

On why it is good to have many names: the many identities of a Nepalese god

WILL TULADHAR-DOUGLAS

ABSTRACT Through looking at a specific shrine image, the Red Avalokitesvara of Bungamati in the Kathmandu Valley, this article asks how it is possible for one image to be the locus of several distinct cults. The role of the shrine priests, patrons and the different religious communities that actually perform the worship is considered. These various agents are shown to collaborate implicitly in constructing a plural identity through such mechanisms as secret names or names known only within certain communities. Maintaining a complex and flexible identity that draws support from different, often competing, communities for the same shrine image under different guises is an effective strategy for the long-term survival of a shrine image that exists under changing political and religious regimes.

When modern scholars of Indic religions set out to identify the image of a deity—for example, a sculpture or a painting—they work from iconographic criteria listed in authoritative texts. They study the image and look at its colour, number of arms and legs and eyes, any particular objects the deity might be holding and other visual details. So, for example, a red figure with an ornate crown, two hands and two feet, holding a lotus, standing with the weight evenly distributed or possibly a gently curved posture and one hand held out in the *abhayamudra* (gesture of reassurance) is very probably a form of the Buddhist deity Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of compassion called *rakta-padmapani-lokeshvara* (red Lokeshvara with lotus in hand). If one were to inspect this figure more closely, a smaller figure sitting in lotus position set into the crown might be visible. This smaller person is Avalokiteshvara's particular Buddha, Amitabha; and seeing him would confirm the identification. This identification holds true even across significant differences in style, such as one might find by putting a Nepalese and a Khmer image side-by-side. Padmapani Lokeshvara can be seated or standing, and sometimes he holds a

Correspondence: Will Tuladhar-Douglas, School of Divinity, History and Philosophy, King's College, University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen AB24 3UB, UK. Tel: +44 (0)1224 272274. Fax: +44 (0)1224 273750. E-mail: w.t.douglas@abdn.ac.uk

wishing jewel rather than showing the gesture of reassurance. But he always has the lotus and Amitabha in his crown. (Of course, there are hundreds of variations such as yellow and white Padmapani Lokeshvaras, and a Lokeshvara with four arms who is shown reciting a mantra, the Six-Syllable Lokeshvara.)

There are two basic types of authoritative texts used by scholars to make this sort of identification. One is the artisans' workbook that shows precise details of proportion and construction of, in general, a very few figures, perhaps 20. The artisans who made the best images were also practising priests and scholars, so these handbooks are not in any way distant from the meditative and scholastic traditions. When it is possible to establish a correspondence between a known image, perhaps in a museum, and a sketch in an artists' workbook, the sense of intimate contact across the gulf of time is profound. Unfortunately, artisan's workbooks are very rare indeed.

The second type of basic text used by scholars to identify images of a deity is the far more common mediators' compendium. For the study of Sanskrit Vajrayana Buddhism as found in India, Nepal, Tibet, Mongolia and Indonesia, the most famous of these are the various texts known as the *Sadhanamala* and *Sadhanasamuccaya*. Here, we find hundreds of Buddhist deities described according to a precise formula. Nepalese Vajrayana scholars know these texts well. Tibetan lamas, by and large, work with texts that were compiled on the basis of later translations of these Sanskrit texts, and in those Tibetan texts further variations and entirely new figures appear. There are many other Sanskrit texts as well, some still preserved in manuscript and some only available through their Tibetan translations. These meditation compendia order the various forms of a particular deity according to increasing complexity. For Avalokiteshvara—who has dozens of possible forms—first come the two-armed forms in peaceful postures, then four-armed, and so on, to the form with 11 heads and 10 arms, and finally the great 11-headed, 1000-armed form. Other deities, such as Shabari the huntress, do not admit of so much variation and may only have two or three forms.

While it is true that the meditation compendia have been a reference for artisans for several hundred years, these books were not written with identification as their principal purpose. They were intended to be used for the generation of images, whether externally as sculptures or internally as meditation exercises. Thus to assume that there should be a correspondence between any given shrine image and an entry in one of these compendia is problematic; indeed, it is an especially pernicious assumption because it conceals both a shallow and a profound error. The shallow error is to assume that the meditation handbooks should somehow be normative for physical images. This reduces the entire dynamic culture of image production to a single related, but not normative, genre of texts. It also erases the possibility of artistic variation, the importance of other standards such as regional or *atelier* traditions, or the likelihood of a particular client requesting that an image be produced according to his/her specific vision. The profound error is to assume that any particular shrine image¹ can only have one identity. As I will show in this article, successful shrine images or *murti*, to use the Sanskrit or Newari term, are successful in part because of their ability to be a locus for many different formal

identities. To put it another way, the external form of the image of a deity in a popular shrine may or may not correspond to an entry in a meditation handbook, but that image may sustain several distinct identifications at the same time and this capacity is crucial for the patronage and public life of that shrine image.

Bungadyah

Many Indologists and/or Tibetanists make a bit of extra money combing through Sanskrit and Tibetan texts to find a satisfactory identification for an image that has just come onto the Oriental art market, and the art of assigning a name to a particular image is well understood. The governing principle behind these identifications is to work out from the salient details of a particular image what deity it represents. The canonical name and the canonical form should ideally coincide, and any variations should be fully explained.² This is not only a Western intellectual game. Indian, Nepalese and Tibetan scholars do much the same thing, either when identifying items for sale or when producing new images to order. However, the game is being played differently now. The enormous influence of the global market for Oriental *objets d'art* has pushed many scholars into the production of neat descriptions of particular works of art. One need only consult a Sotheby's catalogue to see this in operation; an eye accustomed to reading and manufacturing these short descriptions can easily detect the signs of a tentative or overconfident identification.

Yet the ability of an image to sustain several distinct identifications simultaneously defeats even the best attempts of scholars to definitively identify images of deities. R. Meisezahl, for example, has written a brilliant paper³ studying the evolution of just one form of Avalokiteshvara, Amoghapasha Lokeshvara, in which he traces the development of the iconography in textual sources from the earliest Sanskrit sources through to Tibetan variants, and relates these textual sources to certain images held in private or museum collections. However, because he could not read Chinese, he does not describe the East Asian iconographic tradition and, because he is working from texts to images, he does not attempt to consider Japanese, Central Asian or Indonesian sculptures. Even so, Meisezahl somehow omits the best-known Amoghapasha image anywhere in Asia, a Newar image that has the best-known procession in Nepal and that has drawn pilgrims from the entire Indo-Himalayan region. Meisezahl omitted this image for the simple reason that it has never looked anything like any textual description of Amoghapasha, the deity known as Bungadyah (Newari for the 'god of Bunga', Bunga being a very old village in the south of the Kathmandu Valley, near the former Newar city-state of Lalitpur).

