The Brick and the Bull

An account of Handigaun, the ancient capital of Nepal

Sudarshan Raj Tiwari
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When I took office as Dean of Kathmandu’s Institute of Engineering in December 1988, little did I know that I was entering the most stressful period of my career. But thankfully, along with the stress, came more enjoyable aspects of life. Within two years Nepal had shed the dark old garb of the autocratic Panchayat polity and donned the new outfit of multi-party democracy and constitutional monarchy. At a more personal level, the horizon of my interests widened from the history of architecture to the culture of settlements. As the pressure of my office increased, I began to take refreshing breaks to historical locations in the valley as a self-prescribed measure to rejuvenate myself. Soon, such visits developed into an enquiry into the people and places of Kathmandu Valley. Places acquired a new, live feel as I came to learn more about their residents, legends, festivals, history, form and growth. History was coming alive for me.

The towns of Kathmandu Valley are generally viewed, observed and rejoiced only as products of the Malla period. However, both well-known and not-so-well-known towns, villages and their central spaces convey a feel of older times, and, indeed, quite a few were flourishing centres prior to the organisation of the Malla kingdom in the valley around 1200 CE. My heightened excitement led me into an academic research routine that ultimately earned me a doctorate in culture from Tribhuvan University. This book expands on some of the findings from that study.

I took up the idea of writing a book on the oldest royal town of Kathmandu Valley as a challenge. While it is known that three old Lichchhavi sites with Kirat antecedents were knit together spatially to form the Malla capital of Bhadgaun in the early thirteenth century, the location of the capital town of the Lichchhavis has been elusive. Random archaeological trial digs have been made only at three or four speculated spots in and around Handigaun and at one spot as far away as Mangalbazar in Patan to find the remains of the Lichchhavi palaces. Hindering all efforts is the near-total lack of conscious remains or tangible heritage, the tools of academically authenticated history. Any attempt to uncover that past, therefore, calls for approaches reinforced through the analysis of unconscious remains or intangible heritage.

The body of knowledge ensconced in the intangible heritage of Kathmandu Valley is extensive. An exploration of these sources, such as festivals, cultural practices, religious traces, oral traditions, and popular memories in the form of folklore and travel accounts, provides very fertile paths for moving towards locating and observing the past. This book follows such tracks in order to craft a picture of the capital of Nepal prior to the founding of Bhadgaun.

The legendary towns of Manjupattan (as in Swoyambhu Puran) and Vishalnagar (as in
Pashupati Puran) are coterminous with the valley’s central physical space and include within their boundaries two of the earliest historical towns of the valley, Deupatan and Handigaun. In Lichchhavi times, Deupatan was known as Devgarta gram, or the town of the cave-temple of the Lord. ‘Garta’ in Sanskrit, the then court language, conveys the meaning of a cave; devgarta was the natural devalaya, the house of the Lord. In the other town, Handigaun, was located the rajkul, the house of the king; it was thus the capital. Handigaun remained the capital from the beginning of the organisation of the Nepali Lichchhavi state up to the advent of the Malla Period.

This book is about place, place not only in the physical sense, but in the way place traces the variations of seasons and has implications for the town space as seen in rituals and festivals. It pictures a town’s essence as a space to live in and also as a place that provides a theatre for playing out the emotional and seasonal, personal and communal, cosmic and mundane, joys and sorrows of its residents, both human and godly. The legends and folklore presented are backed by analyses and technical logic, reflecting the reality of the place in historical layers.

The book has two basic goals. One is to present and analyse extant tangible cultural resources from before Malla times such as archaeological finds and inscriptions; temples and religious/divine images; pathways and historic place markers; power places or piths and geographical landmarks; and aniconic ancestral places and sites of internment

Handigaun, the ancient central place of Kathmandu Valley
specific to Handigaun; and to relate them to the Kirat and Lichchhavi forms of settlement. Second, it will present, observe and analyse images and their numinous character; festivals and rituals; the life cycles of people and places; and the folk stories and legends behind the festivals and places.

The first provides the basic framework of the place while the latter gives life to it. The first set of evidence is, more or less, what an outsider sees, and the second shows what and how the residents and their ‘gods’ make of, remember, understand, and use their place. Both the gods of Handigaun and their creations, the resident humans (for they believe they were created by their gods), have played
an equal and conscious part in forming, developing, and using this place of their choice. The merging of the two brings out an eternal sense of the romance between the gods and historic personalities, and the people and place of Handigaun. It also becomes quite clear that the residents of Handigaun have created their gods in their own images rather than, as they would like to imagine, the other way around. ‘Literate’ history is plugged in as inscriptions, ancient manuscripts and chronological records start appearing in the scene.

