
/tā dhā/nā dhā/nā dhā/tāy ghū/  
/dhā khutā/tā khutā/tā khutā/tā khutā/  
/tā khutā/nākhutātā/khutātākhu/tākhutā/

appears in the *dhimaycā cvakh* as

/tā di / ni di / ni di / ni di /  
/tā di / ni di / ni di / tā o /  
/dhē khati/tā khati/tā khati/tā khati/  
/tā khati/tākhata /khatitākha/ tā o /

and the *dhimay nhyāḥ* variant

tāy khutā/tākaghunā/tātākhutā/tākaghunā/

appears in the *dhimaycā cvakh* as

/tā khati/tāgadhē/tātākhati/tāgadhē/



Fig. 280

*nā, tā*



Fig. 281

*nī, tī*



Fig. 282

*drakha* roll with 45, 3, 2, 45, 2



Fig. 283

*ghē, ga*



Fig. 284

*kha*

**Stroke combinations:**

*dhā* = *tā* + *ghē*

*dhe*, *dhē* = *ti* + *ghē*

**6.5 *Nāykhīcā***

The name of the drum derives from *nāykhī*, literally ‘butcher’s drum’. The last syllable *-cā* denotes something small, a small *nāykhī*. In fact, the *nāykhīcā* played in *navabājā* ensembles is of smaller circumference than a *dhācā* but it is not a particularly small *nāykhī*. In the *navabājā* context the *nāykhī* is also called *nāykhīcā*. As with *dhā* and *dhācā*, the drummer’s right hand holds a drumstick to play the lower sounding Haimā head that is made of cow hide. Chapter 4 mentions Hari Govinda’s special technique for producing a clearer *tā* sound played with the left hand on the Nāsaḥ head made of goat hide. An instant before playing *tā*, either the tip of the drumstick or fingers 3 to 5 of the right hand press against the centre of the Haimā head, preventing it from vibrating, as that would cause a rather dull *tā*. In this way, brilliance and clarity of *tā* sounds are achieved. This advanced technique is not known or at least not applied in the *nāykhībājā* repertoire of the Nāy. On the other hand, butcher drummers use a unique technique for producing a wailing sound that they call *kvī*. Before playing, they rub bee’s wax called *men* on the Haimā head of the *nāykhī*. Just before producing the sound *kvī*, the drummer licks the tip of his right middle finger and lightly pushes the moist fingertip forward across the Haimā head that responds with a haunting wail, *kvī*. The *nāykhīcā* used in *navabājā* does not play even a single pattern from the butcher repertoire. There is no bee’s wax applied and no *kvī* wail. Compositions are similar to those played by other *navabājā* drums under the same name. The *nāykhī* is also played in the Buddhist processional context of both varieties of *gūlābājā*. Oilpressers do not use the *kvī* rub, only goldsmiths and Buddhist priests. (Figs. 285–287)



*Fig. 285: Nāy butchers Kajjalal Shahi (left) and Kalu Shahi playing nāykhī and sichyāḥ at the shrine of Thāthu Nāsaḥ April 1985. Note how Kajjalal's feet support the drum.*



*Fig. 286: Nucheraj Buddhacharya ('Gole Guruju') of Inācva gūlābājā playing nāykhī accompanied by Jugi with clarinet (Chandranath Kapali) and trumpets (Kedar Kapali, 3rd from right and colleague) August 1986*



Fig. 287: Hari Govinda Ranjitkar playing *nāykhīcā* with *Yāchē navadāphā* during a film shooting 28/2/1985

Drumming syllables used by Śākya/Vajrācārya and *navabājā* drummers for remembering and transmitting their *nāykhī* and *nāykhīcā* repertoires differ from all other inventories of drumming syllables. They exploit the articulation contrast between labial and dental sound production whereas all other drums focus on the contrast between dental and velar sounds. There are other differences, too. When I studied *nāykhībājā* of the butchers with the exceptionally accomplished drummer Kajilal Shahi, I was astonished to see that he did not use any drumming syllables but remembered the compositions as a chain of muscular reflexes. The slightly unnerving disadvantage of this method for me was, that he could not isolate sections of a composition. He had to repeat the complete piece at full speed—again and again. When I published his repertoire<sup>28</sup>, I applied the drumming syllables used in *navabājā*, to make things easier for future students.

28 cf. Wegner 1988



Fig. 288

*dā, da, na*

The right hand stroke *thu* is produced by striking the Haimā head lightly in the centre with the stick and maintaining the pressure against it, producing a dampened and slightly high-pitched sound.



Three fingers of the right hand stopping the Haimā head whilst playing *pā* or *ma* with the left hand

Fig. 289



Fig. 290

*pā, ma*

## 6.6 *Pachimā*

The name of this majestic double conical drum indicates that it came from the west<sup>29</sup>. It is similar to the North Indian concert drum *pakhāvaj*, a little more bulging in the middle and not at all as perfectly tuned—although this may have been accomplished with more care during earlier centuries. In the Kathmandu Valley, the *pakhāvaj* used to accompany *dhrupad* singers and Rudra *vīṇā* players at the royal courts and, until the middle of the 20th century, in some stately homes of the Rāṇā aristocracy.



Fig. 291: A painted and a carved *pachimā* from Bhaktapur (photo: Bernd Karl Rennhak)

As with the *pakhāvaj*, the local drum *pachimā* (Figs. 291–293) has tuning paste on both heads, each with different components, adding weight and resonance to both drum hides. The Nāsaḥ head has in its centre a permanent black tuning paste *khau* containing crushed iron ore. It is attached to the lower goat hide. A ring-shaped hide of mountain goat rests on top (Figs. 294–298). Both hides are woven into a leather ring with holes for the V-laced drum straps. In theory, this head could be tuned to a precise pitch but in common practice the pitch is neglected for a year, until the drum is taken to the Kulu’s workshop for an annual overhaul. Just before playing the *pachimā*, the drummer kneads a sticky *chucū* dough of wheat flower and water and sticks it in the centre of the Haimā head that is made of cow hide. This must be removed after the performance lest ants and rats nibble it off and damage the leather parts as well. In between strokes, the drummer presses loose bits and pieces of sticky dough back into position with his left hand.

During *dhrupad* performances with *pakhāvaj* both heads were tuned precisely at an octave’s distance and to the basic note of the *rāga*, depending on the singer’s disposition. Not so with *pachimā*. Before big festivals, the Kulu drum-maker is asked to tighten the loose drum straps to achieve more resonance. But the pitch is left to chance. An equally lax treatment is given to the

29 Delhi lies exactly to the west of Kathmandu





Fig. 292: Carved decoration (skulls and intertwined snakes) along the waistline of two different *pachimā* drums

*lālākhi*, the drum that accompanies *dāphā* songs. Some singers of *dāphā* songs happily croon away at their personal pitch, apparently unconcerned about the drum's or the lead singer's pitch. Could it be that the ideal is not technical precision but inclusion of all available forces—whatever their musical merits? I often suspected that things must have been done to a higher standard during the Malla time when Newar culture was in its bloom.



Fig. 293: Hari Govinda Ranjitkar playing *pachimā* during film shooting in Yāchē on 28/2/1985



*Fig. 294*

*tā, nā*



*Fig. 295*

*tī*



*Fig. 296*

*tā*



Fig. 297

*drakha*



Fig. 298

*tin*

**Stroke combinations:**

*dhā* = *tā* + *ghē*

*dhe* = *ti* + *ghē*

*dhī* = *tin* + *ghē*

*Pachimā* is also played in processional flute ensembles, with shawm accompaniment in Sāymi *gūlābājā* and for accompanying some masked dances like Mahākālī *pyākhā*.

### 6.7 *Dhalak*

*Dhalak* is the Newari name for the local version of the X-laced Indian *ḍholak*. Unlike most contemporary North Indian *ḍholak* drums, the V-laced *dhalak* does not use cotton straps but traditional ones made of leather. The Nāsaḥ drumhead is made of goat hide, the Haimā head of com hide. The sound quality is clear and pleasing, not at all like the aggressive and hellish noise that huge *ḍholak*-dominated percussion ensembles have produced in Bollywood film studios since the 1970s, to project archaic values of male dominance over female submission. The refined left hand playing techniques including rubbing and single fingers playing that are common in *qavvālī* accompaniment, are not applied in playing the *dhalak*. As a contrast to the majestic ring of the *pachimā*, the *dhalak* plays similar compositions but in a dry and pleasant matter-of-fact manner. This contrasting range of sound production makes the two drums ideal partners in sharing compositions by taking turns in playing different sections. (Figs. 299–301)

In Bhaktapur, the *dhalak* is also used as a processional drum by transverse flute ensembles and Buddhist *Sāymi gūlābājā*. It plays a prominent role as the only accompanying drum in the devotional song genre *dhalcā-bhajan*. (Figs. 302–308)



Fig. 299: Indian *ḍholak* with tuning rings and leather straps (photo: Bernd Karl Rennhak)



Fig. 300: Tirthaman Napit playing *dhalak* during film shooting in Yāchē 28/2/1985



Fig. 301: Hari Govinda Ranjitkar and Tirthaman Napit playing a duet for *dhalak* and *pachimā* 28/2/1985



*Fig. 302:* Buddhahal Manandhar playing *dhalak* in Gvaḥmādhi 1986 with his Sāymi *gūlābājā* ensemble based in Vāṃśa Gopāl



*Fig. 303*

*tā, nā*



Fig. 304

*tin*



Fig. 305

*drakha (4-3-2-4-2)*



Fig. 306

*ti*



*Fig. 307*

*kha*



*Fig. 308*

*ghē*

**Stroke combinations**

*dhā* = *tā* + *ghē*

*dhē* = *tin* + *ghē*

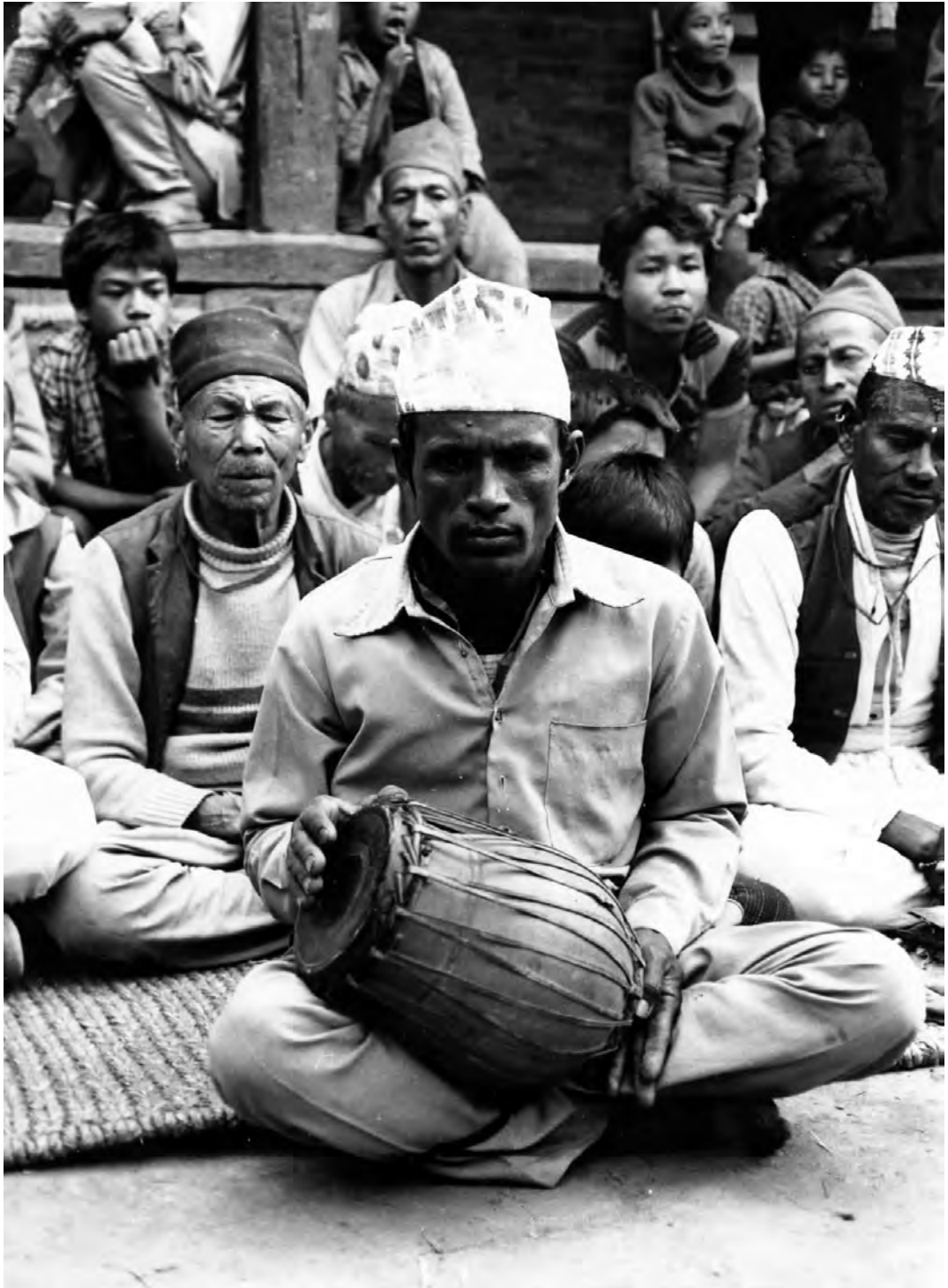


## 6.8 *Kvakhīcā*

*Kvakhīcā* is known as *kvacākhī* or *bhagaḥkhī* in Kathmandu and Patan. It is a vase-shaped clay drum with a hole at the bottom that is opened and closed with the left hand during playing, to alter the sound. The lower layer of the drumhead is made of goat hide, the upper one of mountain goat hide. The drumhead looks like that of the *tablā* but the application of the *khau* tuning paste is very rough in comparison with professional *tablā*-making in India. Lack of tuning is another factor resulting in a soft sound quality lacking brilliance. When it is the *kvakhīcā*'s turn during *navabājā* performance, Jugi shawm-players exchange their loud *Gujarāti mvālī* for soft and lovely sounding bamboo fipple flutes called *baēcā* (Fig. 309). Unfortunately all the old *baēcā* flutes disappeared.



Fig. 309: Chandranath Kapali playing one of the two last old *baēcā* fipple flutes of Bhaktapur 1991



*Fig. 310: Hari Govinda Ranjitkar playing kvakhicā with Yāchē navadāphā, 28/2/1985*

There were two left in the collection of Kathmandu University's Department of Music but one of them broke during the earthquake in 2015. In the 1980s, farmers in Kathmandu and Patan had large transverse flute ensembles *bāsuri khalah* that included accompaniment with several *kvacākhī* drums. They played processional music during *gūlā* and marriage music during the dry season.

In Bhaktapur *kvakhīcā* is played as part of *navabājā* (Fig. 310), *Sāyami gūlābājā* and in a single *kvakhīcā dhalcā* song group based in Taumādhi where it replaces the *dhalak* drum that is usually part of *dhalcā bhajan* groups.



Fig. 311

*nā, tā*

Fig. 312

*tīn*



*Fig. 313*

*di*



*Fig. 314*

*drakha (4-3-2-4-2)*



*Fig. 315*

*kha*



*Fig. 316*

*tin* (after *drakha*)



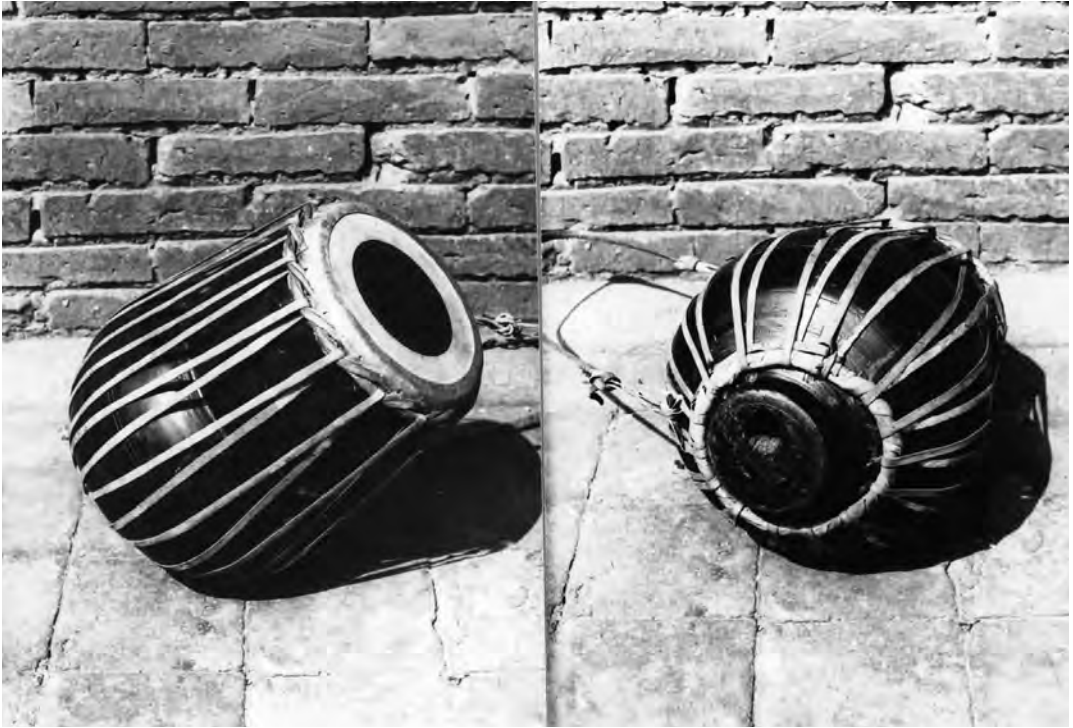
*Fig. 317*

open



*Fig. 318*

closed



*Fig. 319: A rare kvakhīcā made of wood (photos: Bernd Karl Rennhak)*



*Fig. 320: Bhagāḥkī made of clay, played as part of Patan navabājā in 1986*

## 6.9 *Nagarā*

*Nagarā* comprises of two V-laced kettledrums made of clay or copper (expensive but more lasting), differing in size and in the construction of the drum heads (Figs. 321, 322). The smaller *Nāsaḥ* drum has two layers of cow hide on top of each other, the upper one shaped as a one inch wide ring encircling the lower hide. Contrary to the larger drum with only one thicker cow hide, the construction of the *Nāsaḥ* head allows for more variety of sound production and protects the rim of the drum from damage. The addition of the ring-shaped hide appears to be a relatively recent feature. In the 1980s there were still a few older *nagarā* drums with single-layered *Nāsaḥ* heads. The chief reason for untimely disintegration of a clay *nagarā* are frequent hard strokes against the rim that are carried out at the wrong angle and with a tight wrist. The drumstick should approach the rim in a horizontal position, lightly hitting the edge of the drum as well as the entire two inches of the circular hide. The bigger *Mākaḥ* drum has a sturdier hide, sometimes with a *masalā* paste stuck against the centre from inside. This is evident as some of the mustard oil used as *masalā* component seeps through the hide. The *Mākaḥ* is played only in the central area, never on the rim. With sudden spectacular involvement of the drummer's raised right arm, *nagarā* playing conveys joyous rhythmic power, a perfect climax to the *navabājā* performance and a very good reason for kings to be so fond of kettledrums.



Fig. 321: Pair of *nagarā* kept in position by straw rings (photo: Bernd Karl Rennhak)



Fig. 322: Hari Govinda Ranjitkar playing *nagarā* during a film shooting at Yāchē, 28/2/1985

In Bhaktapur, the pair of *nagarā* is used as part of *navabājā* ensembles, in Sāymi *gūlābājā* and in Mahākālī *pyākhā* where it accompanies the battle of three *daitya* demons against the mother goddesses. Invariably, the demon is subdued and the goddess triumphs to the majestic sound of the *pachimā* drum. (Figs. 183, 188)





Fig. 323

*tā, nā*



Fig. 324

*di*



Fig. 325

*digadiga, tugunugu*

6 Royal Kettledrums and *Navabājā*



Fig. 326

*ghē, dhē*



Fig. 327

*dhē*



Fig. 328

*dhē diga tā* (right hand moving from left to right to play *tā*)



Fig. 329

*dhē diga tā (diga)*



Fig. 330: Hari Govinda Ranjitkar playing *nagarā* during a film shooting at Yāchē, 28/2/1985

### 6.10 *Dabadaba* and *Kāntādabadaba*

Lord Śiva is frequently depicted as the cosmic dancer Naṭarājā playing the *ḍamaru*, an hour-glass-shaped clapper drum made of the upper layers of two human skulls. Śiva as absolute, eternal time is Mahākāla. This is transcendental timelessness before creation begins. In this state, the god absorbs all time. Once creation starts, Śiva manifests as movement in time, playing the drum as Naṭarājā.<sup>30</sup> The drum is used in tantric cults all over South Asia and also in Tibetan Buddhism. Paintings of many Ādivāsi ethnic groups of South Asia use a symbol of this drum, consisting of two triangles meeting with their points. In the Vārli Ādivāsi context in rural Mahārashtra, male shamans (*bhagat*) play similar drums (*ḍāk and audh*) during marriage and death rituals. In the tantric Śrī *yantra*, the overlapping of two triangles stands for the union of male and female energies. The House of Gorkha adapted this symbol as the so-called ‘star of Gorkha’. A detailed study of the *ḍamaru*, its use and its symbolism could fill volumes.

Tamer versions of the drum used in Newar culture are made of wood (*dabadaba*) or clay (*kāntādabadaba*). (Fig. 331)



Fig. 331: *Dabadaba* (height: 8 cm) and *kāntādabadaba* (right)

The *dabadaba* was played as part of Sāymi *gūlābājā* of Bhaktapur, before the repertoire was lost with the death of the last player in the mid 1980s. A pair of *dabadabas* played simultaneously by a single person is used in Sāymi *gūlābājā* of Banepa and in Patan’s *navabājā* during *gūlā*. The Navadurgā of Bhaktapur play a big skull *dabadaba* during processions. Occasionally street hawkers and begging mendicants announce their arrival with the characteristic rattling sounds of similar drums.

The *kāntādabadaba* is used in every Hindu household during the Mahānavamī home ritual. During the following days children play with the delicate clay drums until they are broken.

30 cf. Kramrisch 1981, p. 272

## 6.11 The *Navabājā* Repertoire

When the first *navadāphā* groups were founded in the early 18th century, a huge repertoire of suitable *navabājā* compositions had to be found, adapted or created by musicians whose identity remains unknown. They could have been members of the inner court circle, probably founding members of Taleju *navadāphā*, as this requires independent and discerning artistic minds that a Malla king would have valued to have at his service. These musicians would have had exposure to *śāstriya saṅgīt* practised at the Malla courts—a perfect position from which to organise musical material. A major part of the Bhaila *pyākhā* dance repertoire and other masked dances was integrated into the repertoire, also some patterns of *dhābājā*. Comparison of the repertoires of the existing *navadāphā* ensembles suggests that Yāchē *navadāphā* could be the youngest among Bhaktapur’s *navadāphā* groups. This group’s repertoire does not include three Bhaila *pyākhā dhā* compositions that are part of the Bhairavnāth and Dattātreya *navadāphā* repertoires. Despite occasional friendly chats between the leading drummers of Yāchē and Dattātreya and young Hari Govinda Ranjitkar listening to many performances of Bhairavnāth *navadāphā*, these few pieces never made it into the Yāchē repertoire. With more than twenty performances spread over the year, the *navadāphā* groups were in much better practice than dance groups that performed only for a week per year<sup>31</sup> and had to put on annual training sessions before coming out. As a result, the dance compositions are played faster during *navabājā* performances. Another reason for the relatively slow tempo of Bhaila *pyākhā* could be that there is a natural tempo limit for dance movements that is easily surpassed by a good solo drummer. The drumming syllables vary between both genres but the compositions are easily identified in the other context. Borrowing patterns from other repertoires is not uncommon. However, there are certain limits to this, depending on the respective genre and caste. To allow comparison with related drum repertoires, this publication includes, among others, the drum repertoires of *lālākhī* (Yāchē *navadāphā*), of Bhaila *pyākhā* (Kumāḥ of Sujamādhī) and of Sāyami *gūlābājā* (Sākvalā).

During a *navabājā* performance, the initial composition is a *dyaḥllhāygu* invocation for Nāsaḥḍyaḥ, played by the first of the nine drums, *dhā*, to be followed by two short compositions called *cva* and *gu*. Another *dyaḥllhāygu* precedes other *cva* and *gu* played by the second drum, *kvatāḥ*. Two different *āratī* compositions and *dyaḥllhāygu* are played simultaneously by *dhā* and *lālākhī*<sup>32</sup> during the final *āratī* procession around the lit *āratī* lamp stand.

There is a short pattern that imitates the sawing movement of a blunt blade at the throat of a sacrificial goat. It is played during the gory stage of blood sacrifice at the Nāsaḥḍyaḥ shrine and is called *dugucā śyāygu*, ‘cutting the goat’. Before the sacrifice with *dugucā śyāygu* drowning out the goat’s death rattle, the blade is purified with water and decorated with red and yellow powder. Apparently, it is never sharpened. Chicken sacrifices are carried out with a similar blade but without musical encouragement.

31 Bhaila *pyākhā* and Rādhākṛṣṇa *pyākhā* during *saparū* and Mahākālī *pyākhā* during Indra *jātrā*

32 drum accompanying *dāphā* songs

*Dhā* is not only played during *navadāphā* performances but also during processions to the shrine of Nāsaḥḍyaḥ on the occasion of music apprenticeship rituals<sup>33</sup> and during life-cycle rituals including processions. For example in *saparu pyākhā* the drums *dhā* and *lālākhī* take turns in accompanying the *ghētāgiśi* stick dance in front of a cow effigy. These and other short processional patterns are included in the transcriptions, as they were taught during my *navabājā* apprenticeship. Most of them are never played as part of a *navabājā* performance but during ritual processions. *Nhyāḥ* is an irresistible basic processional pattern suggesting physical movement. It is played in between *cva* compositions that are usually repeated once or twice. *Cva* 5 and 7 to 11 are also part of *dhimaybājā* processional patterns. *Lā* *cva* was adapted into the *dhimay* repertoire during the 1990s as an instantly popular addition.

