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Ethnic Boundaries and Religious History

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アジア・アフリカ言語文化研究 38 別刷  
1989

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### Introduction\*

In his most intriguing eighteenth century narrative, the catholic priest Giuseppe da Rovato describes the Nepal Valley<sup>1)</sup> at the time of the Gorkha conquest. Of particular interest are his remarks on the Bare, now a high Newar Buddhist caste in two divisions, Vajrācārya and Śākya:

The religion of Nepal is of two kinds; the more ancient is professed by many people who call themselves Baryesu: they shave all the hair from their heads; their dress is of coarse red wollen cloth, and they wear a cap of the same; they are considered as people of the religious order; and their religion prohibits them from marrying, as it is with the lamas from Tibet, from which their religion originally was brought; but in Nepal they do not observe this rule, except at their discretion; they have large monasteries, in which every one has a separate apartment (Rovato 1801: 309, with emphasis added).

A few years later, the visiting British colonel Kirkpatrick recorded observations on the same group:

With respect to the Bhanras, they have already been mentioned as being a sort of separatists from the Newars; they are supposed to amount to about five thousand; they shave their heads like the Bhootias [sic] and observe many of the religious rites, as well as civil customs, of these idolators, in a dialect of whose language they also supposed to preserve their sacred writings (Kirkpatrick 1969 ed. 183-4).

In 1928, Percival Landon writes about the same group near Paśupati in the

\* The author would like to thank Robin Jared Lewis, Richard English, and Theodore Riccardi, Jr. for their valuable criticisms of this manuscript. Special gratitude also goes to Lozang Jampal for collaborating in the translations of several Tibetan texts that gave credence, then encouragement for advancing this line of inquiry. I must also thank Pratyek Man Tulādhār, Buddha Jiv Tulādhār, and Tej Ratna Tulādhār, Lhasa *sāyis* all, for their assistance. Finally, I acknowledge the help of the Social Science Research Council for support in my presenting an early version of this paper at the South Asia Conference, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

1) Unless otherwise indicated, "Nepal" in this essay refers to the *Nepā* of the pre-modern period: the Kathmandu Valley. The term "Bhotiya" (also spelled by other authors as "Bhootia") is used in broad ethnographic and linguistic terms.

following terms:

The priests of this Ganesh temple [at Deopatan] are Banhras. Kali is not found, but it is remarkable that the Banhras are present at the bloody sacrifices to her at Devighat near Nayakot. The Banhras conducted the services. They wore red robes and their heads were clean shaven (Landon, 1928: Vol II, 216, with emphasis added).

One obvious interpretation of these accounts is that until recently Newar Buddhist priests wore robes and caps much like those worn by Tibetan lamas. The evidence from these and other British observers (e.g. Oldfield 1880, II: 141), whose misunderstandings in certain passages are substantial, is not, of course, conclusive. But new evidence from Tibetan sources and from the modern Newar Buddhist community of Kathmandu does support their impressions and suggests that the Tibetan presence in the Kathmandu Valley was, indeed, particularly influential in the Malla era. In support of this conjecture, this paper discusses points of cultural diffusion and convergence between Tibet and Nepal, indicates a hypothetical model of this frontier to describe the patterns and processes of regional ethnohistory, and proposes several problems anew that confront scholarship on the history of Newar Buddhism.<sup>2)</sup> After describing the situation in the anthropological present, this essay proceeds chronologically from the ancient period to touch on important accounts and recurring themes in Tibeto-Nepalese history.<sup>3)</sup>

A final introductory remark on the total "religious field" must be inserted to frame this study properly: onward from the earliest days of Nepal's recorded history (the Licchavi period (400-900 CE)), both Brahmanical and other "Hindu" traditions existed alongside Buddhist traditions. Local kings claimed obedience to the *Dharmaśāstras*, ruled a society organized by castes, and supported a wide variety of Indic religious groups. This essay examines the Buddhist side(s) of this religious field, referring to the whole only at key junctures. The full history of this marvelous "cultural oasis", a religious microcosm of pre-Muslim Northeast India, must await further research.

2) My scholarly methodology is derived from historical anthropology, a field of humanistic study in which "the student of historical traditions has a triple role to play: recorder, historian, and sociologist. He records a people's traditions, assesses their historical validity, and gives them a time notation...and finally makes a sociological interpretation of them (Evans-Pritchard 1961: 7)." This methodology is especially called for in the nascent field of Himalayan Studies and here I concur with Michael Oppitz that "...the residues of the present can be compounded to complete images of the past. Discoveries made in this way serve to explain the historical development of a single case just as much as they increase the possibilities for general sociological understanding (Oppitz 1974: 242)."

3) In another article (Lewis and Jamsal: 1988), I have collaborated with Lozang Jamsal to produce a translation of three new Tibetan sources dealing with the Kathmandu Valley from 1498 to 1750.

## I. The Contemporary Situation

At present there are over twenty-five active Tibetan Buddhist monasteries (*gompas*) in the Kathmandu Valley inhabited by approximately four hundred lamas. According to a recent study that surveyed the eight largest institutions, over half (56%) of the lamas are refugees, with the remainder divided among the other Himalayan ethnic groups: Sherpa 17%; Nyenshang-pa (Manāngi) 14%; Newar 7%; others 5% (Gombo 1985: 218). This refugee presence dates from the Chinese assuming direct rule over central Tibet in 1951 and the subsequent settlement of refugees after 1959 in the Kathmandu Valley. Communities at Jawalakhel outside Patan, around Baudha and to the south of Svayambhū, as well as the prosperous Tibetan middle class living in the Valley's suburbs (ca. 30% of all local refugees), have supported the lama monasteries generously.<sup>4)</sup> As a result, most *gompas* are well-maintained and retain a close approximation of traditional Tibetan culture.<sup>5)</sup> Lamas now serve as *gurus*, priests, and healers for the refugee community, and young men continue to join the order. All of the major Tibetan schools—Gelugpa, Kargyupa, Sakyapa, and Nyingmapa—are represented, with the Gelugpa lineages controlling half of the monasteries. In recent years, some high lama incarnations in the greater Tibetan world have been identified in the Valley and monastic building has boomed.

It is not only the refugees who support these lamas, however. Today, several *gompas* are oriented towards Westerners and linked to what are now global Buddhist organizations. The wealth that foreign devotees contribute to these institutions is considerable, a factor that figures prominently in the modern resurgence of Tibetan Buddhism in the Kathmandu Valley.

Newar Buddhists with former trading connections to Tibet are another group that has long patronized Tibetan lamas.<sup>6)</sup> Because kinship ties and socio-religious organizations, the *guthis*, are so pervasive in their community, Newar connections with the living Tibetan traditions extend to entire castes, especially the *Urāy* of Kathmandu, the *Dhākhwā* of Patan, and the *Bare* found throughout the Valley. Though their numbers are small in comparison to Newar society overall, these groups constitute a significant portion of the prosperous commercial class in the Valley. Khacara Newars, the children of Newar traders who married Tibetan

4) According to Gombo, over 3,100 Tibetan refugees now reside in the Valley, 2,300 (70%) in planned settlements, another 900 (30%) in private residences. At present, about one half of the lamas are under twenty years of age (Gombo 1985).

5) Assisted by early aid programs, the Valley's refugee community organized itself around the carpet weaving industry. Their rapid and very effective adaptation to small-scale cottage industries coincided with the tourist boom in Nepal and most Tibetans involved have prospered. Here is one clear success story of planned development in Nepal (Gombo 1985).

6) Lhasa traders have been the greatest patrons of Newar Buddhist traditions and especially prominent in sponsoring the lavish festivals—*Samyak* and *Pañca Dāna*—that still redistribute wealth to the Newar Buddhist *samgha*.

wives while living in Tibet, are yet another refugee group that has been supportive of modern Tibetan Buddhism in the Kathmandu Valley.

Individuals from each of these communities still make donations to local *gompas*, take teachings from Tibetan *gurus*, and call lamas to their homes to perform rituals. Some Newars and Khacaras have even taken ordinations and become lamas, a recurring fact that is most significant in the history of Tibetan-Newar relations.

