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BLOOD AND BODHISATTVAS: SACRIFICE AMONG THE NEWAR BUDDHISTS OF NEPAL¹

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1. Introduction

Vajrayāna Buddhism, as practised by most Newar of the Kathmandu Valley, has frequently been described as anomalous by virtue of its embrace of a caste system (Greenwold 1977; Gellner 1986; Rosser 1978; Locke 1980), the priestly ritual activities performed by those initiated into a sangha (Greenwold 1974a, 1974b, 1978), and the absence of the celibate community that the sangha most often constitutes in other Buddhist contexts (Allen 1973).² This paper examines another apparently anomalous characteristic of Newar Buddhism: the prevalence of sacrifice in Newar Buddhist ritual.

Sacrifice is an important part of many rituals performed by Buddhist Newars. Moreover, sacrifice is a vital component of many rites that are intimately connected with Newar Buddhism's most important divine embodiment of compassion, Bungadya,³ otherwise referred to by Newars as Karunāmaya, and known to many non-Newars as Rāto Matsyendranāth. This paper seeks to establish that the importance of sacrifice in this ritual cycle devoted to a *bodhisattva* is not deviant from normal Newar practice, but is completely consistent with fundamental principles of Newar Vajrayāna Buddhist orthodoxy. To this end, this paper begins with several examples of the numerous sacrificial rites performed during the annual procession of this deity. These and other ethnographic examples will show that the relationship that links the appeasement of bloodthirsty deities with devotion to this benevolent *bodhisattva* is also to be found in rites dedicated to other important *bodhisattvas*. This relationship is also articulated in Buddhist worship of other benevolent deities and in rites commonly performed by *vajrācārya* priests for their Buddhist lay-patrons.

It is suggested that blood sacrifice as practised by the Newar Buddhist appears anomalous by virtue of a false comparison between current practice and selective readings of ancient monastic tracts. The structural factors that motivate the sacrifices offered by contemporary Buddhist Newars were undoubtedly present in India when Buddhism was in its ascendancy, and adherents of Buddhism then were likely to have responded to them in a manner similar to their contemporary Newar counterparts.⁴

2. Sacrifice in the festival of Bungadya

Bungadya has been described by many as one of the most important deities in Nepal,⁵ and his annual chariot procession, or *rath jātrā*, is one of the most important of the country's many festivals.⁶ In order to understand most of the explanations Newars give for the sacrifices offered in conjunction with the worship of Bungadya, it is necessary to know the myth told to explain the origins of his annual procession. The essential story presented below is typically offered by Hindu and Buddhist Newars, as well as non-Newar devotees.

This version is, in a sense, an «ideal type,» for though few would argue with the major points, many variations can be found, and no one individual is likely to include all the events noted here.

There appears to be a general consensus among those who recite the various versions of this story that Bungadya's festival began 1,400 years ago. At that time, it is said, the country had suffered from drought for twelve years. The King, Narendradeva, came to know from a priest named Bandhudatta (variously described as either a Hindu *ācārya* or Buddhist *vajrācārya*, depending on the persuasion of the teller) that the only way to bring the drought to an end was to bring Bungadya to Nepal. So, Bandhudatta and Narendradeva, aided by a farmer named Lalita Jyāpu, went to find Bungadya in Karmarup, a kingdom populated by demons and evil spirits ruled by his demon father and demoness mother. Though Bandhudatta and Narendradeva entreated Bungadya's parents to allow him to come to their drought-stricken country, Bungadya was the cherished youngest of five hundred sons, and his parents would not let him go. Due to his eminently compassionate disposition, however, Bungadya stole away to aid the people of Nepal while his mother, who was guarding his door, was asleep. Upon awakening, the demoness queen was furious, and, in the company of a coterie of her demonic subjects, went in pursuit of her son. Attempting to elude Bungadya's parents, Bandhudatta performed a *sādhana*,⁷ turning Bungadya into a bee and placing him in an ewer (*kalas*) in order to flee more quickly. In spite of his efforts, Bungadya's mother and her company of demons caught up with them at the edge of the Kathmandu Valley. Bandhudatta managed to appease them, promising that Bungadya would be the guardian of Nepal. Through his tantric powers, he provided the denizens of Kamarup with an enormous feast of meat. Thus placated, the demoness queen allowed Bungadya to proceed, and a procession formed in his honour. Though numerous deities were in attendance, the casual onlooker could only see a parade of animals entering the valley. Among them were four Bhairabs, visible in the form of dogs, who carried the deity. Upon their entering the valley of Nepal, rain came, ending the prolonged drought.⁸