While the first set of tangible facts and interpretations is based on conventional methodology, the second set of unconscious or intangible facts is based on indigenous communication and knowledge systems, embodied in and extracted from the intangible heritage of the three major Jyapu clan groups of Handigaun, the Maharjan, the Prajapati and the Dongol. Conversations with the old and young of Handigaun in their usual settings formed the starting point. Verification by several sources was sought to make the findings as accurate as possible and to remove questionable information. Thus, information on legends, folklore, festivals, and curious practices was supplied by the actual actors, the people of Handigaun. For them, the explanations they provided are neither unique nor aggrandising. What they described are simple but essential matters of their daily, weekly, monthly, yearly or twelve-yearly life cycles. People outside the circle of Handigaun may see them as myths, rituals, or stories, but for the people of Handigaun these are cyclical realities. What was received from the community is checked against and backed up as much as possible with authentic academic information on history, religion, and culture. For some readers, these corroborations, liberally interspersed in the general text and notes, may make reading difficult, but without their inclusion the results of the research based on the methodology I have adopted run the risk of being considered a fairy tale.

This is not to suggest that this methodology is raw territory. The practice of interpreting towns and town-spaces by analysing rituals, festivals, and other reflections of socio-cultural practices of people is fast gaining momentum and acceptance through the works of Joseph Ryckwert, Niels Gutschow, Guenter Nitschke, Jan Pieper, R.L. Singh and others. Joseph Ryckwert’s *Idea of a Town*, Niels Gutschow’s *Stadtraum und Ritual der Newarischen Stadte in Kathmandu-Tal* and Guenter Nitschke’s *From Shinto to Ando* are notable achievements in this direction.

Given Handigaun’s high exposure to exogenous communication and technology over the last fifty years, the indigenous communication system embodied in folk media such as festivals, dances, songs, storytelling and rituals as well as in indigenous organisations like clan leadership, groups, and guthis has naturally been changing. In such a situation, tracing indigenous knowledge is not an easy task even for experts and, as a novice, I cannot claim complete understanding or success.

Sudarshan Raj Tiwari
Kathmandu, October 2002
I am a Brahmin by birth. Although Brahmins have been living in Kathmandu Valley since Lichchhavi times, my great grandparents on my father’s side came here from Ilwaridanda in Chiti of Lamjung District in central Nepal only about a hundred years ago to make their home in Raktakali. My mother’s ancestors had been in the valley from much earlier.

About fifty years ago, my parents decided to move out of Raktakali, then very much the centre of Kathmandu town, perhaps to get away from the crowded quarters. They moved to Vishalnagar, which is close to Handigaun (Hārigāū). A predominantly Jyapu‘ village, Handigaun would have been considered, at that time, an unusual place for a Brahmin family to set up home. Although Brahmins must have lived in the area when it was the Lichchhavi capital, they had moved out long since when later kings chose to make their capital elsewhere. The centuries that elapsed had erased memories of this connection from their Brahmin minds.

There must have been other unknown factors playing their part in my parents’ decision as well. All Brahmins claim their origins through their gotra, which literally means a ‘cowshed’; they believe they were the cowherds of the ancient sages and teachers of mythological times. Of the forty-nine presently known gotra (initially there were only seven), my family comes from the Kausika, or Kusika group. Kusika, a Kshatriya of the Puru-rava clan who ruled at Kanya-kubja or Kannauj, was the grandfather of the sage Viswamitra. The latter is said to have earned his brahmarsi status through hard penance and not by birth, and his image in mythology is that of a sage trying to bring about change. In anecdotal incidences, Viswamitra is projected as a champion of those abused by the religious beliefs of his time. The Tiwaris belonged to the cowherd lineage of such Brahmarsi Kshatriyas and are also called Kanya-kubja Brahmins. Their Khas linkage makes them one of the sub-groups of Kumaun Brahmins.

Within each gotra, there are several branch clans, each defined through a subset of two ruling gods. One is the kuldevata, or the clan deity, and the other the istadevata, or the protecting deity. Before any religious function or activity of a family can begin, homage must first be paid to the family’s kuldevata. The istadevata of the Tiwaris is Dakshinkali, who has a celebrated temple just outside the southern rim of Kathmandu Valley, while the kuldevata of the Tiwari clan is Bhatbhateni. That the temple of Bhatbhateni is in the Handigaun locality and is closely linked with it seems to be the main reason my parents chose to move to Handigaun.

The social traditions of the predominantly Newar Kathmandu Valley had influenced my parents so much that when they moved to Vishalnagar my mother took to the local customs pretty easily. In the 1960s, during the jatra of Bhatbhateni, I noticed that my mother,
as a mark of solidarity with Bhatbhateni, who are believed to be in some sort of ritual crisis during their jatra, did not oil her hair or use a comb. Today such practices are not seen even among the wives of the Karmacharya priests of the temple of Bhatbhateni.

For the Jyapus, Bhatbhateni is Mha-pata-dyo, the God of Sky. Popular belief has it that to gain access to heaven after death, a Jyapu should have participated at least once in the annual jatra of Bhatbhateni. In their beliefs about the after life, the goings-on in Handigaun seem to bring the Jyapus and Tiwaris quite close.