What does this recent revival represent? It would be a mistake to regard this situation as unique to the modern period: considerable evidence now supports the view that it represents the partial *restoration* of a former situation in which lamas were leading figures in the Buddhist life of the Kathmandu Valley. Oldfield's interpretation of the situation in 1855 points in this direction:

Newars have never formally renounced the spiritual authority of the Thibetan [sic] lamas and they still look with reverence to Lhasa as the headquarters of Buddhist orthodoxy and learning (1880, II: 151).

Modern analyses of Newar Buddhism have generally not taken into full account the long-standing connections with Tibet and therefore have ignored the full "religious field" (Tambiah 1970) present in the Kathmandu Valley. A deeper understanding of this relationship and of ethnohistorical processes on the Himalayan frontier should enable us to make sense of some puzzling features that characterize the Newar Buddhist tradition. First, a survey on what is known from the historical records.

## II. Ancient Nepal and Tibet: 500–1000 CE

Himalayan historiography, a field still in its infancy, is troubled by a scarcity of evidence and a tendency to project historical patterns upon questionable data. Much information from Tibet and Nepal comes from isolated sources that have not yet been confirmed independently. For example, Tibetan chronicles assert that the great Tibetan king Srongtsengampo married a Nepalese princess, Bhrikuti.<sup>7)</sup> To believe in the accuracy of this account is to ignore the fact that no known Licchavi inscription or later Nepalese chronicle mentions the deed. This problem of single source citation exists for many of the intriguing assertions about Nepal found in the Tibetan literature.<sup>8)</sup>

7) In a recent article, MacDonald (1984) joins Tucci (1962) and Slusser (1982: 33) in doubting the historicity of this event. In agreement with Tucci's dating and assessments, I would interpret this as a later tradition composed to underline Tibetan relationships with its two important neighboring countries around 1200 CE.

8) But a lack of independent confirmation is just that and does not necessarily falsify the single source's assertions. For example, this is true of one of the greatest Newar artisans, Arniko, mentioned below. There is no doubt whatsoever about Arniko's existence from the Chinese

In the same manner, no known Tibetan source confirms the *Gopālarājavanśāvali*'s assertion that Rudradeva, a Nepalese king, expelled a Tibetan *rāja* who ruled the Valley in the eighth century (Petech 1958: 29).<sup>9)</sup> To date, the dearth of outside sources of confirmation makes it impossible to accept these records without hesitation. Studies on Malla era literature in both Newari and Tibetan will advance our understanding and clarify many issues.

As for the epigraphic evidence, there is no certain Licchavi inscription from the Kathmandu Valley that points to Tibetan influence during the ancient period. Although the collected sources remain relatively small in number, this negative evidence cannot be discounted.

Tibetan historical traditions on this era, however, contain many references to Nepalese religious sites, teachers, and artisans. Despite the fact that most of these texts were written in later epochs, it is possible that some reflect accurate records of these early events, especially since the Tibetans did adopt a version of the Chinese dynastic record keeping system by 900 CE (Hoffman 1975: 22). Later Tibetan historians clearly draw upon such records that cite verifiable dates (Vostrikov 1970). A summary of these traditional citations appears elsewhere (Lewis 1989) and need not be repeated here.

Chinese pilgrim accounts and imperial records concerning the Himalayan frontier also add suggestive information regarding Nepal-Tibet relations. Of particular relevance is the T'ang record of the Chinese ambassador Hsuan-ts'e who made three trips to India over the period 643–657 (Lévi 1900: 440–443). In 648, he is noted as having united a combined Tibetan and Nepalese army (supplied by the Licchavi king Narendradeva) and proceeded through the mountains to Kanauj on the north Indian plains. There he revenged previous ill-treatment he had suffered under the emperor Harsa's usurpers (Petech 1984: 24) and returned to China via the same route, with his chief tormentor in tow. Afterwards, the T'ang annals report that Nepal sent a mission bearing gifts to the Chinese emperor (Lévi 1905: I, 162). Such an expedition implies established routes and significant contacts.

Finally, there is the linguistic record. Two linguistic influences seem certain

records, but neither Arniko nor his mission have been remembered in the Kathmandu Valley (Petech 1958: 101). The author of the *Blue Annals*, from which many of the references chronicled here derive, mentions his "...minute examination of the ancient chronicles" and "...many other accounts in which there are no mistakes in [reckoning] the number of years (Roerich 1949: 1086)." Remaining open-minded regarding the Tibetan chronicles, despite their being presented in legendary, hagiographic style, seems to be the proper scholarly attitude, "lest we become the victims of barren criticism," to quote Helmut Hoffman's assessment of this issue (1975: 27).

9) The *vanśāvali* refers to "bhotarāja" and could well refer to the Newar town of Banepa located to the east of the Kathmandu Valley proper. The possibility of this term referring to central Tibet is supported by the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* (Jayaswal 1936: 211–214) and the T'ang Annals that state that a Tibetan king died in 704 when he brought an army to his southern border to chastise rebellious tributary states (Lévi 1905, I: 159; 165).

to have extended from Nepal to Tibet in this early era. Helmut Hoffman has pointed out that the Tibetan pronunciation of Indian palatals as palatal sibilants was borrowed from Nepal and that scribes in central Tibet adopted the Newari script's triangular symbol for "va" [Tib. *va-zur*] for several consonants (Hoffman 1975: 16–17; Roerich 1949: 39).

### III. The Post-Licchavi and Early Malla Period: 1000–1500 CE

To date, Tibetan art and architecture provides the best evidence that the overall direction of cultural influences in this era was from Nepal to Tibet. It is clear that from the earliest days artisans from the Kathmandu Valley—especially metal casters, architects, and painters—travelled to highland cities to decorate monasteries (Tib.: *gompas*) at the behest of Tibetan patrons. This is most evident in the field of painting: the *Bala-ris* school that dominated Tibetan painting until the 15th century literally means "Nepalese drawing" (MacDonald and Stahl 1979: 35). This influence that reached throughout Buddhist Asia (e.g. Whitaker 1963) is best seen in the case of Arniko, a Kathmandu Valley native who travelled via Tibet to Peking, where he became a leading artist of his day.

Tibetan literature also suggests Nepal's early importance in the formation of Buddhist civilization on the highland plateau. From at least 1000 CE onward, Tibetan scholars came to the Kathmandu Valley in search of texts, tantric initiations, linguistic instruction, and as pilgrims. Many *namthars*—sacred biographies of great Tibetan lamas—refer to Nepal as a place where great pundits lived and as an important destination to which Tibetans traveled.

In these early centuries when Nepalese influence was predominant, Tibetans came to the Valley and regarded it as a prominent center of Buddhist tradition. Even though Buddhism in Bihar and Bengal was waning, the great north Indian *viḥāras* such as Nālandā and Vikramaśīla remained until 1200 and, as Tucci has pointed out, smaller *viḥāras* were still to be found in northern India much later, i.e. until at least 1400 (Tucci 1931). Throughout this era, there was clearly a trans-Himalayan Buddhist network plied by traders, monks, artisans, and pilgrims (Beckwith 1977). Indians, highlanders from Tibet, and others centered in between traveled up and down such routes.<sup>10)</sup> In this regional context, the Kathmandu Valley became an important entrepot and its socio-cultural evolution was shaped by those who migrated through from both directions.

By the time of the great Tibetan monks Dharmasvāmin (Roerich 1959) and Rwa Lotsava, renowned teachers from the north came regularly to Nepal where they elicited support among local Buddhists. Cumulatively, the Tibetan accounts and Nepalese colophons suggest that in the pre- and early Malla period, a number

10) In addition to the Valley, two other places in the Himalayas were noted in the Tibetan religious geography: Kulu and Hajo, near Gauhati, in Assam. Tibetans identified the latter site as Kuśinagara and continued to make pilgrimages there until modern times (Waddell 1939).

of important Buddhist *viḥāras* existed in the Valley where Indian, indigenous, and Tibetan-born teachers lived, studied, and practiced (Malla 1982). Such guru-disciple lineage initiations linked India, Tibet, and Nepal. After studying all relevant Nepalese inscriptions and colophons of this era, Luciano Petech has underlined "the existence of fairly close relations between Nepal and the great monasteries of central Tibet during the late thirteenth century (1958: 101)."