As noted above, the annual *jātrā* is not only a reenactment of this procession but is also said to cause the vital monsoon rains to come every year. Except for every twelfth year, the chariot procession takes place entirely in the city of Patan, located about five kilometers south of the centre of Kathmandu, where one of Bungadya's two temples is located. Every twelfth year, the procession begins in Bungamati, a small village five kilometers south of Patan, the location of Bungadya's other temple and the home of Bungadya's priestly attendants. The difficult twelve-yearly chariot procession proceeds to Patan and returns to Bungamati on a road that climbs over sizeable hills.

Bungadya attracts a wide range of followers, including Tibetans and Parbatiya as well as the Newar. As noted above, he is known by many different names, Rāto Matsyendranāth and Karunāmaya among them. Bungadya's attendants, however, are Newar Buddhists from the top two sub-castes of the Newar Buddhist caste hierarchy. They revere Bungadya as a manifestation of Padmapāni Lokeśvar, the most important of the many incarnations of Avalokiteśvara, the embodiment of compassion.

These Buddhist priestly attendants annually direct eighteen sacrificial rites in which a total of twenty-six goats, sheep, and buffaloes are killed over the course of the preparation, enactment, and conclusion of the chariot festival. Others offer an additional seven sacrifices (most of which are performed by the chariot brakemen) in which ten animals are killed. This total of twenty-five sacrifices involving thirty-three animals only includes offerings that are generally considered to be mandatory events in the annual cycle of observances dedicated to Bungadya, and are performed by those who traditionally participate in the festival. Many others perform optional sacrifices in conjunction with the festival because of their personal inclination or family custom. Still more sacrifices are performed in years in which new parts of the chariot must be built, such as in every twelfth festival which originates in Bungamati, when the parts for the entire *rath* must be fabricated anew, and in years in which the *rath* is damaged during the procession. Building a new set of wheels for the chariot, which is typically done about every five years, involves a series of thirty-five sacrifices.⁹

Why all this sacrifice? Before arriving at a general answer to this question, it is important to review several instances, explaining why sacrifices are offered to the particular deities that receive them. Since the sacrifices directed by Bungadya's Buddhist priests, or *pānjus*, are apparently the most anomalous, I will restrict detailed discussion to those sacrifices. Of these, seven are offered to Bhairabs, six are offered to various forms of Yogāmbara, three are offered to a manifestation of Bungadya's mother, known as Māju Simā, and one is offered to Ganesh. The latter offering to Ganesh is a typical concluding *kwena pūjā* rite and does not merit special attention here.¹⁰ A brief description of three days of the *jātrā* in which more than fifteen animals are sacrificed in rituals over which *pānjus* preside will serve to illustrate the ways in which sacrificial rites constitute an integral part of the festival honouring the compassionate Bungadya.

As is common in South Asia, Bungadya goes through a process of renewal each year. An annual bathing is followed by meticulous repainting and a reinvestment of the life (*jīvan*) of the god into his image. This is followed by a long series of rituals in which the renewed deity is administered the rites of passage that both male and female Newars undergo. The final series of initiation rites concludes on the day Bungadya is placed in his chariot and the *jātrā* begins.¹¹ The first series of sacrifices discussed here starts two nights before Bungadya's procession begins, and it is known as the *khicā bhu*, or the «dog feast».

3. The feast for dogs: two buffaloes thrice killed

On the evening that some *pānjus* are reinstalling the life of Bungadya in his image in Patan, other *pānjus* are officiating at a remarkable series of sacrifices in Bungamati. This series starts at Ikhāyedyā:, an aniconic deity located just outside the main square of the village dominated by Bungadya's Bungamati temple. This deity lies in a depression over which the chariot is constructed once every twelve years. The *pānjus* identify this deity with Yogāmbara Jhānadākinī, the consort of Yogāmbara, who is also honoured at Mhaipi Ajimā, the original location of the *pānjus'* tutelary deity. The spoils of this sacrifice are offered not only to Ikhāyedyā:, however, but to selected

dogs as well, from which the sacrifice gets its name, *khicā bhu*. The dogs are so honoured because they are identified with Bhairab, four Bhairabs having taken the form of dogs and carried Bungadya in the procession that brought him to the valley.