Being slightly affluent, my parents had Asta, an ‘untouchable’ Kasai from Handigaun, and his family help with chores ‘outside the door sill’. It has always puzzled me that orthodox Brahmins use ‘untouchables’ as household help. The only explanation one can provide is that it was ordained.

In my childhood, Asta used to carry me in his kharpan to the cinema. He and his wife, Bhaucha, became a part of the family although they kept their physical distance from my mother in honour of social practices.

They introduced me to the gods and to the people of Handigaun. Asta, at 95, is probably the oldest man in Handigaun today. With hazy eyes, he still moves around visiting temples, attending festivals and telling stories.

In the last twenty years, several other natives of Handigaun have worked for my family and all of them have contributed towards this book. Because of the importance of Mha-pata-dyo, indigenous knowledge about the cultural practices of Handigaun is shared by many of the older folk in Kathmandu Valley too and I have benefitted greatly from their wisdom and interpretations. Among others, Dhana Lal Awale, 96, of Khashinchhe, Patan, and Vivek Singh Prajapati, 82, of Dhati, Handigaun, have been particularly helpful in piecing together the pre-Modern scene at Handigaun with their living memory.

My understanding of Handigaun has been shaped by my interactions with these fellow residents and by their knowledge. Some of the traditions of this place still puzzle me, but the gods, temples and festivals of Handigaun have become a part of my life. And I believe they, too, have accepted me in the same fashion.

Notes

1 Jyapus are the farming group within the community of Newars, the indigenous settlers of Kathmandu Valley. Jyapus have retained their age-old traditions with fewer changes than are visible in other Newar communities. Their physical features are not Mongoloid but their cultural traits make them non-Aryan as well. They seem akin to Austro-Asian or Indo-Scythian peoples.

2 One of the five priestly castes among Newars, Karmacharyas are initiated into mantra but are not allowed to wear the sacred thread. Originally, they performed worship at the shrine of Taleju, the royal clan goddess of the Mallas, but these days they officiate at the temples and pith of Shakti.

3 Kasais are butchers by tradition. They also cut the nails of people of ‘higher’ castes. Kasais, also called Khadgis or Naya, were not ‘untouchable’ in the past, nor were they just butchers. Documentary evidence from the Malla Period shows that they were ‘touchable’ and that they were known as Niyogis. As the performers of the ordained religious function of sacrificing animals, a very important aspect of the Shakti cult dominant then, they were much more than lowly butchers.

4 Turn to page 6 for the classification of Nepal’s historical periods.
The Jyapu believe that nothing is inanimate and that everything is alive. Everything and everyone has a place and role to play in the overall scheme of the ‘living world’. Like their human creators, gods and temples, the created, too have specific birthdays.

Birthdays not only mark the coming into the ‘local world of the place’ but also recognise the influence of the changing cosmic positions of the planets, the sun, stars, constellations, etc, in shaping the destiny of the born. With this the case, birthdays are not occasions to feast with friends but celebratory times to propitiate and honour the forces that matter in ensuring a fruitful co-existence over the coming year.

Knowledge of astronomy and astrology had reached great heights in the Valley by the sixth century. The Sumatitantra, a book on the stars and the computational mathematics of time, was written here sometime around then. It states that the relative positions of the sun, the moon, the earth and the twelve zodiacal houses are forever changing and that there is a cycle of 25,920 solar years, the adhisamvatsara. Within an adhisamvatsara, absolute time was defined as a complex entity with five interrelated parts, or panchanga.

The solid understanding of time and space that prevailed in society much before Sumatitantra was written seems to have led to the idea that a unique character is associated with a unique moment of birth. Just as no two births could manifest physically at the same spot at the same time, an object with exactly the same characteristics as another could occur only after such a long time on earth that every element, when related to time and space, would be unique. The concepts of a unique time and space and the unique interaction of constantly changing natural forces are brought together in the rituals associated with a birthday ceremony.

In this ceremony of the uniquely characterised birthday, called the Varsavardhan Puja (literally, ‘year increment’ or ‘birthday worship’), every born or created object ceremonially worships others that influence it. Thus, once a year humans worship every entity, below, on, or above the earth. In particular, man-made elements such as images, temples or towns, need to be ritually energised every year to enable them to play their ordained role afresh.

Lest their finiteness be overlooked, cultural practices are repeated in defined and divined cycles, reminding one and all of each and every one’s place in the scheme of life. In this, a seasonality of purpose is far more important than historicity. Nothing is really old, and cultural practices seemingly have nothing to do with keeping the memory of the past alive. Rather, they reflect man’s need to maintain the completeness of the seasons of life—the universal microcosm framed by nature.

Time and again, during proper seasons, every entity has to become and, indeed, becomes a microcosm in and of itself. And, at
The Brick and the Bull

poles in the town, which is also the first act of the festival of Tunaldevi, one of the two most important festivals of the town. Called lingo (literally, 'a dressed slender tree with the top shoot intact'), the timber poles are about six floors' high and are cut from a single tree from a forest east of the valley, near Khopasi village. The raised lingo symbolises the occupation of the land and the finality of the formation of the state.