As the combination of accompanying cymbals and natural trumpets and a stock of similar compositions underline, *dhā* and *kvatāḥ* were probably played in the Kathmandu Valley long before *pachimā*, *dhalak* and *nagarā* arrived from India. In many paintings and sculptures depicting Nāsaḥḍyaḥ as Nṛṭyanāth, his vehicles Nandī and Bhṛṅgi appear next to the god as smaller human figures playing *dhā* and *kvatāḥ*<sup>34</sup>. The three of them dance, the god in the centre, gracefully lifting his right leg. There are many depictions of Nṛṭyanāth dancing with his Śaktī either as half male, half female Ardhanareśvara<sup>35</sup> or in sexual union as an unmistakable image of divine creative energy<sup>36</sup>. It is exactly this inspiring energy that musicians need to tap and communicate through music like a charm. In fact, *nāsaḥ* can be translated as ‘charm’. During a *navabājā* performance, *dhā* and *kvatāḥ* play first *dyahlhyāgu*, then pairs of short compositions called *cva* and *gu*. I was repeatedly told that they are conceived as pairs of male (*gu*) and female (*cva*) energies. *Gu* is never played during procession, only *cva*. The only other *dyahlhyāgu* in the *navabājā* repertoire (for drums number three to nine) is a short piece for *pachimā*. This is played only during procession, at the beginning (invoking Nāsaḥḍyaḥ), in front of the *tvāḥ Gaṇedyāḥ* (in this case Yāchē Gaṇeśa), on reaching Surya Vināyaka Gaṇeśa, and at the end of the procession (Nāsaḥḍyaḥ).

*Navabājā* drums number three (*dhācā*) to nine (*nagarā*) are accompanied by shawms and—in the case of drum number eight (*kvakhīcā*)—fipple flutes. Compositions for these drums include longer developments of changing rhythmic patterns with a brilliant climax. In the *navabājā* context ‘*tāl*’ does not stand for a rhythmic cycle but a fixed composition that may develop stepwise in different meters. The typical development starts with a basic pattern, the so-called *duvā* serving as the identifying refrain to the respective *tāl*. This basic pattern is repeated several times and can be replaced with minor *buttā* pattern variants, before another pattern emerges which also could be varied in a stepwise progression. Typical variants are generated by dividing the patterns into two halves, playing one section once and the other one three times. Another common procedure is the replacement of one short embellishment played on the last beat. The number of pattern repetitions is meant to coincide with the melodic development of the shawm accompaniment that also has a *duvā* refrain and a related melody to be played in between. There can be further increase of tempo, before a chain of lively drumming patterns leads to the climax. Another possible development

33 cf. chapter 11.16

34 in rare cases also *dhā* and *lālākhī*

35 cf. chapter 3.2. p. 65

36 cf. chapter 2., p. 27



Fig. 332: Jugis playing *Gujarāti mvālī* during a *navabājā* recording at Yātāchē 1989

includes repetition of the entire set of variants, before the piece reaches a final climax. There are also patterns succeeding each other with contrasting accents.

Most of the procedures described above resemble elementary variation techniques in North Indian classical *tablā* and *pakhāvaj* playing<sup>37</sup>. Unknown in *navabājā* drumming is the important *tablā* compositional procedure of *khālī-barī* where a *tablā* pattern is repeated with contrasting *bāyāmī* strokes highlighting the rules of the respective *tāl*—for example in the *qāyḍā* form. As the classical *tablā* repertoire began to evolve in the late eighteenth century in Delhi, it is obvious that this advancement could not have influenced the *navabājā* repertoire of Bhaktapur. When Indian court musicians were employed by Malla and Rana courts, there must have been little or no exposure of Newar farmers and lower castes to this exclusive court entertainment.

The Jugi tailor-musicians accompany the *navabājā* drummer continuously from the third drum *dhācā* to the ninth drum *nagarā* with shawm melodies<sup>38</sup> selected in accordance with the season and festivals (Fig. 332). For example, during autumn (*mvahani* festival), they play five variants of *rāg mālāśrī*, during the spring month of Māgh variants of *rāg basanta*, during the month of Phālgun *hvali me*, during the New Year festival *ghātu*. Two pieces<sup>39</sup> start with *rāg kāygu*, a short melodic introduction in free rhythm, whereas all other pieces have a simple melody in two parts<sup>40</sup>. It begins just after the drummer introduces his initial pattern of the respective composition. He

37 cf. Wegner 2004

38 Simonne Bailey was able to identify altogether forty-nine shawm melodies played with *navabājā*.

39 *thatā* and *tatalī*, played by the *dhācā* drum

40 identical with the North Indian concept of melodic development in two steps, *sthāyī* (fixed refrain) and *antarā*

rarely tells what composition he is going to play but expects the shawm players to identify the piece after the initial drumming strokes and respond with the suitable melody. Other shawm players wait until their leader has identified the drumming pattern, before they join in. Different degrees of confidence become obvious, as some shawm players avoid playing in the more difficult upper range, allowing themselves a nonchalant puff from their cigarettes or simply stopping for breath.

There seems to be limited compulsion to play shawm as precisely as possible. This is enhanced by the fact that quite a few Jugī musicians are habitually drunk. Their accompaniment is not the unison playing of a well-defined melodic line. It is the sum total of four—ideally there were four shawm players—different versions that produce a lively continuum around a remembered melody. Astonishingly this works, if the drummer is confident about his patterns and the tempo. Then the tipsy shawm players manage to proceed without letting the music fall apart. So shawm accompaniment is not necessarily a dependable point of reference for the drummer. It represents an element of impending chaos that needs to be lived with.

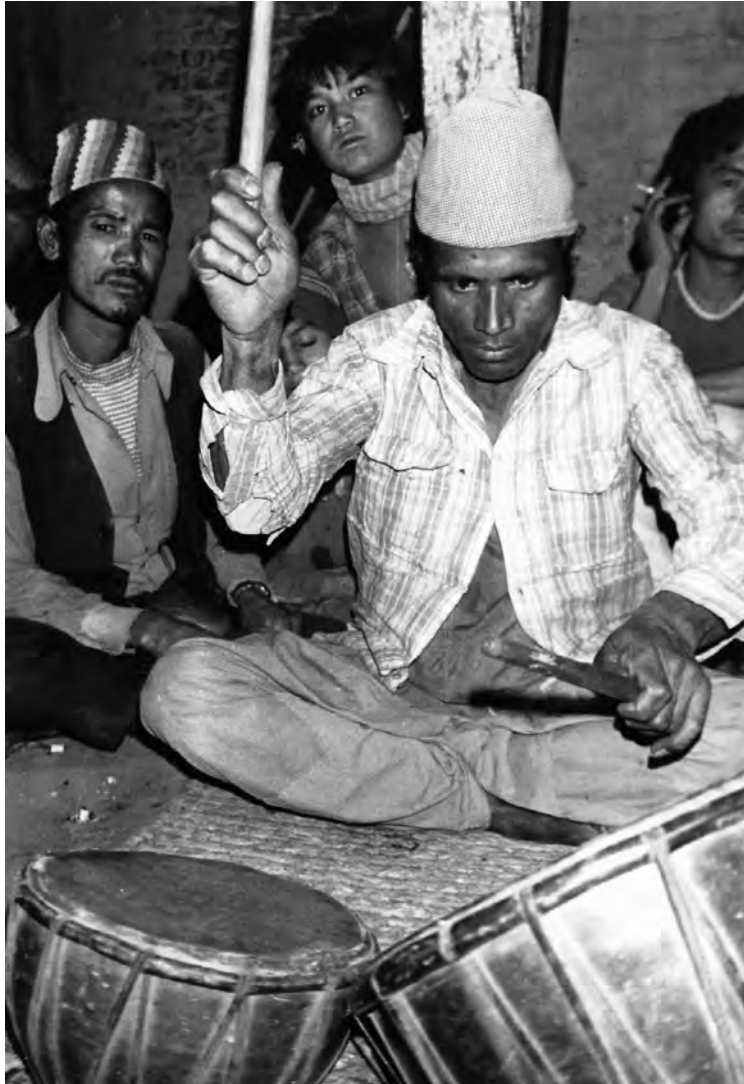
Reasons for the absence of technical perfection in many performances of Newar music could be general intoxication during festivals or simply the advanced age and bad health that also led to the present state of decline of this tradition. Shawm accompaniment was definitely more precise during the early 1980s when there were still enough proficient players and regular performances. In Bhaktapur, Jugī shawm players are always, sometimes drastically shown their place at the very bottom of the socio-economic order. After the *guthi* land bestowments were confiscated by the state of Nepal in 1963, the music groups still needed to pay shawm-players. Payment was mostly in kind, rice and wheat, and it became less and less. Owing to the Jugīs' reluctance to play for free, performances became increasingly rare. If professional musicians are to work, they need to be respected and paid, not abused but supported. The people of Bhaktapur missed that chance.

All *navabājā* drums are played in cross-legged sitting position, some supported by a drum belt around the drummer's knees. In the following descriptions of playing techniques, the fingers are numbered 1 to 5, starting with the thumb as 1. The Nāsaḥ hide of a two-headed drum produces much clearer undampened, open *tā* sounds when the Haimā hide is blocked just before the stroke. Blocking is done either with the drumstick or with fingers 3, 4, 5 silently holding against the centre of the Haimā hide with their tips whilst fingers 1 and 2 hold the stick. Both techniques help to produce a clear and ringing *tā* sound and are applied whenever the tempo allows for this. Fingers 3 to 5 of the right hand also regulate the range of the drumstick's movements by holding it either tight or loose, allowing more freedom to bounce back from the drum head.

Movements are restricted to the barely necessary and carried out with maximum relaxation and quiet, regular breathing. Facial expression should be focused but serene. In exceptional cases, an experienced drummer may use an extra movement to highlight special strokes. Among all *navabājā* drummers, only Hari Govinda did this to impressive effect whilst playing some special *nagarā* patterns. He had learnt this technique from his uncle. (Fig. 333)

The popular *tatali* piece for *dhācā*, *dhalak* and *nagarā* includes a section where the shawms synchronize with the drumming patterns (Fig. 334). Here, the shawms respond after the fashion of natural trumpets *pvaṅgā*. They use only the basic note and the upper fifth, the basic note coinciding with *ghē* strokes of the lower sounding drum hide and the fifth with *tā* strokes of the higher sounding drum hide.





*Fig. 333:* Hari Govinda Ranjitkar throwing his arm up to highlight a stroke (1983)



Fig. 334: Hari Govinda Ranjītkar playing *tatali* with the *dhācā* during a recording session in Yātāchē 1989

In this way, the drum pattern /ghē tā tā ghē / tā tā ghē o /

synchronizes with the shawms playing<sup>41</sup> / S P P S / P P S o /

etc.

In the entire *navabājā* repertoire, this is the only piece, where shawms divert from their role of having to support the drummer with repetitive melodies. The union of melody and rhythm becomes intimate. The piece includes also patterns of Rādhākṛṣṇa *pyākhā* and *khīcā pyākhā*<sup>42</sup>.

Other *navabājā* compositions may include certain patterns that cite those of masked dances: *Cva* no. 10 for *dhā* is the main pattern of Bhaila *pyākhā*. It is played when Bhailadyaḥ dances with his entourage.

The composition *dhamāk* for *dhimaycā*, *nāykhīcā*, *dhalak*, *pachimā* and *nagarā* uses the typical patterns of *khyāḥ pyākhā*, a dance in a rapid seven beat meter showing naughty ghosts that lurk on rooftops at night and paralyze people in their sleep (Fig. 335).

41 in Indian letter notation

42 lit. dog dance



*Fig. 335: Khyāḥ pyākhā performed by potters of Taulāchē, August 1988.*

Citations of dance patterns appear also in *dāphā* drum accompaniment<sup>43</sup>. Musicians and listeners in Bhaktapur are instantly able to pick up the lead given by the drumming patterns and associate the respective gods and other characters from various masked dances.

As much of the *navabājā* repertoire is also part of drum compositions played by Bhaila *pyākhā* and Sāymi *gūlābājā*, the complete transcriptions of those repertoires are included in this publication. Bhaila *pyākhā* uses only two drums, *dhā* and *lālākhī*. Many among *these dhā* pieces are also part of what the *kvakhī* drum plays during the initial section of a *navabājā* performance, but at a faster tempo. The drumming syllables differ a little in both genres, as these are oral traditions.

In this chapter I tried to establish that the *navabājā* repertoire of compositions was to some extent compiled from compositions of existing dance repertoires. Their performance in the *navadāphā* context causes performers and listeners to associate and perhaps experience a vision of the respective characters from those masked dances. It appears that the masters who selected the compositions did apply a final touch resulting in the convincing format of this treasure of Newar drumming compositions. They must have included several original compositions in addition, for example most of those for *dhācā*, *dhimaycā* and *nāykhīcā* and those for *kvakhīcā*. Obviously, they were highly skilled musicians with the necessary intellectual and creative potential. They lived two hundred years before our era when Newar culture was at its full bloom—thanks to an almost unlimited support by the Malla kings. Those rulers embraced the responsibility towards their astonishing culture, encouraging the Newar genius by participating in the unique spiritual and artistic potential of their subjects.

Many drumming patterns are shared among different Newar settlements. For example, some of the *dhimay* patterns of Bhaktapur are also used in Thimi or Kathmandu. The last section of Bhaktapur's *dhimay dyaḥlhāygu* is also played in far away Baḍikhel (near Lele)—proof of the extreme age and ritual importance most this important invocation of Nāsaḥdyaḥ. Much more comparative research into the repertoires of different Newar towns needs to be carried out to identify links between the various local styles. This may enable us to understand the flow of information among local styles and allow conclusions to their origin.

Comparison of Bhaktapur's drumming genres reveals that some genres share nothing, not even a single pattern with other genres, pointing to the restrictions of use by a single caste and/or use in esoteric tantric practices. This applies to the *cacā pyākhā* and *pañcatāla* repertoire of the Buddhist Vajrācārya priests that could be among the oldest surviving drumming traditions—their exclusiveness ensured by secret performances. The other high caste Buddhist drumming tradition, Śākya and Vajrācārya *gūlābājā* is processional music for everybody to hear, but not a single drumming pattern of this can be found in other genres. The other end of the social ladder is represented by *nāykhībājā*, the processional music of the Nāy butchers. Their repertoire includes the funeral procession music *sībājā*, believed to emanate black magic and death. Nobody else wanted to have anything to do even with the rest of the *nāykhībājā* repertoire. Not a single pattern is shared with other genres. This is also the case with the unique music of the Navadurgā that dates from the early 16th century. The mothergoddesses are the most powerful protectors of Bhaktapur. Their music stands apart and cannot be taught to outsiders.

43 cf. chapter 11.12

The *lālākhī* accompaniment of religious *dāphā* songs includes patterns from popular *sāpāru* dances. When the singers are singing the *dāphā* song text, these drum patterns work like an under-current of meaning. Naturally, when they sound, the musicians may visualise the dance characters.

Other genres frequently contributed to each other, especially those genres practiced by the middle strata of the society, the musically very active farmers and related castes of craftsmen. Several processional patterns occurring in *dhimaybājā*, *dhābājā*, *Baila pyākhā* and *navabājā dhā* are similar, for example the following one that accompanies the ensemble dance of *Bhaila pyākhā*. In *navabājā* and *dhābājā* it is called *cva*, in *dhimaybājā gu*, whereas *Bhaila pyākhā* uses the drumming syllables as the title of the piece, *dhānyedhānā*. It comes in a straight metre. The syllables differ but the structure and playing technique are similar.

*navabājā* and *dhābājā*: /ghē o o tā/ o o ghē o /tā o o o /tāghemitā/  
/ghē o o tā/ o o ghē o /tā o o o /tāghemitā/  
/tākha o tā/ o o kha o /tākha o tā/ o o kha o /tā o etc.

*dhimaybājā*: /dhā o o syāy/ o o thēy o /syāy o o o /khatātāka/  
/dhā o o syāy/ o o thēy o /syāy o o o /khatātāka/  
/cakhū o ba / o o khū o /syāy o o o /khatātāka/ etc.

*Bhaila pyākhā*: /dhā o o nye/ o o dhā o /nā o o o /garajaka/  
/dhā o o nye/ o o dhā o /nā o o o /garajaka/  
/dalī o ce/ o o kū o /cakū o nye/ o o kū o /cā etc.

There are numerous examples of drumming syllables evoking poetry—inevitably of erotic connotation. When male drummers start inventing these naughty rhymes based on their drumming patterns, there is no end to it. For example, the popular *tatali* drumming piece played during performances of *navabājā* and *kha pyākhā* has this pattern:

/ghē ti tā /kha ti tā/ ghē ghē tāghē/tā etc.

If replaced by meaningful words, it becomes:

/dho-ti tva/kāy-ta tva/prā-si nāpā/tva etc.  
Take off the dhoti. Take off the loincloth.  
Take off the sari, too.

Another example:

/kāy-ta tva/prā-si tva/jvāḥ jvāḥ majhvāḥ/tya etc.  
Take off the loincloth. Take off the sari. Interlock!

## 6.12 Drum-Making

During the 1980s, the only drum-makers in town were two Kulu brothers, Dil Bahādur and Śaṅkha Bahādur, living on the northern periphery of Bhaktapur, in Mulāchē. Owing to their professional occupation with cow and other animal hides, their Kulu caste comes between Nāy butchers and untouchable Pvaḥ sweepers, basket-makers and fishermen. With the recent disappearance of many music groups and decreasing demand for their traditional work as drum-makers, the next generation of Kulus with school education is trying to find additional avenues for generating



Fig. 336: Kulu women repairing a pair of *tablā* (*tamal* and *bām*) for use in *bhajan* accompaniment, 1985

income. Some specialise in the tourist business, selling small *māḍal* drums, singing bowls and toy *sāraṅgīs* as souvenirs. In the mid 1980s Dil Bahādur Kulu organised instructive video shows of American blue films (entrance fee: 1 Rupee). This became a temporary racket for the needy and brought him some extra income. Newar drums are tuned only to an approximate pitch. If the groups can afford it, they take the instruments to the Kulu drum-maker for tightening—usually before the big town rituals *biskaḥ* and *mvahani*. (Figs. 336–338)



Fig. 337: Śaṅkha Bahādur Kulu repairing *lālākhi* drums in his workshop, 1989



Fig. 338: Drum-maker's tools and raw material for making a *nāykhī* drum,

front row from left to right: Haimā hide (*chēgū*) of cow with bamboo ring (*pvatā*), Nāsaḥ hide of female goat with bamboo ring, and flat *lvahā* stone for tool sharpening,

second row: *lvahā* stone hammer, flat bamboo slice *benā*, hole piercing awl (*pvāḥ khanegu ācā*), *lapi* blade, flat awl (*gvaḥgu ācā*), *chālicā* pliers,

third row: leather strip (*tā bālā*), cotton rope (*kā khipaḥ*), water jug (*karuvā*)

**Animal hides used in drum-making**

<b>Name of drum</b>	<b>Nāsaḥ drumhead</b>	<b>Haimā/Mākā drumhead</b>
<i>dyahkhī</i>	<i>nāk</i> (female <i>yāk</i> , <i>Bos grunniens</i> )	<i>nāk</i>
royal <i>nagarā</i>		male buffalo
<i>dhimay</i>	calf skin	female cow
<i>lālākhī</i>	cow (upper layer), female goat (lower l.)	cow (male for upper layer, female for lower layer)
<i>dhā</i>	<i>cyāgrā</i> (mountain goat)	cow
<i>kvatāḥ</i>	see <i>lālākhī</i> and <i>nāykhī</i>	see <i>lālākhī</i> and <i>nāykhī</i>
<i>dhācā</i>	female goat	mountain goat
<i>dhimaycā</i>	calf skin	female cow
<i>nāykhī/nāykhīcā</i>	female goat	cow
<i>pachimā</i>	mountain goat (upper layer) goat (lower layer)	cow
<i>dhalak</i>	goat	cow
<i>kvakhīcā</i>	female mountain goat (upper layer) female goat (lower layer)	
<i>nagarā</i>	cow (thin)	cow (thicker)
<i>tamva/tukumuku</i>	mountain goat	
<i>mādal/magaḥkhī</i>	female goat	mountain goat
<i>tablā/tamalā</i>	female goat	
<i>bāyām/bām</i>		mountain goat
<i>dabadaba</i>	goat (thin)	goat (thin)
<i>kāntādabadaba</i>	bladder of male buffalo	bladder of male buffalo

All animal hides are soaked in a chalk solution overnight before scraping off the hair with a *lapi* blade.



Some drums require tuning paste. This increases resonance and allows additional sound quality and playing techniques. These pastes are of three varieties:

1. *chucū*, a dough made of wheat flour and water. This is applied to the Haimā of the *pachimā* drum before performance and must be scraped off immediately after performance.
2. *khau*, a mixture of powdered iron ore, little water and various sticky components. It is applied on the outer side of the drum head and rubbed against the tightened hide with the help of a smooth, round stone. Rubbing and pressure cause heat which makes the paste stick to the drum hide for years. Application needs to be done in many layers and with utmost precision to allow for the fine-tuning of a concert *tablā*, for example. The finest *tablā*-makers in India own rare skills as secret craft traditions that are highly valued by professional *tablā-vādaks*. The *khau* applied by local *Kulus* in the Kathmandu Valley is a very rough version of the perfection that some Indian specialists are capable of. Newar drums with *khau* are *tamal* and *bām* (*tablā* and *bāyām*), *lālākhī* (Nāsaḥ and Haimā), *kvakhīcā* and *pachimā* (Nāsaḥ).
3. *masalā*, a mixture of crushed castor seeds (*Ricinus communis*), dried tree resin and mustard oil. It is applied on the inside of the drum hide and needs to be replaced every year. The *masalā* paste lends weight and a deep resonance to the Haimā drum hides of *dhimay*, *dhimaycā*, *dhācā*, *nāykhī*, *dhalak* and to the Mākaḥ of the *nagarā* pair of kettledrums.

Dil Bahādur Kulu taught me how to make a *nāykhī* drum. The following series of illustrations (Figs. 339–373) documents the process:



*Gvaḥ* body of the drum of black *casī* wood<sup>44</sup>  
(diameter at both ends: 19 cm, height: 33 cm)

44 *Magnolia*

*Fig. 339*



Cutting the wetted Nāsaḥ hide into a circular shape (*cāḥ lakaygu* or *cāḥ utigenkegu*)

*Figs. 340, 341*



Binding the bamboo ring with a leather string (*pvata cigu*)

*Fig. 342*



Cleaning the Nāsaḥ hide with the blade (*chēgū pigu* or *chēgū svigu*)

Fig. 343



Jacketing the bamboo ring (*pvata tulegu*) with the help of the *benā*

Figs. 344, 345



Fitting the Nāsaḥ hide on to the drum (Nāsaḥ jukegu)

Fig. 346



Cutting the wetted Haimā hide into shape (cāḥ lakaygu/cāḥ utigenkegu)

Fig. 347



Cleaning the Haimā hide (chēgu pīgu/chēgu svigu)

Fig. 348



Sharpening the *lapi* blade

*Fig. 349*



Cleaning the Haimā hide  
(*chēgū pigu/chēgū svigu*)

*Fig. 350*



Checking the shape of the  
cleaned Haimā hide

*Fig. 351*



Wetting the Haimā hide (*chēgū phvayegu*) before jacketing

Fig. 352



Jacketing (*pvata tulegu*)

Fig. 353



Components of the *masalā* paste: mustard oil (*tū cikā*), *sāl* resin (*sāl dhūp*) and castor seeds (*ālaypu*)

Fig. 354



Castor seeds (*ālaypu*)

*Fig. 355*



Crushing and grinding the resin with a round stone (*lvahā*) into a fine powder

*Figs. 356, 357*



Crushing and grinding  
castor seeds with a stone

*Fig. 358*



Adding mustard oil  
(*tū cikā*)

*Fig. 359*



Three *masalā* components  
mixed into a rough paste

*Fig. 360*





Mixing the components thoroughly, until the *masalā* becomes sticky and glutinous

*Figs. 361, 362*



Applying the *masalā* paste on the Haimā hide (*masalā tāyegu/masalā ilegu*)

*Fig. 363*



Fitting the Haimā hide on to the drum (Haimā jukegu), *masalā* inside

Fig. 364



Securing both the drum hides with string (*nikhē kākegu*)

Fig. 365



Fig. 366

Tying both the drum hides



Fig. 367

Tightening the string with  
the big toe (*tuī kākah  
tāyegu*)



Fig. 368

Piercing twelve holes  
(*pvah khānegu*)



Putting the leather strap (*tā bālā*) through them one by one

*Fig. 369*



Connecting the two drum heads with the leather strap and balancing the tension

*Fig. 370*



Piercing the remaining holes and putting the strap through (*pvaḥ khāṇa tā tāyaḥ cvāgu*)

*Fig. 371*



Levelling the drum hides  
(*cāḥ māthā vākugu*)

*Fig. 372*



Tightening the straps  
(*tā salegu*)

*Fig. 373*

Already suffering from tuberculosis, Dil Bahādur Kulu (Fig. 374) passed away five years later. At the time, TB was a chief cause of premature death in Nepal. He left two sons, Bikram and Bikas, who are skilled drum-makers.



*Fig. 374: Watching the drying nāykhī in the sun (nibhāḥle pāḥgu).  
Dil Bahādur is relaxing.*

## 7 Cymbals

Four different pairs of cymbals are used to accompany the nine drums, *tāḥ* of different sizes, *jhyālicā*, *sichyāḥ* and *bhuchyāḥ* (Fig. 375). Some *navabājā* groups use in addition a thick brass disc of the gong category (approximately 25 cm in diameter), called *kāypā*, *kāypī* or in Bhaktapur also *tāmāī*. It is played with a heavy stick.



Fig. 375: (left to right) *tāḥcā*, *tāḥ*, *jhyālicā*, *sichyāḥ* and *bhuchyāḥ* (photo: Bernd Karl Rennhak)

Two different sounds are produced, the open, ringing sound *tī̃* and the closed, muffled sound *chu*. In the drumming notation they are represented by capital letters **T** and **C** above the drumming syllables.

## 7 Cymbals

### 7.1 *Tāḥ* and *Tāḥcā*

*Tāḥ* are thick-walled bronze cymbals and were made by Śākya goldsmiths living in the Nāgbāhāḥ area, Patan. The smaller *tāḥ* are called *tāḥcā*. The alloy includes precious metals. Before the last goldsmith skilled in this craft closed his workshop in 1991, I asked him if he would let me document the process of making the instruments but this was politely declined. It appears that the family secret has been lost. The tourist market is flooded with poor quality cymbals. The finest thick-walled cymbals were made by Śākya expatriates in Lhasa. (Figs. 376–378)



Fig. 376: *Tāḥcā* (front, 4 cm in diameter) and *tāḥ* with handles (photo: Bernd Karl Rennhak)





*Fig. 377*

tī



*Fig. 378*

chu

## 7 Cymbals

### 7.2 *Jhyāli* and *Jhyālicā*

*Jhyālicā* are flat brass cymbals, approximately 7 cm in diameter, producing a tinkling sound. They are made by *tamaḥ* coppersmiths. The Navadurgā of Bhaktapur use a large and heavy pair called *jhyāli*. That special sound is perceived as /tī̃ - kal - - /tī̃ - kal - - / when the Navadurgā dancers walk through Bhaktapur at night. (Figs. 379–381)



Fig. 379: Two pairs of *jhyālicā* and one pair of big *jhyāli* used by the Navadurgā (photo: Bernd Karl Rennhak)



*Fig. 380*

Resonant sound of *jhyālicā*



*Fig. 381*

Muffled sound of *jhyālicā*

## 7 Cymbals

### 7.3 *Sichyāḥ*

*Sichyāḥ* (in Kathmandu Newari: *chusyāḥ*) are a pair of brass cymbals approximately 20 cm in diameter and with a wide, flat boss (Figs. 382, 383).