For the Tibetans, the Valley must have been an increasingly attractive place to acquire texts and initiations, since they could avoid the dangers that travel further south would entail. Especially perilous was the submontane region where the malarial climate was often deadly to highlanders. After the Muslim invasions of northeast India and the decline of Buddhist Kashmir by 1400, the Valley's importance to Tibetans as a center of Buddhism increased. Mentioned in the Tibetan accounts of Indian saints such as Padmasambhava, Śāntarakṣita, Atiśa, and Ratnarakṣita, the Valley became a popular pilgrimage destination. Newar and Tibetan traditions also refer to certain caves in the Valley that were most suitable as meditation retreats.

The *Blue Annals* contain many references to Nepalese tantric masters from this era, especially during the period from 1000–1300. What emerges from this source and others like it (e.g. Buxton's *History of Buddhism* (Obermiller 1931) and *Taranatha's History of Buddhism in India* (Chattopadhyay 1970)) is the testimony that active exchanges existed between Tibet and Nepal and that many of Tibet's important lineages of Buddhist teaching can be traced to masters residing in the Kathmandu Valley.

This assessment is supported by stories still preserved in the contemporary Newar Buddhist community that may allude to a situation from this era: Tibetan devotees seeking out Newar *vajrācāryas* for initiations. One such example from these traditions, as told to me by several former Lhasa traders, goes as follows:

A lama once came from Tibet to get an initiation of the tantric deity Meka Saṃvara, a bull-headed, multi-armed god usually depicted with his consort. After being told that this initiation was available only in the Kathmandu Valley, he came to Cobhār to find a certain *vajrācārya* who, he was told, was the only man to possess it. The *vajrācārya* refused him outright on hearing his request and so the lama waited there three months and eventually three years. Even then he was still refused. The *vajrācārya* repeated his claim that an initiation to this deity was too difficult since Meka Saṃvara required the greatest level of devotion.

When the lama still pressed him, the *vajrācārya* left. Then the lama asked Gurumā, the *vajrācārya*'s wife, where he had gone and she first said that she didn't know. Finally, she said "Cakunti Bakunti," a series of caves in the Cobhār gorge where people go for meditation. And so the lama set out for there.

As he reached the gorge, the lama heard a voice from the sky that said: "Today your *guru* will come by you—look for him." After that only a herd of deer came by; although the lama looked, he saw only deer. The voice from the sky then resounded: "Your *guru* came by and left. Didn't you see him? Look again along this road."

The lama kept looking. A flock of ducks passed by but the lama saw only ducks. Again the voice: "For a second time he came and you did not recognize him. Keep looking carefully, for this is your last chance."

After some time, a group of young women came by who were dancing and singing. The lama was desperate and perplexed but decided to close his eyes and act: he grabbed one, bowed down and clasped her feet. This was in fact the *vajrācārya* and afterwards he initiated the lama as requested.

#### IV. The Later Malla Era (1500–1769)

By the year 1500, much had changed in the region. The Valley had recovered from the invasions of the 13th and 14th centuries and the great centers of Indian Buddhism to the south were no more. To the north, Tibetan civilization had absorbed and adapted the great compendium of Buddhist tradition that its scholars and kings had so painstakingly collected. Politically, Lhasa had emerged as the capital of a powerful state with a polity organized by competing hierarchies of landowning monastic schools whose heads assumed temporal powers (Carrasco 1959; Goldstein 1971a; Goldstein 1971b). The Sakyapa alliances with the Mongolians who ruled China during the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368) altered the political landscape of Tibet, just as later Gelugpa alliances with them and with the Chinese became an enduring legacy.

Turning to Tibetans and Newars in the Kathmandu Valley, it is possible to sketch only a few emerging images. This is due to the fact that the chief historical sources on the period—the Malla inscriptions and the Tibetan texts referring to the Valley—have hardly been identified, let alone translated or analyzed.

Tibetans in this era use the terms "Balpo" or "Bal-yul" to refer to the Nepal Valley (MacDonald and Stahl 1979: 31; Richardson 1983: 137; Petech 1984: 26). Some texts differentiate them from "Magar," "Nisyang," and "Tamang" ethnic groups, and acknowledge all of these as Buddhist peoples of the southern frontier (Wylie 1970: 35). The Kathmandu Valley was regarded as a prominent part of the Buddhist world, especially the great stupas at Svayambhū (Tib.: *Shin-kun*) and Baudha (Tib.: *Khashor*) (Snellgrove 1957: 99; Ferrari 1958). The considerable number of Tibetan guidebooks show clearly the extent to which highland peoples respected the Valley's religious geography and went on pilgrimage trips there (Wylie 1957; Wylie 1970; MacDonald 1975; MacDonald and Rimpoché 1981; Dowman

1982). This fact of Tibetan life was also noted in the Manchu Annals (Landon 1928, II: 275).

Colophons of Tibetan texts from this era frequently refer to the ruling Nepalese king, suggesting the continuing presence of Newar and Tibetan scribes in the Valley employed as copyists. If Tibetan scholars went outside of Tibet for study, it was almost invariably to Nepal (MacDonald and Stahl 1979: 33). One example of such activity is found in the colophon of the *Vajrayāna-mūlapatti-ṭikā*, a text composed by the Ācārya Mañjuśrīkīrti that mentions a Lotsaba Ratnakīrti, who "went to many Nepalese houses and compared it [the original text] with many old commentaries and made it perfectly correct (Chattopadhyaya 1967: 495)."

Nepal's prosperity in this era and its economic influence on central Tibet are two important—and likely related—themes. Since Malla times, and likely much earlier,<sup>11</sup> Newars have ventured to Tibet as caravan merchants trading as middlemen in salt/grain networks and in luxury goods. The most successful traders set up "trade diasporas" which stationed relatives and/or allies at important stops on the trade routes (Curtin 1984). Newars competed with other ethnic groups on routes across the central Himalayas connecting India with the Tibetan highlands. By 1600, Newars were highly involved in the Tibetan economy: they minted currency, exported musk, entered the woolen cloth dyeing industry, and retailed trade goods across central Tibet, especially luxury goods imported via caravan from India and beyond (Levon 1966; Rhodes 1980). They also supplied Kathmandu with Chinese tea (Sen 1971: 31). Thus, it seems no accident that as trade with central Tibet thrived, so, too, did the influence of Tibetan Buddhism in Kathmandu wax strong.

#### Visit by Gstan-smyon Heruka (1452–1507)

Some of the most intriguing information we have on Newar Tibetan relations in the sixteenth century come from the sacred biography (Tib.: *namthar*) of Gstan-smyon, a "mad saint" who visited the Valley in 1498, 1503, and 1504.<sup>12</sup> This great scholar of the Kargyu school (who composed the *namthar* of Milarepa and other works) is said to have impressed the local Buddhist elite, the "Bharima" (presumably the "Bare" of later parlance), with his tantric powers. Especially important is the fact that Gstan-smyon also initiated local individuals, spent thirteen years in a nearby retreat with his disciples, and also directed the restoration of Svayambhū, an activity that recurs frequently in the record of subsequent Tibetan lamas who visit the Valley. After doing this, he was greeted respectfully by the King of Nepal, his ministers, and the Bare. (A translation of the relevant passages from his *namthar* has been published elsewhere (Lewis and Jamspal 1988).)

11) For example, a Licchavi inscription in Te Bahā, Kathmandu, refers to one Guha Mitra, a "caravan trading leader," who established an image of Surya (Locke 1985: 306).

12) For the Tibetan text, see Chandra 1969; for further information on Gstan-smyon, see G. Smith's introduction to the same volume.

### Gompas in Nepal: Satellites of Central Tibet's "Galactic Polities"

Connections with the major monasteries of the central Tibetan provinces of Gtang and Dbus are recurring themes in the historical record. These monasteries repeatedly commissioned restoration works at the great shrines in the Valley (MacDonald and Stahl 1979: 32) and monks from these places often visited Nepal to supervise the work. Involved with these restorations, Tibetan lamas in effect decided on the sacred art forms that Valley artisans made.