The decoration of the lingo and the details of the festoons do not suggest a usual Hindu ritual but a festival with a more ancient bearing. Raising totems is not the preserve of Hin-

Indra Jatra

The festival of Indra in Kathmandu, Indra Jatra, is celebrated by both Hindus and Buddhists and lasts for eight days. Its rituals begin on Bhadra Sukla Dwadasi with the raising of a lingo in front of the temple of Indra, a little to the north of Kal-Bhairav in Kathmandu Darbar Square. Masked dancers herald the arrival of Indra, the king of heavens and also the god of rain. The chariot festival of the living goddess, Kumari, is held on the third day, when the king of Nepal goes to pay homage to the goddess. Late in the evening, the festival of Baumata is held. Baumata is a festive presentation in which a naga, or snake god, made of narkat plants, is lit by 27 oil lamps and carried around town. The celebrants also pay homage to their ancestors as they follow the procession. During this time, the original lakhe dance of Kathmandu, or Mazipata Lakhe, is also performed in various street crossings. Indra Jatra also signifies the rebirth of a state, so all activities are designed to demonstrate and strengthen the power of the state. The Malla kingdom of Kathmandu submitted to the Gorkha conquest without a fight on this date in 1768, seemingly accepting the new representative of Indra!

The lingo at Bhuteswor—remembering Kirat days

the same time, it reminds itself that it is also a part of a larger entity, the complete world. Circular relationships extend out to finally define the universe as the ultimate entity, beyond which nothingness pervades.

It is only for the universe that there is no assigned annual birthday. The universe exists in a void of time and space, an entirety without any outside influence to reckon with.

Varsavardhan Puja and the lingo

Handigaun celebrates its Varsavardhan Puja on Chaitra Sukla Astami. As both the founding of a new state and its first capital would have taken place at the same time, and as a new calendar era was usually promulgated to mark the event, it is natural that Handigaun's varsavardhan day is a new year's day too.

This day is marked by raising ceremonial
The 'birthday' of Handigaun
dus alone and was common in many ancient societies. Hindu literary evidence of such a ritual is first found in the epic Mahabharata, in which Indra gives his totem (a bamboo pole with his standard banner) to King Basu. The divine ruler then instructs the earthly one on the conduct of the rituals and the manner of celebration for the banner’s annual raising, which assures the continued power and well-being of the state. In ancient times, the celebration was held on the new year of those days. According to the Harivamsa Puran myths, this Indra jatra was relocated later to the bright fortnight of Bhadra, to make room for Govardhan Puja, a new festival called for by Lord Krishna. It is for this reason that Indra Jatra is celebrated in Kathmandu and the other Malla capital towns on Bhadra Sukla Dwadasi, out of synchronicity with the ancient New Year’s Day, Kartik Sukla Pratipada. The Nepal Sambat’s new year is still celebrated on the latter date.

The Handigaun festival, however, occurs six months later and is not connected with Indra. Another similar festival, the grand lingo jatra of Bisket of Bhadgaun, is not associated with Indra Jatra either. Yet, in Bhadgaun, too, the symbolic replay of the occupation of land is timed for the first day of Baisakh, New Year’s Day, according to the solar calendar. During Bisket Jatra, the ritual decoration of the lingo is also different from that in Indra Jatra: it represents the totem pole of the ancient tribes symbolised by nagas, or auspicious serpents. One may thus conclude that the raising of the lingo is timed for the new year and that its decoration symbolises the ruler’s insignia or standard.

In Handigaun, two poles are raised—one at Dabali and the other at Bhuteswor. As in Bhadgaun, the pole raised in front of Bhuteswor Bhairav displays a halipata, a Kirat totem consisting of a ritual thin banner representing the nagas. The exact location of the totem in the square makes it quite clear that it is not raised in honour of the Bhuteswor Bhairav alone. The maze and overlap of religious practices over a long period has made the residents of Handigaun believe that they are raising it in honour of the Kamalasan Vishnu, whose temple has been recently relocated to make way for a wider road. No Hindu myth or tradition supports such a view. It is more than likely that the totem was raised in front of a very ancient palace, dating to before the Lichchhavi, which was located perhaps in the area, now referred to as Tunchhe. In any case, the spot is midway between Bhairav, Tunchhe and Bhachhe.

The well located in the courtyard of Tunchhe is a reminder that it was once occupied by Kirats. One can say with certainty that

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**Worshipping the Mother Goddess**

The most important festival of Nepal, Dasain, is a period of fervent worship of the goddess Durga, or Parvati, wife of Lord Siva. Lasting for nine nights and ten days from Aswin Sukla Pratipada to Dasami, Dasain rituals on the first, seventh, eight and ninth days require animal sacrifices. It is not an original Aryan/Hindu festival but an assimilation of the religious traditions of the indigenous people. As this adopted practice gained strength, it displaced the original calendar slot of the Indra festival.