*Fig. 382*

Resonant sound of *sichyāḥ*



*Fig. 383*

Muffled sound of *sichyāḥ*

## 7.4 *Bhuchyāḥ*

*Bhuchyāḥ* (in Kathmandu Newari: *bhusyāḥ*) is a pair of large brass cymbals (29 cm in diameter) with a wide, round boss (Figs. 384–386). The finest *bhuchyāḥ* were produced in Kathmandu until 1985. Their incomparable sound was gorgeous and the inside of the boss painted with red enamel. Since then, cymbals of lesser quality have been imported from Bhojpur, a town in east Nepal famous for metal work. Both *bhuchyāḥ* and *sichyāḥ* don't last long as they are easily broken during processions. Excited drunken brutes grab the cymbals and smash them together heads on with full force, without knowing the correct way of playing. These delicate cymbals should be held very



Fig. 384: Bishnu Bahadur Manandhar ('Mr. Bhaktapur') playing *bhuchyāḥ* in the correct manner during a *dhimaybājā* procession, 1991

## 7 Cymbals

loosely. Their flat surfaces meet in a gentle, sweeping manner with the right hand pushing and the left hand pulling. Nobody should be allowed to touch the instruments without proper training.

Prolonged cymbal playing damages the inner ear and may cause permanent tinnitus. I always used small cotton balls to protect my ears. This helped me to preserve my hearing capacity—despite participating as a drummer in countless noisy processions. I strongly recommend this to every player of Newar drums and cymbals.



Fig. 385

Resonant sound of *bhuchyāḥ*  
(cymbals remain in loose contact after the initial stroke,  
producing an additional series of tinkling sounds)



Fig. 386

Muffled sound of *bhuchyāḥ*





## 8 Śāstriya Saṅgīt

When Indian court musicians were employed by Malla, Śāha and Rāṇā courts, *śāstriya saṅgīt*<sup>1</sup> remained an exclusive court entertainment until some of these musicians trained disciples from Nepal. If some members of the ruling families attained proficiency in singing or playing in the North Indian classical tradition, this was a strictly private occupation. The last Rudra *vīṇā* player of professional standard was Ekrāj SJB Rāṇā during the 1940s and 1950s (Fig. 387).



Fig. 387: Nepal's last Rudra *vīṇā* player, Ekrāj Shamsheer posing in state attire

1 Nepali term for North Indian classical music/Hindustani music



Fig. 388: Ekrāj Shamsheer's music room at Durgā Bhāvan

On the groundfloor of his Durgā Bhāvan palace<sup>2</sup> at Taṅgal, Kathmandu, he had installed a lavish music room (Fig. 388) with a garden view where white peacocks strutted next to Italian fountains. There he practised and played for his friends. He owned a complete set of musical instruments made in Calcutta and his library included a Newar *rāgamālā* commissioned by Jagajjotir Malla of Bhaktapur (1614–1637).<sup>3</sup>

In the 1980s, a handful of Indian and Nepalese musicians—among them the Ganesh Bhandari (*sītār*), Nara Raj Dhakal (*khayāl*), Shambhu Prasad Mishra (*tablā*) and Shamba Dev Sharma

2 now demolished

3 see Wegner and Widdess 2004, 2005

(*harmonium*)—were in the employment of the royal palace in Kathmandu, one of them in charge of organising a monthly fullmoon concert at the Nārāyaṇhiṭī temple in the palace compound. These concerts were accessible to the general public and linked to the inner palace with horrible microphones and electric wires. We never knew if anybody listened at the other end. There were a few senior professional musicians—among them Krishna Narayan Shrestha (*jaltaraṅg*, *dilruba*, *tablā taraṅg* and *harmonium*), Tarabhir Singh Tuladhar (*sitār*), Mohan Prasad Shrestha (*sarod*) and Homnath Upadhyaya (*tablā*) who each helped to raise a new generation of musicians. Tribhuvan University’s Lalit Kala campus offered basic training in *śāstriya saṅgī*. When Nepal TV opened its first studio on the top floor of Singha Durbar, Krishna Narayan Shrestha and I were called to play a televised programme. The payment was Rs. 125 each but we were told to collect the money later. We came to know that the Singha Durbar guards were under order to prevent pedestrians and private vehicles from entering the gate. The taxi fare would have been more than the money that we were supposed to collect. (Figs. 389–392)



Fig. 389: Krishna Narayan Shrestha playing *jaltāraṅg* at the Goethe Institute 22/2/1991

When I played a *tablā* solo in an auditorium in Patan, to my surprise the Nepal TV technicians had installed their recording equipment on stage. They recorded and telecasted the concert without taking the trouble to ask for my permission. Every musician had such stories to tell of betrayal and piracy. Finally, Nepal TV decided to stop telecasting programmes with *śāstriya saṅgī*. Contrary to Indian state media with their earlier educative agenda, Nepal TV caters only for popular tastes. Unlike India where the copyright rests with the performer, in Nepal it is the producer who owns the copyright. In fact, the biggest producer made himself General Secretary



*Fig. 390: Court singer Nararaj Dhakal presenting khayāl at the Goethe Institute 1991*

of the copyright society that he had founded. This climate of greed and exploitation makes it extremely hard for professional musicians to pull on in Nepal. Consequently, in comparison with North Indian professional standards this noble musical tradition deteriorated to a provincial level. Having to supply dinner music to foreign tourists kills the joy of music. Those musicians who could afford it migrated abroad.



Fig. 391: Tarabir Singh Tuladhar playing *sitār* at the Goethe Institute 1991



Fig. 392: Mohan Sundar Shrestha playing *sarod* at the Goethe Institute 1991



*Fig. 393:* Keshab Narayan Tamrakar during a 1988 practice session at my Bhaktapur home with a pair of *tablā* made in Bombay by Vishnu Vitthal Sutar (photo courtesy of Kevin Bubriski)

In the 1980s and 1990s, there was only a single Newar *tablā* player in Bhaktapur, Keshab Narayan Tamrakar (Fig. 393) who had learnt the Benares style of *tablā* from court musician Shambhu Prasad Mishra. Being the wealthy owner of a tourist shop, Keshab organised occasional public concerts in Bhaktapur with invited musicians from Patan, Kathmandu and Germany (author). These performances of *śāstriya saṅgīt* attracted only a limited circle of a few local people trained in this tradition. To other citizens it was a musical language different from their own, that they could enjoy only at a superficial level. Another Tamrakār family in Kvāchē kept a few instruments

with broken strings as family memorabilia from a time when *śāstriya saṅgīt* was practised more and recognized as South Asia's supreme musical achievement (Fig. 394). Extreme dedication to practice, learning and perfection combined with the essential talent deserve unconditional support. This is how humanity can blossom and proceed.

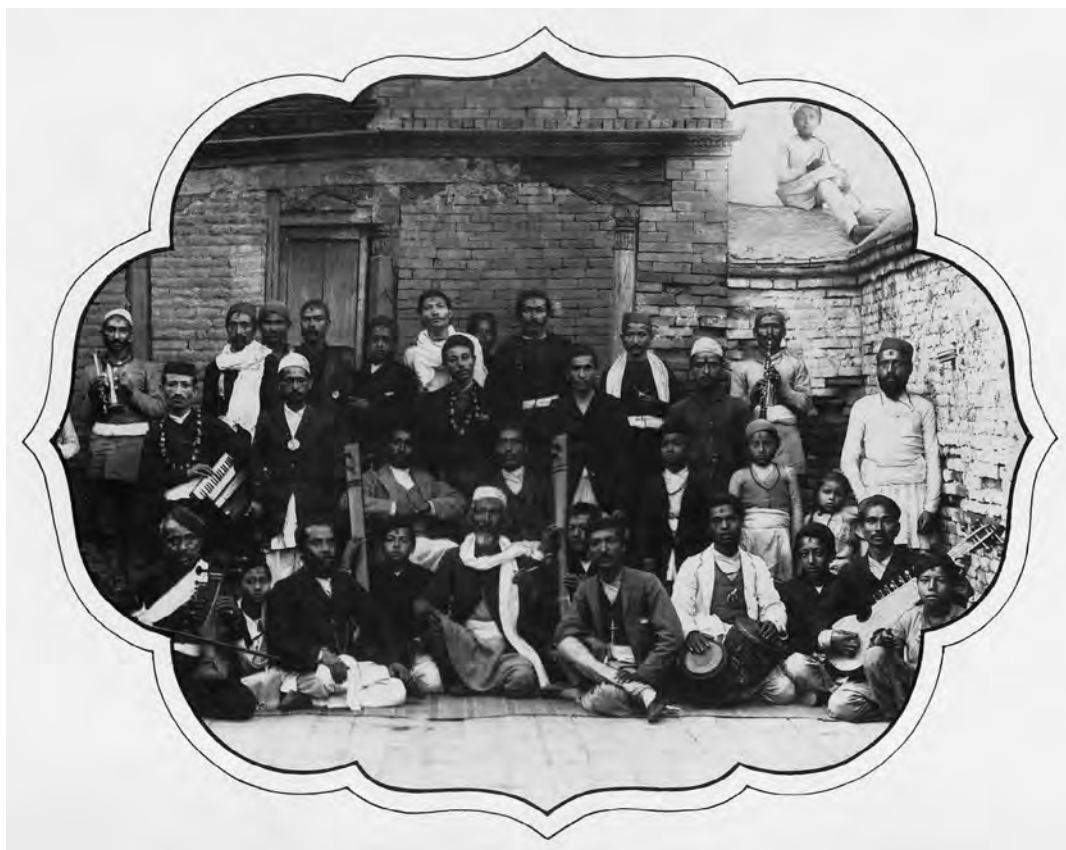


Fig. 394: Musicians of *śāstriya saṅgīt* (front) and other genres—Kathmandu, early 20th century (postcard)

During my years as resident of Bhaktapur, I trained several *tablā* students in the style of Laliyānā *gharānā*. Three of them found employment at Kathmandu University's Department of Music. As I published my complete *tablā* repertoire in 2004<sup>4</sup> in Delhi, transcriptions in this publication do not include *tablā*. When Newar farmers play *tablā* for *bhajan* accompaniment, this is usually done with drums that are out of tune and in a comparatively basic and crude manner. But they manage to inspire the singers, leading them to joyous climaxes.

4 Wegner 2004





## 9 Musical Change

In trying to reconstruct the musical history of the Kathmandu Valley, scholars face the problem of limited written historical data. The National Archive keeps approximately one hundred twenty music manuscripts—among them the oldest existing manuscript of Bhārata's *nāṭyaśāstra*.<sup>1</sup> Among a few other South Asian music treatises, most of these manuscripts are songbooks. Other information can be extracted from the *vaṃśāvalī* chronicles of the kings of Nepal. They mention masked dances or musical instruments sponsored by a king or introduced under his reign. Other sources are stone inscriptions and deed documents kept by music groups, inscriptions on musical instruments and depictions of music performances in painting and carvings in stone, metal or wood. The information generated so far allows only for a broad outline of the historical development, leaving huge gaps.<sup>2</sup> This may become more precise as more scholars take interest and contribute their findings. Another source of information is a critical look at the repertoire. This allows us to identify stylistic changes and innovations that may have been caused by creative minds or by political, social, economic or technological developments. This publication identifies at least five different styles of Newar drumming repertoires of different castes that do not share any common patterns. This could suggest separate origins during different stages in history.

The study of musical change becomes even more important in our time of accelerating change. Alarm bells should sound when an entire musical tradition is on the verge of extinction. It shows that the foundations of a society are about to collapse. This is different from the continuous change of traditions that keep renewing themselves, gradually taking a new shape. That should be no reason for concern. Oral traditions were always enhanced by creative minds or suffered from memory lapses. They are living, not static. This should be kept in mind when using my notations of the Bhaktapur repertoire. These can be an effective teaching and learning aid. They should not be mistaken for an everlasting version. Whenever good ideas for improvement and addition arrive, they should be incorporated to keep the music alive. Notations can be rewritten.

### Stabilising Factors

When we try to list stabilising factors that kept the Newar musical traditions going over the centuries, there was obviously the absolute monarchy that perceived change as a potential threat and

1 the original written approximately 1800 to 2000 years ago

2 cf. chapter 1.

guaranteed continuity. The Malla kings and a few members of the following Shah dynasty took personal interest and supported music groups with land deeds and—in some cases—personal participation. *Guthī* organisations for the maintenance of music groups have been in existence at least since the early seventh century.<sup>3</sup> The value of these social organisations for the continuity of musical practice and maintenance of temples, musical instruments, songbooks, etc. cannot be overstated. The *guthī* system is largely responsible for the continuity of Newar music culture for over two centuries after the end of Malla rule in 1769. The foundation of *navadāphā* groups with their regular performance of drum compositions created a unique pool of reference for other groups that were always welcome to refresh their memory by way of communication with the leading *navabājā* drummers and singers.

Last not least, the essential Newar cultural values of participation and contribution kept the music alive. It was natural for a young farmer to learn music and dance and actively participate in the opulent town rituals. All these activities were established and channeled through the cult of Nāsaḥḍyaḥ, confirming the essential ritual function of music and dance as means of communication with the domain of the divine. *Dyaḥlhāygu* invocations are held sacred. This saved their essential patterns from change. For example, the *cicāhāḥgu dyaḥlhāygu* of *dhimaybājā* can be found in many *dhimay* repertoires across the Kathmandu Valley—even in such a remote place as Lele-Bārikhel.<sup>4</sup> It must have served over a millennium as a proven method for actualising divine inspiration. But when an entire *pañcatāla* group needs to sight-read *tvāka dyaḥlhāygu* to perform it in public with difficulty, the end is near.<sup>5</sup>

### Destabilising Factors

When we look at the dramatic changes that happened in Nepal during the recent past, we perceive an acceleration of the speed of change that goes along with the disappearance of many aspects of Newar music that I was still able to document in the 1980s. This applies also to other musical traditions of Nepal, of course. This publication makes it clear that the confiscation of Newar *guthi* land endowments during King Mahendra Shah's rule in 1963 has been a most destructive factor in the loss of musical heritage.

The other, equally destructive factor is the mindless suppression of lower caste musicians that is still common practice in Nepal. Only if society allows musicians to lead a decent life by teaching and performing, their conditions and status will improve. Musicians who depend on performing as a livelihood need to be paid an appropriate amount for their services just like any other profession. Their traditions will survive and add meaning, stability and beauty to peoples' lives and contribute to the wellbeing of the nation.

3 cf. Wegner with Sharma 1994 and 1995

4 cf. chapter 11.6 and Wegner/Sharma 1994 and 1995

5 cf. chapter 4.1

## What We Could Do

When I realized what an enormous cultural loss this catastrophic change meant for the Nepalese nation, my focus changed from participant observation and documentation to what is now called applied ethnomusicology. It was my aim to train as many intelligent young people in Nepal to appreciate, safeguard and work creatively with their own musical traditions. With the support of Kathmandu University and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) it was possible in 1996 to found the Department of Music in the idyllic setting of the restored Dhaubhadel Śivālaya at the outskirts of Bhaktapur and employ as many local musicians and other academic teachers from Bhaktapur, Patan and Kathmandu as possible. Over the past decades, our staff members and graduates contributed not only to traditional music but their knowledge and training in traditional music affected their own creative output in the field of popular music.<sup>6</sup>

In our age traditional music performances in Bhaktapur have become few and irregular and are drowned by noisy vehicles. Now it is of vital importance to rely on written notation to preserve this unique repertoire for future generations of literate musicians and make the process of learning the repertoire much easier. Notations cannot replace the motivation that is generated by groups that include three generations of musicians united in the musical worship of the gods and by a regular performance schedule.

Occasionally, educated Nepalese concerned about the loss of their musical heritage asked me, what they could do to prevent further decline. The answers:

1. In developing the vital community spirit that supports a musical culture, it is important to offer your children (boys AND girls) exposure to music and town rituals (explain the meaning!) at an early age. This is more important than school homework.
2. The support of musical traditions should be given equal importance as restoration of heritage sites. Both, tangible AND intangible cultural heritage must be preserved, ideally in projects combining both, restoration of physical facilities and their meaningful use.
3. Invest in music education. Create scholarships. Organize performances and competitions. By offering special training and job opportunities, local musicians should be educated and encouraged to apply their knowledge and skills as music teachers in general school education.
4. Include the academic discipline of ethnomusicology in every university and apply the methods of ethnomusicology in systematic documentation and support of the living musical heritage.

6 Fabian Bakel's PhD thesis 'Ethnomusicology, Popular Music and Preservation of Traditional Music in Nepal'—to be published soon—highlights these developments

## 9 Musical Change

5. Prevent suppression and exploitation of musicians. If you organize a paid performance, do not allow musicians to exploit each other. Pay everybody separately and in person.
6. Support music and dance groups as a participating sponsor—regardless of their members' political leaning.
7. Help preserving the skills of making good quality and authentic instruments and sponsor the learning of threatened instruments like *mvālī* shawms, *pvagā* and *kā* natural trumpets and drums.
8. Sponsor reconstruction and maintenance of *phalcā* shelters for music groups.
9. Create the political will to make the old towns permanently free of motorized traffic.
10. Lobby for a copyright law that ensures that performance, dissemination and reproduction rights belong to the performer, not to the producer.
11. By presenting informed and meaningful documentaries, television producers should accept the duty to educate, not merely entertain.
12. Music inspired by Nāsaḥḍyaḥ reveals that our true nature is cosmic creative energy, nothing less. This awareness wants to be nurtured and cultivated.

## 10 Appendix



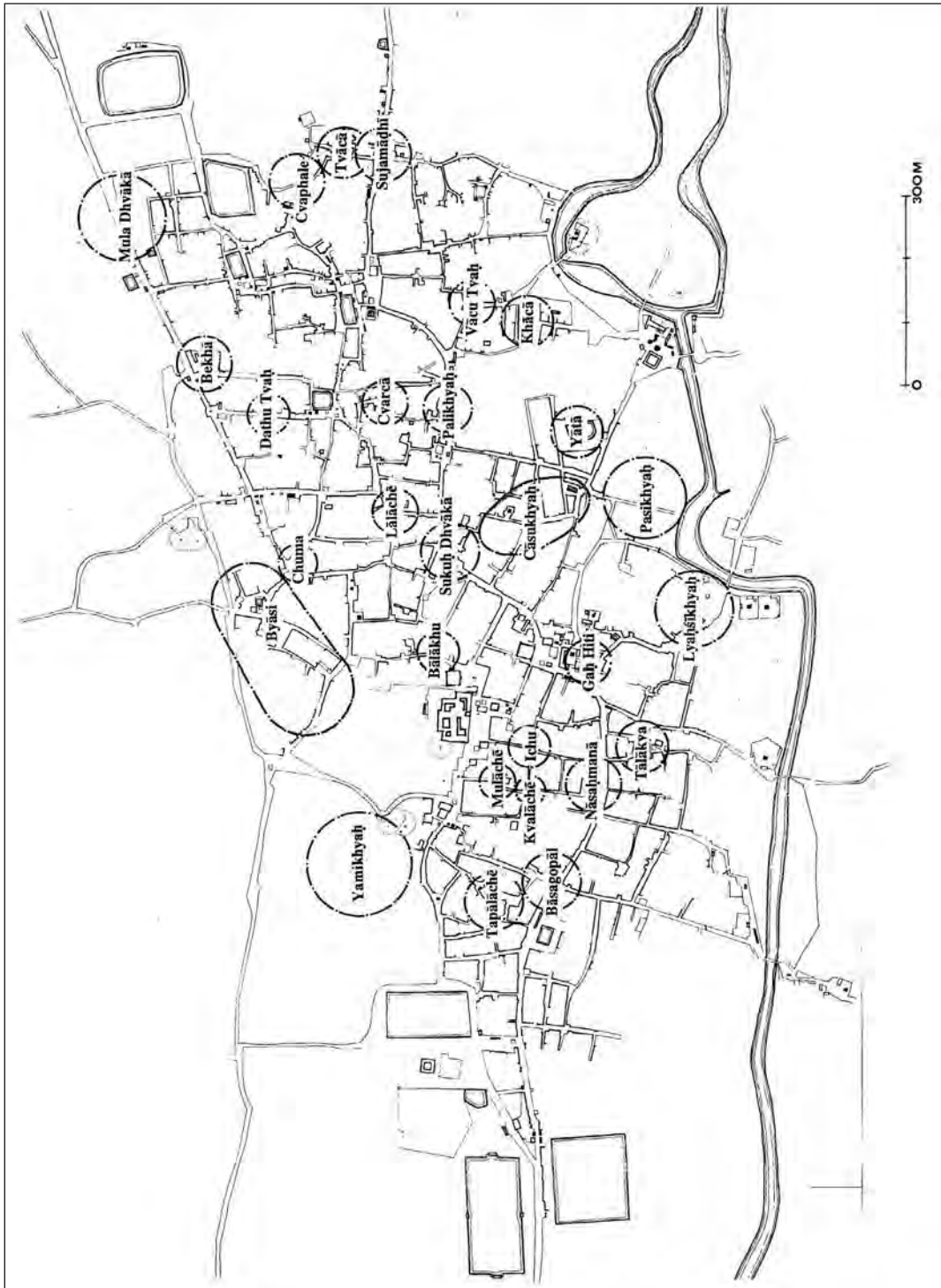
## Bhaktapur Maps

Maps 40, 41, 42 first published in Gutschow, Niels 1982: *Stadtraum und Ritual der newarischen Städte im Kathmandu-Tal: Eine architekturanthropologische Untersuchung*. Stuttgart Berlin Köln Mainz: Kohlhammer, pp. 39, 40)



Map 40: Names of *tvah* quarters (courtesy of Niels Gutschow)





Map 41: Names of *khyah* squares, streets, courtyards (courtesy of Niels Gutschow)



## Glossary

<i>abīr</i>	red powder
<i>ācā</i>	awl
Ācāju	ritual specialist (Karmācārya) of the Pañctharīya caste
<i>āgamchē</i>	Newar Buddhist clan god house for performing <i>cacā pyākhā</i>
Ajajudyah	lit. ‘Grandfather God’, used for Dīpaṅkara Buddha in Yātāchē
Ajimā	Bhadrakālī, consort of Bhairava
Akāś Bhairav	<i>avatār</i> of Śiva
<i>ālaypu</i>	castor seed
<i>ānanda laharī</i>	plucked drum used by Baul bards
<i>antarā</i>	stage of melodic development in North Indian classical music
<i>āratī</i>	ritual light offering
<i>arven</i>	keyboard instrument with reeds, the Indian harmonium
Aṣṭamātrkā	eight mother goddesses
<i>aṣṭami</i>	eighth day of the waxing moon
<i>astarā</i>	drum composition
<i>audh</i>	Vārli drum
<i>aūsi</i>	dark night before new moon
Āvāḥ	caste of bricklayers
Avalokiteśvara	Bodhisattva of compassion
<i>aylāḥ</i>	spirit (up to 80% alcohol)
<i>bāēcā</i>	fipple flute
<i>bāhā</i>	(var. <i>bāhī</i> ) Newar Buddhist monastery
<i>bāhye</i>	category of <i>cacā pyākhā</i> (presenting gods)
<i>bājā guṭhi</i>	managing organisation of a music group, usually financed by land deeds
<i>bām</i>	Newar drum, similar to the Indian <i>bāyāṃ</i>
<i>bārā dāygu</i>	<i>nāykhībājā</i> drum composition signalling ‘return from a sacrifice’
<i>bārahmāsa</i>	song and poetry genre about characteristics of the months/seasons
<i>bāre khī</i>	<i>nāykhībājā</i> drum composition for Buddhist processions
<i>bāsuri</i>	transverse flute
<i>bāsuri khalah</i>	(var. <i>bāsuri bājā</i> ) ensemble of transverse flutes, cymbals and drums
Baul	Bengali sect of itinerant bards

10 Appendix

<i>bekvacukva</i>	U-shaped courtyard of Bhaktapur palace
<i>benā</i>	flat bamboo blade used by Kulu
Betāḥ	Sanskrit: Vetāla, blood-drinking demon, attendant of Śiva
<i>betāli</i>	white turban cloth
Bhadrakālī	mother goddess
<i>bhagat</i>	shaman of the Vārli people of Mahārāṣṭra, India
Bhagavān	God, also used for Buddha
Bhailadyaḥ	Bhairava
Bhaila <i>pyākhā</i>	masked dance performed by potters of Bhaktapur
<i>bhajan</i>	religious song genre (Hindu: <i>rās bhajan</i> , Buddhist: <i>gyānmālā bhajan</i> )
<i>bhakti</i>	loving surrender to god as a path of yoga
<i>bhalb tramban</i>	valve trombone
<i>bhālū pyākhā</i>	bear dance
<i>bhamarā</i>	curved shawm with metal bell
Bhārataś Nāṭyaśāstra	earliest Indian music treatise (approx. 2000 years old)
Bhīmsen	(Sanskrit: Bhīmasena), hero of Mahābhārata epic
Bhūcā	(Hindi, Nepali: <i>bhūt</i> ) malignant ghost, attendant of Bhairava
<i>bhuchyāḥ</i>	pair of large cymbals with round boss
<i>bhūmi sudhār</i>	land reform act
<i>bhusyāḥ</i>	see <i>bhuchyāḥ</i>
<i>bhvē</i>	(KTM: <i>bhvay</i> ) ritual feast
<i>bhvisināḥ</i>	orange powder (not for human consumption!)
<i>bindu</i>	essence, dot representing the universe before it becomes manifest
<i>biskāḥ</i>	New Year town ritual of Bhaktapur
Bodhisattva	in Buddhism: one who seeks awakening ( <i>bodhi</i> ), assisting others to attain the same
<i>brahmatāl</i>	drum composition
Brahmāyaṇī	mother goddesses
Buṅgadyaḥ	Rāto Machendranāth of Buṅgamati
<i>buttā</i>	pattern variant
<i>cacā</i>	<i>caryā</i> song
<i>cacā pyākhā</i>	<i>caryā</i> dance
<i>caitya</i>	(var. <i>cībhāḥ</i> , <i>stūpa</i> ) monument representing Buddha and <i>dharma</i>
<i>cakra pūjā</i>	most elaborate and expensive Buddhist ritual
<i>cā kvatāḥ</i>	room for storing sacred clay
<i>cali</i>	drum composition
<i>calti</i>	(var. <i>cvakh</i> ) name of drum composition
Caṅḍeśvarī	mother goddess
Caṅgu Nārāyaṇa	temple courtyard situated on the ridge north of Bhaktapur
<i>carthi pūjā</i>	<i>pūjā</i> for thanking Gaṅeśa after accomplished apprenticeship
<i>caryā</i>	see <i>cacā</i>