I will use Bungadyah as my primary example in this article, partly because he is an unusually complex deity and partly because we have good enough historical evidence to look at developments in his cult and changes in his identity over about 1300 years. To give a few examples of just how complicated things can get, this one image has two different public names in Nepali: one, Shaiva (Rato Matsyendranath), is used by Hindu worshippers of Shiva, while the other

Bungadyah (Rato Lokeshvara) is used by its Buddhist adherents. In addition, in a ritual context this deity is called Amoghapasha, and there are at least three further secret identities known only to scholars and practitioners... but that is only the beginning.

Historical background

Newars are the original inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley, with a Tibeto-Burman language and a culture that has substantial Tibetic features underneath an Indic social fabric.⁴ Several times in the past millennia, non-indigenous groups have migrated to the valley (almost always from the southern, Indic side, possibly from as far away as the Tamil country) and have been absorbed. Their social system is among the most complex in Asia; even in comparison with other South Asian societies they have a bewildering caste system, with parallel orders of Brahmin and Vajrayana priests at the top of a hierarchy of literally hundreds of castes within one small valley.

As members of a culture located within first the Indic, and then both the Indic and Tibetan, cultural zones, Newars contributed strongly to the development of Tibetan and Northeast Indic culture, and were central to the development of religious forms that can be found either alive or as archaeological remains from Sri Lanka to Japan and Indonesia.⁵ Several of the greatest Vajrayana Buddhist teachers and scholars were Newars, and Pashupati, one of the most important of all Shaiva shrines, is a Newar construction. To the north, Newars built and ran almost the entire trading district in Lhasa, ran the mint for the Tibetan government, and were key members of the Tibetan trade legation to Washington in the twentieth century.⁶

Newars tend to live in densely populated urban centres, each with a history of being its own city-state in contention with all the others. These are surrounded by intensively cultivated rice terraces located in the Kathmandu Valley and other nearby valleys. Houses are usually four or five storeys high, built around courtyards linked by narrow passageways. Given the fertility of the Kathmandu Valley and their distinctive agricultural practices, this was apparently an ecologically sustainable system until about 1950, when the population began to boom. Although their civilisation is very old, dating back at least 2500 years, Newars have for some 230 years been displaced in their own homeland by the Gorkhali-speaking (or Nepali-speaking) modern state of Nepal, whose first king decided to use Kathmandu itself as his capital precisely because only his new subjects, the Newars, had any idea how to run a government. In this case, the invaders did not adopt their subjects' ways, and Newar culture has been in a defensive mode ever since. Fewer people speak Newari every year, and the oppressive religious and linguistic policies of the Gorkha kings and ministers have severely eroded the traditional forms of Newar religion and, especially, Newar Vajrayana Buddhism. A population that was perhaps 90% Buddhist is now something like 35% Buddhist,⁷ and any mutual relations there might have been between the various priestly groups have long since collapsed. Recent political developments have accelerated this decline. On one side there is the oppression on

of the Gorkhali palace. On the other side, the burgeoning Maoist movement in Nepal, which was originally attractive to some segments of the educated Newar classes, has proved to be as lethal an enemy as other Asian Maoisms in Cambodia and China.

Bungadyah appears to have been an indigenous Newar rain-bringing deity, and the schedule of his processions is timed to the onset of the monsoon. By the seventh century, he was understood as an instance of Avalokiteshvara. A Newar origin myth tells that Bungadyah was fetched from Assam by a team of three men; the king, the royal priest and a farmer. A separate Tibetan origin myth (discussed in more detail later) names Bungadyah as one of four brother images of Avalokiteshvara established at four royal courts across the Himalayans (another is still in the central shrine, the Jowo Khang, of Lhasa). This foundation myth credits Srongtsen Gampo (627–50), the king said to have introduced Buddhism to Tibet, with the revelation that led to the establishment of these ‘Four Brothers’.⁸ It would appear that Bungadyah was established at a time when Buddhism was gaining status in the Tibetan court and the new Vajrayana form was receiving official recognition in Nepal. It remains to be researched as to how coordinated these changes were or, indeed, where the other two images of Avalokiteshvara, at two other courts now lost, may have been.

Bungadyah is also unusual in that he has his own special priests, the Panjus. They handle almost all the ritual duties for Bungadyah, and manage his processions. The antiquity of this group can be shown by noting the existence of an eleventh-century Newar pandit known as the White Panju (*Han du dKar po*) in Tibetan sources.⁹ While every Newar monastery has a patrilineal monastic membership, only one other site has a named priesthood, the Buddhacharyas of Svayambhu. The accounts and journals of the financial institution (*thyasaphuta*) by which Bungadyah is supported are regrettably not available for inspection, but it is worth remembering in the following discussion that, for at least 1000 years, there has been a single endowed society of priests responsible for managing patronage, processions, routine worship, renovations and all other aspects of this shrine image’s life.

From the outset, Bungadyah was associated with a particular ritual, the Poshadhavrata, whose tutelary deity is the same Amoghapasha mentioned earlier. When understood as a uniquely Newar Avalokiteshvara, Bungadyah is also called Karunamaya—and this name, as we shall see later, refers to the deity rather than to the shrine image. His popularity extended well beyond the Kathmandu Valley. We find Bungadyah mentioned in meditation texts¹⁰ that circulated in northern India, the Himalayan states and Tibet during the twelfth century. In some contexts he is called Bungadyah, and in others Karunamaya. His role as rain guarantor for the Kathmandu Valley meant that his annual worship was obligatory for any Newar king, Buddhist or not. After 1380, Newar kings usually had a Shakta lineage deity and often defined themselves as Shaiva. However, it was in the seventeenth century that the king of Lalitpur, Srinivas Malla, substantially reorganised the annual rituals of Bungadyah. Whereas before he had always lived in Bunga, henceforth he spent half of each year in the city of Lalitpur itself. It is at about this

time that we first see an ostensibly Shaiva name, Rato Matsyendranath, for Bungadyah appear in inscriptions, and certainly from this time onwards Shaiva priests begin to play a part in his annual processions. However, at the same time Srinivas formally adopted Bungadyah as a lineage deity, and in coins issued by his son and successors we see Avalokiteshvara as the royal deity. After the Gorkha conquest of the eighteenth century, Bungadyah's procession was continued without much change, although the new kings refer to him only as Matsyendranath. Today, Bungadyah's annual procession is the most popular festival in Nepal.