In addition to the period in Aswin devoted to the sacrificial worship of the Mother Goddess, three other such periods are recognised in old texts: the periods from Pratipada to Dasami of the bright moon of the months of Chaitra, Asadh and Magh. The tradition of sacrifice and worship of primal mother goddesses, the ajima, is a Kirat tradition. The corresponding celebrations of Krishna Chaturdasi, such as the Nalasana, Pishacha, Dilla and Lain chahres, are related to such traditions. The Lingo Festival of Handigaun is synchronised with Chaitra Dasain.
following the Lichchhavis’ arrival, it became customary to use stone water conduits to supply water to places of importance. It is at Tunchhe that the head of the buffalo sacrificed for the pleasure of Tunaldevi, another act of the Dasain festival ritualised a few days later, has to be brought for worship by a Kasai.

The other pole is raised at Dabali and is similar to the first in all aspects except that it does not carry the halipata, a symbol reserved for the king and his palace area. Here, at Dabali, the pole is raised in honour of the goddess of Andipringga. (See Note 2) It is an obviously Kirat New Year’s announcement and honours both the king and the tutelary goddess, albeit at different places. The tutelary god Bhairav with his face mask, similar to that of Bhuteswor Bhairav is believed to be a representation of the Kirat king and is also seen in various other places in Kathmandu Valley speculated to be Kirat seats of power or a palace.

Once raised, the poles need not be worshipped. As in a birthday ritual, the raising tells Handigaun residents it is time to worship all the gods. It is these activities that make this festival a new year’s festival and a varsa-vardhana puja at the same time. Symbolically, Handigaun’s ancient role as a capital is played out.3 The festival tells us that the calendar year of the state in memory started on the bright fortnight of Chaitra. As the town celebrates its birthday, it energises the settlement for the coming year. Renewed and its entity reasserted, Handigaun protects and makes life safe and worthwhile for its inhabitants for one more year.

The lives of the people centre around their settlement, just as a settlement lives to serve each of its residents. Indeed, in the cultural scheme of the people of Handigaun, people and their settlements are interactive microcosms, each acting to enable the other to attain completeness and purpose in life.

Born, as I was, here in Handigaun, my life should centre on it, too. My world may be physically wider than that of Asta Bahadur Khadgi, my family helper, but ritually and conceptually both are the same. The cyclic cultural practices of the Jyapu of Handigaun demonstrate that the orbit of their physical world extends as far as Bansbari in north Kathmandu. All these worlds have the same centre and are complete on their own, but at the same time they support the existence of each other, like microcosms within microcosms. They are like electrons making a molecule of the place, stable but not static. The Handigaun presented in this book relates to the orbit of the Jyapu.

The spots where the lingo are raised and other ritual places and paths of movement seen in the jatra of Tunaldevi define salient features of the town of Handigaun that go back long before the orbit of the Jyapu expanded to Bansbari. We shall come back to this in Chapter 10, when we discuss the festival of Tunaldevi in detail.

### The historical periods of Nepal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Dates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-historic 1 or the Gopala Period</td>
<td>before 700 BCE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pre-historic 2 or the Kirata Period</td>
<td>circa 700 BCE to circa 78 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lichchhavi Period</td>
<td>circa 78 CE to circa 880 CE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transitional or Dark Period</td>
<td>circa 880 CE to circa 1200 CE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Malla Period</td>
<td>circa 1200 CE to 1768 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shah Period</td>
<td>1768 CE to present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Interim Rana Period: 1846 to 1950)</td>
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</tbody>
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Notes

1. The usual Pradakshina Festival, during which the residents go round their town or village, is not the *varsavardhana* day for the simple reason that the residents pay homage to the guardian and ruling deities of the settlement in this festival. As a ritual, it retraces the designed divine perimeter elements of a settlement. For Handigaun, the Going-Round-the-Town Festival is held on Bhadra Sukla Dwadasi and is called Matachoyeke.

2. Dabali is mistakenly believed to be a *kot*; however, as no Malla palace was located in Handigaun, there could have been no *kot*, a Malla palace adjunct, at Dabali. It would appear that the mound of ruins, which existed there before it was removed to make room for the Saraswoti temple in the 1970s, comes from traditions even older than the period of the Lichchhavi. The memory of a cult of Puma Kalas and of the Kirat Goddess of Andipringga appears to have caused the mix-up. It must be the site of Dvimaju that is meant by the reference to a *kot*. (See Chapter 10: ‘Gods in crisis or happenings of history?’)

