

SELVES IN TIME AND PLACE

IDENTITIES, EXPERIENCE,
AND HISTORY IN NEPAL



edited by

Debra Skinner, Alfred Pach III, and Dorothy Holland

AFTERWORD BY ROBERT L. LEVY

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Chapter 13

Growing Up Newar Buddhist: Chittadhar Hridaya's *Jhī Macā* and Its Context

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Mother and Child

One day, the child sat in his mother's room with a book. His mother asked him, "Do you know our [Newari] script yet?" Having shown his book to her, the child said, "Why, I do not know it. Are not all these our letters?" The mother made him understand: "This indeed is not our writing. This is in fact *devanāgarī* script. Do you see the large letters in your other book?"

Child: "Yes, yes. There are many round vowels in them, are there not?"

Mother: "Indeed, that is our writing..."

This passage is from *Jhī Macā*, a short book published in 1947 by Chittadhar Hridaya, a Newar of Kathmandu, Nepal. Its Newari title—"Our Child"—conveys the author's intention that it serve as a cultural guidebook for Newar parents in their home teaching and as a first reader for their children (Hridaya 1947). In addition to providing a renowned poet's intimate appreciation of Newar childhood, this work can also be read to understand other areas of the modern Newar experience of ethnic identity. After introducing the text, its author, and the

Nepalese context from the Kathmandu Newar perspective,¹ I will discuss a series of issues *Jhī Macā* raises about the ongoing struggle to reconstruct Newar Buddhist identity in modern multi-ethnic Nepal.

In many studies across the Himalayan region, scholars have devoted special attention to the issue of ethnicity, group interaction, and the problem of defining and maintaining group boundaries utilizing cultural symbols (e.g., Barth 1956, 1969; Berreman 1960, 1963; Burghart 1984; Gellner 1986; Levine 1987). This paper focuses upon an influential Newari literary source, *Jhī Macā*, and its community context to examine these themes.²

The Text

A 32-page pamphlet-sized work, one among thousands in the Kathmandu Valley's vibrant Newari literary tradition, *Jhī Macā* takes the reader through a series of sixteen family vignettes, interweaving episodes of maturation—from infancy to early school-age—simultaneously with typical daily actions in the life of the Newar market. *Jhī Macā* teaches core vocabulary, nursery rhymes, family customs, and religious attitudes to Newar children. The book naturally focuses on language, closing with the already cited instructions on writing in the distinctly Newar script, *rañjanā* (Slusser 1982).

The children's stories from *Jhī Macā* convey the author's intimate poetic appreciation of the Newar market and its vibrant urban lifestyle. Having lived in the Kathmandu bazaar of Asan Tol for a number of years, I can testify to the authenticity of Hridaya's "child's eye" renditions of omnipresent pigeons, swooping swallows, and thieving crows, as well as to his evocations of the mice and feral cats that prowl the rooftops. Anyone who has walked the bylanes of the old Newar towns will recognize the author's graceful imagery of festivals that crowd the streets and of children looking out upper-story windows at passing cows, sheep, and processions. Subsequent generations of Newar youth up to the present have read this book, and its popularity led Chittadhar to compose a sequel. Both have been reprinted several times.

The Author

Chittadhar Hridaya is recognized today as one of the great literary figures of modern Nepal and the preeminent Newar poet of this century. A childless widower at an early age, he devoted his life to writing in Newari and participating in the vigorous intellectual life that evolved in post-Rana Kathmandu. During the last years of Rana rule, Chittadhar defied the prime minister's prohibition against publishing Newari language materials in Nepal; while jailed for attempting this, he wrote *Jhī Macā* and his great poetic masterpiece, *Sugat Saurabh*, the life of Sakyamuni Buddha, in Newari. With the coming of greater press freedoms after the fall of the Ranas, Chittadhar became a leading author and a renowned cultural figure. Besides his poetry, he published several novels and was a significant scholar

in his own right, also writing articles and books on a variety of historical subjects. His prolific literary career continued until his death in 1982. A local newspaper eulogized him in these terms:

...[Chittadhar] consecrated all his life without frustration to the cause he was committed to. He even gave all his material possessions for the promotion of literature... and accepted the hardship a writer is supposed to face in a poor and undeveloped country. The life he lived should continue to be a source of inspiration to those who have taken to writing as a serious pursuit.

Chittadhar remains an icon of Newar cultural revival. Since his death, books of reminiscence have appeared (e.g., Karmacarya and Vajracarya 1983) and almost all his major works have been reissued.