<i>casī</i>	Magnolia wood
<i>cāti</i>	goat horn with long bamboo mouthpiece
<i>cauthi</i>	fourteenth day of the lunar month
<i>cavā</i>	<i>dhā</i> drum composition with shawm accompaniment
<i>chālicā</i>	pliers
<i>chēgū</i>	skin, hide
<i>chemā pūjā</i>	<i>pūjā</i> asking for forgiveness
<i>chinā</i>	drum composition for <i>dhimay</i>
Chipā	cloth-dyer
<i>chu</i>	muffled cymbal sound
<i>chucū</i>	dough
<i>chvāsa</i>	carved stones at street crossings, infested with evil spirits
<i>cībhāḥ</i>	(var. <i>caitya</i> , <i>stūpa</i> ) monument representing Buddha and <i>dharma</i>
<i>cībhāḥ pūjā</i>	<i>pūjā</i> at <i>cībhāḥ</i>
<i>cīr</i>	phallus
Citrakār	caste of ritual painters and mask-makers
<i>cvarā</i>	<i>mvālī</i> piece played during blood sacrifice
<i>cvaykegu</i>	<i>nāykhībājā</i> drum composition for public announcements
<i>dabadaba</i>	hourglass-shaped clapper drum
<i>dabū</i>	stone platform for dance performance, etc.
<i>dādarā</i>	<i>tāl</i> used for light classical and devotional music
<i>daitya</i>	demon
<i>dāk</i>	Vārli drum
<i>damāhā</i>	kettledrum played by Damāi
<i>damaru</i>	drum played by Śiva
Damāi	caste of non-Newar tailor-musicians
<i>dāphā</i>	religious song genre
<i>dāphāchē</i>	building for keeping musical instruments and conducting music apprenticeships
Dasavatār me	songs about the ten <i>avatārs</i> of Viṣṇu
Dattātreyā	Hindu god combining three gods Brahma, Viṣṇu and Śiva
<i>degah</i>	temple
<i>dehrā</i>	drum composition
Devanāgarī	Sanskrit script
Devī <i>pyākhā</i>	cf. Mahākālī <i>pyākhā</i>
<i>dhā</i>	Newar drum
<i>dhābājā</i>	processional drumming of Newar farmers with <i>dhā</i> and cymbals
<i>dhācā</i>	drum used in <i>navabājā</i> performance
<i>dhākathi</i>	straight drum stick for <i>dhā</i>
<i>dhalā</i>	ritual activities connected with <i>gūlābājā</i>
<i>dhalāchē</i>	house where ritual activities connected with <i>gūlābājā</i> are carried out

10 Appendix

<i>dhalak</i>	Newar drum, similar to the Indian <i>dholak</i>
<i>dhalāpa</i>	Buddhist ritual offering of five kinds of grain during <i>gūlā</i>
<i>dhalcā</i>	(var. <i>dhalcā bhajan</i> ) religious song genre
<i>dhamāk</i>	Newar <i>tāl</i> (7 counts)
<i>dhimay</i>	(var. <i>dhime</i> ) Newar drum
<i>dhimaybājā</i>	processional drumming of Newar farmers
<i>dhimaycā</i>	one of the Bhaktapur <i>navabājā</i> drums
<i>dhimay pucā</i>	drum stick made of cane which has been rolled by steaming
<i>dhol</i>	cylindrical drum (India)
<i>dhrupad</i>	North Indian classical vocal genre
<i>dhuvā</i>	refrain
<i>dhvakā</i>	gate, door
<i>dilruba</i>	bowed North Indian instrument
Dīpaṅkara Buddhas	Buddhas of earlier aeons
Dīpāvalī	festival of oil lamps installed to attract Mahālakṣmī, goddess of prosperity
<i>dīpcandī</i>	<i>tāl</i> used for light classical and devotional music
<i>ḍisko ḍram</i>	drum of marriage band
Dolma	Tibetan Buddhist goddess Tārā
<i>dotār</i>	lute used in Bengali folk music
<i>drakha</i>	drumming syllables used for short drum roll
<i>ḍram</i>	big drum of marriage band
<i>dugucā śyāygu</i>	drum composition played during goat sacrifice
<i>dugupūjā</i>	clan god ritual
<i>duḥ dhankegu</i>	marriage song sung whilst leaning a bamboo pole against the wall of the bride's home
Duī	(var. Duīcā) caste of torch-bearers and carriers
<i>dyaḥ</i>	god
<i>dhyaḥbāri</i>	attendants to temporary shrine used during <i>gūlā</i>
<i>dyaḥbhvaykegu</i>	ritual feast offered to Navadurgā
<i>dyaḥchē</i>	house where a statue of a god is kept
<i>dyaḥkhī</i>	drum accompanying Bhaktapur's Navadurgā <i>pyākhā</i>
<i>dyaḥkuti</i>	room with temporary shrine used during <i>gūlā</i>
<i>dyaḥlhāygu</i>	musical invocation
<i>dyaḥpalā</i>	ritual attendant
<i>dyaḥ svagā biyegu</i>	main processional day of <i>biskāḥ</i> on 4th of Baiśākh with offerings to all gods
<i>gā</i>	bell
<i>gā pyākhā</i>	Aṣṭamātrkā dance of Patan
Gāicā	caste of Gāine bards
Gāicā <i>pyākhā</i>	Gāine dance

Gaṇeśa	Hindu god of good luck, son of Śiva and Pārvatī
Gaṅgā	the river Ganges
Garuda	snake-eating eagle, vehicle of Viṣṇu
Gāthā	caste of gardeners and Navadurgā dancers
<i>gathāmugaḥ</i>	straw effigy of demon representing disease
<i>gathāmugaḥ carhe</i>	festival of driving <i>gathāmugaḥ</i> demons out of town
<i>ghāṅglī</i>	stick zither used by Vārli shamans
<i>gharānā</i>	distinct stylistic tradition in Indian music, promoted by family members and disciples
<i>ghāt</i>	(lit. 'steps') ritual bathing place at river banks
<i>ghātu</i>	genre of seasonal songs
<i>ghētāgiśi</i>	stick dance performed during <i>sāpāru</i>
<i>ghulu</i>	buffalo horn used as wind instrument
<i>ghuṅgrū</i>	ankle bells
<i>ghvar</i>	lower octave (for transverse flutes)
Girvāṅ jātrā	procession commemorating a donation by King Girvāṅ Yuddha Vikrām Śāha
Gītagovinda	Jayadeva's 12th century Sanskrit poem of unsurpassable beauty
Gorakhnāth	deified historical ascetic, originator of the <i>Nātha</i> lineage
<i>grīṣma</i>	summer season
<i>gu</i>	drum composition
Gubhāḥju	Buddhist ritual specialist
<i>guhye</i>	category of <i>cacā pyākhā</i> (about esoteric practices)
<i>Gujarāti mvālī</i>	large straight shawm with metal bell
<i>gūlā</i>	Buddhist processional month of giving and taking alms
<i>gūlābājā</i>	Buddhist processional music
Guruju	guru, teacher, respectful address for Śākya or Vajrācārya males
<i>guṭhi</i>	social organisations for various communal purposes (cremations, temple maintenance, music groups, town rituals, etc.)
<i>guṭhi saṁsthān</i>	Nepali government offices installed in 1963 for managing <i>guṭhi</i> affairs
<i>gvaḥ</i>	body of drum
<i>gvākhā</i>	wall niche
<i>gvarā</i>	(var. <i>gvārā</i> ) ancient Buddhist song genre with <i>dhā</i> accompaniment
<i>gyānmala bhajan</i>	Buddhist devotional group singing
Haimādyah	(var. Haimā) god of music and dance (destructive aspect)
<i>Haimāpvaḥ</i>	flight hole of Haimādyah
<i>hane pūjā</i>	<i>pūjā</i> for practising with the complete ensemble
Hanumān pyākhā	Hanumān dance
<i>hemanta</i>	autumn, harvesting season
<i>hvali</i>	Holi full moon festival

10 Appendix

<i>Indrāyaṇī</i>	mother goddess
<i>iphoniyam</i>	euphonium
<i>jaltarāṅg</i>	set of tuned water bowls used as musical instrument
<i>jaṅgalī pyākhā</i>	thug dance
<i>jaṅgī paharā</i>	open porch at the <i>lal baiṭhak</i> palace front
<i>jantabājā</i>	brass band for life cycle rituals
<i>jātrā</i>	town ritual with processions
<i>jhārāḥ vānegu</i>	forced labour
<i>jhyālicā</i>	(var. <i>khvālimāli</i> ), pair of small, flat cymbals
<i>jhyāure pyākhā</i>	pair dance showing various ethnic groups
<b>Jugi</b>	caste of tailor-musicians
<i>Jugibvaḥ</i>	food offered to the wandering soul of a dead person
<i>Jugigaḥ</i>	Jugi graveyard
<i>jvaḥ nagarā</i>	pair of small kettledrums (Patan <i>navabājā</i> )
<i>jvalā nhāykā</i>	ritual mirror
<b>Jyāpu</b>	farmer
<i>Jyāpu-Jyāpunī pyākhā</i>	farmer's pair dance
<i>kā</i>	natural trumpet
<i>kābājā</i>	processional ensemble of natural <i>kā</i> trumpets (up to eighteen)
<i>kachicā</i>	drum stick
<i>kāṅpā</i>	brass disc (idiophone)
<i>kahāl</i>	straight conical bore natural horn
<i>kaharvā</i>	<i>tāl</i> used for light classical and devotional music
<i>kā khīpaḥ</i>	cotton rope
<i>kalālicā pyākhā</i>	'old woman' dancing with basket for ritual offerings
<i>kalas</i>	ritual water pot
<i>kaliyuga</i>	present and last of the four world cycles
<b>Kāmasutra</b>	Sanskrit treatise about erotic refinement
<i>kāntādabadaba</i>	hourglass-shaped drum with handle
<i>kāpāḥ</i>	cotton cloth
<i>kapāy</i>	cotton
<i>kapāy phenīgu pyākhā</i>	spinning dance
<i>karuvā</i>	water jug
<b>Kasti-Bhagvān</b>	Karuṅāmaya
<b>Kaumārī</b>	(var. Kumārī) mother goddess
<i>kavācā pyākhā</i>	skeleton dance
<i>kāypā</i>	(var. <i>kāypī, tāināī</i> ) brass disc
<i>kāytā pūjā</i>	coming of age ritual for males
<i>kha pyākhā</i>	dance drama about Mahābhārata
<i>khālī-barī</i>	pattern modification in <i>tablā</i> playing



<i>khame</i>	sacrificial buffalo for the Navadurgā of Bhaktapur
<i>kharijati</i>	drum composition
<i>khau</i>	black tuning paste for drums
<i>khayāl</i>	North Indian classical vocal genre
<i>khī</i>	generic term for 'drum'
<i>khicā</i>	dog
<i>khicā pyākhā</i>	masked dance of two dogs
<i>khīpvu</i>	drum composition
<i>khīpvu pūjā</i>	<i>pūjā</i> for learning a new drum composition
<i>khīr</i>	sweet rice pudding
<i>khurdak</i>	pair of small Indian kettledrums for accompanying <i>śahnāi</i> shawms
<i>khvālimāli</i>	cf. <i>jhyālicā</i>
<i>khyāḥ pyākhā</i>	dance of two naughty spirits who are part of Bhairava's entourage
<i>khyāla pyākhā</i>	joker performance
<i>kisalī</i>	clay cup
<i>klāroneyaṭ</i>	clarinet
<i>kukicā mvālī</i>	smallest straight shawm with metal bell
<i>kuldevata</i>	clan gods
<b>Kulu</b>	caste of drum-makers
<b>Kumāḥ</b>	caste of potters
<b>Kumāra</b>	generic title for 'son', also used for Kartikeya, Hindu god of war and victory, son of Śiva and Pārvatī
<i>kusi</i>	flea
<i>kvakhīcā</i>	(var. <i>kvakhī</i> , <i>kvacākhī</i> , <i>bhagaḥkhī</i> ) Newar drum
<i>kvatāḥ</i>	(var. <i>pastā</i> , <i>pañcatāla</i> ) compound drum
<i>kvāti</i>	seasonal dish (nine beans soup)
<i>kvī</i>	drum sound produced by rubbing against the drum head
<i>lā cva</i>	processional drum pattern
<b>Lākhe pyākhā</b>	man-eating <i>rākṣasa</i> dance
<i>lālākhī</i>	(var. <i>khī</i> , <i>dāphākhī</i> ) barrel drum used for <i>dāphā</i> and dance accompaniment
<i>lal baiṭhak</i>	Bhaktapur palace wing built during 19th century
<i>lapi</i>	sharp metal instrument to cut leather
<i>lathī</i>	stick used as weapon by South Asian police officers
<i>lāykū</i>	royal palace
<i>likārāḥ</i>	<i>mvālī</i> piece for returning home
<i>liṅga</i>	phallus
<i>lūdhvākhā</i>	Bhaktapur's 'Golden Gate' palace entrance
<i>lusi pyākhā</i>	pestle dance
<i>lvahā</i>	1. stone, 2. tool used by Kulu

10 Appendix

<i>mā</i>	longest <i>dhimay</i> composition
<i>mādal</i>	see <i>magahkhī</i>
<i>magahkhī</i>	drum, similar to the Nepali <i>mādal</i>
Mahābhārata	Sanskrit epic
Mahākālī	mother goddess
Mahākālī <i>pyākhā</i>	(var. <i>Devī pyākhā</i> ) masked dance of Bhaktapur, performed in Kathmandu during Indra <i>jātrā</i>
Mahālakṣmī	mother goddess
Mahānavamī	ninth day of <i>mvahani</i>
Mahāṣṭhamī	eighth day of <i>mvahani</i>
Māheśvarī	mother goddess
Mākaḥ	1. Mahākāla Bhairava, 2. lower sounding drum of a pair of <i>nagarā</i>
<i>māka pyākhā</i>	monkey dance
<i>mālā</i>	rosary used by Hindus and Buddhists
<i>Malla</i>	dynasty of Newar kings of Bhaktapur, Kāntipur and Lālitpur (ruled up to 1768/69)
<i>maṇḍala</i>	sacred image of humanly organised space, usually including mantras or gods placed at the focal points
<i>mantra</i>	sacred syllable, word or text charged with spiritual power, used as focusing tool during meditation
<i>mari</i>	wheat bread
<i>mārsi</i>	seasonal songs in <i>rāg Mālaśrī</i>
<i>masalā</i>	tuning paste stuck against drum head from inside
<i>mātā biyu vānegu</i>	(var. <i>mātā biyegu</i> ) procession covering all <i>cibhāḥs</i> in one go
<i>math</i>	rest house for travelling ascetics
<i>mātrā</i>	time measurement in South Asian music
<i>mhvayakhā pyākhā</i>	peacock dance
<i>mūcukva</i>	inner Bhaktapur palace courtyard bordering Taleju temple
<i>mudra</i>	meaningful gesture (dance, fine arts)
<i>mūlcok</i>	palace courtyard with Taleju temple
Mū Nāsaḥ	main shrine of Nāsaḥdyah
<i>murī</i>	unit of capacity (1980s: 1 murī = 90.92 liters)
<i>mūrti</i>	image or statue of a god
<i>mvahani</i>	1. autumn town ritual celebrating the victory of the mother goddess over the demon, 2. vertical soot line applied on forehead after blood sacrifice
<i>mvālī</i>	generic term for shawm played by Jugi
<i>nā</i>	shirt
<i>nāgacā pyākhā</i>	(var. <i>Rādhākṛṣṇa pyākhā</i> ) dance of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa
<i>nagarā</i>	kettledrum
<i>nāk</i>	female <i>yāk</i>

<i>ñalakegu</i>	‘fishing’ ritual (Navadurgā)
<i>nā phvā vānegu</i>	water-begging procession
<i>ñā pyākhā</i>	fish dance
Nandi and Bhr̥ṅgi	drummer accompanists of Nāsaḥdyah
Nāga	snake god granting fertility
<i>nagarā</i>	kettledrum
Nāgarājā	snake god granting fertility
<i>nāgva</i>	paper effigy of Nāga used as offering
<i>ñakha dhalā</i>	(lit. worship with animal horns) Sāymi <i>gūlābājā</i>
<i>namaskār</i>	formal greeting
<i>naqqārā</i>	big kettledrum played as part of <i>naubat</i> ensemble
Nāsaḥdyah	god of music and dance (creative aspect)
<i>Nāsaḥpvaḥ</i>	flight hole of Nāsaḥdyah
Nāsaḥ sāle pūjā	initial <i>pūjā</i> of music apprenticeship
<i>nāṭak</i>	street theatre
<i>nativācā pyākhā</i>	dance with taro leaves
<i>naubat</i>	court ensemble of natural trumpets, shawms, kettledrums and cymbals
<i>navabājā</i>	ensemble of nine drums
<i>navadāphā</i>	<i>dāphā</i> song group with additional set of <i>navabājā</i> drums
Navadurgā	(lit. nine Durgās) powerful protectors of Bhaktapur
Navadurgā <i>pyākhā</i>	annual masked dance cycle of Bhaktapur
<i>navagraha pūjā</i>	annual Buddhist ritual asking for peace on the nine planets
<i>navarāt</i>	nine processional nights preceding Vijayādasamī
Nāy	caste of butchers
<i>nāyah</i>	leader
<i>ñāykhī</i>	var. <i>ñāykhīcā</i> , lit. butcher’s drum, also played in <i>navabājā</i> and <i>gūlābājā</i>
<i>ñāykhībājā</i>	processional drumming of butchers
<i>Newar, Newari</i>	The Newar people of the Kathmandu Valley and beyond are an ethnic group of Nepal that absorbed many cultural influences from South Asia. Their Newari language belongs to the Tibeto-Burmese language group.
<i>nhyāḥ</i>	1. processional drum pattern, 2. lively movement
<i>nhyāḥ thāyagu cvaḥ</i>	drum composition for starting a <i>dhimay</i> procession after a break
<i>nibhāḥ</i>	sunlight
<i>nirvāṇa</i>	leaving the cycle of suffering and rebirth, ultimate awakening
<i>nitya pūjā</i>	daily (morning and evening) worship with offering
Nṛṭyanāth	(var. Nāsaḥdyah), ‘Lord of the Dance’, one of the names of Śiva
<i>nvamat</i>	straight shawm made of wood only
<i>nyāchī kvatāḥ</i>	room for storing holy water

<i>pachimā</i>	Newar drum, similar to the Indian <i>pakhāvaj</i>
<i>pada</i>	stanza to be recited or sung
<i>pakka</i>	pukka, real, complete
<i>pakhāvaj</i>	North Indian concert drum
<i>pañcabali</i>	offering of five different sacrificial animals
Pañcabuddha	five Buddhas (Vairocana, Akṣobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha, and Amoghasiddhi)
<i>pañcadān</i>	(lit. five kinds of offerings) Buddhist alms-giving ritual
<i>pañcadān carhe</i>	Buddhist festival before the end of <i>gūlā</i>
<i>pañcagapya</i>	ritually purifying liquid of cow products
<i>pañcaibājā</i>	auspicious instrumental ensemble played by Damāi tailor-musicians
<i>pañcatāla</i>	compound drum accompanying <i>cacā pyākhā</i> , <i>pāytāḥ-khalaḥ</i> and <i>gā pyākhā</i>
<i>partāl</i>	drum composition
<i>pastāḥ</i>	name of the <i>kvatāḥ</i> drum when used in Buddhist context
<i>pasūkā</i>	ritual garlands of threads
<i>pāṭhī</i>	unit of capacity (1 <i>pāṭhī</i> = 4,55 litres)
<i>pāytāḥ</i>	(var. <i>pvaṅgā</i> ) natural trumpets played in Sāymi <i>gūlābājā</i>
<i>pāytāḥ-khalaḥ</i>	ensemble of such trumpets, <i>pañcatāla</i> and <i>tāḥ</i>
<i>phākādāli pyākhā</i>	butterfly dance
<i>phalcā</i>	shelter building with a row of carved pillars on the front side
<i>pīrāne pūjā</i>	<i>pūjā</i> concluding music apprenticeship
<i>pith</i>	shrine with aniconic stone image for daily worship
<i>prabandha gīta</i>	ancient genre of responsorial group singing at temples
<i>pradakṣina</i>	main processional route
<i>praṇām</i>	gesture of adoration and respect
<i>prasād</i>	edible blessing
<i>preṭa</i>	evil spirit
<i>preṭa śradda</i>	part of death ritual for pacifying evil spirits
<i>pūjā</i>	ritual offering
<i>pūjākhī</i>	processional drum pattern played on the way to a <i>pūjā</i> place
<i>pūjāmāli</i>	auspicious drum composition of Sāymi <i>gūlābājā</i>
<i>pūjā mvālī</i>	large curved shawm with metal bell
<i>pulu</i>	mat made of bamboo leaf
Pvaḥ	caste of sweepers and fishermen
<i>pvalā apā</i>	traditional burnt roof tiles
<i>pvatā</i>	brim of basket or drum
<i>pvukhu</i>	pond
<i>pvaṅgā</i>	natural trumpet
<i>pvāre me</i>	rice planting songs
<i>pyākhā</i>	dance

<i>qavvālī</i>	genre of Muslim devotional (Sufi) group singing
<i>qāyidā</i>	variation form in <i>tablā</i> playing
<i>Rādhākṛṣṇa pyākhā</i>	(var. <i>Nāgacā pyākhā</i> ) dance of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa
<i>rāg dīpak</i>	Indian <i>rāga</i> said to ignite fire
<i>rāg kāyegu</i>	solo vocal introduction of a <i>dāphā</i> song
<i>rāgamālā</i>	genre of miniature painting, depicting emotional contents of <i>rāgas</i>
<i>Rājopadhyāya</i>	highest caste of Newar Brahman priests
<i>rākṣasa</i>	demon
<i>Rāmāyaṇī pyākhā</i>	Rāmāyaṇa dance depicting chief characters of the Sanskrit epic
<i>Rāṇā</i>	dynasty of rulers of Nepal (1846–1951)
<i>rasan</i>	small straight shawm with metal bell
<i>rās bhajan</i>	Hindu devotional group singing
<i>rikhā</i>	drum composition
<i>ropani</i>	unit of land area (1 hectare = 19.65 <i>ropani</i> )
<i>ṛtu</i>	the six seasons of South Asia
<i>Rudra vīṇā</i>	North Indian stick zither
<i>sādeś</i>	ballad about separation owing to Tibet trade
<i>sādhana</i>	spiritual discipline
<i>saedḍ dram</i>	side drum of marriage band
<i>sakhimā punhi</i>	full moon festival with grain mosaics prepared in front of shrines
<i>Śaktī</i>	1. active female universal power, 2. name of goddess
<i>Śākya</i>	caste of Buddhist gold- and silversmiths
<i>Śākya gūlābājā</i>	processional music performed by Śākya and Vajracārya during <i>gūlā</i>
<i>sāl</i>	kind of tree ( <i>Shorea robusta</i> )
<i>salācā pyākhā</i>	horse dance
<i>sāl dhūp</i>	resin of <i>sāl</i> tree
<i>salicā</i>	clay cup
<i>samaybajī</i>	ceremonial meal
<i>saṅgīta</i>	Sanskrit term for ‘music’
<i>sanyabhajan</i>	music played by Jugī ensemble during daily temple rituals
<i>sāpāru</i>	(Nepali: <i>gāī jātrā</i> ) ‘cow festival’ for the dead
<i>śarad</i>	hot ripening season following monsoon
<i>sāraṅgī</i>	fiddle played by Gāīne bards
<i>sarod</i>	North Indian lute
<i>śāstriya saṅgīt</i>	North Indian classical music, Hindustani music
<i>Sasudyah</i>	Sarasvatī
<i>sataḥ</i>	gate house with room on top
<i>Sāymi</i>	caste of oilpressers
<i>Sāymi gūlābājā</i>	processional music performed by oilpressers during <i>gūlā</i>
<i>sībājā</i>	funeral music played by <i>ṇāykhībājā</i>

<i>sichyāḥ</i>	pair of large cymbals with flat boss
<i>sīguṭhū</i>	funeral organisation
<i>silu me</i>	ballad about a fatal pilgrimage
<i>sinā</i>	orange powder
<i>sinājyā me</i>	<i>rice transplanting songs</i>
Siphvadyaḥ	oleander goddess carried along by Navadurgā
śiśira	cold season, winter
Śiva	one of the main Hindu gods
Śivālaya	temple courtyard for ancestor worship
Śivarātri	festival celebrating Śiva as King of Yoga
<i>slāiṭ tramban</i>	slide trombone
<i>śraddha</i>	ancestor ritual
Śrī pañcamī	start of spring, Sarasvatī <i>pūjā</i>
<i>sthāyī</i>	refrain in North Indian classical music
<i>sukhū</i>	straw mat
<i>sukundā</i>	ritual oil lamp
<i>survāḥ</i>	traditional trousers
<i>sūtra</i>	essential teachings in the form of a poem for recitation
<i>svachā</i>	tail piece of <i>navabājā</i> performance
<i>svagā</i>	ritual offering
<i>svagamālī</i>	marriage song
<i>svarat</i>	genre of seasonal songs
Svayambhū	prominent <i>mahācaitya</i> situated on a hill south of Kathmandu
<i>tā bālā</i>	leather strip
<i>tablā</i>	North Indian concert drum
<i>tablā taraṅg</i>	set of <i>tablās</i> tuned to a scale
<i>tablā -vādak</i>	<i>tablā</i> -player
<i>taḍgoḷa</i>	Borassus flabellifer palm tree
<i>tagva gā</i>	big bell
<i>tāḥ</i>	(var. <i>taḥ</i> ) small, heavy pair of bronze cymbals
<i>tāhā dyaḥlhaygu</i>	long, complete <i>dyaḥlhaygu</i> invocation
<i>tāhāsā</i>	tall straw cow effigy carried along the <i>pradakṣiṇa</i> during <i>sāpāru</i>
<i>tānāī</i>	(var. <i>kāypā, kāypī</i> ) brass disc
<i>taku svā</i>	rhododendron flower (red)
Taleju	tutelary deity of Malla kings
<i>tamal</i>	Newar drum, similar to the Indian <i>tablā</i>
<i>tamva</i>	(var. <i>tukumuku, tunumuku</i> ) small kettledrum played by Jugi
Tārā	Bodhisattva of compassion
<i>tarāī</i>	Nepal's southern flatlands bordering India
<i>tatali</i>	drum composition
<i>thaḥchē</i>	(for married women) her parents' house

<i>thata</i>	drum composition
<i>thukājyā me</i>	weeding songs
<i>thvā</i>	rice beer
<i>thyāḥ saphū</i>	folded book (like ‘Leporello’)
<i>tī</i>	ringing cymbal sound
<i>tīp</i>	higher octave (for transverse flutes and shawms)
<i>tititālā</i>	goat horn with short bamboo mouthpiece
<i>ṭrampet</i>	trumpet
Tripurasundarī	mother goddess
<i>triratna</i>	three jewels of Buddhism: Buddha, dharma, saṅgha
<i>tū cikā</i>	mustard oil
<i>tuki</i>	shawm reeds
<i>tuladana</i>	state ritual where a ruler’s weight is equalled in gold to be distributed
<i>tulbālā</i>	scarlet cloth for Nāsaḥ <i>pūjā</i>
<i>tutaḥ</i>	Buddhist hymn
<i>tvaḥ</i>	neighbourhood
<i>tvaḥ Gaṇedyah</i>	local shrine of Gaṇeśa
<i>vaikuṅṭha</i>	abode of Nārāyaṇa (Viṣṇu)
<i>Vaiṣṇavī</i>	mother goddess
<i>vajra</i>	ritual weapon used in Vajrāyāna Buddhism and related tantric lineages
Vajrācārya	caste of Buddhist priests and gold- and silversmiths
Vārāhī	mother goddess
Vārli Ādivāsi	(var. Warli) ethnic minority of Mahārāṣṭra, India
<i>varṣa</i>	rainy season, monsoon
<i>vasanta</i>	spring season
Vetāla	blood-drinking demon, attendant of Bhairava
Vijayā Dasamī	tenth day and climax of the <i>mvahani</i> festival
<i>yaḥṣī</i>	pole erected during Bhaktapur’s New Year festival
<i>yamadvāracukva</i>	Bhaktapur palace courtyard behind Golden Gate
Yudhiṣṭhira	oldest of the Pāṇḍava brothers of the Mahābhārata epic
<i>yuga</i>	world cycle





# Dictionary of Newar Music Terms

Preparing a dictionary of Newari musical terms required collaboration with three local scholars and a German linguist, Dr. Ulrike Kölver. With her Nepalese team comprising of Iswarananda Shresthacarya, Daya Ratna Sakya and Nirmal Man Tuladhar she produced her massive ‘Dictionary of Contemporary Newari’<sup>1</sup> and helped me to use a format based on her concept, supplying her grammatical definition of each included term. Over the years, I worked with her collaborators hunting for musical terms in the available Newari literature and in various archives and localities where thirteen dialects of Newari had to be considered.