'Polynomasia'

To get on with this project, we need a new word. It is not unusual for a shrine or a site anywhere in the world to have multiple identities that have accrued over time. Just as polysemic denotes a word with many meanings, we may coin the new words 'polynomic' for something that has many names, and 'polynomasia' for the process of having many names. Polynomasia is playful in the sense of interstitial and unexpected, creative in that the business of having many names seems to lead to a more vibrant and successful cultic life for such images or sites (as well as opening the possibility of even further names), and ironic in that this process can lead to a startling or humorous juxtaposition of identities at one and the same site. If the irony was uncontrolled and conflicting identities clashed in the public sphere, there would be a consequent falling-off of patronage. For this reason, the business of having multiple names is a managed business. It appears to be a process of non-confrontation and of implicit collaboration, orchestrated by the corporate body responsible for the management of the shrine image. We will return to this later, but in brief there is a key presupposition held by almost all the participants—priests, patrons, worshippers and local bystanders—in this process: in principle, there is no mistake when a single shrine image is called by two different names. Shrine priests can unexceptionally condone multiple identifications (although they may choose to censor some).

I am very carefully avoiding any discussion of 'real' identity here, for two reasons. First, it is contrary to the point of polynomasia. The performers of ritual who worship a given image according to a particular name often know that there are other names for the same image. If there is a struggle underway to control the identity of that image, to close out other possibilities, then those ritual agents may be making a claim to control its identity. However, we must avoid subscribing to their beliefs in order to recognise the plurality of names and its creative consequences. Second, at least for Buddhist images, it is pointless to worry about identity as within Buddhism any statement of durable identity is treated as philosophical mistake.

Although Newar syncretism has been divided into three categories—capture, parallelism and identification¹¹—a composite religion is instantiated in a deity created as the result of the interaction between Hinduism and Buddhism. I wish to set aside for the moment the anachronistic presumption of some monolithic Hindu tradition for, in the Kathmandu Valley, Vaishnavas, Shaivas and Buddhists each

employed their own strategies when they confronted another tradition. The very idea of syncretism seems misplaced here. It is not that massive traditions capture or manipulate shrine images like chess pieces. Rather, there is a corporate agency in which shrine images are embedded. In Nepal, that agency (*guthi*) makes choices when confronted with new opportunities or changes in the political landscape. Perhaps the earlier division of Newar syncretism is correct when we are talking about the creation of new iconographic material—but even then there is the agency of the religious *virtuosi* who first visualise the new forms and set them down as drawings or instructions for their students. So, while scholars such as Siegfried Lienhard see Bungadyah as the pre-eminent example of Nepalese religious syncretism,¹² others such as David Gellner explicitly reject the category of syncretism, arguing that ‘belief is an individual concern . . . it is ritual and not belief that determines whether one is a Buddhist or a Hindu’.¹³ Even this is unsatisfactory for understanding how the names of a shrine image are managed as some names are pointedly Shaiva, some definitely Buddhist, and some allow for the claims of both traditions.¹⁴

Nonetheless, we do need to distinguish between replacement and accrual. Replacement does not lead to a sustainable polynomasia; the old name may survive preserved in a minimal trace, but there is a new correct name. For example, old Celtic sites in the British Isles such as wells, stones and hillocks were colonised by the Celtic Christian church and affiliated to saints. After the rectification of the church in the British Isles, many of these shrines remained as local pilgrimage sites to saints that the Latin church did not fully recognise. With the rise of new religious movements in Britain, some of these sites—such as Glastonbury and Stonehenge—have been revalidated and acquired new life. A similar case is that of the Manjunath temple in Mangalore, on the Karnataka coast of India. For many centuries, this was a major Buddhist temple, and Manjusri and Avalokiteshvara figures are still visible today. The site was colonised by Shaivas sometime before the sixteenth century, however, and despite the renewed presence of Buddhists in Karnataka, the site remains staunchly Shaiva.¹⁵ In such cases, only one name is allowed for the presiding deity of a physical site, although an older identity may form the justification for adding a new name. In other cases, such as the Triloknath of Lahul in India, both the Shaiva and Buddhist identities have continued to prosper in a manner very similar to that of Bungadyah.

In contrast to replacement, accrual is the process of adding new names to adapt to changing circumstances without excluding other names. As we will see, Bungadyah sustains several parallel systems of naming simultaneously. This is an active, managed process. If the contested object is merely a pawn in a zero-sum game (e.g. a floating iconographic description such as those in the handbooks), then there is no reason to accrue new identities. However, as suggested earlier, important shrine images in Nepal being embedded in economic and social associations that provide for their ritual life has the consequence that these associations can respond to changing circumstances. For them, the rivalry between religious traditions is an opportunity for more patronage. In Nepal, where the churn of divine identities is constant, Shaiva and Buddhist identities tended to

exclude each other, but the Vaishnavas appear to have excelled at combining identities with either partner. This has deep historical roots. When they created the notion of the 10 avatars of Vishnu, Vaishnava theorists did not miss the opportunity to coopt Shakyamuni Buddha, who became the penultimate avatar, and thus take over the Buddhist criticism of Vedic sacrifice for themselves—possibly in order to compete with the Shaivas, who still perform animal sacrifice in Nepal. At least in Nepal, however, this rather canny strategy has not resulted in any previously Buddhist sites becoming Vaishnava. Rather, several important Vaishnava sites—including Changu Narayana, Budhanilakantha and Shesh Narayana—are also important Buddhist cult sites. Within the Kathmandu Valley, then, it would seem that Vaishnavas have a distinct historical relationship with the Buddhists; one marked by mutualism rather than by exclusion. This mutualism, as far as I know, has not been properly documented or analysed; indeed, it has been obscured by the modern tendency to lump Shaiva and Vaishnava together as ‘Hindu’.

Different views of a shrine image

I now will outline different sets of names that are applied to Bungadyah. These are alternatives; the sets themselves are never confused with each other. Moreover, within each set the distinct identifications are managed quite carefully. Different names will be used at different times or places and for different listeners. Some of these sets are entirely Newar Buddhist, and some allow for alternating Shaiva and Buddhist names for the same figure, but they all tolerate the use of awkwardly different names for the same cultic figure. For efficiency’s sake, I will use a morphological approach and diagrams to characterise the different naming patterns. In order, we will look at: a set of names all applied by Buddhists to the one image at Bungmati, and distinguished by a level of secrecy; the contrasting Shaiva and Buddhist names given to this image as part of a major national procession; and the names used to describe a set of different shrine images (one of whom is Bungadyah), all said to be images of the same deity but kept in different locations around the Kathmandu Valley. Finally, I will refer to another similar set of images, also including Bungadyah, which is distributed across the Himalayas as a whole.

A set of names for the image at Bugamati

I have publicly previously identified Bungadyah as Amoghapasha.¹⁶ The proof in my possession is a small clay figure of a Rakta Padmapani with the words ‘Bungadyah Amoghapasha Lokeshvara’ written underneath. To a Western art historian this is impossible as the name does not fit the image. Amoghapasha in Nepal usually has eight arms, which this image clearly does not. He is the patron deity of a lay fasting vow (the Poshadhavrata) widely performed among Newar Buddhists. Amoghapasha’s rituals are tantric, and are not performed in the street but inside monastic courtyards. What we have is two names for the same image,

distinguished according to the level of secrecy. The iconography is made explicit once one knows what to look for: above the head of Bungadyah in the decorative surround of the shrine in which he lives is a small but correctly formed Amoghapasha image.