Newar Buddhists and Buddhism in the Modern Nepalese Context

A Tibeto-Burman language-speaking ethnic group unique for its urban culture and a remarkable level of artistic achievement, the Newars have shaped life in the Kathmandu Valley for at least a millennium. Protected from colonization by the lowland malarial zones and the high Himalayan barrier, the Newars created a civilization adapted in their own style from the cultures of north India. Living traditions of ancient Indic art, architecture, texts, rituals, and festival celebration endure in great multiplicity. Newar Buddhism is perhaps the most notable Indic cultural survival (Lienhard 1984) as it has remained a separate tradition adhered to by distinct Newar castes, primarily in the largest cities (Gellner 1992). Newar Buddhists have long lived alongside other Newars practicing Shaiva and Vaiṣṇava forms of Hinduism.³

Once the Newar line of Malla kings was deposed in 1769 by the Shah dynasty of Gorkha, the country's new elite emerged: Pahari (or Pārbatiya) Brahmins and Chetris, along with their allies from various ethnic groups.⁴ Other (mostly Hinduized) peoples from the Himalayan mid-hills subsequently migrated into the Valley to work as laborers, start businesses, or to take posts in the new government enclaves close to the capital. Today roughly one-half of the Valley's population is non-Newar, and royal rule by the Shahs endures.

From its inception, the modern state has been staunchly Hindu in character and dominated by high-caste elites. Shah and Rana governments have sought to unify the many non-Indic peoples across the modern state by promoting Nepali as the national language, implementing a legal system based upon ancient Hindu lawbooks (the *Dharmashastra*), and maintaining the Hindu customs of *Kshatriya* (Nep. Chetri) royalty. I will return to specific aspects of modern Nepal's policies of unification shortly.

The Hindu-Buddhist admixture makes the pluralism and cultural complexity of Kathmandu, modern Nepal's capital, especially striking. Through increasing Tarai-Valley and hills-Valley migration into the old town and suburbs, urban

Kathmandu now mirrors the immense sociocultural pluralism of the nation. Ethnic boundaries, caste distinctions, and class stand in high relief as both rich and poor migrants from the periphery have settled around the capital. Their presence and patronage have both intensified and complicated the Hindu-Buddhist cultural interaction in the Kathmandu Valley. For Newars, their ethnicity and caste remain important social markers, and in many domains the rich and varied traditions in the Valley reflect the long-standing Newar need to assert hierarchical separation from neighbors and vis-à-vis other ethnic groups.

With their home territory conquered and occupied by the new royal court, Kathmandu Newars have responded variously to the new state's formation and development since 1770. Some became involved as officials and businessmen in alliance with the Shahs in the unification process that created the modern state of Nepal. Entire lineages left the Kathmandu Valley to pursue business opportunities across the mid-hills, dependent upon the new state's contracts and protection (English 1985; Lewis and Shakya 1988). Other Newars were removed from former positions of influence and had their lands confiscated. The intra-Newar variance is striking: the influential Buddhist Newar merchants who traded with Lhasa even welcomed the Shah restoration of trans-Himalayan trade (Stiller 1973), and the state's subsequent support (throughout the Rana period) of their lucrative ventures (Lewis 1993a).

Although increasingly inundated by migrants and encircled by state offices, hotels, and burgeoning suburbs, the old core areas of Kathmandu, Patan, and Bhaktapur retain their Newar character. Social divisions shaped during the Malla era also endure: the Newar community remains divided into over 100 castes and fissured further according to strong loyalties to localities and subcastes. To the outsider, Kathmandu Newars may seem unified by a common language, history, urban lifestyle, and religion, but in fact dialects divide Newar localities (Genetti 1988) and each settlement has its own history. Cultural traditions among Newars do vary quite dramatically.⁵ Status competition between castes and subcastes is a feature of Newar life, with Hindu and Buddhist factions prominent at the pinnacles of Kathmandu's social pyramid.

Since the Valley's conquest over two hundred years ago, almost all socio-religious institutions in Newar communities have declined. Early Shah and Rana elites used legal legerdemain or seized outright temple and monastery lands (Regmi 1971, 1976), depriving these institutions and the Newar priesthoods (both Hindu and Buddhist) of their former endowment incomes. Myriad *guthis*, committees of devotees dedicated to some religious practice (and many also with land endowments), were likewise dispossessed, undermining the social institutions developed in the Malla era to support the performance of many religious practices. At the same time, the new rulers heavily patronized Hindu temples and priests, while promoting Brahmans as government officials. All of these factors realigned the standards of social, economic, and political advancement toward those practicing Hinduism. In so doing, the state supported high-caste authority and privilege, rewarding those who gained alliances with the Pahari elite, especially those con-

nected with the Shah palace (Rose 1970).

In the later years of the Rana era, these efforts were pushed to excess, especially through the state instituting coercive measures against non-Parbatiya ethnic groups, actions that created a strong dialectic of increasing resistance. In 1905 when the Ranas prohibited the public use of non-Nepali tongues and the printing of literary works in Newari, they created among a large portion of the Newar community the conviction that the state was against them.⁶ These actions by the state continued even after the Shah restoration (1950), especially in the 1964 Panchayat decree which eliminated any radio programming in Newari or other non-Nepali tongues. Only since the 1991 Revolution has the media broadcast policy been broadened. Even today, when educated Newars hear the term "national unification," many associate that call with state policy aimed at weakening their culture.