Two *vajrācārya pānjus* preside over a rite in which members of the butcher caste sacrifice a buffalo at the Ikhaye Yogāmbara. They bleed it through an incision in the back of the neck, and then slaughter it. They cut the limbs and head off the carcass, which they then skin. They empty the ribcage of viscera and set it aside. The *pānjus* offer several pieces of meat to a few favoured dogs, many of which gather, snarling and yelping, around the slaughter. It is said that the entire buffalo used to be offered to the dogs, except the skin, limbs, head, ribcage, and some of the blood, but because buffaloes are now so expensive, they save almost all the meat for feasting.

The butchers then proceed to the bottom of the steps of Hayagriba Bhairab's temple, located across the central square from Bungadya's temple, and re-assemble the carcass, placing a bowl of blood inside the ribcage, which they then drape with the skin they have saved. The butchers put the head and limbs in place and the *pānju* officiant blesses the reassembled buffalo with the ritual normally used to prepare animals for sacrifice: the same rite that was performed for the buffalo half an hour earlier while it was still alive. This preparatory rite completed, the butcher assistants lift the skin draped over the ribcage, extract the bowl of blood, spray its contents onto the temple steps, and take it to the Bhairab within the temple, thereby sacrificing the same buffalo twice. It is said that the priests used to be able to bring the reassembled buffalo back to life before sacrificing it again, but nowadays, it being the *Kali yuga*, no one has this power.¹²

Another buffalo is then sacrificed to a second Bhairab (Hākumha Bhairab, the «black» Bhairab) located behind the shrine of Hayagriba and not visible to the public. A niche in the rear wall of the temple is doused with the blood of the second buffalo. This third sacrifice completes the series, described in the local riddle-like phrase, «two buffaloes thrice killed» (*Nimha myey swoka siye*).

The meat of these buffaloes is consumed in feasts on three different occasions. On the first occasion, human participants in the feast for dogs eat their share in their own homes, and some join in a small feast immediately after the sacrifices in Bungamati. The second feast, a much larger affair, is shared in Patan by many of those who have some official role in the workings of the *jātrā*. The third occasion in which the buffalo is consumed is a much smaller, but far more significant event. As with most feasts, the head of the buffalo sacrificed to Hayagriba Bhairab is cut into seven pieces to be offered to the most honoured guests. In this case, the prestigious left jaw is offered to none other than Bungadya. The deity is presented with this jaw during his first rice feeding, one of the many life cycle rites he undergoes on the morning of the day he is placed in his chariot.

Here the link between sacrifice and Bungadya is particularly close. Not only do his attendants supervise the dog feast sacrifices, but they actually present the *prasād* left from the sacrificial rites to Bungadya. This sacrifice illustrates one particularly strong connection between the appeasement of the bloodthirsty Ikhāyedyā: and Hayagriba Bhairab, and worship of the bene-

volent Bungadya. Another example will illustrate a similar connection between Bungadya and his mother, the demoness queen of Kamarup. Most of the sacrifices which the *pānjus* direct are to these three deities: Bhairab, Ikhāyedyā: (Yogāmbara Jñānadākinī), and Māju Simā (Bungadya's mother).