3. See Chapter 4: ‘The gods arrive at Handigaun’, and Chapter 8: ‘Andipringga, the Kirat Handigaun’.
Kathmandu Valley is a small bowl, 25 kilometres in diameter, which has been dotted with small and large settlements since ancient times. Indeed, the abundance of non-Sanskrit names for places and settlements in the Sanskrit inscriptions of the Lichchhavis is sufficient proof that the indigenous population used some other language and lived in compact settlements on ridges, hillocks, hills and other humps on the valley floor. Containing the suffix ‘pringga’, these Kirat settlement names include Khoppringga, Phalapringga, Mhasapringga and Kadapringga(-dula), still remembered today as Khopa (Bhadgaun), Pharping, Mhyepi and Kupondole respectively.

The Kirat performed ancestor worship in the latter period of their independent social existence. This included the worship of grandmothers, or yumi, and of grandfathers, or theba or hathavan, forerunners respectively of the ajima and the ajju in later Newari religious celebrations. An essential part of both rituals was the sacrifice of an animal such as a male buffalo or lamb.

With the arrival of the Vrijji, the Lichchhavi, and other migrants, Buddhism and Hinduism and their various sects were introduced to the valley. Each new influx led to a re-creation and re-interpretation of the indigenous people’s traditional mode of religious and social practice and resulted in the creation and placing of a myriad of images, power places, and temples within the physical space. Indeed, there are so many places in the valley with such assimilated gods and goddesses as their central piece that a visitor interested in seeing small, old towns would have a really long list to choose from. Many of the towns and villages look similar, but each has its own story, its own festivals and its own tutelary god. Historical overlaps not only shroud their past in mystery, but also render these places enigmatic today, as people continue to celebrate their esoteric festivals.

The valley’s people, settlements and festivities seem to come straight out of history books. For some, it may look as though time stopped here sometime in the medieval ages. But the fact of the matter is that cultural time in Kathmandu is moving much more rapidly than it is in other countries—so fast that many of the memories, traditions and rituals that once bound the place together are eroding. However, a closer look will reveal that each settlement carries long-term records of the sequential stamp of the dynamism of various periods. On festive and religious occasions, these imprints come alive and renew the past. At such times, one can witness the grandeur that the settlement was and still is.

The skyline in the old sections of the towns and villages of Kathmandu Valley is dominated by multi-roofed temples and stupas, and their surface spaces are full of power places. All of these house a myriad of gods. Over the known historical period, the religious affiliation of the people has changed greatly, but
these changes do not seem at any time (except once in the seventh century and perhaps once again somewhere between the ninth and the tenth centuries?) to have brought about any major religious turmoil; the two exceptions in any case engulfed the two new entrants rather than the indigenous population. It was usual for the new to fit in with the old and for the old to adopt some of the features of the newer faiths. This process led to the development of syncretism in the religion as well as the culture of the people.

Even before the Kirat took to ancestor worship, the water-logged nature of the valley in its early days seems to have paved the way for an animistic religion to take root: people worshipped the naga, the serpents resident in the water bodies of Kathmandu. Certain rituals, such as the one in Bhadgaun in which the totem symbol is a holdover of the naga tradition, make this evident. The Kirat, when they came to the valley, were already followers of the non-ithyphallic Siva-Rudra cult. They then developed ancestor worship, followed by the worship of mother goddesses and the observation of the Saiva, Buddhist and Vaisnav religions, perhaps in that order. The processes of religious change began in the first millennium CE and are still going on today. Thus, in the twenty-first century, a whole range of faiths can be seen in traces or in preponderance in all the towns of the valley. As a place subjected to massive physical intervention in its periphery only in the recent past (during the last years of the Rana Period), Handigaun remembers its ancient past more precisely than do other towns. Given its role as a central settlement in the ancient period of Nepali history, it is a singularly informative place for the observation of early urban form and space.

The firm flowering of Tantrism in Nepal towards the end of the first millennium CE had a strong effect on all of the earlier religious movements, which resulted in the emergence of newer faiths such as Shakti-dominant Hinduism and Vajrayan Buddhism. In a sense, Tantrism served to draw the two major religions and their followers closer because of the similarities between rituals that stemmed from the adoption of gods with similar powers by both religions and from the introduction of the priesthood in Mahayan Buddhism. In daily life there was not much to differentiate the Saiva, the Shakta, or the Buddhist. Soon festivals developed a pan-religious outlook and their cultural and social aspects began to surpass their religious dimensions.

A change may have come about in the way society approached these gods, whether Kirat, Saiva, Shakta or Buddhist, but in their original places, their pith, and their temples, they continued to enjoy their independent status. The number of temples and gods increased over time, so much so that it was as if these towns had been chosen by the gods and that humans lived only to fill the spaces and attend to the needs of the celestials in their many moods and interludes. These towns are, thus, the abodes of gods with various forms, characters and qualities. Wonderfully, the gods do not always live their lives inside their temples; once in a while they come out to renew their relations with humans, just as humans, as believers, visit the gods in their temples. Either way, for the residents of Kathmandu, the result is joy and festivals.