There is nothing confusing about this dual identity to a Newar; indeed, almost everything within Newar Buddhism is understood on three levels at the same time¹⁷ (see Figure 1). In terms of locations, outer rituals (such as seeking alms in the street) are public, inner rituals (such as performing *pujas* [act of showing reverence to a god]) happen inside monasteries or at shrines, and secret rituals take place where no outsider can see them; for instance, in closed rooms or graveyards. We should therefore expect to find a third, secret identity—and indeed we do. An outside observer visiting the shrine of Bungadyah will eventually notice steps leading to small doorway in the surrounding courtyard into which many visiting Newars will disappear after paying their respects to the main shrine image. Just inside the low door is an enormous grimacing face, very similar to Bhairavas elsewhere in the Kathmandu Valley (such as the Akash Bhairav in Indrachowk). This is Hayagriva, the wrathful horse-headed form of Avalokiteshvara. Thus a complete identification of the Bungadyah image will look like Figure 2.

How are these three levels—outer, inner and secret—distinguished in practice? In terms of the outer level, most visitors to Bungamati will know about Bungadyah. Indeed, most Nepalis do, as his procession is the most popular procession in the country. In terms of the inner level, as we will see later, only Buddhist (or unusually educated) Newars know him as Bungadyah and, of those, only the higher castes who are likely to take part in the Poshadhavrata are likely to know that he is also Amoghapasha. As for the secret level—that it is secret makes most people, especially Vajracharya priests whose job it is to guard such secrets while performing the appropriate rituals, quite cautious about discussing this

| | | |
|--------|-------------|--------------|
| secret | vajrayāna | vajrācāryas |
| inner | mahāyāna | householders |
| outer | śrāvakayāna | monks, nuns |

Figure 1. The three levels of understanding in Newar Buddhism.

| | |
|--------|-----------------------------|
| secret | wrathful tantric form |
| inner | Amoghapāśa |
| outer | Padmapāṇi |

Figure 2. A complete identification of the Bungadyah image.

identity. Nonetheless, the Panjus were perfectly happy to identify Hayagriva for me, although they were not interested to discuss his actual cult rituals.

The question of secrecy is important here. The identity of secret deities is guarded quite closely, not only from outside observers and the uninitiated, but also between monasteries. Shakyas and Vajracharyas, members of the priestly caste among Newar Buddhists, inherit their monastic affiliation from their fathers. Membership of a monastery is closed. The next generation of tantric priests come from the children of this generation (assuming they undergo the correct rituals). They will become full-fledged priests by taking initiation (*diksha*) in their natal monastery. It is theoretically possible for a properly initiated priest to take further initiations at other monasteries, but the root deity of any particular monastery and the initiation of that root deity is jealously guarded. It is for this reason that my enquiries about the rituals of Hayagriva were met with polite dismissal. To admit knowing the rituals is potentially to admit being initiated, while to admit not knowing the rituals of such an obviously important deity would be embarrassing.¹⁸

It is this intense secrecy that gives rise to a more complex picture of Bungadyah. I originally assumed that the simultaneous existence of three different names worked because, while different registers sustained distinct names, the identification within any one register was fixed. As if to prove the rule, I discovered evidence in the *Gunakarandavyuha*,¹⁹ a fifteenth-century Newar text, that there had been some effort to substitute the 1000-arm form of Avalokiteshvara for Amoghapasha. This iconographic shift had already taken place in the Tibetan cousin to the Poshadhavrata ritual. Under the influence of the nun Lakshmi (who reformulated the Indo-Newar Poshadhavrata to create the *sMyung nas* ritual), the

tutelary deity of the ritual for Tibetans had changed from Amoghapasha to the 1000-arm Avalokiteshvara. Whatever the programme of the *Gunakarandavyuha*, it had not succeeded and the iconography and identification of the middle layer remained constant. Even today, one sees only a handful of images of the 1000-arm Avalokiteshvara in the Newar monasteries of the Kathmandu Valley.

This consistency works when the identification is public and consensual. When there is no public representation, and when it is vitally important that those who know the secret identity do not reveal it to others, it becomes possible for multiple simultaneous identifications to be applied to the same layer of the same image. This, it seems, is what has happened for Bungadyah. There are at least three distinct identities—Trailokyavashankara, Hayagriva and Padmanarttेशvara—that have been put forward as his secret identity.

The oldest name for which we have solid evidence is Trailokyavashankara. This form is mentioned in the recent re-edition of the Avalokiteshvara section of the *Sadhanamala*.²⁰ The identification with Bungadyah is made explicit by using the name ‘Bugama’, which we also find in an eleventh-century illustrated Prajnaparamita manuscript.²¹ Iain Sinclair notes that the colour and description of the deity conform in specific ways to the actual icon of Bungadyah, and speculates that this particular meditation was a Newar composition.²² I am not convinced of this last point, as there are scattered references to Bungadyah outside Newar sources and he appears to have been a widely known figure. However, the early nineteenth-century pandit Amritananda Vajracharya also refers to Trailokyavashankara, and we may therefore assume that this identity remained current for many centuries for at least some Lalitpur Vajracharyas.

Hayagriva is the horse-headed form of Avalokiteshvara. The only clearly Newar evidence for this name is the image (mentioned earlier) located in the courtyard near the Bungadyah shrine. This has been identified by the Panjus and others as Hayagriva. In Tibetan Nyingma sources, there is ample evidence for the practice of Hayagriva. For instance, the biography of Yeshe Tsogyal suggests that she practised Hayagriva meditations in the Kathmandu Valley in the eighth century together with Atsara Salé under the Newar teachers Vasudhara and Shakyadema.²³ A further link is suggested by the occurrence of the Ashvaraja or Balaha story of Avalokiteshvara as a magical horse in the *Gunakarandavyuha*, a text closely tied to the cult of Bungadyah. Hayagriva is generally understood to be an esoteric form of Avalokiteshvara. However, aside from the name given to the adjacent Bhairava image, I have not yet found another direct link between Hayagriva and the cult of Bungadyah in Newar sources. This may, therefore, be a dormant identity with little modern activity.

In modern Newar Vajrayana, the most powerful and secret form of Avalokiteshvara is usually understood to be Padmanarttेशvara. As I will describe in more detail later, when Bungadyah is considered as a generally Newar form of Avalokiteshvara called Karunamaya, it is implicit that the secret form of Karunamaya is Padmanarttेशvara. This identity is important for ritual purposes; a tantric initiation for Karunamaya is not, as one might expect, an Amoghapasha *diksha* (initiation rite), but a Padmanarttेशvara *diksha*. While almost every Newar

Buddhist monastery does have a representation of Padmanarttेशvara, I know of no salient image in or near the shrine of Bungadyah itself.