When Rana statutes were aimed against Newars, it was the Buddhist Newars who were especially targeted. Nowhere was this more evident than in the case of the sumptuary laws enacted in 1947—the year of *Jhī Macā's* publication—that specifically delimited *Urāy*⁷ Buddhist ritual observances. These widely publicized laws enacted by the Rana government⁸ set very specific limits on the cultural celebrations that punctuate the Newar Buddhist year and life cycle. They sought to scale back drastically the size of offerings, the number of people in processions, the gifts that could be exchanged, the magnitude of feasts, and so forth. As the statute reads:

Performance of rites and social functions may be in accordance with the rules stated above or in a much simpler scale but without breaking the traditional rules. Those rites not covered by the rules may be performed in accordance with custom but as economically as possible.

Some old customs were banned outright, such as community-wide meetings held once each year at the rotation of *guthi* responsibilities (Toffin 1975b). For example, Rule 38 sought to outlaw the caste-wide feasts showing recognition of the senior *guthi* leader:

38. While celebrating *Thakali Luye*,...the married-out daughters and in-laws may bring besides the *sagam* tray a headdress of cotton for the father, a blouse for the mother. Other persons including the married daughters of sons and nephews may not bring gifts of any sort. Nor may any other persons be invited.

The 1947 statute cited *fifty-one* customary rituals, from birth to death, as falling under state supervision, with each very specifically listed and with threat of fines and punishments standing behind the regulations if limits were breached.⁹

These regulations did not exist merely on the books, but were aggressively publicized right into the neighborhoods and the households of prominent Newar Buddhist citizens. (Such laws, by the way, existed until at least 1982, although I know of no efforts to enforce them in Kathmandu.) As the 1947 Promulgation concludes:

For facilitating strict enforcement, these rules are to be printed at the Government press and distributed to the people of the Uray caste residing in Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, and Lalitpur. Emissaries may be sent by the Police Office to each neighborhood of these cities to announce publicly these rules. Urāys of each household may be called in person to sign a statement that he is prepared to accept these rules and act accordingly.

Thus, through language policy and sumptuary laws, the state provided a common Valley-wide experience that Newars themselves had traditionally lacked: state-sponsored discrimination aimed at their mother tongue and their venerable religious practices. In this repressive climate, Newar activists from formerly rival caste groups and city-states found the basis to unite in organizations to promote communal uplift, language education, cultural recognition, and political change.

This heavy-handed attempt at national unification, polarizing communities that unite in resistance, has, of course, been a mistake repeated again and again by South Asian states. If exchange is the basis of social life (Murphy 1971), state laws limiting exchange represent an intrusive attempt to weaken social groups and undermine their culture. I have emphasized these laws to convey vividly the setting of *Jhī Macā* and the Buddhist Newar sense of suffering special discrimination at the hands of the Hindu state.

Textual Analysis:

Jhī Macā's Definition of Newar Ethnicity

In other writings, Chittadhar held that loyalty to one's artistic traditions could effectively undermine growing social division in the Newar community and reverse the trend toward cultural disintegration. For him, this was to be a long process that must go forward with hope, even in the face of government hostility. So suggests Chittadhar's "Entrance," the lead poem from one of Chittadhar's most celebrated poetry collections:

O Seedling, a day will come when you will also get your turn.
 Yes, the field has dried without sufficient rain
 And is doubly ruined for want of proper care.
 Moreover, it is encroached upon by others
 For want of embankments to mark its boundary.
 Bear it, remembering well the well-known saying,
 "Endurance is equal to a thousand virtues."
 The future understands the value of time
 And surely come to look for you also.
 O Seedling, a day will come when you will get your turn. (Hridaya 1976:v)

Underlying most of Chittadhar's writings is the social activist's commitment to Newar culture. Born 130 years after the Newar kingdoms fell, the author saw dramatic indications of cultural decline over his lifetime: many temples were nearly

in ruins and their sculpture was being looted; old customs were declining, even, as we have seen, by state decree. Since the government also allowed only Nepali as the national school and state administrative language, Newars were giving up the use of their mother tongue. Most discouraging to Chittadhar, Newars by the end of the Rana period did little to resist, as their own factionalism impaired attempts at unified response. Thus, many Newars were intimidated, reduced to despair or co-optation.