This project had progressed to a preliminary, unedited word list, when our lavishly paid word hunter, Iswarananda Shresthacarya took the liberty of publishing it under his name in a Tribhuvan University journal without informing me, just before he passed away. However, we continued compiling and correcting the word list until the early 1990s. At my advanced age, resuming work on such a time-consuming project as the originally planned ‘Illustrated Dictionary of Newari Music Terms’ seems very optimistic. Instead, I am including in this publication the final version of our word list with my translations.

## **Abbreviations of localities:**

BKT: Bhaktapur  
KTM: Kathmandu  
PT: Patan

1 Kölver, U. 1994

## अ A

अखा **akhā**, cf. *ākhā*

अतः **ataḥ**, aj. alternate **-gāye**, (*gāla*) to alter the succession of musical pieces

अयलाः **aylāḥ**, n. (*°lākha-*) home-made liquor, offered to Nāsaḥḍyaḥ as well as to musicians

अर्विन **arvin**, n. (*-gaḥ*) (var. *hārbin*) Indian harmonium used for *bhajan* accompaniment and *śāstriya saṅgīt* and—more recently—in some Newar flute and violin bands where it replaces transverse flutes (*bāsuri*)

अलः **alaḥ**, n. (*°lakha-*) castor **-pu**, n. (*-pu*) castor-apple, used in pulped form by

drum-makers to prepare the tuning paste (*masalā*) that is applied at the inner side of a drum head

अस्तरा **astarā**, n. (*-gū*) 1. *lālākhī* piece in five beat metre, played with *dāphā* songs 2. *tamvaḥ* piece played by Jugi during Kumārī processions (BKT)

अस्तुति **astuti**, n. (*-pu*) prayer (cf. *tutaḥ*); song of invocation, song at beginning and end of *bhajan* performance **-hāle**, to praise a god through astuti

## आ Ā

आख **ākhā**, n. (*°khāla-*, *-gū*) (var. *akhā* BKT; *āḥkhāḥ* Pāṅgā; *āḥgaḥ* Bal.). 1. practice room 2. backstage **-chē**, n. (*-khā*) house with practice room where musical instruments are kept (cf. *dāphāchē*)

आग्यां **āgyā**, n. (*-gū*) (var. *ujā*) order; pattern of behaviour prescribed by a *guru* for his music students

आचा **ācā**, n. (*-pu*) 1. awl used by drum-makers to cut holes for drum straps 2. crochet-hook used by cobblers

आरति **ārati**, n. 1. (*-pvāḥ*) ritual oil-wick lamp-stand of *dāphā* groups 2. (*-pu*) final piece of *dāphā* performance, accompanying the lighting of *ārati* lamp-stand **-biye**, (*bila*) to offer light to a god by lighting the lamp-stand

आलाप **ālāp**, n. (*-gū*) vocal solo prelude, to precede a *dāphā* song (cf. *thalāḥkvalāḥ*, cf. *rāga kāyegu*) 2. speaking, conversation **-tvaḥte**, 1. to sing the *ālāp* prelude 2. to praise oneself

आःखाः **āḥkhāḥ** cf. *ākhāḥ*

आःगाः **āḥgāḥ** cf. *ākhāḥ*

## इ I

इनाय् **ināy**, n. pr. (*°nāsa-*) 1. Lord Gaṇeśa god of success, accomplishment, and drumming 2. peaceful aspect of the god of music and dance, Nāsaḥḍyaḥ **-dyaḥ**, n. (*deva-*) id.

इमन राग **iman rāga**, n. (*-pu*) *mvālī* piece played by Jugi while going for a *pūjā*

इस्तमि **istami**, n. (*-kū* “piece”) root of a medicinal plant used as a remedy for sore throats of singers (cf. *bvajhva*)

## उ U

उचतं **ucatā**, n. (<sup>o</sup>*tana-*, *-pu*) stiletto used by drum-makers and cobblers (fam. *lapi*)

उजं **ujā**, n. (*-gu*) (var. *āgyā*) order; pattern of behaviour prescribed by a *guru* for his music students

## ए E

एकता: **ektā**, n. (*-gū*) *lālākhī* piece, played with *dāphā* songs (BKT)

एकमां **ekamā**, n. (*-gū*) *gūlābājā tāla* (KTM)

## क KA

क **ka**, onp. drumming syllable

कैय् **kāy**, n. bronze **-kaḥ**, n. (*-pu*) bell of shawm **-cu**, n. (<sup>o</sup>*cuna-*) powdered bronze, used to decorate tuning paste on drum heads **-thā**, n. (*-pāḥ*) bronze disc struck with wooden hammer, used in *dāphā*, *dhalcā*, KTM *dhi-maybājā* **-pā** and **-pī** BKT cf. *tānāī*

कं **kā**, 1. onp. drumming syllable (*dhimay*, *lālākhī*) 2. n. (<sup>o</sup>*khana-*, *-gū*) wooden rattle (syn. *kartāl*)

कचा **kacā**, n. (*-gū*) branch, sect **-nāyaḥ**, n. (<sup>o</sup>*yalā-*) leader of a music group

कचि **kaci**, aj. 1. uncooked 2. unripe **-macāme**, n. (*-pu*) plaintive song, sung when children were exiled from the Kathmandu Valley during smallpox epidemics

कजी **kajī**, n. anim. (<sup>o</sup>*jila-*) 1. leader of *dāphā* group 2. sponsor, donor 3. manager, con-vener 4. organizer of a big *pūjā*

कतांगुली **katāguli** cf. *katāgulu*

कतांगुलु **katāgulu**, n. anim. (var. *katāguli*) 1. member of *dāphā* group, acting as messenger and manager's assistant 2. submember of a *guthi*

कतांमरि **katāmari**, n. anim. rag doll **-pyākhā**, n. (<sup>o</sup>*khana-*, *-pu/-gū*) puppet play, marionet show (cf. *dayālachmi pyākhā*)

कथि **kathi**, n. (*-pu*) stick (cf. *dhimay-*, *dhā -*) **-cā**, n. (*-pu*) 1. drum stick 2. sl. penis **-pyākhā**, n. (<sup>o</sup>*khana-*, *-gū*) stick dance

कन **kana**, n. (*-pu*) short natural trumpet played by tailor-musicians during *dvīmāju-jātrā* (BKT)

कनाथ **kanātha**, n. (*-pu*) 1. Western trumpet adopted by Damāi tailor-musicians 2. straight natural trumpet with large bell (nep. *karnāl*)

कपांय् **kapāy**, n. (*-kū*) 1. cotton 2. cotton binding used to seal the gap between staple and body of a shawm **-phenegupyākhā**, n. (<sup>o</sup>*khana-*, *-gū*) spinning dance

करताल **kartāl**, n. (*-gu*) wooden rattle used for keeping the time in a *bhajan* performance (fam. *kā*)

करुनामय **Karunāmay**, n. anim. 1. Compassion aspect of the Buddha 2. Matsyendranāth (white or red) **-me**, n. (*-pu*) (var. *karunā-mayyā me*) song in praise of Karunāmay

कलप्याखं **kalāppyākhā**, n. (<sup>o</sup>*khana-*, *-gū*) (var. *kalāīlipyākhā* BKT) dance with two baskets suspended from a stick (for offerings)

कवंप्याखं **kavāpyākhā**, n. (<sup>o</sup>*khana-*, *-gū*) (var. *kavācāpyākhā*) skeleton dance (cf. *bhailapyākhā*, *devipyākhā* BKT)

**कःखिं kaḥkhī**, n. (<sup>o</sup>khina-, -gaḥ) (var. dhāḥ) main drum of *navabājā* ensemble (BKT), decorated with horns of fighting ram

**काँय् kāy**, n. (<sup>o</sup>syāla-, -pā) (var. *chusyāḥ sichyāḥ*) pair of flat, thin-walled cymbals (term is only applied by BKT butchers)

**कां kā**, cf. *kāhā*

**कांतांदबदब kātāḍadabada** cf. *dabadaba*

**काखिपः kākhipaḥ**, n. (*pata*-, -*pu*) thread used by drum-maker while fastening the drum hide to hold it in position

**काचिका kācika**, n. (-*pu*) 1. cotton string 2. cotton string used to secure leaves of shawm reeds

**कातिप्याखः kātipyākḥā**, n. (<sup>o</sup>khana-, -*gū*) annual dance-drama of PT, played after *mvahani*

**कापः kāpaḥ**, n. (-*kū*) 1. cloth 2. cotton cloth used to seal the gap between staple and body of shawm

**कान्हारा kānhārā**, n. (-*pu*) a *rāga* employed in KTM *gūlābājā*

**काह kāhā**, n. (-*pu*) (var. *kā*) 1. long straight horn used in death processions and other major ritual events 2. *kāhā* group -**khalah**, n. (<sup>o</sup>laka-) *kāhā* group -**bājā**, n. (*jana*-) set of *kāhā*

**कि ki**, -**jiyā**, n. (-*gū*) playing a string instrument with a bow -**pu**, n. (-*gū*) id. -**sā**, n. 1. id. 2. (-*pu*) bow -**su**, n. (-*gū*) id.

**किनारा kinārā**, n. (-*pu*) graceful ending of *dāphā* song after the drums have stopped (syn. *sijāḥ*)

**किये kiye**, (*kila*) 1. to play a stringed instrument with a bow 2. to saw, to scratch a line

**किसली kisalī** cf. *kisalī*

**किसलीं kisalī**, n. (<sup>o</sup>lina-, -*gaḥ*) (var. -*salī*) clay cup filled with rice, betelnut and coin as a reminder of vow made to learn something. In case of musical apprenticeship two *kisalī* symbolizing *Nāsaḥḍyaḥ* and *Haimāḍyaḥ* are kept in the practising room, where students must worship these gods every day

**की kī**, n. 1. bowing 2. sawing -**kayāḥtvāl-hāye**, (*lhāta*) to change a rhythm -**kāye**, (*kāla*, *kayā*) to change a piece (drumming)

-**gubājā**, n. (*jana*-, -*gaḥ*) bowed instrument (general term)

**कुचा kucā**, n. (-*gū*) piece (also musical)

**कुमाः kumāḥ**, n. anim. (<sup>o</sup>māla-) (var. *kumhāḥ*) potter -**pyākḥā**, n. (<sup>o</sup>khana-, -*gū*) potters' dance (*Pāṅgā*)

**कुम्हा kumhāḥ** cf. *kumāḥ*

**केदार kedāra**, n. (-*pu*) a *rāga* played during PT *gūlābājā*

**कैलाश kailāśa**, n. (-*pu*) id.

**क्व kva**, bfp. (low, lower) -**jāḥ**, n. (<sup>o</sup>jāla-) 1. change to lower octave 2. low pitch -**lā**, n. (-*gū*) (var. -*lāḥ*) id. (cf. *kvalāḥ* s.v.) -**lāye**, (*lātā*) to sing in low pitch -**lāḥ** see *kvalā*

**क्वखिचा kvakhīcā** cf. *kvakhī*

**क्वचाखिं kvacākhī** cf. *kvakhī*

**क्वकु kvaku** cf. *bāy*

**क्वखिं kvakhī**, n. (-*gaḥ*) (var. *kvakhīcā*, *kvācākhī*, *bāgaḥkhī* *Pāṅgā*)-single-headed drum with tuning paste (*khau*) and a hole in its base, which can be muted with the player's left hand

**क्वताः kvatāḥ** 1, n. (<sup>o</sup>tāla-, -*gaḥ*) (var. *kvatākhī*, *pastāḥ*, *pañcatāl*, *pāyṭākhī* compound drum: horizontal barrel drum (small *lālākhī*) tied together with a small vertical cylindrical drum (*kvatāḥ yā macā*=*kvatāḥ*'s child). Each drum has two heads, but the lower head of the vertical drum is not played. Used in *caryā* dance, *gūlābājā*, *navabājā*

**क्वताः kvatāḥ** 2, n. anim. (<sup>o</sup>tāla-) skilled artist or musician -**mvah**, n. anim. (<sup>o</sup>mvala-) leader of music group

**क्वलय kvalaya**, n. (-*pu*) name of a *cacā* song sung in connection with *dhalcākhāke* in Nagā and *nakīkhāke* in PT. It is sung to induce a state of shaking in the participants.

**क्वलसि kvalasi**, n. (-*pu*) type of *cacā* song sung during *khaḥ pyākhā* when a melancholic and tearful mood is asked for

**क्वला kvalā**, n. (-*pu*) a *rāga* played during PT *gūlābājā*

**क्वहपा kvahapā**, n. 1. (-*pā*) overbaked brick 2. (-*kū*) (“piece”) fragment of overbaked

brick used by drum makers to roughen drum hide before applying tuning paste

**क्वेकु kvēku**, n. (-*pu*) mandrel used in the construction of shawm reeds

**क्वेना kvenā**, n. (-*pu*) a drumming piece (PT *gūlābājā*)

## ख KH

**ख kha**, onp. drumming syllable (*dhimay*, *lālākhī*)

**खौ khau**, n. (*khali-*) 1. circular black area on drum head, used as permanent tuning paste 2. mixture out of which *khau* is prepared 3. dough made of wheat flour and water, used as temporary tuning paste on deep sounding drum head of *pachimā* -**cū**, n. (*cuna-*, *-phuti*) “drop” etc) id. -**tā-ye**, vp. (*tāla*) to apply *khau* to a drum -**pval-e**, vp. to remove defective *khau* from drum head -**buigulvahā**, n. (*hāta-*, *-gaḥ*) stone to rub and smoothen *khau* -**bval-e**, vp. (for *khau*) to be destroyed by long use

**खौमा khaumā**, n. 1. (-*gaḥ*) large bell 2. (-*javāḥ*) set of large bells worn around waist by *lākhay* dancers

**खरजति kharjati**, n. (-*gu*) *atāla* (*dāphā*, *navabājā*, *gūlābājā*)

**खलः khalah** 1 n. (*°laka-*, *-gū*) group (cf. *dāphā-*; *pyākhā-*; *bājā-*)

**खलः khalah** 2 n. anim. (*°laka-*) member of musical group (syn. *dujaḥ*)

**खंजलि khājali**, n. (-*pā*) small type of cymbals (fam. *khvālimāli*)

**खन्दलि khandali**, n. (-*gaḥ*) small, single-headed frame drum (PT *navabājā*)

**खः khaḥ** 1 n. (*°khata-*) 1. (-*gū*) temporary stage for dance or drama 2. (-*d*) chariot 3. (-*d*) ceremonial palanquin 4. (-*gū*) scaffold

-**pyākhā**, n. (*khana-*, *-gu*) stage drama; ballet (cf. *dabūpyākhā* = full play)

**खः khaḥ** 2 n. (*khava-*) left-hand-side -**lākāḥ**, n. anim. (*°kāla-*) second best drummer in a *dāphā* music class -**lāgāy**, n. anim. (var. *khaḥlāgāy*, *khālāgāyē*) second best singer in *dāphā* music class

**खाये khā-ye**, vp. (for a dancer) to shake while possessed

**खालि khāli**, n. 1. aj. empty 2. (-*gū*) off-beat; without clap (cf. *tāli* = with clap)

**खिचा khīcā**, anim. dog -**pyākhā**, n. (*°khana-*, *-gū*) dog dance (cf. *bhailapyākhā* BKT)

**खिं khī**, n. (*khina-*, *-gaḥ*) 1. drum (general) 2. *lālākhī*; double drum with tuning paste on both heads, used for *dāphā* and dance accompaniment -**thā-ye**, vp. (*thāta*) to play a drum -**pūjā**, n. (-*gū*) (var. *khīpvupūjā*) offering for Nāsaḥdyah by music students (cf. *Nāsaḥpūjā*, *pirānepūjā*, *hanepūjā*)

**खु khu**, onp. drumming syllable (*dhimay*)

**खे khe**, cv. lullaby -**cā-ye**, vp. (*cāla*) to sing a song while washing the face of a god’s image -**then-e**, vp. 1. to put a child to sleep with a lullaby: *hūnāyaḥ putā cha mha dhukū yāta nhā āu nauca kahvay dhala madu dhayā nhā* 2. (for child) to put oneself to sleep with a lullaby -**hāle-e**, vp. id. (fam)

**ख्यालः khyālah**, n. (-*gū*) humorous drama or short play

ख्यालंबाजं **khyālābājā**, n. (-gaḥ) small double-headed drum (syn. *ghītāmali*) (fam. *magahkhī*)

ख्यालि **khyāli**, n. (-gū) joke, jest -**kū**, n. (°kuna-, -gū) 1. ironic joke 2. ironic joke as a section of drama performance -**nhili**, n. (-gū) joke, jest -**me**, n. (-pu) joke song -**van-e**, vp (nep. *dohare gīt*) to sing a duet (boys and girls alternating in two groups)

ख्याः **khyāḥ**, n. anim. (*khyāka-*) goblin; ghost -**pyākhā**, n. (°khana-, -gū) goblin dance -**bājā**, n. (*jana-*, -gaḥ) (var. *khyālābājā*) drums which are not used in *dāphā* but for dance accompaniment (e.g. *magahkhī*)

ख्व **khva**, bfp (weep) -**khanā**, n. (-gū) weeping -**khanāme**, n. (-pu) sad song -**lu**, n. (-gū) id. -**lu pcā-ye**, vp. (*cāla*) to cause an actor to burst into tears spontaneously (by reciting a certain *cacā* song during *khaḥpyākhā*) -**saḥ**, n. (-ka) mood of sorrow -**va-ye**, vp. (*vala*) to burst into tears spontaneously (on stage) -**su**,

n. (-gū) weeping, lamenting -**suva-ye**, vp. (*vala*) to weep by inspiration from singing

ख्वबि **khvabi**, n. tear -**picā-ye**, vp. (*cāla*) to weep; to burst into tears -**lu**, 1. aj. whining, always ready to weep 2. n anim. whining person; easy weeper -**lume**, n. (-pu) pathetic song

ख्वःसः **khvaḥsaḥ**, n. (-d) husky, breathy voice, as if about to weep

ख्वातु **khvātu**, aj. thick -**saḥ**, n. (*sala-*, -r) breathy voice with deep register

ख्वलिमालि **khvālimāli**, n. (-pā) pair of small cymbals (cf. *khājali*, *jhyāli*, *bau*, *baucā*) -**thā-ye**, vp. (*thāta*) 1. to play cymbals 2. (sl) lesbian sexual activity

ख्वाँयमला **khvāymalā**, n. (-pā) pair of *khvālimāli* (Pāṅgā)

ख्वाः **khvāḥ**, n. (°khvala-, -pāḥ) face -**ken-e**, vp. to prelude, to play an introductory drum piece (lit to show sound) -**pāḥ**, n. (*pāta-*, -r) mask

## ग G

गौ **gau**, n. (°gali-, -gū) (var. *gu* BKT) 1. short *dhimay* pieces, played as a contrast to the basic processional pattern *nhyāḥ* 2. particular type of *dhā* composition (BKT *navabājā*) -**kā-ye**, vp. (*kala*, *kayā*) to signal to the other players a change to another *gau* -**va-ye**, vp. (*vala*) (for *gau*) to be performed well

गणपति ग्वारा **gaṇapati gvārā**, n. (-pu) a drumming piece (KTM *gūlābājā*)

गणेशतिमो **gaṇeśa timā**, n. (-gū) id.

गत्ता **gattā**, n. (-gaḥ) (var. *gatā*) tuning peg (drum) -**phvā-ye**, vp. (*phyāta*) to tune drum by moving *gattā* up or down

गथि **gathi**, n. (-d) knot, joint (of drum leather strap)

गथु **gathu**, n. anim. (var. *gāthā* BKT) caste of gardeners and Navadurgā dancers; gardener

-**pyākhā**, n. (°khana-, -gū) 1. dance of the Navadurgā of Bhaktapur 2. Pachali Bhairava dance organized by *gathu* (KTM)

गनेच्चः **ganedyah**, n. anim. (dave-) Lord Gaṇeśa; worshipped by music students during apprenticeship

गरजजिना **garajajina**, (-pu) first of a set of three songs known as *bhū-cacā* (lit feast *cacā*) sung at the end of ritual feast while disposing of left-overs (to ward off evil spirits)

गपः **gaḥpaḥ**, n. (°pata-, -pu) 1. nape 2. neck -**tapvuk-e**, vp. to swell one's neck out of strain while singing -**mvāk-e**, vp. id.