Festivals are and always have been a part of life in Kathmandu Valley. A lot of them involve the gods, and local people rejoice in participating in these romantic interactions with them. In many festivals, participation involves pretending to be a god. It is as though the people themselves become the gods. Indeed, participating locals, masked and bedecked in godly paraphernalia, are so much at ease with gods that they claim in local Newari, 'Jhipin Dyo', or 'We are the gods'. Kathmandu Valley is perhaps the one place in the world where the claim that man made god in his own image is wonderfully evident.
The spirit of living in Kathmandu Valley lies in believing in religion, and, moreover, in believing in many faiths at the same time without being sceptical about any particular one. The valley dwellers believe in gods and feel that the gods reciprocate through their engagement with the human world. Festivals in the towns of Kathmandu Valley are a fascinating depiction of this romantic perspective. Residents play-act and animate gods as if their great-grandfathers had seen them walking the streets only a few decades ago. Annually, or sometimes only every twelve years, elaborate rituals are executed to re-enact celestial events and scenes of the past. Whether demons prowl the streets, giving the gods a reason to come out of their temples to save humans, or whether the gods just need to renew their relationships with celestial relatives through a regular visit, whatever the theme or reason, festivals come into play. They are grand occasions and whole settlements come alive with them. Whatever the reason for a festival is, almost all of them are place- rather than caste-specific. In this sense, festivals link places in a town or village and make visible the existing social structure as well as how it was built up from the past.

Despite the fast-paced modernisation taking place today, traditions do not seem to die easily, particularly in Kathmandu Valley. For the residents, traditions are larger than life and certainly their perpetuation or abandonment is not a matter for the current generation to decide upon. The current generation exists to play its role in the cycle of time and in the events that were set rolling by their forefathers. This attitude does not imply that traditions are static or that festivities are still enacted entirely as they had when they first started. Changes have been periodically introduced in order to adapt them to newer religio-cultural moods and changing faiths. What we see today is an accretion of adaptations over a long period of time and sometimes the original is so overshadowed that it takes a very experienced and watchful eye to make out the origins of a festival. Among the Newars, the aboriginal settlers of the valley, Jyapus, have been the most tenacious in maintaining traditions, and Handigaun is a predominantly Jyapu settlement.

Academic proof of the antiquity of both the town and the residents of Handigaun has been accumulating slowly. The discovery of the Yaksa statue; of images of mother goddesses belonging to the pre-Lichchhavi Period; of Lichchhavi inscriptions; and of inscribed bricks from the time of Mahasamanta Amshuverma, a powerful chieftain from the last quarter of the sixth century CE, is reinforced by more recent archaeological finds at Satyanarayan. The finding of an inscribed and dated image of Jayaverma I, the fourth Lichchhavi king, has not only added about three hundred years to the ‘proven’ history of Nepal, but also reaffirmed the role of Handigaun as the capital of early Lichchhavi days.

The archaeological excavation of Satyanarayan proves beyond question that Handigaun had been a developed settlement since at least around 150 BCE. The non-ithyphallic Saiva cult practices of the Jyapu of Handigaun and the celebrated jatra of Tunaldevi add up to take Jyapus and their town to the heydays of the Kirat Period in Nepal’s ancient history.

**Jyapus and society**

Kathmandu Valley was once an orthodox society with a variety of castes. The Lichchhavi society followed the system of four castes, or varnas—Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras—and eighteen sub-castes, or jat, that it inherited from the indigenous Kirats. It is not clear how the earlier Kirat society was organised or how they fit into the new system. As Lichchhavi society practised Hindu strictures, the Kirat may have been put into the
Handigaun: a gem among places

Kshatriya caste, or orthodoxy might have caused them to merge with the Sudra agriculture and artisan groups.

In the Malla Period, following the rise of Jayasthiti Malla to the throne of Nepal through his marriage to Queen Rajalladevi in 1382 CE, a reorganisation of the then extant caste system was apparently undertaken by the state with the help of Brahmin advisers. A strict code governing the division of labour was redrafted and enforced, and has since remained fixed in Nepali society. This division (called jat, a professional class by birth) made the various professions within the society hereditary. In reality, this was not caste sub-structuring because it was independent of religious faith. Only the priests used by the different groups established their castes based on their religious faith. The valley society thus came to have ten subdivisions within the Brahmins, thirty-two within the Jyapus, eight within the Kumahs, etc. Both Jyapus and Kumahs belonged to the Sudra varna. This action appears to have redefined and encapsulated a class of people as the Jyapu, which literally means ‘someone able to do any primary work’. Ancient chronicles, however, do not use this term, so its coinage must be quite recent. Today Jyapus are primarily engaged in agriculture; indeed, they are legendary for their green thumbs.

There are twelve sub-divisions within the group, far fewer than the thirty-two sub-divisions mentioned in the chronicle of Jayasthiti Malla. There appear to have been just twelve groups at least since the mid-Malla Period. They carry such surnames as Maharjan, Prajapati, Dongol, Suwal, Mali, Kumah, Tepe, etc. The Jyapus of Handigaun are mostly Maharjans, Prajapatis and Dongols. Although Newar society today is complex, and although the hierarchical ranking of the jat is subject to disagreement, Jyapus are considered to be the lowest jat, superior only to the ‘untouchables’.