Jhī Macā itself represented Chittadhar's own literary response to resist these trends. In the narrative, the author draws upon important personal relationships and activities to define the paradigmatic Newar urban experience. Several other selections from the text give the flavor of Chittadhar's book:

Episode 4. On the Balcony

From the balcony, the sun was still not visible. The child sat on the small woven rice-stalk mat and began eating the flattened rice. While eating, the boy felt chilly, but when the first sun rays of the day finally arrived, he made a *namaskār*¹⁰ to the sun and said:

Come on, come on Sunlight!
 Lock it! Lock it! At mirrors, windows bowing
 I beg the sun-giving deity for sun
 And bow to Jana Bāhā deity's¹¹ two feet.

Episode 6. At the Window

One day in the afternoon, the boy was sitting at the window and looking down. His mother was standing behind him. In the street below, a herd of cows was coming. The child looked around, held onto the mother's shawl, and asked, "O Mother, where are all of these cows going?" Stroking the child's head, she answered, "Yes, they are coming to browse in a distant field"... Soon thereafter came a flock of sheep led by a Tibetan hollering "gyū, gyū" at them. The sheep jumped along and ran ahead, baaing. The child held on to the window bar and said, "Here they come! Oh how many sheep!" as he was jumping up and down excitedly. Pointing at the sheep, the mother said, "Yes, Yes, many have come. And can you count them? How many sheep are there?" The child counted, "One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten... oh ho, there are so many more. I cannot count them all! Where are they all coming from? Oh, so many sheep!"

Episode 7. Saturday

One day while sitting in a room, mother was grooming herself. The child came up from behind and crowded her while she was looking in the mirror. The mother nudged the child aside and said, "Go off now, it is late. Why are you getting in the way?" The child moved off a little and asked his mother, "Where are you going now, mother?" [The mother said] "Today is Saturday, isn't it? I am going to do *pūjā*.¹² Stay with your father today." Scratching his temples with both hands, the child continued to pester her and said, "I will

also come along." The mother replied: "I cannot carry you. You are to walk now." The child laughed and replied, "Yes I will walk."

Episode 8. In the Garden

...In the meantime a very beautiful butterfly came and landed on the fragrant flower. The child ran over in order to catch it. The butterfly flitted over to another flower. The child again went after it but could not catch it. Then he went running over to his mother and said, "Mother, give one butterfly to me." While still picking flowers, the mother said, "Son, we should not catch butterflies. If we catch it, it will die. Just watch it as it goes from place to place. Look at how beautiful its wings are! While looking at it, how much it seems like a flower itself." The child said, "Um," and held on to his mother's shawl. Then a sparrow came there and captured the butterfly. The butterfly struggled and its wings were torn off. The child took the wings and showed them to his mother: "Look mother! Here are its wings." Mother: "Gha, tisk, tisk. This evil sparrow has killed such a beautiful butterfly. Look, I say we should not capture them. Let's go now, it is done."

Episode 13. In the Morning

One day in the morning, the child heard the sound of the *bājan*, stood up unsteadily, and looked out. Looking from the window, he heard from a distance the sound of drums, a clarinet, and a trumpet. He then went inside to his mother and asked, "Today where has the *bājan* gone?" The mother replied, "Yes, from today and throughout [the month of], it will go to Svayambhū¹³ to do a *pūjā* and come back."

Child: "What is *Gumlā*?"

Mother: "Gumlā is a month and thirty days make up this month."

Child: "What are the months, mother?"

Episode 14. *Saunti*¹⁴

During this festival, lamps were lit in all places. Seeing them, the child with some pastry in his hand felt very happy. His mother called for him many times but he never heard her. With his neighborhood friends he was singing loudly:

Come, come Lakṣmī, come to our place!

Do not go there, to another place.

Jhili-mili, jhili-mili go the burning lamps Come right here to our dwelling's special room; Mother will feed you a good feast indeed.

(Lewis 1989a:199–208)

We now turn to the linguistic and religious themes in the text by which the author defines essential Newar culture and group boundaries.¹⁵

Language and Identity

In the *Jhī Macā* vignettes, the author eschews using fancy Sanskrit vocabulary terms—"spicing" literature with Sanskrit is a sign of erudition in Kathmandu—because this little book was intended to be as fully "Newar" as possible.¹⁶ The author wanted this work to be a specimen of authentic *Newar: bhāy*¹⁷ (Newari language) for school-age children who could only study Nepali in school, but also were in need of learning to read and write Newari. Above all else, Chittadhar's *Jhī Macā* wants Newar children to use Newar terms, not Nepali or Sanskrit loan words, to refer to kin, units of time, to count, and to identify the deities that inspire enduring loyalty. He also espoused the revival of *rañjanā*, one of fourteen old Newar textual scripts. This last aspect of his work still continues in the educational groups and literary societies promoting Newar cultural revival.