गँ **gā**, n. (°gana-, -gaḥ) bell; gong -**yā**, n. (*yana-*, -gu) lasting sound of bell

**गँप्याखं gāpyākhā**, n. (<sup>o</sup>khana-, -gū) general term for mask dance (lit family dance) of twelve gods (cf. *gathu pyākhā*; Sveta Kālī *pyākhā*)  
**गाई gāī**, n. anim. (<sup>o</sup>yāna-) (var. *gāyā*, *gāyē*) caste of Nepali-speaking bards who accompany themselves on four-stringed fiddle *sāraṅgī* -**cā**, id. -**pyākhā**, n. (<sup>o</sup>khana-, -gū) satirical dance impersonating such bards (BKT) -**me**, n. (-*pu*) song of the *gāī*  
**गाछिं gāchī**, n. (-*pā*) (var. *gāchē*) painted screen with image of Nāsaḥḍyaḥ, shown before dance drama starts (PT)  
**गाथा gāthā**, n. anim. cf. *gathu*  
**गितार gitār**, n. (*gaḥ*) guitar  
**गु gu**, n. (-*gū*) cf. *gau*  
**गुजराति gujarāti**, n. (-*pu*) a type of straight shawm imported from Gujarat by members of Jvagi caste  
**गुथी guṭhī**, n. (-*gū*) social organization for ritual functions -**pūjā**, n. (-*ka*) annual *pūjā* of *guṭhī*, including a feast for all members  
**गुनिपुनि gunipuni**, n. cf. *gūpuni*  
**गुभाजु gubhāju**, n. anim. (var. *gubhāḥju*) 1. Buddhist priest (*bajrācārya*) 2. *pyātāḥ* player (caste) 3. *cacā* singer

**गुरू guru**, n. h. 1. religious priest 2. instructor; music teacher -**mā**, n. h. (mama-) guru's wife)  
**गुँ g** nr. b. nine -**puni**, n. (var. *gunupuni*, *gunipunī* BKT) full moon of *gūlā* which marks beginning of nine days festival (*sāpāru*) -**lā**, n. (-*r*) ninth month of Newar calendar -**lādharma**, n. (-*gū*) practice of going to Svayambhū and other holy places for the hole month of *gūlā*, playing musical instruments and reciting *tutaḥ* -**lābājā**, n. (<sup>o</sup>jana-, -*thvaḥ*) 1. set of instruments used during *gūlā* processions 2. processional music of the Buddhist groups -**lāseva**, n. (-*gū*) cf. *gūlādharma* -**punipyākhā**, n. (<sup>o</sup>khana-, -*gū*) seasonal drama to be played at the crossroads during *gūpuni* (cf. *jyāpupyākhā*)  
**ग्रह graha**, n. (-*gū*) 1. planet 2. mode 3. rhythm  
**ग्वले gval-e**, vt. 1. to enlarge a hole (drum making) 2. sl. to seduce a woman  
**ग्वः gvaḥ**, n. (-*gaḥ*) body of drum -**ācā**, n. (-*pu*)awl used by drum maker  
**ग्वारा gvārā**, n. (-*gū*) (var. *gvarā* BKT) drumming piece of *gūlābājā*

## घ GHA

**घंगला ghāgala**, n. (-*gaḥ*) (var. *ghasula*) ankle bell -**māḥ**, n. (<sup>o</sup>māla-, -*māḥ*) set of small bells worn around dancer's ankles or waist  
**घय् पुये ghay puye**, (*pula*) 1. to re-establish a rhythm (after it has gone astray) 2. to re-establish the pitch (after it has been lost)  
**घवाः ghavāḥ**, n. anim. (<sup>o</sup>vāla-) 1. owner of a water mill 2. driver -**me**, n. (-*pu*) unskilled song  
**घसुला ghasula**, n. (-*gaḥ*) cf. *ghāgala*  
**घातु ghātu**, n. (-*pu*) pathetic tune -**me**, n. (-*pu*) plaintive song sung at *pāhācaray* during the

month of *cillā* -**lay**, n. (<sup>o</sup>lasa-, -*gū*) tune of *ghātu*  
**घिं ghī**, onp. sound produced by left hand on a double headed drum -**tāḡisi**, n. (-*gū*, -*ka*) stick dance performed by children during *sāpāru* (BKT) -**tāmali**, n. 1. (-*gaḥ*) small double-headed drum (syn. *khyālābājā*) (fam. *maḡaḥkhī*) 2. n. anim. child dancer 3. (-*pu*) musical mode) -**tāmali** *pyākhā*, n. (<sup>o</sup>khana-, -*gū*) dance with *ghītāmali* drum -**tāmali-lay**, n. (<sup>o</sup>lasa-, -*gū*) song sung with *ghītāmali* drum

**घुलु** **ghulu**, n. (-*pu*) buffalo horn played during *gūlā* by oilpressers of BKT, Thimi and Banepa (cf. *ghvar neku*)

**घुं** **ghū**, onp. drumming syllable (*dhimay*)

**घें** **ghē**, onp. id.

**घ्व** **ghva**, n. (-*pu*) drumming piece of KTM *gūlābājā*; fourth section of *gvārā*

**घ्वंसः** **ghvāsah**, n. (°*sala-*) low pitched sound; low notes

**घ्वर** **ghvar**, n. (-*pu*) lower octave of shawm or flute -**neku**, n. (-*pu*) buffalo horn played during *glā* (cf. *ghulu*)

**घ्वंसाः** **ghvasāḥ**, n. 1. (-*kū* 'piece') split bamboo to close top end of a notch flute 2. (-*gū*) a *lālākhī* drumming piece (BKT)

**घ्वरः** **ghvaḥra**, n. (-*pu*) large type of transverse flute (cf. *tīp*)

**घ्वाइनाई** **ghvāīnāī**, n. (-*pū*) long bamboo pole decorated with *yāk* tail and tassels, used as mace, carried in step with the rhythm of KTM *dhimay* groups (syn. *tāīnāī*, *tāīnāīghvāīnāī*, *dhuḥjyāmuḥjyā*)

## ङ NA

**डख** **ṅakha**, n. (-*pu*) horn (BKT general) (cf. *neku*)

**डाला कायगु** **ṅālā kāygu**, vp. (*kala*, *kayā*) a Navadurgā ritual where Seto Bhairav tries to catch boys for sacrifice (BKT)

**डाप्याखं** **ṅāpyākhā**, n. (°*khana-*, -*gū*) 1. fish dance (BKT) 2. a *lālākhī* pattern

## च CA

**चउमा** **caumā**, n. (-*gū*) a drumming piece used in *gūlābājā* (KTM, PT) -**sa**, n. (-*pu*) a *rāga* used in *dāphā*

**चंघाये** **cāghāye**, (*ghāta*) to join a metal ring to drum straps for easy adjustment of tension

**चकारा** **cakārā**, n. (-*gū*) standardized introduction to a *pañcatāl* drumming piece. The drummer chants *cakārā* using the syllables *ca-ca*

**चक्का** **cakkā**, n. (-*cakka/-gū*) 1. circle 2. cf. *pvatā*

**चच** **caca**, n. (-*ka*) 1. signal to be shouted by lead drummer to indicate entry to other players BKT 2. syllables of *cakārā*

**चचा** **cacā**, n. (-*pu*) (skt. *caryā*) Buddhist Tantric songs. The skt. texts are sung to different *rāgas* and *tālas* with the three sections *rāga kāygu*, *dhuḥvā kāygu*, and *carāṇa*. The

only accompanying instrument is a pair of thick-walled cymbals (*tāḥ*). *Cacā* are sung in secrecy and are said to help singers attain magical powers. -**hāle**, to sing a *cacā* song -**hike**, to perform a secret rite in which several drinks are provided in skull cups during *cacā* singing -**pyākhā**, n. (°*khana-*, -*gū*) Tantric Buddhist dance performed by Bajrācārya in the secrecy of their clan god house (*āgaṃchē*) in order to attain magical powers

**चतज्वंचा** **catājvācā**, n. anim. antagonist of the monster in *lākhay* dance (Jala) cf. *jhyālī*

**चति** **cati**, cf. *cāti*

**चरण** **carāṇa**, n. (-*pu*) section of a *cacā*

**चरिपुजा** **carthipūjā** n. (-*ka*) final *pūjā* of drumming apprenticeship at Ināre Ganedyah (BKT)



**चलं calā** 1, n. (<sup>o</sup>lana-, -gū) (var. *cilā*) 1. refrain of a song 2. stanza of a poem  
**चलं calā** 2, n. (-gū) section of *cavā*  
**चलि cali**, n. (-gū) (var. *cāli*) 1. *lālākhī tāla* (*dāphā*) 2. a *tamvaḥ* drumming piece played during Kumāri processions by Jugi (BKT)  
**चल्लि calti**, n. (-gū) a *tāla* (*navabājā*, *nāykhībājā*, *gūlābājā*)  
**चवां cavā**, n. (-gū) *dhā* drumming piece of BKT *navabājā* and Sāyami *gūlābājā*  
**चह caha**, n. (-ka) signal to be shouted by lead drummer to indicate entry to other players (cf. *caca*, *ha*)  
**चा cā**, onp. *dhā* drumming syllable (Śākya *gūlābājā*)  
**चांपा cāpā**, n. (-pā) interlaced pad of small bells worn around dancer's ankles  
**चाति cāti**, n. (-pu) (var. *cati*) ram horn with bamboo mouth-piece, played by Sāyami *during gūlā* (BKT) (cf. *neku*)  
**चाबां cābā**, n. (fam. *chubā*) 1. prelude 2. main theme of a drumming composition (*navabājā*)  
**चालि cāli**, cf. *cali*  
**चा:मुलु cāḥmulu** n. (-pu) (fam. *chēsū-ācā*) big awl used by drum-makers  
**चिउँमि ciūmi**, n. anim. composer  
**चिखिं cikhī**, n. (-pu) leather strap of a drum  
**चिचासः cicāsaḥ**, aj. soft (for voice) (BKT) cf. *cisaḥ*  
**चिचाहागु चःल्हायगु cicāhāḥgu dyaḥlhāygu**, n. shortened form of *dyaḥllhāygu*, to be played while *dhimaybājā* procession passes a god  
**चिना cinā**, aj. 1. compact 2. composed 3. connected, joined -**khā**, n. (-pu) poetry; lyric; song -**bākhā**, n. (<sup>o</sup>khana-, -gū) novel (mod.) -**me**, n. (-pu) duet song (fam. *jvaḥme*) sung by boys and girls  
**चिनापाकचा cināypākcā**, cf. *cimpākcā*  
**चिने cine**, to compose (a song, melody, poem)  
**चिप्वाये cipavāye**, (*vāta*) to dispose of the remains of feast while singing *bhūcacā*; this

item consists of three *cacā*; *garjajina*, *dvibhuja*, *namāmi*  
**चिपुलपि cipulapi**, n. (-pu) small stiletto used by drum-makers  
**चिम्पाकचा cimpākcā**, n. anim. antagonist of the monster in *lākhay* dance (Pāṅgā) (var. *cināypākcā*) cf. *jhyālī*  
**चिलं cilā**, cf. *calā*  
**चिसः cisaḥ**, aj. soft (for voice) (KTM) cf. *cicāsaḥ*  
**चिसा cisā**, cf. *cikhī*  
**चिं cī**, n. (*cina*-, -gū) mark -**khine**, to mark a drum strap before cutting -**taye**, (*tala*) 1. id. (lit. put) 2. to mark a drum hide for making holes for drum strap  
**चीभः cībhāḥ**, n. (<sup>o</sup>bhāla-, -gaḥ) Buddhist shrine; small *stūpa* -**pūjā**, n. (-gū) procession with *gūlābājā* playing invocations at all the shrines of a locality  
**चीर cīr**, n. (-kū 'piece') 1. cloth; flag-stand (KTM, PT) 2. wooden phallus displayed during *holi* (BKT) -**thane**, to erect a flag pole on the first day of *holi* while singing *hvalime* (BKT, KTM, PT) -**vāye**, (*vāta*) to take down and throw away flags on the last day of *holi*, while singing *dhamār* with *dhalak* drum accompaniment (by Śrestha of *thābahi*) -**svāye**, (*svata*) to erect flag pole on the first day of *holi*, while singing *hvalime*  
**चुकः cukaḥ**, n. (<sup>o</sup>kala-, -pu) (var. *cukuḥ*) split bamboo for closing top end of a notch flute (fam. *ghvasā*)  
**चुकुः cukuḥ**, cf. *cukaḥ*  
**चुम्पाकचा cumpākcā**, n. anim. antagonist of the monster in *lākhay* dance (Banepa) cf. *jhyālī*  
**चुलु culu**, 1. aj. slippery 2. n. quick step -**palāḥ**, n. (<sup>o</sup>lakha-) slipping while dancing  
**च्यानाचागः cyānācāgaḥ**, n. (<sup>o</sup>gala-) standard fee of eight anas and one pice given to the guru during a *pūjā*  
**च्याम्पाकचा cyāmpākcā**, n. anim. antagonist of the monster in *lākhay* dance (Bāde) cf. *jhyālī*

**चव** **cva**, n. (-gū) (var. *cvaḥ*) 1. *gūlābājā tāla* (KTM) 2. type of *navabājā* piece (BKT)  
**चवभाः** **cvabhāḥ**, n. pr. village on a hillock in the southwestern part of Kathmandu Valley  
**-द्याḥ**, n. Karuṇamāya (deity of *cvabhāḥ*)  
**-द्याḥ (yā) me**, n. (-pu) song for Karuṇamāya of *cvabhāḥ*  
**चवये** **cvaye**, (*cvala*) 1. to write 2. to go fast (in singing or drum playing)

**चव्यकेगु** **cvaykegu**, 1. to proclaim 2. n. (-gū) a drumming piece of *nāykhībājā* (fam. *nāykhī-*)  
**चवरा** **cvarā**, n. (-gū) *tamvaḥ* piece played by Jugi during goat-sacrifice for Bhailadyaḥ (BKT)  
**चवल** **cvala**, n. (-gū) (var. *cvalā*) strap to tie a *pvaṅgā* trumpet to supporting stick  
**चवः** **cvah**, cf. *cva*  
**चवाये** **cvāye**, (*cvāta*) to go fast (in singing or drumming) (Pāṅgā)

## छ CHA

**छधाःप्याखं** **chadhāḥpyākhā**, n. (*°khana-*, -pu) performance showing one section of a drama, one-act-play  
**छलं** **chalā**, n. (*°lana-*, -pu) (var. *chalī*) blade for cutting leather (fam. *lāpi*), used by drum-makers  
**छसः** **chasah**, n. united voices **-जूये**, (*jala*) to sing in unison **-ये**, (*yāta*) id.  
**छाय्** **chāy**, n. offering **-चि**, n. charity; donation for *guthī* feast or feast of music group **-व्वा**, n. (-*bva*) *pūjā* plate offered to Nāsaḥyaḥ or other gods  
**छिना** **chinā**, n. (-gū) type of *dhimay* composition  
**छु** **chu**, onp. dampened cymbal sound  
**छुबां** **chubā**, cf. *chumā*  
**छुमने** **chumane**, to indicate, to signal (a musical change)  
**छुमां** **chumā** n. (*°māna-*, -gū) (var. *cābā*) 1. prelude for a song. 2. initial section of a drumming piece (BKT *navabājā*)

**छुस्याः** **chusyāḥ**, n. (*°syāla-*, -pā) (var. *kāy*, *sichyāḥ*) pair of flat cymbals  
**छेगु** **chēgu**, n. (*guli-*, -pāḥ) 1. skin 2. drum hide **-पिये**, (*pila*) to skin (an animal)  
**छेमा** **chemā**, n. (-gū) apology **-पूजा**, n. (-gū) ritual of appeasing Nāsaḥyaḥ (if one has displeased the god)  
**छेसुआचा** **chēsu-ācā**, n. (-pu) big awl used by drum-makers  
**छयाइं** **chyāi** onp. ringing sound of cymbals (fam. *jhyāi*) **-पपा**, n. (chv.) large cymbals with highly raised boss and wide rim (cf. *bhuchyāḥ*)  
**छवखना** **chvakhanā**, n. (-gū) provocation; instigation **-प्याखं**, n. (*°khana-*, -gū) ironical sketch (to be performed at cross-roads and squares during *sāpāru*)  
**छवहरा** **chvaharā**, n. (-gū) *tamvaḥ* piece played by Jugi during Kumāri processions (BKT)

## ज JA

**जंगलिप्याखं** **jāgalipyākhā**, n. (*°khana-*, -gū) sav-age dance  
**जति** **jati**, n. (-gū) a drumming piece of BKT *dāphā*, *gūlābājā*

**जयन्तीभैरव** **jayantībhairava**, n. (-gū) a drumming piece of PT *gūlābājā*  
**जयश्री** **jayaśrī**, n. (-pu) a *rāga*  
**जयंबाछलि** **jayābāchali**, n. (-pu) particular *cacā* song (*jāmanah gubhāju* sang this song in

order to make his belt float on the *Brahma-putra* river, serving him as a raft during his return from Lhāsā)

**जलप्याखं jalapyākhā**, n. (*°khana-*, *-gū*) ritual masked dance of Harisiddhi

**जःला jahḷā** aj. first **-kāḥ**, n. anim. (*°kāla-*) best drummer of a *dāphā* student group **-gāy**, n. anim. best singer of a *dāphā* student group **-gāyē**, id.

**जात्रा jātrā**, n. (*-gū*) festival with a procession; chariot festival

**जःक्वला jāḥkvalāḥ**, n. (*°lāta-*) prelude in singing

**जि ji**, onp. drumming syllable (*lālākhī*)

**जुगि jugi**, n. anim. (var. *javagi*) (cf. *tvājā*) 1. ascetic 2. caste of tailors and shawm players, descendants of *śaivite* yogis called *kāpālīka*, a subgroup of the *paśupata* sect which merged in time with the *kānphaṭa* followers of *Gorakhnāth* **-bājā**, n. (*°jana-*, *-gāḥ*) 1. small kettle drum (fam. *tamvaḥ*, *tamaḥ*,

*tuntuncā*, *tunumuku*, *tunumukhu*, *turmuku*, *tyāmkvaḥ*) 2. auspicious *mvālī* piece

**जुहार juhār**, n. 1. (*-gū*) bridge of a string instrument 2. tuning a string **-cāyke**, to smoothen the bridge to improve the sound quality

**ज्यापु jyāpu**, n. anim. farmer **-pyākhā**, n. (*°khana-*, *-gū*) 1. (*-pu*) seasonal drama (fam. *gūpunipyākhā*) 2. (*-gū*) (var. *javāpujyāpunipyākhā*) farmers' dance **-me**, n. (*-pu*) love song

**ज्वगि jvagi**, cf. *jugi*

**ज्वनाकाये jvanākāye**, (*kāla*, *kayā*) 1. to repeat a tune during teaching sessions 2. to memorize

**ज्वः jvaḥ**, n. (*jvala-*, *-jvaḥ*) pair, couple **-khī**, n. (*°khina-*, *-gā*) pair of small kettledrums, used in PT *navabājā* (var. *dvaḥrā nagarā*) **-pyākhā**, n. (*°khana-*, *-gū*) duet dance **-me**, n. (*-pu*) duet song sung by boys and girls

**ज्वारि jvāri**, n. (var. *javāḥri*) vibration **-mhite**, to play several drone strings in repetitive patterns (fam. *jhālābiye*)

## झ JHA

**झा jhā**, n. identifying notes of a *rāga* **-vane**, 1. to demonstrate the essence of a *rāga* 2. to reach a climax during a musical performance 3. to dig deep until reaching fertile soil

**झाँकी jhāḅkri**, n. anim. shaman healer **-bājā**, n. (*jana-*, *-gaḥ*) double-headed frame drum with handle, played with S-shaped stick, also used in PT *navabājā*

**झारक्व jhārkvā**, n. (*-gū*) festival celebrated after completing paddy transplanting

**झाला jhālā**, n. (*-gū*) final section of a *rāga* lplayed on string instruments (several drone strings are played in repetitive patterns) **-biye**, to play several drone strings in repetitive pattern (cf. *javārimhite*)

**झिं jhī**, onp. drumming syllable (*dhā*, *dhimay*)

**झें jhē**, onp. id.

**झ्याई jhyaī**, onp. (var. *chyāī*, *jhyāy*) 1. ringing sound of cymbals 2. (chv.) *jātrā* festival; going for a walk **-vane**, 1. to observe a *jātrā* festival 2. to join a *jātrā* procession

**झ्यालि jhyāli**, n. (*-pā*) (var. *jhyālicā*, *khvālimāli*, *bau*, *baucā*) pair of small thin-walled cymbals

**झ्यालिं jhyālī**, n. anim. (*°lina-*) antagonist of the monster in *lākhay* dance (cf. for geographical variants: *cimpākcā*, *cināypākcā* Pāḅgā; *cumpākcā* BKT; and Banepa; *cyāmpākcā* Bode; *timpākcā* Theco, Vā, Sunākvathi; *catājvācā* Jala)

## त TA

- त **ta**, onp. drumming syllable (*dhimay*, *navabājā*, *lālākhī*)
- ततलि **tatali**, n. (-*gū*) (var. *tātāli*) popular drumming piece (BKT) -**khī**, n. (°*khina-*, -*gaḥ*) double-headed drum (cf. *dhācā*)
- तबला **tablā**, n. (var. *tamal* BKT; *tamali* Pāṅgā) 1. (-*jvaḥ*) pair of North Indian *tablā* drums used for *bhajan* accompaniment and śāstriya saṅgīt 2. (-*gaḥ*) right hand *tablā*
- तमल **tamal**, n. id. (BKT) -i, n. id. (Pāṅgā)
- तम्बः **tamvaḥ**, n. (°*mvala-*, -*gaḥ*) small kettle-drum played with two sticks by Jugi (var. *tamaḥ*, *tuntuncā*, *tukumuku*, *tunumukhu*, *turmuku*, *tyāmkvaḥ*) -**khī**, n. (°*khina-*, -*gaḥ*) id.
- तारबिन **tarbin**, n. (-*pu*) trumpet
- तसः **tasah**, aj. loud (for voice)
- तहाःआचा **tahāḥ-ācā**, n. (-*pu*) long awl used by drum-makers
- ताईनाई **tāīnāī**, n. 1. (-*paḥ*) (var. *kāyṭhā*; *kāypā*; *kāyṭi*) bronze disc struck with wooden hammer, used in *dāphā*, *dhalcā*, KTM *dhimay-bājā* 2. (-*pu*) long bamboo pole decorated with *yāk* tail and tassels, used as mace, carried in step with the rhythm of KTM *dhimay* group (syn. *ghvāīnāī*; *tāīnāīghvāīnāī*, *nyāīchyāī* BKT; *dhuḥjyāmuḥjyā*)
- तां **tā**, n. (-*bālā*) (var. *tāna*) leather strap (BKT) -**bālā**, n. id. -**sāle**, to tune (a drum) by tightening strap
- तांचा **tācā**, n. (-*gū*) triangle used by *bhajan* groups (fam. *tinimuni*; *tintincā*)
- तातालि **tātāli**, n. (-*gū*) (var. *tatali*) popular drumming piece of BKT
- तान **tāna**, n. (-*bālā*) (var. *tā* BKT) leather strap -**bālā**, n. id. -**sale**, to tune (a drum) by tightening strap
- तारिपत्त **tāripatta**, n. (-*pā*) dried palm leaf (*Borassus flabellifer*) used for producing shawm reeds
- ताल **tāla**, n. (-*gū*) timing, measure, metre (of music and poetry)
- तालि **tāli**, n. clapping of hands
- तासा **tāsā**, n. (-*gaḥ*) side-drum played with two sticks, used in Jugi marriage band
- ताः **tāḥ**, n. (*tāla-*, -*pā*) small pair of thick-walled bronze cymbals, used for *cacā* and *dāphā* accompaniment -**thāye**, (*thāta*) to keep time with *tāḥ*
- ति **ti**, onp. drumming syllable (*dhimay*, *lālākhī*)
- तिका **tikā**, n. (-*ka*) third part of *gvārā* (KTM)
- तितिताला **tititāla**, n. (-*pū*) goat horn with bamboo mouth-piece, used in *gūlābājā* of oil-pressers (BKT)
- तिनताल **tintāla**, n. (-*gū*) drumming piece for *pachimā* (BKT)
- तिनिमुनि **tinimuni**, n. (-*gū*) (var. *tintincā*) cf. *tācā*
- तिप **tipa**, n. (-*pu*) upper octave of shawm or transverse flute
- तिपदु **tipādu**, n. (for dancer) entering *dvikvaṇa* position on stage,
- तिपपी **tipāpi**, n. (for dancer) leaving *dvikvaṇa* position on stage (of main entry)
- तिमां **timā**, n. (-*gū*) *tāla* used in *gūlābājā* (KTM)
- तिम्पाकचा **timpākacā**, n. anim. antagonist of the monster in *lākhay* dance (Theco) cf. *jhyālī*
- तिसः **tisah**, n. (°*sala-*, -*saḥ*) high pitched sound
- तीप **tīp**, n. (-*pu*) small type of transverse flute producing high pitched sounds (cf. *ghvaḥra*)
- तीं **tī**, onp. undamped *tāḥ* sound
- तुं **tū**, onp. (var. *tum*) 1. drumming syllable 2. timbre of a stringed instrument -**ganā**, n. 1. four-stringed bowed musical instrument (i.e. bow is interlaced between strings and body of instruments) 2. four-stringed plucked musical instrument (played with fingers). Both instruments have gone out of use.
- तुकाज्यामे **tukājyāme**, n. (-*pu*) type of song sung by *jyāpu* during weeding the paddy field

तुकि **tuki**, n. (-gū) shawm reeds made of dried palm (*Borassus flabellifer*) leaf  
 तुतः **tutaḥ**, n. (°tala-, -pu) Buddhist hymn, prayer (*skt. stotra*) -**bvane** to chant (a *tutaḥ*)  
 तुनुमुकु **tunumuku**, cf. *tamvaḥ*  
 तुनतुनचा **tuntuncā**, cf. *tamvaḥ*  
 तुम्पाकचा **tumpākchā**, n. anim. antagonist of the monster in *lākhay* dance (BKT) cf. *jhyālī*  
 तुनुमुखु **turmukhu**, cf. *tamvaḥ*  
 तुले **tule**, to stretch skin over rim of drum-head (drum making)  
 त्याम्क्व **tyāmkvaḥ**, cf. *tamvaḥ*  
 त्रमपेत् **trampet**, n. (-pu) trumpet, cf. *tarbin*

त्रिकुलसिमे **trikulasime**, n. (-pu) song for encouraging a child to dance in rhythm: *tāytiti vaḥ sā ghālī ghālī bī*. If you toddle (I) will give you a pad of bells.  
 त्रिमां **trimā**, n. (-gū) *tāla* used in *gūlābājā* (PT)  
 त्रिगा **trīgā**, onp. timbre of a string instrument  
 त्याःरा **tyaḥrā**, aj. having three-fold composite reeds (of harmonium)  
 त्वाःजं **tvāḥjā** n. anim. (°jana-) tailor-musician of *jugi* caste who receives oblations for the deceased and works as temple keeper (cf. *jugi, jvagi*)  
 त्वाःल्हाय्गु **tvāḥlhāygu**, n. (-lhāta) drumming interlude (KTM *gūlābājā*)

## थ THA

थकता **thakatā**, n. (-gū) *tāla* used in *gūlābājā*  
 थता **thatā**, n. (-gū) a drumming composition (*lālākhī, dhācā, dhimay* BKT)  
 थला **thalā**, n. (var. *thalāḥ*) 1. high pitched sound 2. high note -**kvalā**, n. (var. -*kvalāḥ*) change between pitches -**kvalā yāye**, (*yāta*) 1. to sing both high and low notes; to go up and down the scale 2. to warm up  
 थलाःक्वलाः **thalāḥkvalāḥ**, n. (-gū) (cf. *ālāpa*) vocal solo prelude preceding a *dāphā* song  
 थतिकृति **thātikuti**, n. (for shawm) the notes of a scale  
 थाय् **thāy**, n. (*thāsa-, -pā*) single brass disc used as a percussion instrument in KTM *dhimay* groups (fam. *kāyipi*)

थाये **thāye**, (*thāta*) to play a musical instrument  
 थासा **thāsā**, n. 1. (-kū 'piece') split bamboo to close top end of a flute (fam. *ghvasā*) 2. (-gū) notation, musical notes (fam. *saḥcī*)  
 थेटर **thetar**, n. (-gū) theatre, play, drama  
 थ्याःक्वहा **thyaḥkhā**, n. (°khana-, -gū) theatrical play  
 थ्वं **thvā**, n. (-phuti 'drop') rice beer (Bhaktapurians know five varieties for specific uses) required by musicians as fuel during strenuous processions  
 थ्वया **thvayā**, n. echo, vibration (cf. *thvāḥsaḥ*)  
 थ्वः **thvaḥ**, aj. resounded, echoed -**saḥ**, n. echo -**saḥ vaye**, (*vala*) to echo  
 थ्वाइं **thvāī**, onp. distorted sound of broken cymbal or tuning paste (of drum)

## द DA

दं **dā**, onp. drumming syllable (*nāykhī*)  
 दथुला **dathulā**, n. (-gū) dominant note  
 दबदब **dabadaba**, n. (-gā) (var. *kātā-*) hour-glass drum; symbol of Lord Śiva (cf. *damaru*)  
 दबु **dabu**, n. (-gaḥ) (var. *dabhu*) kettledrum played with one hand

दबू **dabū**, n. (°buli-, -gū) stage; platform -**pyākhā**, n. (°khana-, -gū) 1. complete drama 2. extinct dance drama called *khāḥpyākhā* which takes 28 days to perform, showing the Birāt Rājā and other episodes from the Mahābhārata (BKT)

**दमरु damaru**, n. (-gā) hour-glass drum; symbol of Lord Śiva (cf. *dabadaba*)

**दमाई damāī**, n. anim. Nepali speaking tailor-musicians playing auspicious music (pañcai bājā) at shrines and for social functions; the caste name originates from the kettle-drum *damāhā*

**दम्फु damphu**, n. (-gaḥ) small single-headed frame drum, played by Tāmāng

**दम्बःखिं damvaḥkhī**, n. (°khina-, -gaḥ) double-headed drum with temporary tuning paste on both heads (PT *navabājā*); for auspicious performances three *damvaḥkhī* are decorated with robes, ornaments, and masks of Bhairava, Mahākālī and Māhālakṣmī (var. *davaḥkhī*)

**दयालक्ष्मीप्याखं dayālakṣmīpyākhā**, n. (°khana-, -gū) puppet dance

**दवंदु davādu**, n. entering the stage (of dancer)

**दवंपि davāpi**, n. leaving the stage (of dancer)

**दवःखिं davaḥkhī**, cf. *damvaḥkhī*

**दवंशमान्त वारा daśamānta gvārā**, n. (-gū) drumming piece of *gūlābājā*

**दः daḥ**, n. (°hala-, -gaḥ) single-headed frame drum; metal frame with tuning screws and a metal tongue pressed against head by left hand to alter pitch (cf. *dahaḥ*)

**दहः dahaḥ**, n. (°hala-, -gaḥ) single-headed frame drum; frame either round or octagonal (*phāgu me hāleta dahaḥ thanāḥ hāle sikka hey bālāḥ* = to sing a song of Holi accompanied by the *dahaḥ* is pleasing) (cf. *daḥ*)

**दाफा dāphā**, n. (-gū) *prabandha* type of devotional group-singing with *tāḥ* and *lālākhī*

**-khalah**, n. (°laka) group of *dāphā* musicians

**-chē**, n. (-khā) (cf. *ākāchē*) house for keeping *dāphā* instruments and training students

**-pūjā**, n. (-gū) annual *pūjā* of *dāphā* group

**-pyākhā**, n. (°khana-, -gū) traditional dance with *lālākhī* accompaniment

**-me**, n. (-pu) *dāphā* song

**-lay**, n. (°lasa-, -gū) *dāphā* tune

**दिबां dibā**, (°bāna-, -gū) final phrase

**दियेगु diyegu**, n. (-gū) closing pattern for several *nāykhī* pieces

**दीपक dīpaka**, n. (-pu) a *rāga* played by Jugī shawm players exclusively during death rituals for Taleju priest and (earlier) Malla kings (BKT); accompanies lighting of funeral pyre

**दुजः dujaḥ**, n. (*jala-*) member of music group or *guthī*

**दुप्याखं dupyākhā**, n. (°khana-, -gū) 1. most popular sequence of a drama, often naughty and hilarious, having no direct connection with the plot 2. psychological drama (mod.)