The Valley elite's patronage of Tibetan art in this era also signals this shift in cultural relations, with Tibetan styles clearly the most popular. This was especially true in image casting and in painting (MacDonald and Stahl 1979: 33; Slusser 1982: 72). Finally, one wonders if these "restorations" that are recorded in the *namthars* as purely religious do not, like Marpa's tower, indicate underlying political realities (Wylie 1964). This is a recurring theme in the next two sections.

### Relations with Bhutan

Perhaps the most striking connection between the Valley and the Tibetan world in the later Malla period was with Bhutan. In 1673, after Damchos Pedkar visited the Valley, the Nepalese king, Pratap Malla, granted lamas of the Drukpa sect authority over Svayambhū and Bauddha (Aris 1980: 249) and recognized the religious authority of the Shabdung Namgyal as Dharma Rāja of Bhutan (Aris 1980: 249).<sup>13</sup> The Bhutanese sources cited by Aris assert that the Nepalese king and ministers patronized their Valley *gompas* lavishly and describe Bhutanese lamas traveling to Nepal (Nado 1977: 95; Aris 1980: 240, 249). Bhutanese cults also spread to Nepal in this period (Aris 1980: 78) and both Svayambhū and Paśupati are placed in Drukpa geographic *maṇḍalas* as western sites "to suppress the water element and defend the Tibeto-Bhutanese border (Aris 1980: 32)." Even the early Shah rulers continued to support this alliance (Rose 1977: 69).

These relationships, like so many others, require further study. Newar-Tibetan relations must doubtless be understood with reference to factions in Valley politics and related to the political maneuvering across the greater Tibetan world, i.e. Lhasa nobility and Gelugpa alliances versus nobility supporting non-Gelugpas—especially Kargyu and Drukpa Bhutanese—on the periphery.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, it was

13) The Drukpa are a branch of the Kargyu school that had its original center at Rvalung in Gtang province of central Tibet. Many monks left there when the Fifth Dalai Lama began his persecutions of the Nyingmapa school (Hoffman 1975: 61).

14) In this light it is interesting to note how the Drukpas during this era also established monasteries across the Tibetan frontier in Mustang, Dolpo, Manasarowar, Lahul, and in Ladakh (Hemis) (Hoffman 1975: 61). It may well have been that the Mallas saw the virtues of this alliance in political as well as religious terms. The Bhutanese records note a tribute mission sent by Nepal in this era, a fact that further suggests the existence of political alliances (Aris 1980: 269). Relations with China also must be factored into this analysis (Boulnois 1972).

in this period that the great Fifth Dalai Lama sought to crush militarily the alternative emerging center of socio-religious power in Bhutan. This may have been a cause for consolidation by their opponents and for certain highland groups to migrate across the Himalayan region in this era (Richardson 1957; Stein 1972).

### The Visits of Si-tu Pan-chen (1770–1774)

The most detailed account of the Valley to date comes from the autobiography of Si-tu Pan-chen, one of the great Tibetan scholars of his era (Smith 1968). In 1723, this young monk first visited the Valley with other notables and recorded many observations in his diary. His narrative is often concerned with the religious life found there: he meets the kings of the three cities, conducts *pūjās*, goes on pilgrimages, and consults with the Buddhist and Hindu elite, especially Brahmans, on religious matters. Of special interest is his account of the ceremonies in the Malla courts of the Valley, where kings receive the group with great honor and make generous donations to them, inviting the lamas to preach the Dharma and perform *pūjās* to quell an epidemic.

Also important to our study is the fact that several Newar Buddhists are Si-tu Pan-chen's pupils. In his autobiography, he writes of two local "*gubhas*" (Ratnamuni and Siddheśvara) who become his disciples and receive a variety of teachings: the taking refuges, the *Bodhicitta utpada* ("Generating the Enlightened Mind"), and the oral transmission of the 100 Syllables of Vajrasattva. (To begin the initial practice for last initiation, Si-tu sent these disciples on a three-day retreat to a cave in Nāgārjuna Hill, the mountain defining the Valley's northwest perimeter.) Later, he also gave them an initiation into the meditation upon the goddess Vajravārāhī. One final important point from this account is Si-tu's mentioning the presence of several notable lamas at Svayambhū who were active in preaching and bestowing Mahāmudrā initiations on a large number of devotees. Although it is still impossible to assess the historical importance of this account as yet,<sup>15</sup> it is noteworthy that all of the Buddhist traditions cited remain important, arguably central, in modern Newar Vajrayāna parlance.

### The Kathmandu Valley and Regional Buddhist Networks

Thus, the sources underline the fact that Newar-Tibetan relations of this era must be framed in the regional context, especially with reference to the peoples in the mid-hills, i.e., those now referred to as Tamangs, as well as other ethnic groups that had been converted to Tibetan Buddhism. Lamas from Tibet traveled and preached among these "Tibeto-Burman" peoples who lived on the frontier periphery of Tibetan civilization. For these groups too, the Kathmandu Valley became

15) The secrecy that still shrouds the *vajrācārya*'s bestowal of Vajrayāna initiations makes the scholarly task of investigating initiation lineages very difficult (Lewis 1984: 232–240).

recognized as a major Buddhist center where important shrines, large monasteries, and noted teachers were located. Individuals from these communities likely had trade connections with Kathmandu, although very little is known about Mallaties with the small hill settlements and states that circled the Valley.

The patronage by Tibetanized mid-montane peoples must have helped support Buddhist monasteries and temples in the Valley and created certain alliances with the Valley's urban Buddhist communities (March 1984: 733). For example, modern evidence suggests that Bauddha has been especially supported by Tamangs (Wylie 1970: 34). There are also modern observances linking Newar and Tamang Buddhists that suggest former connections: Tamangs still make yearly pilgrimages to participate with Newars in several Buddhist festivals in the Valley.<sup>16)</sup>

One important place where such multi-ethnic interactions were particularly focused was at Kindol Vihāra, a monastic institution just outside of Kathmandu city and south of Svayambhū. Si-tu Pan-chen stayed there in 1723 and in 1748 where local kings and laymen visited him. Modern sources show that the Tibetan character of Kindol persisted well into this century.<sup>17)</sup>

#### V. The Modern Era (1770–Present) and Further Contemporary Evidence

Since the cultural and social history of 19th and 20th century Nepal is only beginning to emerge as a field of scholarly concern, the changes in Newar-Tibetan relations in this tumultuous era are still not fully discernible. Any analysis of the decline of Newar Buddhism must take into account the modern events that weakened the Tibetan presence in the Valley: the Nepalese wars with Lhasa in 1792–3 and in 1855–6, the breakdown of the Kathmandu-Bhutan alliance, the disfavor shown by the Hindu Ranas to all Bhotiyas, and discrimination against the large Tamang community that was located in areas on the immediate Valley periphery (Hofer

16) One example of this joint participation is the Pāñcāre festival day in spring (Baisākh Purnimā), when Newar Buddhists from the Kathmandu Valley make a short pilgrimage up to Nārgārjun Hill (New: Jama-cho) to worship at the small hilltop stupa. Although they are in decline, *guthis* from Buddhist communities in Kathmandu city still lend support to the pilgrims and underwrite the performance of rituals. During this festival, Buddhists from neighboring mid-hills, Gurungs and Tamangs, as well as Tibetan refugees from the Valley proper also travel to the site to string up prayer flags and make offerings. Tamangs outside the Valley still observe a tradition of pilgrimage to the Valley on this full moon. They visit Bauddha, Bālāju's Śeṣ Nārāyan, and Svayambhū (Fricke 1987).

17) Kindol was rebuilt in the 1930's by Urāy laymen and figures prominently in the autobiographies of leading Newar religious figures and in the religious controversies of the era (Dharmalok 1980). Although it is now only occupied by female Buddhist ascetics, the most notable there remains Dharma Guraju, a Vajrācārya strongly influenced by Tibetan traditions. Over the last forty years, however, Theravādins have sought to use the facilities and take up residence. When Amritānānda built his *vihāra* at Svayambhū, the only Theravādins remaining were women. Although Tamangs still constituted over 60% of those in residence in 1981, the Theravādin influence continues to increase.