Therefore, if we were to depict Bungadyah’s identity as a vertical stack, it would look something like Figure 3. Maintaining three identities on the basis of registers of secrecy is ordinary in Vajrayana. (Indeed, there are often four identities, with a ‘most secret’ layer on top of everything else. This highest identity is somewhat abstract, and is almost always said to be Vajrasattva, the root deity of all Vajrayana practice.) How do we account for these parallel identities within the same register? It is precisely because they are so secret. Knowledge of such secret tantric identities is necessary—although not in itself sufficient—for membership in the tightly controlled groups that can perform such rituals, and this knowledge is carefully guarded between groups. Even if a serious practitioner is aware of several such secret identities, there is no opportunity for public dispute.

We have a wonderful example of the way in which this secrecy is negotiated. An artist’s handbook²⁴ from Lalitpur shows three different images of the same deity (see Figure 4). From right to left, the captions read ‘Karunamaya’, ‘Amoghapasha’ and ‘Vajrasattva’. In other words, the handbook shows the public, the private and the most secret identities, the latter being an ‘open secret’ discussed in Sanskrit and Tibetan texts. However, the third layer, the secret identity of the various Vajrayana deities particular to lineages or monasteries who are carefully hidden, is simply elided in favour of the doctrinally correct but non-threatening most secret identity of Vajrasattva. Judging by its contents, this handbook was almost certainly the property of a Chitrakar (member of the painter caste) who would not have had access to the secret identities of the image. Elsewhere in the same handbook, we do find drawings of secret deities, such as Chakrasamvara, executed as part of his work. Crucially, however, even if the painter suspected that Bungadyah had secret names, he did not know what they were.

Although this secrecy makes the recovery of the history of simultaneous ritual under multiple identities nearly impossible, it is easy enough to see how they must

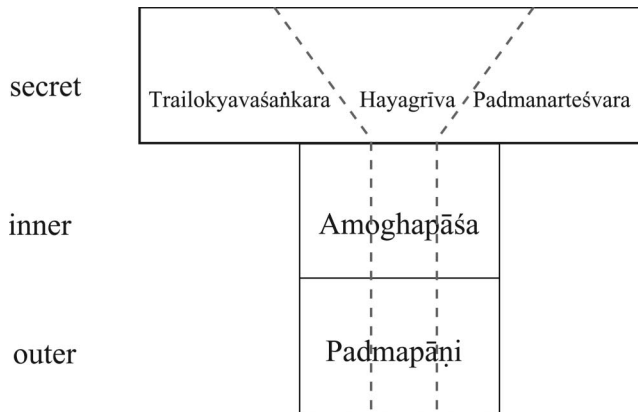


Figure 3. Bungadyah’s identity as a vertical stack.



Figure 4. 'Karunamaya', 'Amoghapasha' and 'Vajrasattva'.

begin and be sustained. As with the story of the nun Lakshmi, religious *virtuosi* have the ability to externalise their personal visionary experiences by teaching them as formalised meditations, or writing them down for students. This is a particular case of the Weberian routinisation of charisma. In the case of a shrine image that has an endowed society that manages its worship, such as that of the Panjus, there is natural support for a proliferation of forms. They will worship Bungadyah under one or more secret identities themselves, but they will not necessarily know the secret identity under which Bungadyah is worshipped by other groups. Nonetheless, they can expect to collect some money when a large ritual is performed at the shrine of Bungadyah and will not, in principle, object to a ritual being performed simply because they themselves are unaware of the secret identity being worshipped. The Panjus stand to profit from large rituals being performed at their shrine, and would positively welcome the chance to institute a new festival.

Of course, it is not simply about money. Precisely because there is no felt discomfort at allowing a single shrine image to be celebrated and worshipped in its many names, accepting money for multiple cult rituals is in no way cynical. More glory to the deity, indeed! However, the Panjus are the custodians of the shrine image and must behave prudently. As we shall see later, a flexible attitude towards names acts to ensure that the deity of the shrine can survive major changes in the political climate.

Contrasting Shaiva and Buddhist names for the image at Bungamati

Thus far we have noted the multiplicity of names, all Buddhist, that are applied to one image of Bungadyah at Bungamati, and seen that there is a rather prosaic

social process that allows one shrine image to be called by many names. The endowed foundation that is responsible for the shrine image may collect more revenue if, within the bounds of reason, it condones and manages the activities of various groups who make offerings to the image in nominally different, often ritualised, forms. I say ‘within the bounds of reason’ as there is a strong sense in which the good behaviour of all participants is assumed. A wealthy foreigner who insisted on mounting an unprecedented 5-day festival in which Bungadyah was worshipped as Durga would almost certainly be turned away—but the same reasonable elasticity extends without discomfort to include Shaiva names.

Indeed, except for the Newars, everyone in modern Nepal refers to Bungadyah as Rato Matsyendranath and associates him with a Shaiva legend about a great *yogin* (a male practitioner of yoga) who rescued the Kathmandu Valley from a prolonged drought. This nomenclature is ritually expressed by the presence of non-Buddhist tantric priests who assist in the public (although not in the private or the secret) aspects of his annual procession. I have argued elsewhere²⁵ that the presence of puns on the name ‘Matsyendranath’ in the fifteenth-century *Gunakarandavyuha* suggests that the Buddhists were aware of this alternative identity before it was made official through the reorganisation of the annual procession in the seventeenth century by King Shrinivas Malla of Lalitpur. It is curious that, having negotiated a Shaiva identity for their most important deity, the Shaiva monarchy in Lalitpur then became openly Buddhist and began to mint coins with Buddhist logos in the time of Shrinivas Malla’s son. When the Newar city-states of the Kathmandu Valley were overrun by the army of Prithivi Narayan Shah in the late eighteenth century, the new Gorkhali regime placed its full weight behind the Shaiva interpretation of the procession, and it became a Hindu event for the new Hindu state of Nepal. Today, it is the single most important procession in the country.

Even educated non-Newar Nepalese informants are often unaware that the priests who organise Bungadyah’s procession are Buddhist, and rarely know anything about his Buddhist identity other than that it exists. They do know he is a Newar deity. Newars, who see this procession as a remaining symbol of their cultural superiority, refer to him as Bungadyah. Although many non-Buddhist Newars certainly know about his Buddhist identity, they do not refer to it. Newar Buddhists, by contrast, know about the Matsyendranath identity and will name Bungadyah as ‘Matsyendranath’ to outsiders. Thus, the only group for whom there is an unambiguous name are those furthest ‘outside’, the non-Newars, including the primary patron (and object of legitimation), the Gorkhali king.²⁶ I have attempted to map this situation in Figure 5.