Kinship

It will surprise no anthropologist who has worked in Newar society that one episode finds the mother teaching her child kinship terms (Episode 2). These complex ties dominate Newar social life (Toffin 1975a), and so the text. Newar society is patrilineal in the north Indian style, with preference for patrilocal marriage and large, extended family households dominated by the eldest males (Quigley 1986). The bond between a mother and her sons—who live under the same roof all their lives—is understandably the chief narrative presented in *Jhī Macā*. The text often testifies to the Newars' love for their children. This is touchingly conveyed in Episode 1, when the author writes of a father observing his baby breast-feeding. Also interwoven in the text is a sense of the dual membership of Newar women, who readily move back and forth between their natal and husbands' homes throughout their lives, creating a distinctive caste-wide sense of support and dependence. Every child likewise maintains enduring and loving bonds with the mother's brothers, the *pājus*; the latter also have ritual obligations to fulfill throughout the child's life.

Religion

The child is taught the months largely in terms of a shorthand outline of major religious festivals.¹⁸ The choices again underline how Chittadhar saw loyalty to traditional family customs as integral to the modern revival of Newar culture. Religious ritual (*pūjā*) is likewise a recurring theme. The many references to sacred observances and morality underline the pervasive presence of Indic traditions, Hindu and Buddhist, in Newar life.

This Hindu-Buddhist coexistence has been rightfully cited as a cultural environment unique in modern South Asia, closest to north India before the Muslim conquests of the twelfth century (Levi 1905–8; Gellner 1992). Some episodes touch upon important common popular traditions shared by all Newars: Sūrdayah,

the sun god worshipped every day on the rooftop, merits attention (Episode 4) as does Saunti, the fall festival of lights devoted to Lakṣmī, goddess of fortune (Episode 14). But the Buddhist tradition is especially highlighted: the Mahāyāna Buddhist celestial bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, the most popular Newar deity (Episode 4), receives devotional chanting.

It is noteworthy how elements in *Jhī Macā* reflect the perspective of the author's own Buddhist merchant caste, the Urāy of Kathmandu. The best example of this are the references made to the *Gumilā bājan*, a Buddhist musical procession. For the latter, drummers and other musicians go each day for a month to Svayambhū, the chief Buddhist shrine on a nearby hilltop, and fill the morning market with drumbeats on their return (Lewis 1993b).¹⁹ Chittadhar's choice of the bājan is consistent with his dislike of the Theravāda modernist movement in his midst; he saw the latter as abandoning too much of the Newar cultural heritage orchestrated through Mahāyāna-Vajrayāna ritual (Lewis 1993c) and tainted by moral scandals.

The text also illustrates the enculturation of core ethical viewpoints from the Newar lay Buddhist's perspective. A recurring theme is the moral superiority of *ahimsā*, the abstention from killing any living being. Cats are thought evil for their killing mice (Episode 5), as are the sparrows for catching butterflies (Episode 8). Thus, the ethos of nonviolence is fundamental to Chittadhar's statement of Newar character.²⁰ In his general approach to defining Newar identity, then, Chittadhar is a traditionalist who holds that the central principle of Newar moral life, *ahimsā*, must be inculcated in childhood.

In *Jhī Macā*, we see, in part, Chittadhar's conviction that Newars must hold fast to their old traditions in response to the threats of state discrimination and modernization. This book directs children to adopt "purely Newar" kin terminologies, learn a Newar script to underline group pride, use the Newari names for months, numbers, and deities, and adhere to the norms of nonviolence and ritual celebration that have made the Newars unique in ethnic, moral, and devotional terms.

It is also significant to note how the author's subject choices in several places delimited his audience to Kathmandu Buddhists of high caste. The specific content of the text itself implies a limited audience: the literate urban sector of Newars in the Buddhist community. This is true in its depiction of Svayambhū, the Gumilā bājan, script instruction, and so forth. Thus, the ideal lifestyle in *Jhī Macā* could not naturally resonate far beyond the high-caste Buddhist communities. This may have been intentional: perhaps Chittadhar hoped that Newar children from other backgrounds would see the Buddhist customs depicted in *Jhī Macā* as the original Newar culture; if they did not emulate them, at least they could know of the traditions and respect them. The text, thus, can also be read as a celebration of the Urāy lifestyle, a modern "lifestyle account" gifted to his own community though shared with all Newars. This interpretation points to a commonly held Newar Buddhist attitude that Shresthas and other newly Hinduized Newars have abandoned their Buddhist traditions, and so a portion of their true Newar-ness.

Concluding Observations

In the ethnohistorical context of mid-20th century Nepal, author Chittadhar Hridaya responds to the Kathmandu Newar Buddhist middle-upper class's situation: a sense of geographic and political encirclement; Newar disunity with some, mostly Buddhists, who were bitter and unreconciled to the new order while another large subsection of the urban elite, mostly Newar Hindus, were integrally involved in the Shah state apparatus; public schools teaching only Nepali, as many children were abandoning Newari language and culture; Buddhists struggling against forces seeking "national unification" via Hindu laws, high-caste bureaucracy, and Brahmanical ritual; Pahari cultural dominance at the expense of non-Nepali languages, Buddhism, and indigenous legal systems; the decline of Newar Buddhist institutions and the traditional priestly (*vajrācaryā*) elite. Chittadhar Hridaya's literary revivalism represents one of many contending responses to this situation.