1979; cf. Burghart 1984: 108). Over the last two hundred years, the cross-regional Buddhist networks that once connected sites along the entire mid-montane Himalayan region with the Tibetan plateau have been disrupted and realigned. The final culmination, of course, has been the Dalai Lama's exile and the destruction of prominent central Tibetan monasteries, for this represents a radical shift that has transformed the Tibetan politics now lying outside of Chinese-controlled territory.<sup>18)</sup>

In the Kathmandu Valley, the disruption of long-distance trade has likewise undermined the standing of former traders, a prominent Newar Buddhist patron constituency. Thus, many of the recent political and economic changes in the Himalayas have converged to dismantle the constituencies and alignments that until recent times extended Tibetan Buddhist influences across the Himalayan frontier.

There are many traditions surviving in the modern Newar Buddhist community that support the contention that there were significant former connections between Newars and Tibetans in the Kathmandu Valley. First, an extensive array of Tibetan texts are preserved in Kathmandu Valley libraries. Hodgson sent out many Tibetan texts in the nineteenth century and over the last fifteen years, the German Microfilm Project has found the whole Kanjur, Tanjur, and other texts that have filled over 340 microfilm reels (Erhard 1980). Although it is difficult to specify exactly what the relationship is between written texts and the particular Buddhist tradition of a locality, the physical presence of so vast a quantity is noteworthy.

Second is an important ethnographic detail regarding the yearly gathering of the De Ācārya Guthi, a caste association to which all members of Kathmandu City's *vajrācārya* caste belong. During the two days of feasting and ritual performance attended by all *vajrācāryas* in the early spring, it is customary for Newar laymen to serve them hot buttered tea prepared in the Tibetan style.

A third area is folklore bearing on Newar-Tibetan relations and here the traditions speak with different voices. In addition to the Meka Saṃvara story presented above, other oral accounts exist that recount *vajrācārya* superiority over the lamas. Most well-known, perhaps, is the story of Surat Bajra, a Newar *vajrācārya* in the *saṃgha* of Kathmandu City's Ta Chem Bāhā.<sup>19)</sup> The account states that this tantric master showed his magical-ritual superiority over Tibetan

18) Retaining the centrality of the greater Tibetan "monastic network" helps to make sense of the contemporary situation across the region today, with the Dalai Lama now centered on the former Himalayan periphery of central Tibet, in Dharamsala. No scholar has yet defined the center-periphery links in the contemporary "web of Tibetan monasticism" (Miller 1960) in exile. For further discussion regarding such pan-regional categories of analysis in the Himalayas, especially Tambiah's "Galactic Polity" (Tambiah 1977), see Lewis 1989.

19) In his recent study, John Locke suggests that this Surat Bajra may have been a contemporary of Yakṣa Malla. He also notes that until recently many Tibetan pilgrims visited the *bāhā* due to this master's fame in Tibet (Locke 1985: 299).



lamas. As told in a popular version:

Surat Bajra was a Buddhist priest. He went, one time, to Lhasa in Tibet, and one day when he was having tea with a great lama of that city, he silently emptied his cup on the floor. He filled the cup and again threw away the tea. Surprised, the lama asked the reason for his strange behavior.

Stranger still was the explanation of Surat Bajra. He told the lama that his house in Nepal had caught fire and was burning at that moment and so he was extinguishing the fire.

Lest it should hurt his guest's feelings, the lama said nothing but he had misgivings in his mind and he made a note of the day and time. As soon as his guest was gone, the lama dispatched a messenger...to Nepal to find out the truth of Surat Bajra's statement.

Months later the messenger returned to Lhasa and reported to the lama that Surat Bajra's house had actually caught fire at the time noted by him, but thanks to a timely rain, it was saved. The lama hardly believed the report, but he was now filled with jealousy of the knowledge and power of the Nepalese priest.

When...the lama heard that Surat Bajra was preparing to go to his own country, he thought of harming him in some way. He sent word privately to Nepal, saying that Surat Bajra had died on his way home to Lhasa. The lama then ordered that no boatmen should take the Nepalese priest across the Brahmaputra river.

Meanwhile, Surat Bajra took leave of his friends and left Lhasa. When he arrived at the river and found that no one would take him across it, he threw the sheet of cloth with which he wrapped himself on the water. Then, to the amazement of the boatmen, he stood on it and crossed the Brahmaputra.

Frustrated to find Surat Bajra equal to the situation, the lama became very angry, and overtaking the homeward-bound priest, he challenged him to a contest of knowledge. Faced with the determined lama, Surat Bajra asked him what sort of contest he proposed. The lama replied that both of them should change themselves into sparrows and perch upon a stalk of wheat growing on the roadside. The heavier would be declared vanquished. To this Surat Bajra agreed.

At once both men became sparrows and alighted in a wheat field. To his chagrin, the stalk upon which the lama was perched weighed down heavily while the other, upon which perched the Nepalese priest, was not even slightly bent. To show that his bag of sin was not as heavy as that of the lama, Surat Bajra changed himself the next moment into a pigeon. And yet the stalk of wheat did not bend under him.

At this time the lama was angrier than ever and changed himself the next moment into a hawk, the enemy of all pigeons, ...and swooped down murderously upon Surat Bajra.

Thus attacked, the pigeon flew into a cave and regained his human shape. Meanwhile, the lama changed himself into a snake and crawled in.

Finding himself cornered, Surat Bajra invoked the goddess Guhyeśvarī for aid, and she gave him a sword with which he cut the snake to pieces.

After this, the priest took to his journey without further trouble. But on his arrival in Kathmandu, Surat Bajra learnt that he had been rumored dead. At this his family had actually gone through the ceremonies for the dead, [and so] he could not go home. So, to let his family know that he had not died, he took off his shoes and sent them home to his family. Then he went to the temple of Guhyeśvarī and was never seen again (Lall 1968: 55-59).

Other stories suggest the Tibetan origin of Newar cults. The origin account of Mahākāla of Tundikhel in Kathmandu states that the deity's Himalayan abode was in Tibet<sup>20</sup>:

There once dwelt in Mantrasiddhi Mahāvihāra, the present Sabal Bāhā, a *Vajrācārya* named Saswat Bajra. One day he was sitting in the sun after an oil massage and just then a large cloud mass came floating by in the sky, cutting off the sunlight. When Saswat Bajra looked up, he saw that the cloud remained stationary. Then he went out of the *vihara* to the *Aganchāpa*, the present Tundikhel, and meditated with the purpose of bringing down the cloud to him.

He succeeded and went to the place where the cloud had landed. He saw the deity Mahākāla inside the cloud and discovered that he was on his way from Lhasa to Kāśī. Then Saswat Bajra performed a *pūjā* to Mahākāla and chanted the "Pāñca Kapāl Ācārya," a song of his own composition. When this *pūjā* was over, Mahākāla blessed Saswat Bajra, agreed to be present on Saturdays for offerings at this site, then disappeared into the sky.

Yet another common tale also asserts lamaist dominance. Although the historicity of this event is most dubious, the tale is still informative regarding the Newar perception of the indigenous Buddhist priesthood and the standing of the Tibetan monastic elite. As Hodgson reports his *vajrācārya* informant's version:

20) The story of this important deity's temple's origins given here is based upon a contemporary printed version (Bajracarya 1971) and oral recensions.

...it is said that Śankara Ācārya, Śiva Mārgī, having destroyed the worship of Buddha and the scriptures containing his doctrine in Hindustan, came to Nepaul, where he also effected much mischief; and then proceeded to Bhot. There he had a conference with the grand Lama. The Lama, who never bathes, and after natural evacuations does not use topical ablution, disgusted him to that degree, that he commenced reviling the Lama. The Lama replied, "I keep my inside pure, although my outside be impure; while you carefully purify yourself without, but you are filthy within" and at the same time drew out his whole entrails, and showed them to Śankara; and then replaced them again. He then demanded an answer from Śankara. Śankara, by virtue of his yoga, ascended into the heavens; the Lama perceiving the shadow of Śankara's body on the ground, fixed a knife in the place of the shadow; Śankara fell upon the knife, which pierced his throat and killed him instantly. Such is the legend or tale that prevails, and thus we account for the fact that the Buddhāmārgī practice of Bhot is purer, and its scriptures more numerous, than ours (Hodgson 1874: 48).