The Panjus and Lalitpur Vajracharyas know a fair amount about the doctrine and rituals of this alternative Shaiva identity, as they are obliged to work with Shaiva ritual specialists who play an important part in the procession. In this sense, the distribution of knowledge about these identities reflects the Shaiva hegemony in modern Nepal. The subject population is made to know the names imposed by the rulers, but their secret knowledge is utterly closed to the ruling classes. Yet the ritual life of Bungadyah depends on the Panjus’ ritual activity, a fact that the

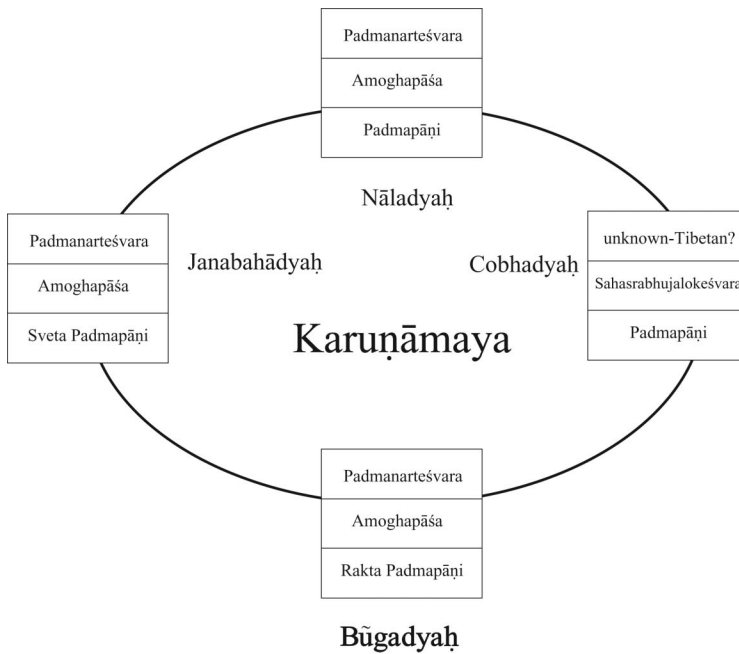


Figure 5. Mapping Bungadyah's names.

modern Gorkhali state recognises (as did its Newar predecessors), by supporting the endowed foundation of Bungadyah. Although the Gorkhali state ministry that controls the distribution of funds to such endowed foundations is routinely accused of flagrant theft of Newar relics,²⁷ it is still the case that the modern Nepalese state patronises the deity and the priests who manage his ritual life.

How this parallel identification began is not yet completely understood,²⁸ but its support and continuation is an example of an endowed priestly society deftly playing the politics of patronage. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the procession of Bungadyah was a venue for displays of authority among rival Newar kings, as well as being a pilgrimage destination for heavily armed visiting delegations from Buddhist kings in western Nepal.²⁹ The king who won the early medieval struggle immediately brought in Maithili brahmins hostile to Buddhism to set up his new legal frameworks. The seventeenth-century reorganisation of the procession by a royal line far more sympathetic to Buddhism was the next major move and, by the time the Gorkhali state was imposed (1767–68), there was no choice but to preserve the procession and its attendant institutions, even if the Hindu elements of the public display were amplified. The Panjus, for centuries accustomed to negotiating between rival kings at their shrine, made the shift to managing their status within a formally non-Newar and non-Buddhist state with little difficulty. That the religious traditions in question, Shaiva and Buddhist, have rival claims as to who is the appropriate kind of priest to call for life rituals, does not affect the already present possibility of multiple names for the one image.³⁰

Names for a set of different shrine images in the Kathmandu Valley

Bungadyah and Karunamaya are both names applied to the whole, internally complex, deity whose shrine is at Bungamati. However, there are several other images of the same deity also called Karunamaya, but not Bungadyah. Traditionally one speaks of four Karunamayas (*pemha karunamaya*), although there are actually six or more of these images scattered through the Newar culture area.³¹ Some of these compete with Bungadyah for prestige. The Karunamaya of Jana Baha in Kathmandu has its own ritual cycle and procession, while Jatadhari Lokeshvara, the Karunamaya who is actually proper to Lalitpur, greets Bungadyah and leads him into Lalitpur when he arrives each year. There is no usual set of four. Which four are chosen (or which four a speaker is even aware of—I have caused some consternation by pointing out that almost everyone can, if pressed, think of more than four) seems to depend on where in the Kathmandu Valley the speaker is from. If it is good to go see one Karunamaya, it is very good to see ‘all four’, and the pilgrimage to see four Karunamayas in one day is said to generate enormous merit.

Most Newar Buddhists, when they talk about being devoted to him, going for *puja* or doing the lay vow, use the name Karunamaya rather than Bungadyah. When used this way, the name Karunamaya refers to all the images, but Bungadyah is definitely the most important, and any list of four will usually begin with and certainly must include him. Kathmandu speakers will usually start their list with their Karunamaya. Only Bungadyah has the Panjus, however, and the other Karunamayas live within shrines whose fortunes rise and fall over time.

While I have not done the necessary work to establish the internal stratification of each of these Karunamayas, it is clear that they are all minimally Padmapani, Amoghapasha, and Padmanarresthvara. Anandadi Lokeshvara of Chobhar, who attracts enormous Tibetan patronage, appears also to support identification as a 1000-arm Lokeshvara because that is how Tibetans identify the patron deity of their version of the Poshadhavrata (see Figure 6). It seems that the distinction is made at the public level where Bungadyah is described as a Rakta Padmapani, the Jana Baha image (which is white) as a Shveta Padmapani, the old Lalitpur image as a Jatadhari Lokeshvara, and so forth. That these are all understood to be tightly linked figures of one deity is illustrated by the figures on sale next to the shrine of Bungadyah (although nowhere else). Here, one can buy a set of identically cast clay figures in each of four different colour schemes, with each labelled on the bottom to show which of the four local versions of Karunamaya it represents.

Each of these Karunamayas is a localisation of the popular Kathmandu Valley deity. If one wishes to worship Karunamaya, it is not necessary to go all the way to Bungamati. The process whereby major pilgrimage deities tend to be recreated close to home is well documented for Indic religions generally.³² The deeply held belief that there are four Karunamayas is part of a general tendency to have four of every major divinity:³³ four Vajrayoginis, four Vishnus, four Ganeshas, and so on. Although only Bungadyah has the Panjus, they clearly encourage his identity as part of a set of Karunamayas. The local iteration of the image and its cult would

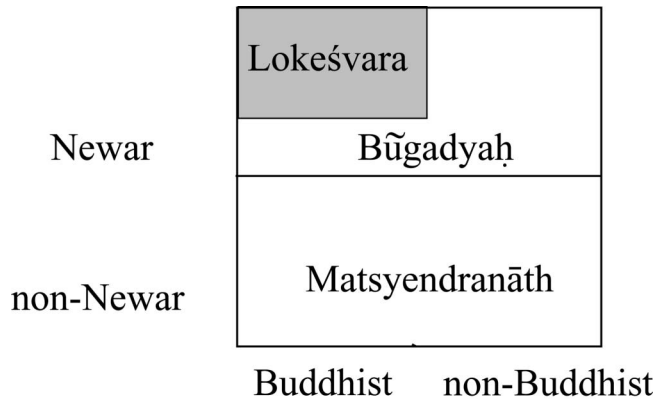


Figure 6. Mapping interpretations of Karunamaya.

have been welcomed by local elites and patrons, for whom such local Karunamayas would have served as a source of legitimation.