4. The great sacrifice

When the chariot festival reaches the southernmost part of its route, Bungadya encounters his mother once again in the form of a tree known as *māju simā*. At this point, the *pānjus* officiate over the largest sacrifice of the festival, the *mahā bali*. This series of sacrifices lasts over five hours, and is performed directly in front of Bungadya's chariot. The form that Bungadya's mother takes as Māju Simā is the result of her having come to the *jātrā* in an effort to steal her son away, only to be found out and anchored to the spot as a tree. It is this kind of interference from Bungadya's mother and the other demonic denizens of Kamarup – *bhūts* («ghosts») and *rachases* («demonesses») – that the *mahā bali* is intended to prevent each year.¹³

The participants include a *vajrācārya* priest from Patan who is considered an expert in the *mahā bali* performance and who uses a ritual manual (*vidhi*) entitled *Sasi Balipūjā Saphū* («demon king sacrificial ritual book») to conduct the rite.¹⁴ Others are the officiating *pānju* priest, five or six other *pānjus*, the descendant of the Patan Malla king (Yela Juju) and his retinue, two *suwa:s* (members of a prestigious subcaste of Newar *jyāpu* farmers traditionally associated with feast preparation), and two butchers. At the centre of the sacrificial area a large basket is placed, surrounded by sixty-four clay saucers containing grains, garlic, and ginger as normally offered to deities which accept blood. In addition to these ingredients, one cracked duck egg, often used as a proxy for a sacrificial animal, is placed in each saucer.¹⁵ The *pūjā* officiants sit in a line opposite the basket and offerings, facing the chariot.

The first set of sacrificial offerings includes two goats and a sheep. After these animals have been blessed by the Patan Malla king's descendant, and the knife used to cut their throats is blessed by the *pānju* priest, the *suwa:* sacrifices them, slitting their throats so that blood squirts from the victim onto the central assemblage of sacrificial offerings. The first goat is flayed and dumped into the basket, to be disposed of later as tainted and dangerous refuse. At this point a bucket of wriggling fish-like creatures is thrown onto the array of bloodied saucers to die.¹⁶

The Malla king's descendant then blesses two buffaloes to be sacrificed. Butchers (*nay*), also using knives blessed by the *pānjus*, direct streams of blood from two major arteries in the buffalo's neck to spatter on the assemblage of saucers and other offerings. They then decapitate the buffaloes and place their heads along with those of the other victims which are lined up in front of the *pūjā* paraphernalia in front of the *pānjus*. A burning wick is placed on top of these heads to symbolise the immediate release from the cycle of rebirth which the victims have secured by offering themselves in sacrifice.¹⁷

These sacrifices, officiated over by the *pānjus*, are followed by sacrifices offered by the *gakhu* brakemen to the wheels as manifestations of Bhairab. Bhairab is their tutelary deity, and the wheels to which they offer sacrifice threaten them throughout the *jātrā*, for it is their job to stop and steer the

chariot by shoving chocks of wood under the massive wheels as they roll. During the course of all these sacrifices, at the moment an animal is killed, the *pānju* attendants in the chariot block the front door of the *rath* in order to shield Bungadya from the sight of bloodshed. The compassionate Bungadya, though born of a blood-thirsty demoness, abhors sacrifice.¹⁸

5. Sacrifice and other Buddhist deities

It might be suggested that these sacrifices have become incorporated into the *jātrā* of Bungadya because of his many Hindu devotees who revere him as Rāto Matsyendranāth. This would not explain, however, the many little-known and, in some cases, secret sacrifices presided over by *pānjus* as integral parts of the *jātrā*.¹⁹ Neither would it explain the importance of very similar sacrifices in the ritual cycles connected with *bodhisattvas* that do not have such a large Hindu following.

There are four other *bodhisattvas* in the valley: Cobāhā:dyā: of Cobhar (Ānandādi Lokeśwar); Janmadyā: of Kathmandu (Padmapāñi Lokeśwar); Cakwa:dyā: of Patan (Jatādhāri Lokeśwar); and Nālādyā: of Nala (Srsthikānthā Lokeśwar), often associated with Bungadya as the *pengu taye* Lokeśwar, or Lokeśwars of the four places. There is some contention among residents of Kathmandu and Patan concerning whether Janmadyā: or Cakwa:dyā: is one of these four, thus accounting for the total of five possible candidates for inclusion among the *pengu taye* Lokeśwar. The annual festivals of at least three of these other Bodhisattvas also involve sacrifice in ways quite similar to the practices involved in the festival of Bungadya.²⁰ Janmadyā: and Cakwa:dyā: have both come to be identified with what could be called Hindu appellations (Seto Matsyendranāth and Minnāth, respectively), lending support to the notion that the influence of Hindu devotees could account for the importance of sacrifice in their ritual cycles. However, the same cannot be said for Cobāhā:dyā:. In fact, tradition suggests that the *jātrā* for Bungadya could have been modeled on that of Cobāhā:dyā:, as his festival is said to have existed at the time of Bungadya's arrival in Bungamati. Cobāhā:dyā: remains one of the principal deities worshipped by Buddhist Newars from Kathmandu, and his annual river ceremony (the equivalent of which is performed for each of this group of Lokeśwars) is attended by thousands every year. Just outside the *bāhā* temple compound of Cobāhā:dyā: is another Ikhāyedyā:, to whom sacrifice is offered under the supervision of a *vajrācārya* priest during Cobāhā:dyā:'s annual festival.