**दुगुचा स्यायगु dugučā syāygu**, n. 1. goat sacrifice 2. (-gū) *dhā* drumming piece, played during goat sacrifice for Nāsaḥdyah (BKT *navabājā*)

**देवीप्याखं devīpyākhā**, n. (°khana-, -gū) dance drama of BKT, showing the triumph of the goddesses Mahākālī, Mahālakṣmī, Kumārī, and their allies over the demons

**दैत्य daitya**, n. anim. demon **-kvaḥthalegu-bājā**, n. (°jana-) percussion group accompanying killing of demon during *dyaḥpyākhā*

**-pyākhā**, n. (°khana-, -gū) demon dance (fam. *lākhaypyākhā*)

**द्यः dyah**, n. anim. (*deva-*) god (cf. *gane-*; *nāsaḥ-*; *haimā-*) **-khī**, n. (°khina-, -gaḥ) large double-headed drum with temporary tuning paste on both heads, decorated with ram horns, accompanying Navadurgā dances of BKT and Theco and other auspicious dances **-cāhule**, (*hula*) (var. *-cākahule*, *-cākahile* BKT) to circumambulate a shrine (of Nāsaḥdyah) while playing a particular drumming piece (BKT *gūlābājā*) **-pyākhā**, n. (°khana-, -gū) traditional dance (cf. Navadurgā *pyākhā*) **-lhāygu**, n. (*-kaḥ*) drumming composition serving as an invocation of Nāsaḥdyah and other gods

**द्यां dyā**, n. (*dyāna-*, -gaḥ) kind of kettle drum

**द्र dra**, onp. drumming syllable (for rapid succession of strokes)

**द्वपाः dvapāḥ**, n. (<sup>o</sup>pāta-, -gū) uncultivated field patch infested with snakes or evil spirits  
**-vāygubājā**, n. (<sup>o</sup>jana-, -gū) particular *nāykhī* piece for warding off evil spirits  
**द्वहाः dvahā**, n. (-gū) category of songs  
**द्वहजं dvahjā**, n. anim. (<sup>o</sup>jana-) 1. second-rate member of music group or *guthī* 2. volunteer (*dāphā bhvajay dvahjāta madaykā hey magāḥ* = inevitably volunteers are needed for the *dāphā* feast)  
**द्वराः dvaḥrā** aj. having double reeds (of *harmonium*) **-nagarā**, n. (-gāḥ/-jvaḥ) pair of small kettledrums, used in PT *navabājā* (*gūlābājā*) (var. *jvaḥkhī*)

**द्वबः dvābaḥ**, n. (<sup>o</sup>bala-, -gaḥ) small-mouthed beer storage pot, occasionally used as a drum (fam. *bhvāgā*)  
**द्वालु dvālu**, aj. tedious, boring (of talk, music) **-ka**, av. (to drum, sing or talk) tediously, in a boring manner **-secvane**, (of music or talk) to become tedious or boring  
**द्विवरण dvikvaṇa**, n. (-ku) (for dancer) position on stage (cf. *tipādu*)  
**द्विभुज dvibhuja**, n. (-pu) second *cacā* song of the *bhūcacā* set, sung whilst collecting used leaf plates at the end of a ritual feast. The leaf plates are then taken and discarded in the *kalaḥgāḥ* or *cipagāḥ*, in order to ward off evil spirits

## ध DHA

**धं dhā**, onp. drumming syllable  
**धनासिरि dhanāsiri**, n. (-pu) a *rāga*  
**धमाक dhamāk**, n. (-gū) a *tāla* of BKT, used in *khyāḥpyākhā* and *navabājā*  
**धमार dhamār** n. (-pu) classical group- singing **-lay**, n. (<sup>o</sup>lasa-, -gū) song in *dhamār* style  
**धलक dhalak**, n. (-gaḥ) (var. *dhuluka*; *dhvalak*) double-headed drum, (two different types: 1. like North Indian *ḍholak* 2. cylindrical body, leather straps without rings)  
**धल्चा dhalcā**, n. (-gaḥ) (var. *dhalcābhajan*) devotional group singing with *dhalak* and *arvin* (BKT)  
**धा dhā**, onp. drumming syllable  
**धाँ dhāṅ**, cf. *dhāḥ* **-cā**, n. (-gaḥ) (var. *tatalikhī* BKT) smaller variety of *dhāḥ*, used in BKT *navabājā* **-bājā**, n. (-gā) ensemble of *dhāṅ*, *bhuchyāḥ*, *sichyāḥ*  
**धाँदिगना dhāḍiganā**, n. onp. *pastā* drumming piece (BKT Sāymi *gūlābājā*)  
**धाः dhāḥ**, n. (*dhāla*-, -gaḥ) (var. *dhāṅ* BKT) double-headed drum; sometimes decorated with horns of fighting ram, (BKT *navabājā*) (cf.

*kaḥkhī*). The lower-pitched head is played with a stick (*dhāḥkathi*). Buddhist *gūlābājā* groups hold the stick in the left hand, others in the right hand **-kathi**, n. (*pu*) (var. *-kachicā* BKT) 1. drum stick 2. sl. penis **-cā**, n. (-gaḥ) (var. *tatalikhī* BKT) smaller variety of *dhāḥ*, used in BKT *navabājā* **-bājā**, n. (-gā) ensemble of *dhāṅ*, *bhuchyāḥ*, *sichyāḥ*  
**धिमि dhimay**, n. (-gā) (var. *dhime*, *dhemā* Lele, *dhemay*) large double-headed procession drum played by Jyāpu and Kumāḥ; if made of wood, its body often has an irregular shape like the trunk of a tree **-kathi**, n. (-pu) (var. *-kachicā* BKT) 1. *dhimay* stick (straight) 2. sl. penis **-khalah**, n. (<sup>o</sup>laka-)group of *dhimay* players **-cā** n. (-gaḥ) 1. smaller variety of *dhimay*, used in *navabājā* (BKT) 2. sl. woman **-thāye** 1. to play *dhimay* 2. sl. to fuck **-pau**, n. (<sup>o</sup>pathi-, -pu) (var. *-pucā* BKT) spiral cane stick used to play *dhimay* **-pirāne**, n. (-gū) 1. final *pūjā* of *dhimay* apprenticeship 2. sl. first pregnancy of young woman after husband ‘plays dhimay’ with

her **-pyākhā**, n. (*°khana-*, *-gū*) *dhimay* dance  
**-bājā**, n. (*°jana-*, *-gaḥ*) ensemble of *dhimay*,  
*bhuchyāḥ*, *sichyāḥ* BKT)  
**धैप्याखं dhūpyākhā**, n. (*°khana-*, *-gū*) tiger dance  
**धुज्यामुज्या dhujyāmujiyā**, n. (*-pu*) long bam-  
 boo pole decorated with yāk's tail and tas-  
 sels, used as mace, carried in step with the  
 rhythm of KTM *dhimay* group (syn. *tānāi*,  
*ghvāināi*) **-hike**, to move this bamboo in  
 time with the rhythm of *dhimay*  
**धुमांगारि dhumāṅgāri**, n. (*-pu*) *cacā* song sung  
 while disposing of the remains of ritual feast

**धुलुक dhuluka**, cf. *dhalak*  
**धुवं dhuvā**, n. (*-gū*) 1. first section of *cacā* song  
 2. refrain of a song  
**धुसः dhusaḥ**, n. (*°sala-*, *-gū*) rhythmic step  
**-biye**, (*bila*) to signal to music group with  
 a dance step  
**धेमा dhemā**, n. (*-pu*) *tāla* of *nāgacāpyākhā*  
 (BKT)  
**ध्याचुप्याखं dhyācupyākhā**, n. (*°khana-*) 1. (*-gū*)  
 sarcastic play 2. (*-pu*) short comedy (syn.  
*chvakhanapyākhā*) **-me**, n. (*-pu*) comic song  
**ध्वलक dhvalak**, cf. *dhalak*

## न NA

**नड nau**, n. (*°nali-*, *-phuti* “drop”) straw ashes  
 (for preparing tuning paste for drums) (cf.  
*su-*)  
**नकीं nakī**, n. anim. (*°kina-*) heroine **-khāke**, to  
 induce shaking in the body of *nakī* by recit-  
 ing the *kvalaya* and *harasila cacā* songs  
**नखि nakhi**, n. (*-pā*) *sitār* plectron  
**नगरा nagarā**, n. (*-gaḥ*) 1. kettle-drum played  
 with two sticks in PT *navabājā* and at shrines  
 2. pair of two kettle-drums of different sizes,  
 played in BKT *navabājā* 3. gigantic ket-  
 tle-drums (either single or pair), played by  
*damāi* at royal palaces and major shrines  
**नट naṭa**, n. (*-pu*) a *rāga* (PT)  
**नतुवा natuvā**, n. anim. 1. clown, buffoon  
 2. male dancer **-cāpyākhā**, n. (*°khana-*, *-gū*)  
 young girls' dance performed by boys cross-  
 dressing as beautiful girls (cf. *ghīṭāmali*)  
**नमामि namāmi**, n. (*-pu*) third (and last) song of  
*bhūcacā*, sung to ward off evil spirits while  
 discarding remains of a ritual feast  
**नव nava**, num. nine (auspicious number)  
**-dāphā**, n. (*-gū*) *dāphā* group with addi-  
 tional set of nine *navabājā* drums which are  
 accompanied by Jugi shawm players (BKT).  
 The first two *navadāphā* ensembles were

established by King Bhupatindra Malla.  
**-durgāpyākhā**, n. (*°khana-*, *-gū*) annual dance  
 cycle of the Navadurgā of BKT and of Theco  
 (here every 12 years) **-bājā**, n. (*°jana-*, *-jvaḥ*)  
 1. set of nine drums (BKT) (cf. *navadāphā*)  
 2. set of many drums played during *gūlā* in  
 PT **-mā**, n. (*-gū*) a *tāla* (PT *gūlābājā*)  
**नवाकिपा navākipā**, n. (*-gū*) cinema, film  
**ना nā**, onp. drumming syllable  
**नांगाप्याखं nāṅāpyākhā**, n. (*°khana-*, *-gū*) chil-  
 dren's dance (nude dance)  
**नागाचाप्याखं nāgācāpyākhā**, n. (*°khana-*, *-gū*)  
 dance of small boys dressed as Rādhā and  
 Kṛṣṇa accompanied by flute ensemble (BKT)  
**नान्दिमे nāndime**, n. (*-pu*) song sung as a pre-  
 lude to a dance drama  
**नाय nāy**, n. anim. butcher **-khī**, n. (*°khina-*,  
*-gaḥ*) double-headed butchers' drum played  
 during death processions and other ritual  
 events (cf. *sībājā*) **-khīcā**, n. (*-gaḥ*) small  
*nāykhī* (BKT *navabājā*) **-khīcvaykegu**, n.  
 (*-pu*) a drumming pattern of *nāykhī* played  
 during a ritual climax or to announce an offi-  
 cial proclamation **-khībājā**, n. (*-gaḥ*) ensem-  
 ble of several *nāykhī* and *sichyāḥ*, played by  
 butchers



**नायोः nāyaḥ**, n. anim. (<sup>o</sup>yalā-) 1. leader 2. main character of drama or novel (cf. *hāmā*) -**khī**, n. (-gaḥ) see *nāykhī*

**नायाःयाये nāyaḥ yāye**, (*yāta*) to lull a child to sleep

**नासलं nāsalā**, (instr. of **nāsaḥ** charm, etc.) -**liye**, (*lita*) 1. to be charmed 2. to be inspired (by *Nāsaḥdyah*) -**tvaḥte**, to perform without inspiration

**नासः nāsaḥ**, n. (*sala-*) 1. charm; delight; inspiration 2. god of music and dance (cf. *Nāsaḥdyah*) 3. high-pitched drum head (of double-headed drum) -**cuka**, n. (-gū) courtyard with *Nāsaḥdyah* shrine -**taye**. to charm; to inspire -**tāpāye**, (*pāta*) to have no inspiration (lit to be far away) -**daye**, (*data*, *dayā*) to have inspiration -**dyah**, n. (<sup>o</sup>deva-) god of music and dance (nowadays often identified with *Nṛtyanātha*) -**pūjā**, n. (-gū) worship of *Nāsaḥdyah*, especially during music apprenticeship (cf. *hāne pūjā*; *pirāne pūjā*) -**pvāḥ**, n. (<sup>o</sup>pvāla-, -pvāḥ) hole in wall (often triangular), serving as flight passage for *Nāsaḥdyah* -**litaye**, (var. *litataye*) to return *Nāsaḥdyah* to his shrine after completing music apprenticeship (cf. *pirāne pūjā*) -**sāle**, to take *Nāsaḥdyah* from the shrine to a wall niche in the practice room (initial *pūjā* of music apprenticeship)

**नित्यनाथ Nityanātha**, n. pr. (var. *Nṛtyanātha*) cf. *Nāsaḥdyah* -**gvarāḥ**, n. (-gū) auspicious drumming piece of BKT *gūlābājā*

**निबाजं nibājā**, cf. *nilā*

**निभाःत्वःसिं nibhāḥtvahsī**, n. (-pu) nursery rhyme sung by mothers while giving oil massage to their babies

**निर्गन nirgan**, n. (-pu) prayer, hymn -**bhajan**, n. (-pu) song of renunciation -**me**, n. (-pu) id.

**निलंबाजं nilābājā**, (<sup>o</sup>jana-, -gaḥ) (var. *nibājā*) term applied to a variety of drums played on

important occasions. The *ghītāmali* (*madal*) is considered a fun drum (played for light entertainment and party dancing), whereas *lālākhī*, *dhimay*, etc. are considered serious drums (played for ritually significant occasions)

**नृत्यनाथ Nṛtyanātha**, n. (var. *Nityanāth*) cf. *Nāsaḥdyah*

**नेता netā**, n. pr. section of KTM known as *Naradevi* -**maru-ajimāpyākhā**, n. (<sup>o</sup>khana-, -gū) particular type of ritual dance (KTM) -**marupyākhā**, id. -**pyākhā**, id.

**नेकु nekū**, n. (<sup>o</sup>kuli-, -pu) 1. buffalo horn used in *gūlābājā* (var. *ghvarneku*) (cf. *ghulu*) 2. buffalo horn with bamboo mouthpiece and silver decoration, used in PT *navabājā* (cf. *cāti*) -**puike**, to blow *neku* to announce to the gods a family member's death. This is done only during *gūlā* at *Svayambhū*

**न्याइंच्याइं nyāicyāi**, cf. *ghvāināi*

**न्वातु nvatu**, n. (-gū) mouthpiece of a trumpet  
**न्वमत nvamat**, n. (-pu) type of shawm, earlier played by *Jugi* during marriages (nowadays replaced by *kanātha*)

**न्हासंथ्वःसः nhāsāthvahasḥ**, n. (<sup>o</sup>sala-, -saḥ) nasal sound

**न्हिलासः nhilasah**, n. (*sala-*, -saḥ) joyous voice  
**न्हिलि nhili**, n. smile -**khyāli**, n. (-gū) 1. joke, jest (syn. *khyāli-*) 2. merriment, enjoyment -**pyākhā**, n. (<sup>o</sup>khana-, -gū) comic scene within a play -**me**, n. (-pu) joyous song; jocular song

**न्हुलय् nhūlay**, n. (<sup>o</sup>lasa-, -pu) modern song; recent genre of light urban popular love songs incorporating some aspects of Western music

**न्हेसः nhesah**, n. (<sup>o</sup>sāla-, -gū) rehearsal

**न्ह्या nhyāḥ**, n. (-gū) basic processional drumming pattern (for *dhimay*)

## प PA

**पउकथि** **paukathi**, n. (-*pu*) spiral cane stick for dhimay (cf. *dhimaypau*)

**पँयता** **pāytāḥ**, n. (°*tāla*-, -*pu*) cf. *pañcatāl-khalaḥ*, n. (°*laka*-, -*gū*) group of *pāytāḥ* players -**khī**, n. (°*khina*-, -*gaḥ*) cf. *kvatāḥ*

**पछिमा** **pachimā**, n. (-*gaḥ*) large double-headed drum (like North Indian *pakhāvaj*), used in *navabājā*, flute ensembles and dance

**पञ्चताल** **pañcatāl**, n. (°*tāla*-, -*gaḥ*) (var. *kvatāḥ*, *kvatāḥkhī*, *pastāḥ*, *pāytāḥkhī*) cf. *kvatāḥ*

**पञ्चताल** **pañcatāl**, n. (°*tāla*-, -*pu*) (var. *pāytāḥ*, *kāhāḥ*, *kā*) long natural trumpet with supporting stick, played ensemble during important ritual events

**पञ्चबाजा** **pañcabājā**, n. (-*gaḥ*) cf. *kvatāḥ*

**पञ्चमां** **pañcamā**, n. (-*gū*) a *tāla* (PT *gūlābājā*)

**परताल** **partāl**, n. (-*gū*) (var. *pratāla*) a *tāla* used in *dāphā*, *navabājā*, *gūlābājā*

**परिमान** **pariman**, cf. *palimā*

**पलिमां** **palimā**, n. (°*māna*-, -*gū*) (var. *pariman*, *paliman* BKT; *palamā*, *palemā* PT) a *tāla* (*navabājā*, *gūlābājā*)

**पस्ता:** **pastāḥ**, n. (°*tāla*-, -*gaḥ*) cf. *kvatāḥ*

**पा** **pā**, onp. drumming syllable (*nāykhī*)

**पासाचःरयमे** **pāsācaḥrayme**, n. (-*pu*) (var. *pāhā-caḥrayme*) pathetic song sung during *pāhā-caḥray* (fam. *ghātu*)

**पाःगयबले थाये** **pāḥ gayebale thāye**, (*thāta*)  
1. to climb the hill of Svayaṃbhū during *gūlā* whilst playing *gūlābājā* 2. a particular *nāykhī* piece of KTM *gūlābājā*

**पिथाने** **pithane**, (var. *pikāye*) 1. to stage or perform (a play, drama, dance) 2. to release (a publication)

**पिरानेपूजा** **pirānepūjā**, n. (-*gū*) 1. final *pūjā* of music apprenticeship (BKT). Nāsaḥdyah is returned to his shrine where the students play in public for the first time 2. sl. (for a woman) to give birth for the first time (BKT)

**पिवंचा** **pivācā**, n. (-*gaḥ*) bowed chordophone with one to three strings (no longer in use)

**पुचःमे** **pucaḥme**, n. (-*pu*) group song; chorus (syn. *mākāḥme*)

**पुधाःप्याखं** **pudhāḥpyākhā**, n. (°*khana*-, -*pu*) complete drama

**पुलां** **pulā**, aj. old, ancient -**me**, n. (-*pu*) old song -**lay**, n. (°*lasa*-, -*gū*) old tune

**पुवाज्यामे** **puvājyāme**, n. (-*pu*) song sung by farmer girls while sowing rice

**पूजा** **pūjā**, n. (-*gū*) (var. *pūjā*) worship -**khī**, n. (°*khina*-, -*gū*) a *nāykhī* piece, played by butchers going for a *pūjā* (BKT) -**mālī**, n. (-*gū*-, -*pu*) *nāykhī* and *mvālī* piece, played by oilpressers and tailors during a *dalāpa*, while the Vajrācārya priest invokes the gods -**mvālī**, n. (-*pu*) (var. *byekvamvālī*) large curved shawm with nine finger-holes, played by Jugi at shrines during *sanyabājā*

**प्याखं** **pyākhā**, n. (°*khana*-) 1. (-*gū*) dance 2. (-*gū*) dance drama; ballet with many characters 3. (-*pu*) play; drama -**khalaḥ**, n. (°*laka*-, -*gū*) dance group -**pāḥ**, n. (°*pāla*-, -*gū*) rhythmic step in a dance -**pāḥkāye**, (*kāla*, *kayā*) to step in rhythm -**pithane**, to stage a drama or a play for the first time -**pidane** id. (cf. *pirānepūjā*) -**mi**, n. anim. writer of dramas -**misā**, n. anim. 1. female dancer 2. actress in a play or drama -**me**, n. (-*gū*) dance drama (lit song play) -**mvaḥ**, n. anim. (°*mvala*-) 1. actor 2. actress -**hule**, to dance

**प्रक्वण** **prakvaṇa**, n. (-*ku*) (for dancer) position on stage (cf. *tipādu*)

**प्रताल** **pratāla**, cf. *partāl*

**प्वंगा** **pvāgā**, n. (-*pu*) natural copper trumpet, supported by a stick, played in *dāphā*, *navabājā*, *gūlābājā*

**प्वता** **pvatā**, n. (-*gū*) bamboo ring framing the drum hide (of *dhimay*, *nāykhī*, etc)

फःप्याखं **pvahpyākhā**, n. (<sup>o</sup>khana-, -gū) fisher-  
men's dance

फःयै **pvāy**, n. onp. 1. sound of a trumpet (fam.  
-cā) 2. (-pu) flute, pipe 3. (-gū) mouthorgan  
(fam. -pyāycā) -**yāye**, (yāta) 1. to blow a

trumpet or wind instrument 2. to marry (to  
the sound of Jugi band)

फःरेज्या **pvārejyā** n. (-gū) paddy transplanting  
-**me**, n. (-pu) sad song sung during the paddy  
transplanting season -**lay**, n. (<sup>o</sup>lasa-, -gū) id.