Names for a set of different shrine images in the Himalayas

Yet there may be another factor here. There is a larger but similar pattern of ‘brother’ Lokeshvaras, of which Bungadyah is certainly one, that straddles the Himalayas. Although there is no Newar record, the story is preserved in Tibetan sources and names the Lokeshvara image in Lhasa as one of the set of four, along with Bungadyah.³⁴ While some of the Newar Karunamaya images are recent foundations, at least three of them—Bungadyah, the Lalitpur image (said to be older than Bungadyah) and the Chobhar image—are very old. It may well be the case that there is a close relationship between the trans-Himalayan set of Lokeshvaras and a now lost Newar tetrad. Given the far greater antiquity of Newar civilisation, it is possible that the story of the Tibetan ‘Four Brother Lokeshvaras’ was a regional expansion of the Newar pattern intended to legitimate the new Tibetan adoption of Buddhism in terms of prestigious southern neighbours. In turn, however, as the Tibetans became a more powerful bastion of Buddhism, the story of the four brothers that Newar traders would have heard in Tibet, and that Tibetans in the Valley would have repeated, may have reinforced the importance of the set of four Lokeshvaras for Newar Buddhists.

Conclusion

Bungadyah is one of many shrine images with multiple names and located at a site with an endowed society. Of the four major images just within the small town of Pharping—the Vishnu at Shesh Narayan, Vajrayogini, the self-arisen Sarasvati and Dakshin Kali—only Dakshin Kali, who is largely a Gorkhali cult deity, has a simple identity. Shesh Narayan is regarded as a form of Avalokiteshvara by the

local Tibetans, and there is strong evidence that there was a Newar Buddhist monastery at the site until perhaps 100 years ago. Vajrayogini is worshipped by both Buddhist and non-Buddhist Newars, as well as by the non-Newars in Pharping, under differing tantric names, but she also sustains at least two distinct Tibetan cults. All around the Kathmandu Valley there are numerous cases of managed complex images, and I would argue this is a feature of Indic religion generally. It is occasionally even brought to the surface and institutionalised at the doctrinal level, as in the medieval Indonesian cult of Shiva-Buddha.

That different ritually realised names are located in the same physical image does not mean that there is confusion among the religious traditions to which those ritual names belong. Within one tradition, Newar Buddhism, several names located in the same shrine image are differentiated by levels of secrecy or by being secret from each other. These are ritually managed epistemological boundaries that make the management of many names possible. For the endowed foundation that supports the shrine image, the coordinated ascription of multiple names means greater opportunities for patronage. When the distinct names are proper to religious traditions that compete for legitimation of the throne (as Shaiva and Buddhist did in medieval Lalitpur), they offer the chance to secure patronage regardless of which religion has the upper hand. Moreover, it is not just the priests or endowed foundations who engage in this constant management of names. When a Buddhist Newar on the street identifies an image of Prajnaparamita to a tourist as Sarasvati, this is not an attempt to mislead, but merely a spontaneous choice of the most appropriate name for the presumed expectations of the audience.

Does this affect the ‘genuineness’ of the religious experience to be had before such an image? At least for Newars, not at all. Rather, it simply opens up more opportunities for religious experience. Only the modernising Theravada Buddhists worry about asserting an unambiguous single identity for worship.³⁵ These Nepalese Theravada Buddhists descend directly from the Mahabodhi society that has a modern intolerance for complexity.³⁶ This intolerance is akin to that built into Western theories of religion that react to indeterminate or managed complex identities with words like ‘syncretism’. To say a shrine image is Shaiva or Buddhist, or even to say that it is Mahayana or Vajrayana, is wilfully to exclude some part of the life of that image. For most Newars, polynomasia is the ordinary state, and the play of names is a property of shrine images through which their divinity is realised.

Notes and references

1. By ‘shrine image’ I mean an image, usually a sculpture but not always, that has an enclosing structure of some sort and that has been ritually quickened.
2. For good examples of this, drawn largely from the *Sadhanamala*, see Marie Thérèse de Mallmann, *Introduction à l’Iconographie du Tāntrisme Bouddhique* (Paris: Librairie Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1975). See also Janice Leoshko, ‘The appearance of Amoghapasa in Pala-period art’, in A.K. Narain (ed), *Studies in Buddhist Art in South Asia* (New Delhi: Books India, 1985), pp 127–135, where the difficulty of identifying images without unambiguous textual referents or images that have been damaged becomes very clear.
3. R.O. Meisezahl, ‘Amoghapasa: some Nepalese representations and their Vajrayanic aspects’, *Monumenta Serica*, Vol 26, 1967, pp 455–497.