One need not resort to this quartet of Lokeśwars to find benevolent gods, worshipped primarily by Buddhists, linked in a similarly complementary fashion with bloodthirsty deities. This principle of complementarity is evident at Tham Bahī in Kathmandu, where a shrine to Jātaka Ajimā is located just outside the main entrance. This man-eating demoness is linked with the founding of the *bahī* by virtue of her destroying (and presumably consuming) a king, thereby permitting his heir to build Tham Bahī.²¹ Blood sacrifices are performed to her image just outside the *bahī*.

In many cases, major deities who abhor sacrifice will have a sort of proxy nearby, in the form of another god who accepts sacrifice. A famous example of this arrangement is the shrine of Vajrayoginī, also identified as Ugratārā, located at Gum Bāhā on the outskirts of Sankhu. It is said that the formerly

carnivorous goddess now shuns sacrifice, but devotees frequently offer a sacrifice to a Ganesh conveniently located nearby after honouring the goddess.

Many initiated members of Buddhist sanghas claim that their clan deity (*digu dyā*.) is Yogāmbara or some other tantric deity who accepts sacrifice, though during their annual clan deity *pūjā* they worship an enshrined *caitya*. Gellner (1987b) has described the important example of Kwa Bāhā in Patan in which this situation exists. Locke (1985: 14) suggests that this confusion may be the result of needing a *digu dyā*: proxy who will accept sacrifice, since many consider sacrifice to be an essential aspect of *digu dyā*: worship.

6. Complementarity of blood sacrifice and benevolent deities in common rituals

This principle of complementarity, which dictates that potentially malevolent deities must often be propitiated with sacrifice in the course of worshipping a benevolent deity that abhors bloodshed, is also evident in the most common *pūjās* performed by Buddhist priests at the behest of their clients. The *hwamā pūjā*, or fire sacrifice, is an elaborate offering that, for Buddhists, can be performed only by an initiated *vajrācārya*. Though the *hwamā* may be offered primarily to a benevolent deity, an essential part of all *hwamā pūjās* is the summoning of the *lokapālas*, or guardians of the directions, for whom meat and alcohol must be provided.

The *satwa: pūjā*, which is primarily an elaborate form of *kalaś pūjā* in which a deity is summoned into a ceremonial ewer, provides another example of complementarity. The full name of this *pūjā*, *sapta vidhānuttara pūjā*, can be roughly translated as «the *pūjā* of the supreme seven-fold manner of devotion.» (Joshi 1987: 599). These manners of devotion, according to Vajrācārya, include worship, *pūjā*, removal of sin, giving pleasure, seeking instruction, aspiring to the *bodhicitta* (perfected mind), and abundance. It is the most popular of the more elaborate devotional offerings made during the chariot festivals of Bungadya and Janmadyā, and is offered to many other deities as well.

Two series of 108 offerings are made in the course of this *pūjā*.²² Participants are supposed to be in a state of purity while the *pūjā* is performed. Ideally, this rite should be followed by another before the participants resume their impure ways and consume the feast which inevitably follows. This rite is called the *laysiwā pūjā* and consists of making an offering of meat and alcohol to a deity who accepts sacrifice.²³ The deity of choice for this *pūjā* during the chariot festival is, of course, Māju Simā, though the nearby Batuka Bhairab is also so honoured. Those who perform the *laysiwā pūjā* do so in order that they may safely resume consuming meat and alcohol.