## फ PHA

फय् **phay**, n. (<sup>o</sup>phasa-) air, wind -**gā**, n.  
(<sup>o</sup>gana-, -gaḥ) wind chimes (lit wind bell)  
-**pvāḥ**, n. (<sup>o</sup>pvāla-, -pvaḥ) 1. mouthpiece of  
a wind instrument 2. finger hole of a wind  
instrument

फलेआचा **phale-ācā**, n. (-pu) (var. *phālā ācā*)  
awl used by drum maker

फाकन्दालिप्याखं **phākandālipyākhā**, n. (<sup>o</sup>khana-,  
-gū) 1. group dance telling the story of a

woman abandoning her baby 2. butterfly  
dance (BKT)

फाका **phākā**, n. anim. (var. -cā, *phāknāli*) moth  
-**pyākhā**, n. (<sup>o</sup>khana-, -gū) slow dance

फागु **phāgu**, n. (loc. *khunu*) red powder festival  
(syn. *hvali*) -**punī**, n. (loc. *khunu*) full moon  
of the month of *cillā* -**me**, n. (-pu) joyous  
song sung while throwing red powder during  
*hvali* (syn. *hvalime*) -**lay**, n. (<sup>o</sup>lasa-, -gū) tune  
of *phāgu*

## ब BA

बाउ **bau**, n. (-pā) (var. *jhyāli*, *jyālicā*, *baucā*,  
*babhu*) small, thin-walled cymbals

बाँय् **bāy**, n. (*basa*-, -pu) (var. *bāycā*, *kvaku*  
*bāycā*) short notch flute made of bamboo  
played by Jugi along with *kvakhī* and *bau*  
(BKT *navabājā* and *gūlābājā* of oilpressers)

बलादि **balādi**, n. (-pu) a *rāga* sung in *dāphā*  
(BKT)

बसन्त **basanta**, n. 1. spring season 2. (-pu)  
song sung during spring 3. (-pu) a *rāga*  
(several varieties) -**me**, n. (-pu) id. -**lay**, n.  
(<sup>o</sup>lasa-, -gū) tune of *basanta*

बसुन्धरामे **basundharāme**, n. (-pu) hymn, har-  
vest song

बहिद्यःस्वःवने **bahidyah svahvane**, (for a group of  
musicians) to lead a procession through all  
the Buddhist courtyards (*bāhā*) of a locality  
during *gūlā*

बाखंमे **bākhāme**, n. (-pu) ballad (cf. *sādeme*,  
*silume*)

बागःखिं **bāgahkhī**, n. (<sup>o</sup>khina-, -gaḥ) cf. *kvakhī*

बाजं **bājā**, n. (<sup>o</sup>jana-, -gaḥ) (var. *bājā* BKT)  
1. musical instrument 2. drum 3. set of  
musical instruments -**kvacāya kigu** 1. (for a  
drumming piece) to be thoroughly completed  
2. *pastā* drumming piece -**khalah**, n. (<sup>o</sup>laka-,  
-gū) group of drummers

बापुजा **bāpūjā**, n. (-gū) procession to all Bud-  
dhist courtyards (*bāhā*) accompanied by  
music

बाम् **bām**, n. (-gaḥ) (var. *bāyā*) left hand drum  
of *tablā* pair

बारादाय्गु **bārādāygu**, n. (-gū) a *nāykhī* piece  
played by butchers while returning from a  
*pūjā* (BKT)

बारेखिं **bārekhī**, n. (-gū) a *nāykhī* piece played  
by butchers while leading the procession  
of the Dipākara Buddha during *pañcadān*  
*caḥray*

**बारह** *bārha*, n. (-*pu*) a *mvālī* piece played by Jugi at the Taleju temple (BKT) -**māse**, aj. (var. *barahmāsī* BKT) occurring all the year round; omni-seasonal -**māseme**, n. (-*pu*) song which may be sung all year round -**lay**, n. (°*lasa-*, -*gū*) tune which may be sung all the year round

**बावने** *bāvane* cf. *bahidyah svaḥvane*

**बासुरि** *bāsuri*, n. (-*pu*) (var. *bāsuri* BKT) transverse flute played ensemble by farmers

**बाहापूजा** *bāhāpūjā*, n. (-*gū*) 1. (family) ritual of worship at monasteries on *aṣṭamī* or full-moon day 2. procession with *gūlābājā* playing invocations at all the *bāhā* of a locality

**बाँसुरि** *bāṅsuri*, cf. *bāsuril*

**बिचतं** *bicatā*, n. (°*tana-*, -*pu*) blade used by drum makers to cut leather

**बिहाग** *bihāga*, n. (-*pu*) a *rāga* played or sung at night

**बुत्ता** *buttā*, n. (-*gū*) (var. *bvutāḥ* BKT) variant of a drumming pattern

**बुलुसः** *bulusaḥ*, n. (°*sala-*, -*saḥ*) low-pitched sound

**बेक्व** *bekvaḥ*, aj. bent, crooked -**mvālī**, n. (-*pu*) type of shawm with a curved, conical bore and nine finger-holes (cf. *pūjā mvālī* BKT)

**बेताः** *betāḥ*, 1. n. anim. chaotic spirit associated with Bhairava as well as Nāsaḥdyah 2. aj. out of tune; out of rhythm

**बेतालि** *betāli*, n. (-*gaḥ*, -*pu*) white turban-cloth worn by music apprentices and *gurus* during *pirānepūjā* (BKT)

**बेना** *benā*, n. (-*bālā*) blade used by drum-makers

**बेला** *belā*, n. (-*gaḥ*) violin played ensemble by farmers and potters

**ब्याँचुलि** *byāṅculi*, n. (-*pu*) a *rāga* played at dawn -**me**, n. (-*pu*) early morning song in *rāga byāṅculi* -**lay**, n. (°*lasa-*, -*gū*) tune of *byāṅculi*

**ब्रह्मताल** *brahmatāl*, n. (-*gū*) a *tāla* used in *nav-abājā* (BKT)

**ब्वभो** *bvajhva*, n. (-*kū* 'piece') (cf. *istami*) root of medicinal plant used as a remedy for sore throat of singer

**बोल** *bval*, n. (-*gū*) drumming pattern expressed by drumming syllables (general) -**kāye**, (*kāla*, *kayā*) to follow a *bval* while drumming -**lhāye**, (*lhāta*) to recite a *bval*

## भ BHA

**भजन** *bhajan*, n. (-*gū*) devotional group singing with *tablā* and *arvin* -**me**, n. (-*pu*) hymn of this category -**chē**, n. (-*khā*) house of *bhajan* group

**भमरा** *bhamarā*, n. (-*pu*) type of curved shawm played by Jugi during *gūlābājā* processions (out of use)

**भालुप्याखं** *bhālupyākḥā*, n. (°*khana-*, -*gū*) bear's dance

**भुछ्या** *bhuchyāḥ*, cf. *bhusyāḥ*

**भुजं** *bhujā*, n. (°*jana-*) 1. group of instrumentalists of the butcher or tailor caste leading a funeral procession 2. n. anim. butcher (in relation to funeral rites)

**भुस्याः** *bhusyāḥ*, n. (°*syāla-*, -*pā*) (var. *bhuchyāḥ* BKT) large thin-walled cymbals with round boss

**भुचचा** *bhūcacā*, n. (-*pu*) set of three *cacā* songs, viz.: *garajajina*, *dvibhūja*, *namāmi*. The set is sung at the end of ritual feasts in order to ward off evil spirits when left-overs are being discarded

**भुछ्ये** *bhūchuye*, (*chuta*) to sing a hymn at the beginning of a feast

**भें** *bhē*, onp. 1. drumming syllable (*dhimay* BKT) 2. sl. fuck

**भैल** *bhaila*, n. anim. (var. *bhailaḥ*) Bhairava -**pyākḥā**, n. (°*khana-*, -*gū*) set of mask dances

performed during *sāpāru* by the potters of BKT, showing Bhairava with his attendants Betāḥ, Bhucā, Khicā, Kavācā, Khyāḥ and

several Tantric goddesses including Kumāri, Bārāhi, Mahākālī and Mahālakṣmi  
**भ्वंगा bhvāgā**, n. 1. small mouthed pot for storing beer 2. such a pot used as a drum

## म MA

**मंकाःमे mākāḥme**, n. (-*pu*) group song (syn. *pucaḥme*)  
**मंजुसिरि mājusiri**, n. pr. god of craft and knowledge -**yāme**, n. (-*pu*) hymn for Mājusiri  
**मगःखि magāḥkhī** n. (<sup>°</sup>*khina-*, -*gaḥ*) (var. *mādal*) small two-headed drum  
**मणिगण ग्वारा maṇigaṇa gvārā**, n. (-*gū*) drumming piece of *gūlābājā* (PT)  
**मतिनामे matināme**, n. (-*pu*) love song  
**मसला masalā**, n. (-*tā* “kind”) tuning paste applied on the inner side of a drum head (components: *alapu*, *cikā*, *silāy* = castor seeds, mustard oil, *sāl* tree resin)  
**महाकालीप्याखं mahākālīpyākhā**, n. (<sup>°</sup>*khana-*, -*gū*) (var. *devīpyākhā* BKT) ritual mask dance of BKT and Thimi showing Mahākālī’s victory over three demons (*daiṭya*)  
**मा mā**, n. (-*gū*) main piece of *dhimaybājā* BKT  
**माकःप्याखं mākaḥpyākhā**, n. (<sup>°</sup>*khana-*, -*gū*) stick dance performed during *sāpāru* BKT (lit. monkey dance)  
**माजं mājā**, n. (<sup>°</sup>*jana-*) melody instrument (general) (cf. *bājā* drum)  
**मात्रा mātrā**, n. (-*gū*) time measurement (in *sāstriya saṅgīt* each *tāla* has a certain number of *mātrās*)  
**मादल mādal**, n. (-*gaḥ*) cf. *magāḥkhī*  
**मार्ग mārga**, n. (for dancer) path from *prakvaṇa* to *dvikvaṇa* positions on stage

**मालसिरिमālasiri**, n. (-*pu*) (var. *mārsi*) *rāga* for *dasāi* songs (fam. *mvahanime*) -**lay**, n. (<sup>°</sup>*lasa-*, -*gū*) song in *rāga mālasiri*  
**महाकाः māhākāḥ**, n. (<sup>°</sup>*kāla-*, -*gū*) (var. *mākāḥ*) left-hand-side of a double-headed drum (In BKT the term *haimā* is used instead; only the left-hand drum of the *nagarā* pair is called *mākāḥ*)  
**मिचुलाये miculāye**, (*lāta*) to overlap in rhythm or metre  
**मिजंसः mijāsaḥ**, n. (<sup>°</sup>*sala-*, -*saḥ*) male voice  
**मिसासः misāsaḥ**, n. (<sup>°</sup>*sala-*, -*saḥ*) female voice  
**मीर mīr**, n. (-*gū*) pitch of a string -**sāle**, to alter the pitch by tightening the string  
**मुद्रा mudrā**, n. manual signs in ritual, iconography and dance, expressing various meanings and/or magical power  
**मुमे mūme**, n. (-*pu*) last hymn of *bhajan* (lit. main song) (syn. *ārati*)  
**मे me**, n. (-*pu*) 1. song 2. reed of harmonium (cf. *rid*)  
**म्वहनि mvahani**, n. (-*gū*) (var. *mvahni*) *dasāi* festival -**me**, n. (-*pu*) *dasāi* song (syn. *mārsi*, *mālasiri*) -**lay**, n. (<sup>°</sup>*lasa-*, -*gū*) mode or tune of *dasāi* song  
**म्वाली mvālī**, n. (-*pu*) (var. *maḥālī*, *muhālī*, shawms played by Jugi tailor musicians (cf. *gujarāti-*, *nvamat*, *pūjā-*, *bhamarā*, *bhveka-*, *rasan*)  
**म्वयखाप्याखं mhaykhāpyākhā**, n. (<sup>°</sup>*khana-*, -*gū*) (var. *mhvayakhāpyākhā* BKT) peacock dance

## य YA

यचुपीचा **yacupīcā**, cf. *yecupī*

यंला **yālā**, n. eleventh month of Newar calendar  
-**me**, n. (-*pu*) song sung before *mvahani*

याकः **yākaḥ**, (°*kala-*) 1. n. solo 2. aj. alone -**me**,  
n. (-*pu*) (for song) solo -**bājā**, n. (°*jana-*, -*gū*)  
(for instrument) solo

यकरा **yekahrā**, n. (-*gaḥ*) 1. single-reed har-  
monium (sound of) 2. single-stringed instru-  
ment (sound of) 3. aj. one-sided (person)

यचुपी **yecupī**, n. (°*pila-*, -*cāḥ* “circle” etc.) (var.  
*yacupīcā*) lip disc of a shawm

यन्याःप्याखं **yēyāḥpyākhā**, n. (°*khana-*, -*gū*) sea-  
sonal dramas staged at cross roads during  
*yēyāḥ punhi* (Indra *jātrā*)

## र RA

राग **rāga**, n. (-*gū*) 1. (var. *rāg*) melody model  
in *śāstriya saṅgīt* 2. free-rhythmic introduc-  
tion to *tātāli* (BKT *navabājā*) 3. free-rhyth-  
mic vocal introduction to a *dāphā* song, usu-  
ally enriched by a few *lālākhī* strokes -**kāye**,  
(*kāla, kayā*) 1. (for main *dāphā* singer) to sing  
an introduction 2. (for *lālākhī* drummer) to  
apply a few accompanying strokes -**thva-**  
**kegu**, n. (-*gū*) *lālākhī* strokes to accompany  
the vocal introduction to a *dāphā* song

राधाकृष्णप्याखं **rādhākṛṣṇapyākhā**, n. (°*khana-*,  
-*gū*) dance of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, performed

by four Jyāpu boys dressed up as two pairs  
of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa during *sāpāru* in BKT  
रामदरि **rāmadari**, n. (-*pu*) a *rāga*

रासभजन **rāsbhajan**, n. (-*pu*) devotional  
group-singing with *tablā* and harmonium

रासमे **rāsme**, n. (-*pu*) particular song or hymn

रिखा **rikhā**, n. (-*gū*) a *tāla* (BKT *navabājā*)

रितु **ritu**, n. season of a year -**me**, n. (-*pu*) sea-  
sonal song -**lay**, n. (°*lasa-*, -*gū*) seasonal tune  
or mode

रिद **rid**, n. (-*pu*) harmonium reed (fam. *me*)

रुपकः **rupakaḥ**, n. (-*gū*) short drama

## ल LA

लंच्व **lācva**, n. (-*gu*) (var. *lācva* BKT) *dhā* drum-  
ming piece for processions (BKT *dhābājā*)

लंता **lātā**, n. (-*gū*) *gūlābājā tāla* (BKT)

लगसिख **lagasikha**, n. (-*gū*) a *tāla* of *dāphā*  
(BKT)

लपि **lapi**, n. (-*pi*) stiletto used by drum makers  
(cf. *ucatā*)

लय **lay**, n. (°*lasa-*, -*gū*) 1. tempo (in music)  
2. tune

लयताप्याखं **laytāpyākhā**, n. (°*khana-*, -*gū*)  
1. joyous dance 2. comic play

लयतामे **laytāme**, n. (-*pu*) joyous song

लवः **lavaḥ**, n. (-*gū*) second part of *gvārā*

लसकुसमे **laskusme**, n. (-*pu*) song of welcome

लस्तामे **lastāme**, n. (-*pu*) joyous song

लाखे **lākhe**, n. anim. man-eating ogre -**pyākhā**,  
n. (°*khana-*, -*gū*) demon dance accompa-  
nied by *lākhebājā* (cf. *daityapyākhā*) -**bājā**,  
n. (-*gaḥ*) *pachimā* used for *lākhepyākhā*  
accompaniment

लानाकाये **lānākāye**, (*kāla, kayā*) to take up (a  
song, tune, rhythm)

लापाप्याखं **lāpāpyākhā**, n. (°*khana-*, -*gū*) butter-  
fly dance

लापाथाये **lāpāthāye**, (*thāta*) to clap in rhythm

लाये **lāye**, (*lāta*) to take up (a tune, mode, song, etc); to memorize  
 लालाखिं **lālākhī**, n. (*°khina-*, *-gaḥ*) (var. *khī*) double-headed drum with black tuning paste (*khau*) on both heads; used for accompaniment of *dāphā* songs and dances  
 लाहाजुकेगु **lāhājukegu**, n. (*-gū*) *lālākhī* drumming exercise BKT  
 लि **li**, onp. drumming syllable (*lālākhī*)  
 लिकारा **likārāḥ**, n. (*-gū*) a *tamvaḥ* piece played by tailors returning from a *pūjā*  
 लिसः **lisah**, n. (*°sala-*, *-gū*) 1. answer, reply 2. type of drumming (like an echo)  
 लु **lu**, n. (*-gū*) (var. *lū*) scenery, view 2. scene of a drama  
 लुचु **lucu**, n. quick step in dance -**palāḥ**, n. (*°lākha-*, *-r*) skipping  
 लुसिप्याखं **lusipyākhā**, n. (*°khana-*, *-gū*) stick dance using pestles (BKT *sāpāru*)  
 लू **lū**, cf. lu

ल्यासेल्याम्हप्याखं **lyāselyāmhapyākhā**, n. (*°khana-*, *-gū*) lover's duet dance  
 ल्यासेल्याम्हमे **lyāselyāmhame**, n. (*-pu*) love song  
 ल्वक **lvaka**, n. anim. people (var. *lvahka*)  
 -**pyākhā**, n. (*°khana-*, *-gū*) folk dance  
 -**bākhā**, n. (*°khana-*, *-pu*) folk tale -**lay**, n. (*°lasa-*, *-gū*) folk tune  
 ल्वकब्बकथाये **lvakabvakathāye**, (for music students or drunk players) to create a musical chaos by playing irregularly or missing the correct tempo BKT  
 ल्वकब्बकवाने **lvakabvakavāne**, id.  
 ल्वम **lvama**, n. (*-pu*) (for dancer) passage to enter stage  
 ल्वहं **lvahā**, n. (*°hāta-*, *-gaḥ*) stone (used by drum-makers as tuning-hammer)  
 ल्हाक **lhāka**, n. anim. (var. *-mha*) 1. composer (of song, poem) 2. speaker 3. prayer  
 ल्हुये **lhuye**, to dance (BKT) **pyākhā** -, id.

## व VA

विजय **vijaya**, n. (*-pu*) a *rāga* (PT)  
 विभास **vibhāsa**, n. (*-pu*) id.

विल्वम **vilvama**, n. (*-pu*) (for dancer) passage to leave stage  
 विश्राम **viśrāma**, n. (*-ka*) (for drama etc.) interval

## श ŚA

श्री कृष्ण ग्वारा **śrī kṛṣṇa gvarāḥ**, n. (*-gū*) auspicious drumming piece of BKT *gūlābājā*

श्री भगवान ग्वारा **śrī bhagavān gvārā**, n. (*-gū*) drumming piece of PT *gūlābājā*

## स SA

सगिनि ग्वारा **sāgini gvārā**, n. (*-gū*) drumming piece of PT *gūlābājā*  
 सदेमे **sādeme**, n. (*-pu*) ballad describing the plight of a newly married Newar woman whose husband went to Tibet as a trader,

leaving her defenceless against the cunning schemes of his so-called friend  
 संय्चलं **sāycaḷā**, n. (*-gū*) a *tāla* (BKT *navabājā*)  
 संय् **sāy**, n. anim. Tibetan -**pyākhā**, n. (*°khana-*, *-gū*) Tibetan dance -**saminīpyākhā**, n. (*°khana-*, *-gū*) Tibetan lovers' duet dance

- सतिसः satisāḥ**, n. (-*pu*) kind of tree used for drums and shawms
- सन्यबाजा sanyabājā**, n. (°*jana*-, -*gū*) ritual music played by Jugi twice a day at shrines
- सभुजं sabhujā**, n. (°*jana*-) (var. -*bva*) marriage feast in which couple eats from the same dish -**puye**, (*pula*) (for Jugi) to play an auspicious tune for such an occasion
- सम sam**, n. (-*gū*) beginning of a *tāla* cycle (in *śāstriya saṅgī*)
- समिनीप्याखं saminiṅpyākḥā**, n. (°*khana*-, -*gū*) Tibetan dance (cf. *sāy*-)
- सर्वेश्वरग्वार sarveśvar gvarā**, n. (-*gū*) drumming piece of PT *gūlābājā*
- सल sala**, n. anim. (var. *salācā* BKT) horse -**pyākḥā** n. (°*khana*-, -*gū*) horse dance
- ससुद्धः sasudyah**, n. (°*deva*-) Sarasvatī, goddess of learning, music, and weaving
- सः saḥ**, n. (*sala*-, -*saḥ*) sound, voice -**cī**, n. (°*cina*-, -*gū*) musical notation (syn. *thāsā*)
- सांज sāj**, n. brass staple of a shawm
- सातपुये sātapuye**, (*pula*) (for Jugi) to play an auspicious shawm piece
- सातमां sātamaṅ**, n. (-*gū*) a *tāla* (PT *gūlābājā*)
- सापारु sāpāru**, n. (-*gū*) the *gāi-jātrā* festival -**pyākḥā**, n. (°*khana*-, -*gū*) stick dance performed during *sāpāru* (BKT)
- सामाज्या sāmājyā**, n. (-*gū*) rice harvest -**me**, n. (-*pu*) song sung during rice harvest -**lay**, n. (°*lasa*-, -*gū*) id.
- सारंग sārāga**, n. (-*pu*) a *rāga*
- सारंगि sārāgi**, n. (-*gaḥ*) four-stringed fiddle of the *gāyā* bards
- सालुसः sālusah**, n. (°*sala*-, -*saḥ*) soft voice
- सिद्ध्याः sichyāḥ**, n. (°*chyāla*-, -*pā*) (var. *kāy*, *chusyāḥ*) flat, thin-walled cymbals
- सिजाः sijāḥ**, n. (-*pu*) graceful ending of a *dāphā* song after the drums have stopped (syn. *kinārā*)
- सितलामे sitalāme**, n. (-*pu*) (var. *sitalamājume*) song of suffering, first sung when children suffering from smallpox were exiled from the Kathmandu Valley
- सितार sitār**, n. (-*gaḥ*) North Indian long-necked lute
- सिधय्केगु चःल्हाय्गु sidhaykegu dyaḥlhāygu**, n. (-*gū*) last section of *dyaḥlhāygu*, played by BKT *dhimay* groups while passing a god during a procession
- सिनाज्या sinājyā**, n. (-*gū*) paddy transplanting -**me**, n. (-*pu*) paddy transplanting song -**lay**, n. (°*lasa*-, -*gū*) id.
- सिलुमे silume**, n. (-*pu*) sentimental ballad sung during *gūpuni*, describing a young couple's ill-fated journey to *Silu*
- सीबाजा sībājā**, n. (°*jana*-, -*gū*) *nāykhī* drumming piece for funeral processions; its drumming patterns changing whilst passing sacred stones at streetcrossings (when played out of context, the music is said to cause death and disease)
- सु su**, n. straw -**cāḥ**, n. (°*cala*-, -*cāḥ*) (var. *pecā* BKT) straw ring on which kettledrums are placed for support -**nau**, n. (°*nali*-, -*phuti*, “drop”) straw ashes (for making *khau* for drums)
- सुर sur**, n. (-*gū*) (var. *sūr*) tone (cf. *svara*)
- स्वगंमाली svagāmālī**, n. (-*gū*) auspicious *tamvaḥ* piece played by Jugi during marriage, when bride and groom place *tikā* on each other's forehead BKT)
- स्वचाः svacāḥ**, 1. aj. (playing) three times 2. n. (-*gū*) *navabājā* pieces played in three sets, in alternation with pairs of *dāphā* songs (BKT)
- स्वनं svanā**, n. (var. *svanā* KTM) 1. ritual placing of sacred objects 2. consecrated area in which ritual objects are placed -**thāḥvanebale**, n. (-*gū*) *pastāḥ* piece played by oil-pressers on arrival at *dalāchē* (BKT) -**pujā**, n. (-*gū*) a *pūjā* during which symbolically decorated earthenware pots are ritually arranged, accompanied by *cacā* songs



**स्वयनगुमे svaynagume**, n. (-*pu*) (var. *svayna-guyāme*) sentimental ballad about a tragic love triangle

**स्वर svar**, n. (-*gu*) sound (cf. *sur*)

**स्वेतकालीप्याखं svetakālīpyākhā** n. (<sup>o</sup>*khana*-, -*gū*) ritual mask dance of KTM

## ह HA

**ह ha**, n. (-*ka*) signal to be shouted or sung to by leading drummer to indicate entry to other players (cf. *caca*, *caha*)

**हैमा haimā**, n. 1. terrifying and destructive aspect of Nāsaḥḍyaḥ, receiving blood sacrifice during a musical apprenticeship (only at BKT) 2. low-pitched drum head of a double-headed drum BKT **-द्याह -dyah**, id. 1. BKT **-पवाह -pvaḥ**, (<sup>o</sup>*pvāla*-, -*pvāḥ*) hole in wall as a passageway for Haimādyah

**हनेपूजा hanepūjā**, n. (-*gū*) cf. *hānepūjā*

**हनुमानप्याखं hanumānpyākhā**, n. (<sup>o</sup>*khana*-, -*gū*) Hanumān dance

**हरसिल harasila**, n. (-*pu*) *cacā* song sung in conjunction with *nakīkhāke* (PT)

**हानेपूजा hānepūjā**, n. (-*gū*) worship of Nāsaḥḍyaḥ during music apprenticeship, introducing the complete set of musical instruments in the teaching sessions (var. *hanepūjā* KTM)

**हामा hāmā**, n. anim. leader of a music group (cf. *nāyaḥ*)

**हारबिन hārbīn**, n. (-*gaḥ*) (var. *arvin* BKT) Indian harmonium used for *bhajan* accompaniment and *śāstriya saṅgīt*

**हुले hule**, to dance (fam. **pyākhā**- KTM)

**व्हलिमे hvalime**, n. (-*pu*) song sung during *hvali* festival (cf. *phāgume*)

**व्हलिलय् hvalilay**, n. (<sup>o</sup>*lasa*-, -*gū*) id.



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## Documentary Films and Audio Examples

The following three documentary films by Gert-Matthias Wegner show Newar music, dances, and rituals of Bhaktapur during the 1980s, the documentaries can be accessed via heidICON:

1. *Navabājā von Bhaktapur* (Navabājā of Bhaktapur), 1985, 35', UMATIC Lowband  
Online resource: <https://doi.org/10.11588/heidicon/23736359>
2. *Endzeitmusik* (Music for the End of Time), 1987, 28', UMATIC Lowband  
Online resource: <https://doi.org/10.11588/heidicon/23736361>
3. *Totentanz von Bhaktapur* (Dance for the Dead of Bhaktapur), 1989, 20', UMATIC Highband  
Online resource: <https://doi.org/10.11588/heidicon/23736362>

The original video films were produced in collaboration with Worldview Foundation Nepal (WIF), funded by German Research Council (DFG) and shot on location in Bhaktapur. The English subtitles were inserted with the technical assistance of Ranav Adhikari.

In 2001 I recorded and produced the CD 'Bhaktapur *Dhimaybājā* and *Navabājā*' with the 'Master-drummers of Nepal'. Production costs were sponsored by 'EcoHimal'.

Online resource: <https://doi.org/10.11588/heidicon/23736345>

- |  |        |
|--|--------|
| 1. <i>dyah̄lhāygu, cva, gu</i> for <i>dhā̄</i> (soloist: Hari Govinda Ranjitkar)                                 | 2'34"  |
| 2. <i>dyah̄lhāygu, cva, gu</i> for <i>kvatāḥ</i> (soloist: Hari Govinda Ranjitkar)                               | 1'53"  |
| 3. <i>tatali</i> for <i>dhācā</i> (soloist: Bishnu Bahadur Manandhar)  | 6'25"  |
| 4. <i>calti</i> for <i>dhimaycā</i> (soloist: Krishna Gopal Lachhimasyu)   | 4'10"  |
| 5. <i>cvakh</i> for <i>nāykīcā</i> (soloist: Hari Govinda Ranjitkar)   | 4'09"  |
| 6. <i>dhamāk</i> for <i>pachimā</i> (soloist: Hari Govinda Ranjitkar)  | 4'04"  |
| 7. <i>dehrā</i> for <i>dhalak</i> (soloist: Buddhalal Manandhar)   | 4'31"  |
| 8. <i>cvakh</i> for <i>kvakīcā</i> (soloist: Hari Govinda Ranjitkar)   | 4'22"  |
| 9. <i>partāl</i> for <i>nagarā</i> (soloist: Hari Govinda Ranjitkar)   | 4'45"  |
| 10. <i>calti</i> for <i>nagarā</i> and <i>pachimā</i> (soloists: Hari Govinda Ranjitkar and Buddhalal Manandhar) | 8'39"  |
| 11. <i>mā</i> for <i>dhimaybājā</i> (lead drummer: Gert-Matthias Wegner)   | 12'08" |
| 12. <i>dyah̄lhāygu</i> for <i>dhimaybājā</i> (lead drummer: Raju Hyaumikha)                                      | 1'20"  |



This groundbreaking publication offers a unique resource of information about one of the most glorious and diverse musical cultures of the Himalayas. The numerous drum traditions of Bhaktapur in the Kathmandu Valley are a vibrant aspect of traditional Newar culture that saw its heyday between the thirteenth and eighteenth centuries. The three Malla kingdoms of Bhaktapur, Lalitpur and Kathmandu competed in art, architecture, music, dance and opulent town rituals celebrating the presence of the gods. Music served as a portal between the human world and the realm of the gods. This study documents the role and repertoires of the different percussion genres in a transcribed and commented form for practical use and as a teaching aid. It also includes a dictionary of Newari terms related to music. As it focuses on the musical life of Bhaktapur during the decade starting from 1983, it could serve as a point of reference for comparison with the present situation. This publication is an outstanding contribution to the preservation of Newar culture.



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