Chittadhar was no revolutionary and counseled Newars not to revolt against the Shah state. (He himself accepted awards from King Mahendra.) He had traveled modestly to countries of modernizing Asia and argued that the unification of Nepal was necessary and desirable. His position was that each group should strengthen its culture; like many Kathmandu activists who followed his lead in seeking to revive traditional Newar traditions through literary pursuits, Chittadhar felt that one day the government would see that national integration would be truly possible only when each ethnic group did not feel threatened.

Since Chittadhar's death, the entire question of ethnic culture and national unification has become yet more complex and problematic in urban Kathmandu. The contestation between nationalism and Newar ethnicity continues, with the since-1991 legalized voice of the Congress Party and the myriad-factioned communist parties adding into public discourse further alternative visions of ethnic identity and modernization. Many of these groups are dominated by Newars and have found strong support in the large cities of the Valley.²¹

Another powerful transformative influence has been the introduction (since 1979) of mass video technology and the availability of global television programming via satellite dishes (since 1988). For example, there are now in Kathmandu satellite dish guthis that share purchase and maintenance expenses. The expansion of media programming has altered many variables in the process of situating identity along the tradition-modernity axis. A partial listing would include expenditures of patronage funds away from traditional institutions and devotions; choices for the investment of free time; effects of the symbolic content of the programs themselves (Indian TV Hinduism, global news and information, television and movie stereotypes of modern America or Japan).²² As elsewhere, the Newar literary community of modern Kathmandu is an audience whose understandings of self, kin, community, and world have been transformed and multiplied far from those of Chittadhar's generation.

Ten years after his death, Chittadhar's books are still found among booksellers and still read by Newar youth. Yet there is an anachronistic, romantic sense

one gets when talking to young Newars today about what the half-century-old literary culture represented by Chittadhar means to them. Those seeking to sustain Newar culture and identity in modern Nepal still honor the poet's life and many still use *Jhī Macā* with their own children. But they must also contend in a different era, one in which Shah-Newar alliances endure and state discrimination has abated, but in which Nepal's failure to develop its economy, infrastructure, and governmental institutions is now leading to the rapid deterioration of the Kathmandu Valley's ecology. The precipitous decline in urban living standards (water supply, air quality, sanitation, public health facilities) is a problem faced by all Newars, and others, living in Kathmandu. How will the commitment to Newar cultural identity intersect with the call for identification with party programs and alliances in the new political system? For the young, who can say how they will negotiate their commitments and identities vis-à-vis their country's economic stagnation and the multifaceted impact of global mass media?

Notes

An early version of this paper was presented at the 18th Annual Conference on South Asia, University of Wisconsin, Madison, in November 1989. Special thanks go to Nirmal Tuladhar and Subarna Man Tuladhar for guiding me early in my fieldwork to meet Chittadhar and become aware of his work. Some information presented here was derived from interviews with Chittadhar in 1981 and 1982. This article is dedicated to Margaret Mead, an exemplary ethnographer and an inspiring teacher.

1. Scholars who have worked in different Newar communities in the Kathmandu Valley have long recognized the difficulty of generalizing beyond their fieldwork for all Newars. A further complication is that today half of all Newars live outside the Kathmandu Valley (Lewis and Shakyā 1988), making any sweeping pan-Newar generalizations difficult to support. Even within the Valley, many Newar groups cultivated discrete community practices in caste-based separation, in large part reflecting the legacy of walled cities being self-enclosed polities (called *deshā*, "countries"). Of particular relevance to this paper, note that the religious cultures of Bhaktapur, Patan, and Kathmandu are quite strikingly different. Bhaktapur is predominantly Hindu (Levy 1990; Lewis 1992), while Patan is the most Buddhist city (Gellner 1992). Kathmandu, the focus of this essay, is roughly equally divided along Hindu-Buddhist lines; closest to the centers of state power, it is also the city most affected by state Hinduism, national development initiatives, and other modernizations (Lewis 1986, 1995).

2. A full translation of the book has been published in *Asian Folklore Studies* (Lewis 1989a) and the discussion in this article, of course, will be best comprehended by the reader having familiarity with it. Some points made here found earlier expression in the short introduction to this translation.

3. To treat the subject of Hindu-Buddhist relations in Indo-Nepalese history, belief, and practice would require a lengthy monograph. Many scholars working on Newar Buddhism have entered into the subject (e.g. Gellner 1992:83-104; Lewis 1984:468-481;

Lienhard 1978; Toffin 1984), at least to expose the false impressions conveyed by early European visitors, still endlessly repeated by modern tourist brochures, that these traditions are inextricably intertwined for all Newars.