Evidence of enduring Newar-Tibetan relationships survive in still other domains that can only be mentioned briefly here. All of them certainly merit further inquiry:

+A very popular Newari *dhāraṇī* devoted to the Buddhist deity Tārā, the *Tārāsātarama* published by P. Vajracarya, notes that "the text was written in Tibetan script...by the holy lama Katarinchambu and it is well preserved in the collection of the late Śri Guhya *Vajrācārya* at Ason [sic] Taksha Baha, Kathmandu (1947: 17)."

+Images of the great lamas have been placed along the circumference of the Svayambhū stupa (and now all but covered over) and there are Tibetan inscriptions there (Oldfield 1880, II: 228).

+The recorded involvement of the Sikkimese lamas in the construction of the Mahābaudha temple in Patan (Locke 1985: 100).

+Small Tibetan *gombas* are now found in important Newar *viḥāras* in Kathmandu (Si Gha:) and Patan (Rudravarṇa Mahavihāra (Shakya 1986a: 49)).

+One Śiva Singha Lama is recorded as rennovating a stupa at Takan Bāhā, a Śākya Viḥāra in Kathmandu (Locke 1985: 347).

+“In N.S. 776 [i.e. 1642 CE] a Tibetan monk by the name of Juaron (Gyron) from Tasirumbu' (=Tashilunpo) and one Padmadhvaja built this monastery [Dharma Uttara Mahavihara, in Bhaktapur] in memory of the father of the latter (Locke 1985: 439)."

+Small *bāhā* just southeast of Kathmandu called "Bhote Bāhā"

remains a stop on town circumambulations for the local Buddhist community.

+Tibetan guidebooks identify over five shrines in Bhaktapur for pilgrimage (Dowman 1982).

+Newar tradition regarding the Macchendranāth cult in the Valley recount that a group of Tibetans once carried off a "Lesser Macchendranāth" image from the procession that once proceeded from Cobhār to Paśupatināth (Oldfield 1880, II: 283).

+When visiting the Svayambhū hilltop, almost all Newar laymen stop to pay their respects to the Kargyu and former Bhutanese *gompas* (Lewis 1984: 354).

+Any prestigious Newar Buddhist family will include a man attired in Tibetan dress as part of the groom's wedding procession (Lewis 1984: 286).

+In some Newar households, laymen erect prayer flags above their houses, collect devotional photos of Tibetan lamas, participate in *Nyunge* retreats at local *gompas*, and use *khata* cloths for cremation rituals. Many affluent households own Tibetan-style art.

+In the early photographic businesses of Kathmandu, almost every photographer retained negatives of the Dalai Lama and used them to supply local devotees with images.

+Oral histories of some Urāy families in Kathmandu suggest that their ancestors were from Tibet.

+The pan-Buddhist tale of Sinhalasārthabāhu—a merchant who travels far away to trade, gets captured by alluring cannibal demonesses, and is saved by Avalokiteśvara in the form of a horse—is popularly told in the Valley and commonly depicted in Newar art. In these media, Tibet is identified as the country to which Sinhalasārthabāhu goes and the Brahmaputra River is identified as the great ocean he must cross (Sudarshan 1968; Lewis and Tuladhar, forthcoming).

+*Bare Chuyegu*—Male Śākyas at the time of their initiations can choose to wear red (or yellow) monastic vestments in the "bhikṣu stage" of the rites (Locke 1986: 58).

+In addition to the buttered-tea custom already cited, Newars eat a version of Tibetan meat-filled noodles, *momos*. Many Newar women include Tibetan dresses as part of their wardrobes.

+Finally, a very popular *pūjā* performed by the *vajrācāryas*, called *Sata Pūjā*, is thought by many to be Tibetan in origin since it uses *tormas*, molded butter-flour offerings.

## VI. Newar Politics and Religious Tradition

Any analysis of the Kathmandu Valley's later religious history must come to

terms with the fact that Tibetan lamas were influential figures in the Malla era. We have seen that important lamas were specially honored guests in the royal courts and that Druk-pa lamas ostensibly controlled the religious character of Svayambhū, the most important Buddhist site in the Kathmandu Valley,<sup>21</sup> a relationship that lasted for almost two hundred years (i.e. 1673–1850) until Rana rule. And here we must return to the shaved Bare in the European accounts who were described as being attired in the red woolen robes and caps. Were some local monasteries of this era primarily Tibetan in their ordination lineages, ritual styles, and meditation practices?

To advance the discussion of this issue with reference to regional Himalayan history, I will sketch a hypothetical construction of Tibetan-Newar relations in the Kathmandu Valley during later Malla times:

Before Shah state rule, ethnic boundaries in Nepal were less articulated and not centered in standards set beyond the regional polities that existed prior to 1770 (Levine 1987). A “Newar” family was one that had settled, learned the local dialect, married into a settlement. The fractured city-states of the Valley created no widespread sense of common ethnic identity. Pre-modern Nepal was a pluralistic civilization created by many waves of cumulative migration. The Valley towns shared common cultural traditions but also a great breadth of local diversity.

On the “Hindu” side, ethnic factors are dramatically illustrated by the Malla dynasty’s ongoing ties to the Mithila civilization (Bihar), their allies among Brahman priests and court officials with similar close southern ties, and the practice of entrusting the care of the Valley’s most important Hindu shrine (Paśupati) with South Indian Brahmans. Malla kings conformed to Indic norms of royal patronage by supporting all worthy traditions, and some texts even record their being personally interested in Tibetan lamas (Lewis and Jamsal 1988). Still, Brahmans and Brahmanical traditions dominated the social order and claimed the chief loyalty of the elite who ruled the city-states of the later Malla period.

Arrayed alongside this “Hindu” constituency were the Buddhist merchants, artisans, royal retainers and their monasteries. The northern foreigners at Svayambhū mirror the southerners at Paśupati, although the former (i.e. pre-1200 CE) ties between Nepal and the great monasteries of India remain a distant memory that survives only in some of the Sanskrit names of prominent Newar *viḥāras* (Locke 1985).

To return to Newar Tibetan relations in this context: by 1750, there were strong monastic institutions at Svayambhū and Bauddha linked to monasteries elsewhere in the Tibetan culture region. As major landmarks on the trans-Himalayan lama

21) Oldfield describes the special status of the Tibetan monastery west of Svayambhū in the following terms, “In an upper apartment...resides a family of Thibetan [sic] lamas from Lhasa [sic], to which has been entrusted, from time immemorial, the custody of the sacred fire, which is regarded as the symbol of ...the Adi Buddha (1880, II: 242).”

Figure 1: The Himalayan Frontiers of Tibet: Tibetanized Ethnic Groups and the Kathmand Valley