The principle which underlies the *laysiwā pūjā* is, by now, familiar. Summoning the benevolent Bungadya, *bodhisattva* par excellence, entails the appeasement of bloodthirsty divinities. The *satwa: pūjā* is the most common *pūjā* performed during the *jātrā* in which Bungadya is invoked through *sādhana*. Even in this common observance performed for lay devotees, the worshipper should ideally honour not only Bungadya, but also mollify gods who demand blood sacrifice.

7. Conclusion

That a study of Bungadya, who is known for his benevolence and identified as a *bodhisattva*, should point to the role of sacrifice in the Newar Buddhist tradition bears testimony to the importance of this apparently anomalous practice. One striking reference concerning a small «barony» in Chamba state in north-western India suggests that the phenomenon of sacrifice being linked with *bodhisattvas* has not been limited to Nepal.

There also exist, however, in Chamba a few Ranas in the original sense of the word, who still hold the position of their ancestors, the *rajanakas* of the inscriptions. Chief among them is the Rana of Triloknath whose barony extends over a large portion of Chamba-lahul. ...The tradition of his family is that they came originally from Jammu and settled at the place now known as Triloknath, before the celebrated idol of that name was established there. ...At the annual *mela* on the last day of Savan (Savana), in which the worship of Avalokitesvara, the Great Compassionate, is strangely blended with bloody sacrifices of an aboriginal type, the Rana takes the leading part. Though professedly a Hindu, he acts as manager of the famous Buddhist shrine, and appoints the lama *pūjāri* (Vogel 1911: 116-17).

In view of our understanding of the importance of access to benevolent gods and the potential of interference from malevolent deities, it seems only logical that sacrifices would be offered to ensure access to the power and munificence of benevolent deities if sacrifice were required for the propitiation of gods who threaten this contact.

The Kathmandu Valley is a world populated by people and gods who constantly interact. The human population is scrupulous about avoiding the displeasure of powerful deities who favour blood as a means of propitiation. There is no reason to doubt that the Buddhists of India were in a similar milieu, surrounded by deities who were worshipped prior to the coming of the Buddha, and who continued to demand propitiation in spite of the Buddha's teachings that they did not exist. Buddhism has never evolved in a spiritual or cosmological void. Frequently, in the eyes of the laity, it has enveloped other deities and spirits, as the well-known work of Tambiah (1970) in Thailand, Spiro (1970) in Burma, and Leach (1962) and Obeyesekere (1977) in Sri Lanka clearly reveals. Unfortunately, we have no knowledge of the beliefs of the Mahāyāna Buddhist layman in India, for our only evidence lies in inscriptions which record the deeds and thoughts of Buddhist kings, and texts recorded in monasteries chiefly for the benefit for monks. In spite of their clear limitations as historical evidence, these pronouncements and theories are often used as the bases of criticism of modern Newar practice and belief. The position of the Newar Buddhist who marries, observes caste laws, and offers blood sacrifice is anomalous by virtue of a false comparison. To the degree that the existence of a Buddhist laity is acknowledged in India during the period of Buddhist efflorescence at the time of Asoka, for example, assumptions made about the day-to-day lives of Buddhists are based largely on monastic tracts and panegyrics.²⁴ To compare this material with contemporary ethnographic accounts does disservice to both.

The *vajrācārya* who participates in sacrifice also distances himself from it. Though he blesses the knife he never wields it. Though he participates in sacrifices performed directly in front of Bungadya, he shields them from Bungadya's view. Newars who describe themselves as Buddhist agree that sacrifice constitutes a departure from ideal behavior. Possibly due to the relatively new influence of Theravāda in Nepal, some have renounced sacrifice, but offering sacrifice by no means constitutes an occasional deviation from the norm. Blood sacrifice is a pervasive and enduring aspect of the lives of many Newar Buddhists. Any definition of Buddhism which does not accommodate the only surviving community of South Asian Mahāyāna Buddhists is deficient from the anthropological, if not common-sensical perspective. Newar Buddhists observe the principal of *ahimsa* which is at issue here even as they violate it.