Until very recently, the Newar Buddhist communities of the Kathmandu Valley successfully reproduced a vital and broad Mahāyāna-Vajrayāna Buddhist culture, with its householder *samgha* of Shākya and Vajrācārya unsurpassed in its translation of Buddhist ideas into domestic and shrine ritualism (Gellner 1988, 1989, 1991; Lewis 1989b, 1993b, 1994a, 1994b). Newar Buddhist tradition until recently cultivated scholar lineages conversant in the high Sanskrit commentarial traditions, as well as meditation masters who have passed down initiation lineages originating from the later Pāla era in northeast India (c. 1000 CE). There have also been prominent lay castes in Kathmandu that for centuries patronized and strongly identified with the Buddhist traditions in the Newar cities, with a significant faction that supported the resident Tibetan *samghas* (Lewis 1989c) and, more recently, the Theravada revival (Kloppenborg 1977; Tewari 1983). If the assertion is made that Hinduism and Buddhism are inextricably blended in the Kathmandu Valley, as has been long suggested, Urāy, Sākya, and Vajrācārya (and doubtless many other) respondents will wax indignant. For them, being Buddhist, not Hindu, has meaning as both spiritual practice and in their self/caste identities.

4. The Pahari (Parbatiya) are speakers of the Indo-European language now called Nepali (also *khas kura* or, more archaically, "Gorkhali") in the modern state. This ethnolinguistic area actually extends across the mid-montane region from Himachal Pradesh across the eastern Himalayas (Berreman 1963). Although likely descended from a group known as the Khas, an Indo-Aryan people cited in ancient sources, Kshatriya elites across this zone have since Mughal times asserted that their origins were among Rajput clans that fled from Muslim rule. This claim has stood behind their allegiance to Hinduism, promoted intergroup solidarity, and justified their predatory dominance over other peoples in the region. Modern Himalayan history was shaped decisively by one Pahari clan from Gorkha that built upon, extended, and finally dominated the petty Kshatriya states across the region (Burghart 1984; Stiller 1973). By 1769, the entire region was conquered and integrated into this new state.

5. Among neighbors in Asan Tol, northeast Kathmandu, we noted fifteen examples of divergent vocabulary terms used for common household items between Hindu Shresthas and Buddhist Tuladhars.

6. The sense of conquest is not gone: for several weeks in 1980, I recorded the life history of an old Newar businessman. One day we sat talking about the Rana period, surrounded by several of his elderly Newar friends who sat looking out over the rooftops of Kathmandu. The Valley foothills and Himalayas were visible in the distance. When the conversation turned to relations with the Paharis, for whom the Newars have the special term "Khem," my informant was silent for a moment, then suddenly volunteered in broken English: "This still our Valley, not theirs." His friends nodded their agreement. (For a corresponding Pahari anecdote, see note 9.)

7. The Urāy caste is composed of eight subcastes, numbering in all several thousand. Predominantly merchants and artisans, and indigenous to Kathmandu city, the Urāy are one of the most important lay Buddhist communities in the Valley. See Lewis (1994) for

an extended discussion of this group and more in-depth consideration of the history of Newar Hindu-Buddhist contestation from the late Malla period onward.

8. The Nepali manuscript consulted was obtained from a private collection, hand copied from the original government printed version (1947). Special thanks go to Subarna Man Tuladhar for bringing this to my attention years ago and for his kind help in translating the Nepali text. (As our copy's Nepali title page has been lost, I can only give the English translation of the title in the bibliography.) Beyond Höfer's work on the *Muluki Ain* of 1856 (1979), I have not been able to research the history of sumptuary laws, or their application (and enforcement) among other Newar Buddhists or other ethnic groups. Such a study of the legal history of state-ethnic group interaction would be invaluable.

9. Why were the Buddhist Newars of Kathmandu singled out? First, the ruling state elite (Rana and Shah) used the claim that Nepal was the world's only remaining "pure Hindu state" to justify its sovereignty (Burghart 1984:115–116). The Buddhist Newars were also quite wealthy and they were right there directly before the palace and the new government. I have had informants cite pre-1950 cases in which Rana family members acted in despotic fashion to take property from wealthy Kathmandu merchants and even seize beautiful young women they espied in state processions through the old town. (The women became their subsidiary wives.) The 1947 sumptuary code in fact does lay the legal basis for the Rana state to fine or confiscate any excessive displays of wealth. The enduring Pahari jealousy about Newar culture and sophistication has been noted in Bista (1991). In support, I can recount a conversation I once had in the United States Marine Bar in Kathmandu with a young man from a prominent, if somewhat dissipated, Chetri family. With feeling, and knowing my research on Newar communities, he volunteered what he said was the Chetri sense of inferiority regarding Newar artistry and tradition. "But," he added, "I will never give up the feeling that we deserve to rule since my ancestors conquered them, created the nation and have set their roots into this Valley." (Fieldnotes, 1987)

10. A gesture of respect with the palms joined at shoulder height. For honoring deities and individuals of higher status, *namaṣkār* (also called *namaste*) is common across the Indian subcontinent. This is the very first gesture a Newar child is taught.