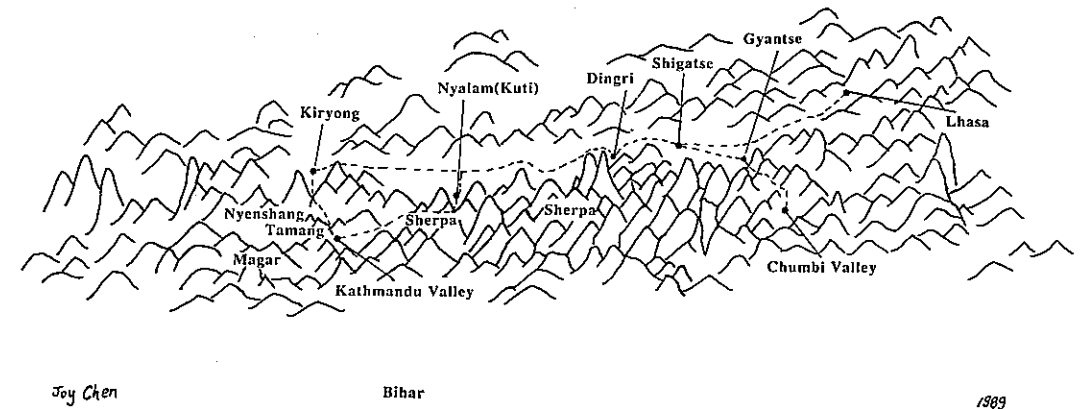
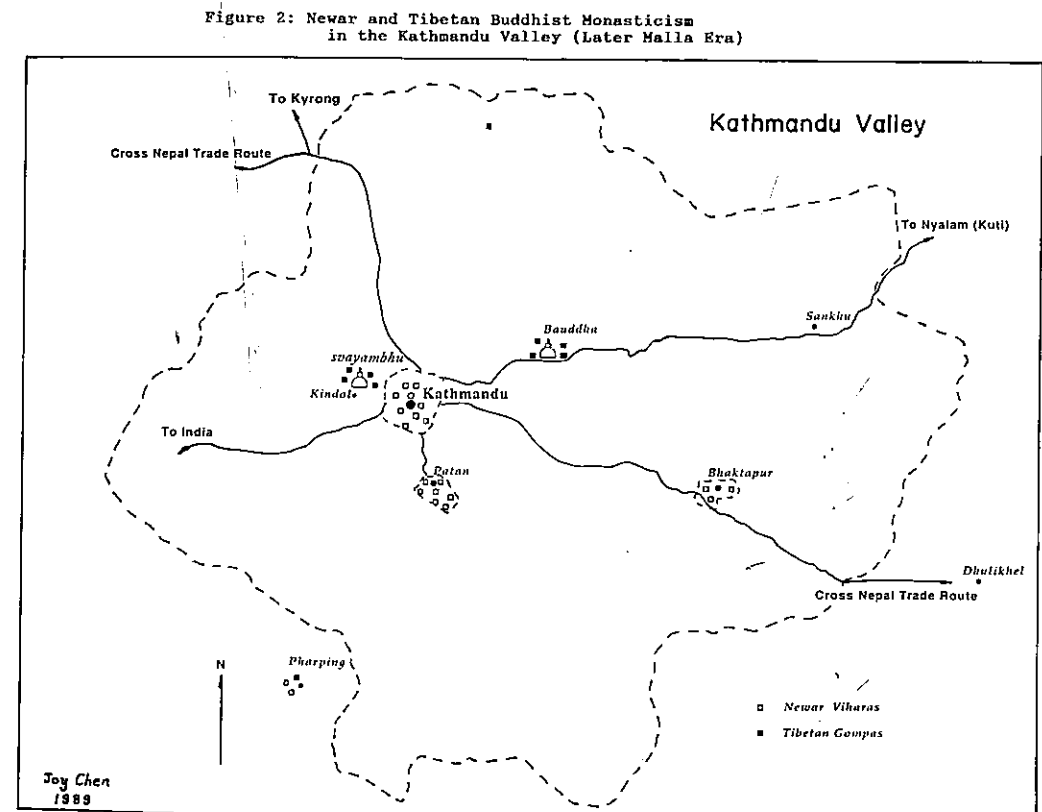


Figure 2: Newar and Tibetan Buddhist Monasticism in the Kathmandu Valley (Later Malla Era)



pilgrimage routes, these *viḥāras* were classic refuges for devout Buddhist men living in the region, especially Newars, Tamangs, Gurungs, and other mid-hill peoples. Even if the monastic lineages originated in Tibet and represented distant schools, the institutions were doubtless very much related to Valley society, supported by local nobility and trans-Himalayan traders,<sup>22)</sup> underwritten by land grants in the region, and inhabited predominantly by men from the surrounding areas. It is in these Valley monastic institutions that traditions of philosophical learning, textual copying,<sup>23)</sup> complex ritual, and Vajrayāna meditation were transmitted. This sense of history provides a historical model for the Kathmandu Valley that places it at the center of ethnic and religious networks across the region.

The evidence developed in this essay points to a model of Buddhism in the Kathmandu Valley that corrects the long-held assertion that in Malla-era Buddhism in the Kathmandu Valley had no celibate monastic elite (e.g. Snellgrove 1957; Slusser 1982: 290). Aligned with the important segment of Valley society involved in lucrative highland trade and with Tibeto-Burmans in the mid-hill region, Tibetan Buddhist *viḥāras* inhabited by celibate monks have likely existed in the Valley continuously since mid-Malla times or even earlier.

What, then, do we make of the Newar *saṃgha*, i.e. those “Bare” who now identify themselves as high-caste *vajrācāryas* and *śākyabhikṣus*? The best analogy for the *vajrācāryas* is perhaps with the Nyingmapa lamas in other highland Himalayan areas: both are married and live in monastic quarters that are family property and both serve the local community’s mundane ritual needs, with a few elite among them taking vows and entering the large *gompas* of other Tibetan schools to become great teachers and saints. Though it is very probable that surviving *vajrācāryas* lineages descend directly from Indian masters, it also seems likely that Bare and other Newars during more recent eras entered the great Tibetan *gompas* in the Valley for acquiring initiations mediated by teachers from the highlands.<sup>24)</sup> Then, as now, a few could take the monastic ordination. The autobiography of Si-tu Pan-chen supports this image and the supposition that contacts with a Buddhist elite trained

22) Members of the Urāy caste, a group that traded in Tibet at least as early as 1750, were well known as prominent patrons of *gompas* and leading lamas in Lhasa as well as Kathmandu (Smith 1968: 6; Bista 1978; Bista 1980). This relationship between merchants and Buddhist monasteries is common in Asian history.

23) In a recent publication, Min Bahadur Shakya (1986b: 36–37) cites the Milarepa *GurBum* to connect the *Nava Dharma* of Newar tradition to Tibet. In this text, Marpa the translator instructs Milarepa to collect these nine texts from Nepal. These texts are still recognized as a distinct group today in the Kathmandu *vajrācārya* community.

24) The extraordinary autobiography of Mahapragyan (1901–1979), one of the most notable Newar religious figures of this century, may be paradigmatic of the Tibetan religious influences posited in this essay. Mahapragyan’s religious awakening came as the result of meetings with a number of lamas residing in Kathmandu. Later, after studying under another lama in a Lhasa *gompa*, he receives an empowerment initiation and then gives this same instruction to Nepalese disciples (Newami 1986: 10).

in central Tibet have continually re-invigorated the Buddhist character of local Newar communities.<sup>25)</sup>

## VII. The Modern State and Changes in Newar-Tibetan Relations

The survival and maintenance of Buddhism in the Valley was based on the logic of local life. The sigma that the Indianized, caste-observant Newar elites came to place on “bhotiya” peoples may help explain the ultimate emergence of *vajrācāryas* caste lineages which adopted Brahmanical observances and ritualism in order to adapt Vajrayāna Buddhism to the local caste society.<sup>26)</sup>

Anti-Bhotiya caste sensitivity remains today among high-caste Buddhist Newars, as indicated in the saying “Sem Cipa, thi maju.” (“Tibetans are polluted, touching them is improper.”) In these domains, the lamas had neither the Brahmanically-styled life cycle ritual traditions (*saṃskāras*) nor the birth “pedigrees” to help the local Buddhists adapt to a more Brahmanical sociocultural environment. Instead, discrete native-born, caste-observant Buddhist priestly lineages emerged to fashion appropriate ceremonies and compete for patrons as literati with local Brahmins.

This need for adaptation may help explain why a distinct caste claiming “Vajra

↗ Nor was he alone in this era: one Ratna Bahadur Bajracharya (died 1954), from Patan, travelled on a similar road to Tibet for his spiritual development. In Min Bahadur Sakya’s recent account, “Pandit Ratna Bahadur Bajracharya was born at Yashodhara Mahavihara in Patan. He received his informal education from his grandfather Kulman Singh Pandit, a learned scholar in Vira Library. He learnt grammar, poetry, rhetoric and logic in his early age. He was also expert in ancient scripts of Nepal. Not satisfied with his learning of sūtras and Tantras in Nepal he studied Tibetan Buddhist texts from learned Geshe at Shigatse... He decided to serve Nepalese society by devoting his entire life in preaching, practising, and translating the Buddhist texts. On his way back from Tibet he continued his journey, preaching the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. In Kuti he delivered lectures on *Ārya Guṇakāraṇḍa Vyūha Sūtra* for three months. He became popular as a learned scholar of Buddhism and he earned his living by copying and translating the sacred texts. He was nicknamed Pandit Guruju. He translated many Sanskrit Buddhist texts into Newari and thus contributed tremendously in the field of Newari Buddhist literature and philosophy. He delivered lecture on Nava Khanda or Nine Basic Texts of Mahāyāna Buddhism of Nepal in the residence of the local merchant called ‘Dhakhwas’ (Shakya 1986b: 57–58).”