4. Two good introductions to things Newar are David N. Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest: Newar Buddhism and its Hierarchy of Ritual* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); and Gérard Toffin, *Religion et société chez les Newars du Népal* (Paris: CNRS, 1984).
5. John Huntington and Dina Bangdel, 'A case study in religious continuity: the Nepal–Bengal connection', *Orientalism*, Vol 32, No 7, 2001, pp 63–70.
6. Personal communication from Tsering Sakya.
7. Under present political conditions, any guess as to relative proportions in the past is bound to be contentious—and making a precise division between Shaiva and Bauddha is in any case impossible. Many castes patronise both Vajracharyas and Brahmins, depending on the ritual to hand. Toffin (1984) in his introduction argues that there was a great preponderance of Buddhists in the premodern period. I have argued (2002) that the far greater number of Vajracharyas compared to Newar Brahmins even now would seem to support this; certainly the picture that emerges from historical sources after the 14th century is of a royal house anxious to legitimate itself in terms of foreign, usually Maithili, cults while the mercantile and agricultural castes slowly changed from Buddhist to Shaiva. The 17th century declaration of a Buddhist dynastic cult in Lalitpur under Srinivas Malla is thus a reversion, not an innovation.
8. Per Sorensen, *The Mirror Illuminating the Royal Genealogies* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz) 1994, pp 193–6 has a good translation of one version of this story (from the rGyal.ba'I me.long) with references to other discussions.
9. See the discussion in Erberto Lo Bue, 'The role of Newar scholars in transmitting the Indian Buddhist to Tibet (c. 750–1200)' in Samten Karmay and Phillippe Sagant, *Les Habitants du toit du monde* (Paris: Société d'ethnologie, 1997), pages 629–658. I disagree with his conclusion that this figure was Indian, as I argued in Tuladhar-Douglas (2002).
10. See the discussion below. Minimally he is found in the *Sadhanamala*, as edited by Sakura (reference 29) and apparently also in the Ba.ri brGya.rtsa of Rin.chen grags. The Red Amoghapasa meditation in that work has a mantra which clearly refers to Karunamaya.
11. Siegfried Lienhard, 'Religionssynkretismus in Nepal', in H. Bechert (ed), *Buddhism in Ceylon and Studies on Religious Syncretism in Buddhist Countries* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), pp 146–177.
12. *Ibid*, p 157.
13. David N. Gellner, 'Buddhism and Hinduism in the Nepal valley', in Stewart Sutherland, Leslie Houlden, Peter Clarke and Friedhelm Hardy (eds), *The World's Religions* (London: Routledge, 1988), p 751.
14. In Gellner, *op cit*, Ref 13, written before the publication of his major monograph on Newar Buddhism, he also appears to be suggesting that Newar religion might even drift in the direction of the formally constituted medieval Indonesian Shiva-Buddha cult. The Indonesian case is an unusual and formal theological systematisation that is fundamentally different to the Newar case. For the medieval Indonesian theologians, it was necessary to understand the Shiva-nature of Buddha and the Buddha-nature of Shiva, a claim that few if any Newar priests or lay participants would assent to. I would disagree with Gellner's point that ritual supersedes belief for Newars and that is the explanation for the lack of conflict between traditions. For the practising Buddhist priests with whom we are concerned here, the rituals are impossible without faith.
15. This results in the delightful fact that Tibetan Buddhist scholar-monks see heavy lorries with the name of their patron Bodhisattva, Manjunatha, all over the highways around the monasteries that they built in exile.
16. Will Tuladhar-Douglas, 'The last Amoghapasa across all Asia', paper for the Spalding Conference on Indian Religions, Oxford University, 2002.
17. Gellner, *op cit*, Ref 4.
18. Those Tibetans familiar with the living Newar Vajrayana traditions tend to express respect for the fact that Newars keep secret things properly secret.
19. See Douglas (2002) p 145ff. The thousand arm form never gained real popularity in Nepal, though it is very popular among the Tibetans.
20. Ruriko Sakura (ed), *Sadhanamala: Avalokitesvara Section* (Delhi: Adroit Publishers, 2002).
21. Alfred Foucher, *Étude sur l'Iconographie Bouddhique de l'Inde d'après des Documents Nouveaux* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1900).
22. Iain Sinclair, 'Review of Sakura', *Sambhasa: Nagoya Studies in Indian Culture and Buddhism* (Nagoya, 2004), Vol 24, pp 170–174.
23. Gyalwa Changchub and Namkhai Nyingpo, *Lady of the Lotus-Born: The Life and Enlightenment of Yeshe Tsogyal*, trans. Padmakara Translation Group (Boston: Shambala, 2002), pp 45–57.
24. Image created by digital enhancement of author's photograph from an unpublished manuscript.
25. Douglas (2002:147).
26. The king—whether Newar as was, or Gorkhali as is—is exquisitely dependent on the successful performance of the procession. Bruce McCoy Owens has studied this at length in *The Politics of Divinity in the Kathmandu Valley: The Festival of Bungadya/Rato Matsyendranath*, PhD dissertation (New York: Columbia

- University, 1989). The present political crisis in Nepal is such that, as the chariot collapsed during the 2004 procession, there have been heated denials by the palace that the monarchy is about to fall.
27. As with accusations that Shankaracharya actually overturned stones at Sankhu, this is a deeply held belief whose basis needs to be carefully examined. See Gellner (1992) 234–5 for a discussion of Rana-period corruption. For an example of the modern problem that was, astonishingly, detected and thwarted, see ‘Stolen 17th century Buddha mask finally to be back home’, *The Kathmandu Post*: 22 October 2002, also available at <<http://www.nepalnews.com.np/contents/englishdaily/ktmpost/2003/oct/oct22/index1.htm>>
 28. See, for instance, John K. Locke, *Rato Matsyendranath of Patan and Bungamati* (Kirtipur, Nepal: University Press, 1973); John K. Locke, *Karunamaya: The Cult of Avalokitesvara-Matsyendranath in the Valley of Nepal* (Kathmandu: Sahayogi Prakashan, 1980); Owens, *op cit*, Ref 26; Will Douglas, ‘Washing your neighbour’s god: royal ritual in 14th century Nepal’, in Marie Leconte-Tilouine and Pascale Dolfus (eds), *Ethnic Revival and Religious Turmoil: Identities and Representations in the Himalayas* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp 44–67, especially Boullier’s response published with the article; and Will Douglas, *The Fifteenth-century Reinvention of Nepalese Buddhism*, DPhil thesis (Oxford: University of Oxford, 2002). There is as yet no adequate study of the term ‘Matsyendranath’ between 1000 and 1500 CE.
 29. Douglas, ‘Washing’, *op cit*, Ref 29.
 30. The same image can also be worshipped under different roles. So for some particular lineage group, an otherwise unremarkable and featureless stone known by others as an aniconic Ganesha will be their lineage deity, and named as a secret tantric deity.
 31. For a descriptive list see Locke, *Karunamaya*, *op cit*, Ref 28.
 32. A fine example in the Newar case is the existence of pilgrimage sites around the Kathmandu Valley associated with hagiographic stories about the previous lives of Buddhas. Thus the *Manicuda Avadana* has a pilgrimage site above Sankhu where it is possible to see the location of each of the major events in the story; and the stupa erected in memory of Prince Mahasattva, who fed himself to a starving tigress in the *Mahasattva Avadana*, is on a hilltop just east of the Kathmandu Valley.
 33. Mary S. Slusser, *Nepal Mandala: A Cultural Study of the Kathmandu Valley* (Princeton: The University Press, 1982), p 256.
 34. Ian Alsop, ‘Phagpa Lokeshvara of the Potala’, *Orientalist*, Vol 21, No 4, 1990, available at <http://www.asianart.com/articles/phagpa/index.html>, date accessed 6 October 2004. Alsop argues that the Kathmandu Lokeshvara is one of the four brothers, but his argument presumes a great antiquity for the Kathmandu image and reflects an apparent bias in later Tibetan sources.
 35. Gellner, *op cit*, Ref 4.
 36. There is perhaps also a genuine discomfort with just this ability I have been describing to see transgressive and erotic deities within simple and chaste Buddha images of the sort Theravadins prefer. For Theravada missionary activity to succeed (in its own terms) it must cut off the possibility of secret Vajrayana names being applied to Theravada images, but this seems unlikely. Vajrayana deities are routinely thought of as encompassing and transcending an earlier and less sophisticated Shrivakayana stage. From the Vajrayana perspective in debates within present-day Nepalese Buddhism, Theravada is a popular manifestation of Shrivakayana Buddhism.