Notes

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 2. But see Gellner (1985a).
 3. Frequently mentioned terms that have commonly used Roman transliterations are written here without diacritics if no ambiguity results and readability is enhanced. Hence, Bungadya: is here rendered as «Bungadya», *samgha* as «sangha», etc. Other major terms or names, such as Ganesh and Bhairab, are rendered as such rather than the more accurate, but less recognisable Newari forms Ganedyā: and Bhailā:dyā:. I have also used «w» in place of «v» to convey more accurately the Newari pronunciation of words.
 4. John Locke (1980: 450) has made a similar argument with respect to the status of Buddhism in India, suggesting that the adoption of caste among the Newar Buddhists might, paradoxically, have saved them from the fate of their Indian predecessors who were, according to Locke, absorbed into Hindu society.
 5. Dharmaswamin, who lived in the Kathmandu Valley from 1226 to 1234, noted that «Arya Bu-kham» was well known in India (Roerich 1959). Slusser suggests that Bungadya was well known in Tibet by the thirteenth century and considered to be one of the «...most esteemed manifestations of *Avalokitesvara* among the thousands known in Nepal and Tibet» (1982: 371).
- Many observers have compared the popularity of Bungadya in Nepal with that of Lord Pasupati of Pasupatinath, the most heavily endowed religious shrine in Nepal. Slusser notes that «Srinivasa of Patan [1658-1684]..., one of the most pious of Hindu kings, passed over Pasupati in his *praśasti* [panegyric] to declare himself the devotee of Matsyendranātha» (*ibid.*: 74, citing Regmi 1966, pt. 4: 168-70). D.R. Regmi, one of the most prolific Nepali writers of Nepalese history, has stated that «*Lokeśwar* known as Macchindra is one of the most commonly respected deities of the Nepal Valley, ranking as high as Pasupatinatha in popular estimation as far as the followers of Vajrayāna are concerned» (1965, pt. 1: 572).
- Early European observers also commented on the importance of Bungadya, often describing him as the «guardian deity of Nepal» (Wright 1972 [1877]: 34). Sylvain Lévi observed that both «Gourkas» and Newars participated in the festival of Bungadya, whatever their religious persuasion, for «Matsyendra Natha est un trop gros personnage

- pour qu'on risque de provoquer ses rancunes» (1905, vol. ii: 44). Percival Landon simply noted twenty years later that «Machendra is the most notable deity of Nepal...» (1928: 124).
6. Bungadya's annual *rath jātrā* is the only festival which Dharmaswamin chose to record of the many he must have observed during his prolonged stay (Slusser 1982: 370). Gopal Singh Nepali, the first to produce an ethnography on the Newar, writes of Bungadya that «the Newars regard his festival as the greatest among their national festivals» (1965: 316).
 7. Among the Newar Buddhists, the term *sādhana* is most often used to refer to a ritual through which the presence of a deity is invoked, even against the deity's will, either to benefit from the deity's presence or to constrain the deity from doing harm. The more esoteric meditative aspects of *sādhana*, including dissolution of the self and achieving identity with a deity through visualisation, if acknowledged at all, are usually referred to as instrumental aspects of a procedure to control a deity.
 8. This version of the myth is grossly simplified, and not intended to represent a particular version offered by an informant. Many contemporary versions of the myth, even those offered by Buddhists, will refer to the deity as Matsyendranāth, and link the drought with the actions of his disciple Goraknāth. The details recounted here are intended simply to provide the mythological context essential for understanding those aspects of the festival being considered here. For further discussion of this myth see Wright (1972 [1877]: 140-52), Locke (1973; 1980: 281-98), Vergati (1985), Toffin (1990) and Owens (1989: 145-55). Locke cites many of the Newari and Nepali published works on the myth, drawing particularly on A. Vajrācārya (1980).
 9. For example, felling the tree used for making a new chariot yoke (*dhwamā*), and constructing a new *baymwa*, the crow's-nest-like structure located at the top of the chariot's spire, both involve extensive sacrificial rites.
 10. *Kwena pūjās*, usually involving a sacrifice and feast, typically mark the conclusions of many religious endeavours, including not only ritual sequences, but pilgrimages, for example.
 11. Bungadya actually undergoes two series of life-cycle initiation rites, the first in the company of the *niyekhu* painters, and the second in the company of the *pāñjus* who will accompany the deity during the chariot procession. For a complete description of these rites as performed for the principal *Lokeśwar* of Kathmandu, Janmadyā:, see Locke (1980: 208-21). See Owens (1989: 206-16) for a description of these rites as performed for Bungadya.
 12. See Lewis (1984: 391) for a description of a similar sacrifice offered during *Mohini* to Annapurna in Assam. In this case the buffalo, which is reassembled at Annapurna's *āgam chem*, is also said to have been revived with mantras in the past using techniques that are no longer mastered in this inauspicious age.
 13. Contrary to Locke's brief mention of this sacrifice, in which he states that «Some have explained this sacrifice as a propitiation of the *yakshas*, etc. who came with *Avalokitesvara*'s mother, but this hardly fits with what actually happens...» (1980: 270), this explanation is well known and is consistent with what occurs. The sacrifice to the Bhairabs represented by the wheels and mask on the front of the chariot yoke, inaccurately described by Locke as performed exclusively by butchers on the *gakhus'* behalf, is clearly offered to propitiate the Bhairabs, as Locke notes. Locke does not mention, however, the four hours of sacrificial rites which precede this relatively brief offering to the Bhairabs. The extensive offerings which give the *mahā ball* sacrifice its name are clearly intended for the malevolent beings of Kamarup.
 14. «*Sasi*» is a name commonly used in the Newari literature to refer to the demon king of Kamarup. Explanations of this sacrifice, however, usually emphasise Bungadya's mother, and it is she who is represented in the shrine at the base of the tree known as *māju simā*.
 15. Even when an animal is actually killed, a duck egg is often offered as a kind of insurance that the offering is adequate.