25) In his classic study of the transference of the Svayambhū-Ādi Buddha lake myth from Khotan to Nepal, John Brough speculated that there was likely just such a Tibetan hand involved in the adaptation:

We may therefore imagine a Tibetan lama who was familiar with the old Tibetan texts dealing with the legends and traditions of Li... [and] attributed them to Nepal.” He added, “The Nepalese who, as Hodgson found, held the Tibetans in high esteem in religious matters and would doubtless not have been averse to accepting such a revelation, and would have assuredly had little difficulty in finding appropriate sacred sites to adorn with legends (1948: 339).”

26) An occasional Brahman initiated as a *vajrācārya*—a practice noted in the nineteenth century (Oldfield 1880, II: 138) and in modern oral histories (Locke 1985: 317, 323), but not done today—may have been instrumental in this process.

Ācārya" status may have emerged in the last centuries to insist upon a clear social separation between themselves, Tibetan lamas, and the lay community. As Rosser's classic study (1964) showed, this "boundary maintenance" has led to major conflicts that have alienated the *vajrācāryas* from the richest Newar laymen, including the former Lhasa traders who were prominent supporters of the lamas.

The details of this fight support our contentions. The incident that started the quarrel was Newar laymen taking *prasād* from a great Tibetan monk, Kyanchen Lama, who had attracted audiences of several thousand devotees (Shakya 1986b: 57). A recently published account on this era reports on one of this lama's activities while in Kathmandu: "[He] was preaching at the Gopuccha Pārvata [i.e. Svayambhū] the doctrine of the *Ngon-dhro* practice.<sup>27)</sup> That discourse program was arranged by Sāhu Dharma Man [an Urāy], Sāhu Bekharatna [also an Urāy] was the translator, and Buddhirāj Guraju [a *vajrācārya*] explained it in detail... (Newami 1986: 4, with my notes.)" Here is a clear example of *vajrācāryas* directly involved in disseminating a lama's teaching tradition.

This lama's relations with Newar patrons brought tensions between the pro-Tibetan and anti-Tibetan factions to a head: in religious terms, eating the leavings of a saint was meritorious and healthful; in the caste regulations of Nepalese state law code, the *Muluki Ain*, consuming the leavings of a "Bhotiya" was especially polluting and demeaning (Höfer 1979). The *vajrācārya* lineages who then denied ever eating in Urāy houses—an act suggesting mutual commensality with those eating the lama's *prasād* and so, ultimately, calling into question the *vajrācāryas'* own high purity/caste standing—have *ever since* been excluded as Urāy *jajmāns*.

Thus, this destructive fracturing of the Newar Buddhist tradition's long-standing web of priest-patron bonds was, in part, a product and reflection of changing Newar-Tibetan relations (Lewis 1984; Rosser 1964). By pursuing the logic of caste, the Brahmanically-minded Newar Buddhist elite broke apart the older web of exchange relationships that once bound their Buddhist traditions in the Kathmandu Valley together in alliance with the lamas and Buddhist Tibeto-Burman peoples of the region.

Finally, we can explain why Newar Buddhist folklore reflects the mixed legacy of Newar—Tibetan relations and elements of *vajrācārya*—lama competition. The data suggests that there was later competition between Valley monasteries linked to Tibet against those claiming more ancient Indian institutions. Robert Miller's discussion of the relationship between Tibetan trade and the spread of Buddhist monasticism supports hypothesizing that later Tibetan monks and *viḥāras* may have, in effect, "colonized" the Buddhist community in the Kathmandu Valley:

The creation of daughter monasteries may be seen as an effort to stabilize

27) These practices consisted of four contemplations: 1) the preciousness of human birth; 2) death and impermanence; 3) karma and its results; 4) the vicious state of *samsāra*. These are known in Newari as the "four jewels" and are thought to incline the Buddhist devotee's mind toward the Dharma (Newami 1986: 4).

and stretch out the local resources of support and to tap sources further afield.....

There will inevitably be a point at which competition between different monasteries becomes acute. The larger monasteries...could reach out beyond the immediate locality to attract rich patrons, and could draw laymen into trade on their behalf. But competition from large, expanding monasteries sometimes led to the collapse of a local *saṃgha* (Miller 1963: 437).

Did the Newar *saṃgha* suffer decline due to competition from Tibetan *viḥāras*? Future studies must explain who these Newar Buddhists were who once wore red woolen attire in the style of Tibetan lamas.

### VIII. Summary

1. Over the last millenium, cultural relations between Nepal and Tibet oscillated. At times, Nepalese Buddhist teachers and *viḥāras* were instrumental in enriching Buddhism in the Tibetan highlands; at other times, especially over the last 500 years, great lamas and Tibetan monasteries in the Kathmandu Valley likely affected local Nepalese Buddhism. The ebb and flow is reminiscent of the history of decline and revival between SE Asia and Ceylon over the same period.<sup>28)</sup>
2. Over the past five centuries, highland Tibetan institutions in the Kathmandu Valley have attracted aspirants from local society and continuously disseminated Tibetan-style Vajrayāna Buddhist influences into the local communities. In the later Malla period, Kargyupa *gompas* helped maintain the Valley as a notable center of highland-style Mahāyāna-Vajrayāna Buddhism on the periphery of Tibetan civilization.<sup>29)</sup>

28) The comparison here is illuminating: whatever else we know about the Malla/Kings' attitude to the Newar Buddhist *saṃgha*, it is certain that they never engaged in any of the "purifications of the *saṃgha*" that kings of Burma, Thailand, or Sri Lanka instituted, whereby they profoundly shaped and reformed the history of the tradition in their domains.

29) In a recent article that appeared as this work was in the final stages, David Gellner illuminates many aspects of Newar cultural identity, especially with reference to the important issues of language and religion in the national context. My conclusions are at odds with his views only in the domain of Tibetan relations. Gellner states, "Newar Buddhism (its texts, architecture and rituals) is derived wholly from Indian Buddhism. Interest in, and practice of, Tibetan Buddhism is confined to isolated individuals, mostly in the last 100 years or so (Gellner 1986: 118)."

To analyze trans-Himalayan history in culture area terms, it is insufficient diagnostically to use the extension of "South Asian cultural borrowing (*ibid.*, p. 118)" because the entire region, from the terai to the Tibetan highlands, shares this formative legacy. Tibet, like Nepal, was a frontier zone that was "Indianized" in terms of Buddhist tradition, scripts (Hoffman 1975: 156), and the adoption of a caste society (Gombo 1982).

3. Tibetan *gompas* remained refuges for the "true elite" in the region who desired the celibate lifestyle of traditional monastic Buddhism. There was no loss of celibate monasticism in the Buddhist field of Kathmandu Valley civilization.
4. Historians should recognize the limitations that go with accepting ethnic group names as the sole nuclei around which regional history in the Himalayas evolves. Names change, old names are adopted by new elites, and in urban centers ethnic pluralism requires finer categories of analysis (Lewis and Riccardi 1986: 101-103). Most significant was the "web of Tibetan monasticism (B. Miller 1960)" that often overarched ethnic boundaries throughout the Himalayan region.
5. When Buddhist monasticism spread across Asia, it introduced independent, corporate institutions that had the potential to transform local societies and regional politics. Buddhist *viḥāras* have, at times, functioned to break down ethnic boundaries, blurring divisions between peoples. The anthropology of missionizing religions would likely find a common comparative theme here: newly introduced religious institutions can fundamentally alter previous alignments of kinship, ethnicity, and political power.<sup>30)</sup>

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30) To point to this possibility, of course, is not to deny that Asian history holds numerous instances of the reverse, i.e., when monastic lineages fortified ethnic lines and existing powers. MacDonald (1980) has dealt with this issue in the Sherpa context.

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