11. The Buddhist celestial bodhisattva, Avalokiteshvara, who is also called "*Karuṇāmaya*" ("Compassionate-hearted One"). The chief shrine for this deity in Kathmandu city is in a monastic courtyard called *Jana Bāhā*, hence the appellation. See Locke (1980).

12. *Pūjā* can be defined as "ritual offering" and constitutes any gesture or substance offered to an icon.

13. Svayambhū is the large hilltop Buddhist shrine that is the focus of Newar Buddhist devotionism. Groups gather to play drums and sing devotional songs there for the entire month. For elaborate notes and documentation on the Guṃlā month, see Lewis (1993b).

14. Also called "Tihār" in Nepali and "Dīpāvalī" in northern India, devotees celebrate this festival by lighting lamps dedicated to Lakṣmī, goddess of wealth.

15. I want to make it clear before turning to certain themes pertaining to ethnic boundary maintenance, that I do not want to violate the poet's artistry by implying that the "didactic uplift agenda" pervades every episode in the text. There is this element in *Jhī*

Macā—which I will now focus upon—but Hridaya's little book is not one of the heavy-handed works of "Newar nationalism." The poetry of Chittadhar's language makes *Jhī Macā* more than a mere manual. As I have written elsewhere, "It rises to the level of art by its poetic celebration of the Newar lifestyle, enlivened by the author's love of his own culture and its children" (Lewis 1989a:199).

16. For example, the text uses idiomatic onomatopoeic expressions for fluttering fireflies (Episode 10) and burning butter lamps (Episode 14).

17. "Newari" is a modern English neologism. There are two emic terms preferred by Newars: the colloquial form as given in the text; or the Sanskritized "Nepāl Bhāṣa" that also expresses the old pre-Shah boundary of "Nepāl" as the Kathmandu-Valley only.

18. See the notes in Lewis (1989a) and Lewis (1984) regarding the details of these festival observances. As cited in Episode 9, these are:

Month	Known by:	Tradition or Trait
<i>Bacalā</i>		<i>mwāli</i> horn playing and <i>Digu Pūjā</i>
<i>Taculā</i>		hot
<i>Dillā</i>		rice planting
<i>Guṃlā</i>		the <i>bājan</i>
<i>Yamlā</i>		<i>Indrajatra</i> and <i>Dīpa Pūjā</i>
<i>Kaulā</i>		<i>Mohini</i> (Nep. <i>Dasain</i>)
<i>Kachalā</i>		<i>Mhah Pūjā</i> (Nep. <i>Tihar</i>)
<i>Thinlā</i>		<i>Yomari</i> confections
<i>Pohela</i>		Full moon frost
<i>Sillā</i>		<i>Māhra</i> festival (Nep. <i>Shiva Ratri</i>)
<i>Chilā</i>		<i>Holi</i>
<i>Caulā</i>		Bathing at <i>Lhuti Ajimā</i>

19. The *bājan* before 1991 also coordinated various Urāy communities' participation in political protest marches, including the demonstrations each year urging the government to adopt the Newari yearly cycle, Nepal's only indigenous calendar system, as the official standard for the country.

20. Such observations on the natural world are not peripheral to the foundations of Newar moral reckoning. As Parish has noted, "Newars...tend to see morality as an objective part of the world, rather than as a human construction—morality reflects natural or sacred law" (1991:340). This *ahimsā* ideal provides a linkage to the Pahari stereotype of Newars in general: as Prithivi Narayan Shah, the unifier of the country once said, "This three-cited Nepal is a cold stone. It is great only in intrigue. With one who drinks from cisterns [the Newar practice] there is no wisdom; nor is there courage" (quoted in Burghart 1984:111, with my notation). This view is even expressed by Newars themselves in an old verse:

Lvāy he maphu ("Can't fight
Mile naṃ majū Or unite.")

21. The study of the political parties in modern Newar contexts and their views on ethnic identity and religious tradition would be a fascinating and important area for research. Impressionistic observations of Guṃlā devotional activities at Svayambhū in 1991 and the 1993 *Samyak* in Kathmandu suggest to me that the popularity of Marxist-Communist parties in the capital have led to no discernible falling away from festival practices.

22. Kathmandu television owners receive on Star Cable (Hong Kong) CNN, MTV, Asian sports, BBC, and movies. Indian television features government news and many religious series. The government-run Nepal TV features government news and American TV shows (e.g., *Bonanza*, *The Brady Bunch*).

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