16. These are referred to simply as «*nya*», or fish, though they appeared to be more like large tadpoles or newt larvae. I know of no other sacrifice which includes these creatures and could elicit no explanation for their presence.
17. Before any animal is sacrificed, it is first determined that the animal has «offered itself», usually indicated by the animal twitching its skin or shaking its head. These signs of the sacrificial animal's consent are often encouraged by generously sprinkling water on the animal or inserting rice in its ear while blessing it.
18. This sight is not spared numerous casual onlookers, however. Though the three *mahā bāis* that I have witnessed all began in the darkness of early morning, none of them concluded before daylight, and crowds of early morning worshippers had gathered.
19. For example, secret sacrifices are twice offered near Swayambhu, including one to Yogāmbara near Santipur, and possibly another at Phaykwa dyā:, located south-west of Swayambhu. Sacrifices offered to Diladyā: in Kotwa daha, where Bungadya's mother is said to have caught up with the group bringing Bungadya to Nepal, are also secret.
20. There are no equivalent sacrifices performed in conjunction with the festival of *Nālādyā:*. The absence of such rites in Nala might be attributable to a simplification of ritual that could have occurred in conjunction with the relatively recent revival of the annual cycle of observances there (cf. Locke 1980: 366-67).
21. See Slusser (1982: 363) for a brief rendition of this story.
22. One series is comprised of the five *pāncopachāla* offerings of flowers, incense, light, scent, and food (Skt. *puspa*, *dhupa*, *dīpa*, *gandha*, *naivedya*; vermilion is frequently substituted for the scent *gandha*). These offerings are manifested in the form of 108 repetitions of *mudrās* and mantras performed by the *vajrācārya* priest whose services are required for this *pūjā*. These symbolic offerings are accompanied by 108 offerings of rice, water, lighted oil or ghee lamps, *gwa:jā* (forms made of flour, called *gtor-ma* in Tibetan) and incense, which are usually lined up in front of the *kalaś* and/or *hwamā pūjā* implements.
23. Ratna Kaji Vajrācārya (1980: 2) states that the members of the Jana Bāhā sangha perform their *laysiwā pūjās* offered in conjunction with *satwa: pūjās* for Janmadyā: at Santipur. One informant stated that after performing the *satwa: pūjā* they had to offer a «*santipur pūjā*» at Māju Simā.
24. One such effort, by Nalinaksa Dutt (1945), concludes that by the second century A.D. a Buddhist laity was being cultivated through the popularisation of Jataka and Avadana stories about the previous lives of the Buddha and his disciples, and that the option of achieving bodhisattvahood was not limited to monks.

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