Population profile of Handigaun

Today Handigaun is a mixed community. In the central area, which is bounded by Gahana Pokhari in the west and Satyanarayan in the east, and whose corners are at the Bhimsenthan, Krishna Mandir, Nateswor and Kartikeya temples, a 1997 survey counted 396 families. Of these, 248 families were Newar and 148 non-Newar. A physical comparison of the spaces existing in 1997 with those of 1972 shows that there has been a significant addition of buildings in open spaces and their periphery. Of the 148 non-Newar families found today, about 130 live in buildings built after 1972 on plots which were once open areas, kitchen gardens or farmland. In contrast only 18 Newar households live in houses built after 1972 in hitherto open spaces. In 1972, there were only about 248 houses and Newars occupied about 230 of them.

No Brahmin lived in the surveyed area before 1934; their arrival in Handigaun followed the rule of Prime Minister Bhirn Shumsher Jung Bahadur Rana. From a wholly Jyapu town, changes in the last quarter of a century...
alone have reduced the proportion of Jyapu and Newar households from 92 per cent to about 62 per cent in the core area. In 1972, the population consisted of Maharjans, Prajapatis and Dongols with a few Shresthas, Manandhars and Khadgis. Shresthas, the socially highest placed among them, occupied Bhimnani and the nodes of the crossroads around Bhimsenthan, Krishna Mandir and Dabali. Manandhars shared these nodal spaces. Khadgis were around the Nateswor temple. Maharjans and Prajapatis were at Dathutole and along the street between Dabali and Krishna Mandir; Dongols were to their west and at Kotaltole. This jat-based use of space is still intact except that the number of Dongols has decreased and the number of Shrestha households had gone up correspondingly. Actually, there has been little decrease in the number of Dongol households; the difference is that more Jyapus now call themselves Shresthas in search of social elevation. Since the Handigaun Newar community was once exclusively Jyapu and even as they are overwhelmed by other jat and by immigrants, they continue to exhibit great social unity among themselves. Despite the changes, the Jyapu adhere strongly to ancient traditions and life styles.

The divine profile of Handigaun
We have already pointed out that each and every entity in everyday life was identified by Newar society as a mirror image of the cosmos. Nowhere has this been more emphatically put in physical perspective than in the planning of towns and villages. As cosmic entities, settlements were built ‘complete’ to start with and were to remain so into the future. To do so physically, gods and power places were put in spaces and streets laid out as if their function was to facilitate the passage of gods rather than that of man. For fear that the town would expand beyond its boundaries and destabilise its form, the perimeter of built areas was also scrupulously defined by locating ‘heavenly elements’ around it. In what modern planners may call the ‘zoning through rituals’ approach, the town grew through the process of in-fill, thereby keeping the ritual infrastructure static and unchanged. In this sense, all the traditional towns of Kathmandu Valley are metaphysically walled-in towns, with a clear definition of the inside (dune, in Newari) and the outside (pine, in Newari) spaces; neither was able to transgress upon the other through later human interventions until recently. Heavenly elements fixed in physical space define entry into (or exit from, depending upon your direction of movement) the human domain. In the more ancient of the indigenous towns, the ritual structure consisted of a dyochhe, or house of god, in the town and a pith, or aniconic power place, outside.

**Jat profile of Handigaun Newars**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family name (Jat)</th>
<th>Number of households</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maharjan</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prajapati</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shrestha</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dongol</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manandhar</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khadgi</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Perimeter gods and goddesses: A schema for every town
Handigaun: a gem among places

The pikhalakhu in front of a house and on a street, a river of flowing humans

the settlement limits in the domain of nature. Such a structure still survives to a degree in Handigaun.

Every change in the direction of movement in a physical as well as a psychological sense is ritually marked, by placing a natural stone, a pith, a sculpted image or even a temple. This concept was applied on the inside of the town as much as along its perimeter. As a matter of fact, the first place of departure of the residents, the intersection of the line of exit from each house and the direction of the street outside, is taken as a heavenly point. Here, the Newars worship a stone vedi every morning. Called pikhalakhu, these points mark the interface of the in-house state of mind and the change to public behavioural mode, a ritual point of departure or an exit marked by the presence of Kaumari or Aparajita, a shakti of Siva. Kaumari commands worship even prior to Ganesh, the god in the Hindu pantheon always worshipped first in other rituals. In the religious scheme of spaces, a pikhalakhu (pin, kha and lamkhu respectively mean ‘outside’, ‘door’ and ‘stream’) indicates a passage or a flowing movement similar to that of a stream. The flow into the town from each house creates a set of streams with various states of minds mingling together. Thus, the pikhalakhu in front of all the houses symbolically transform the street into a river of flowing humans.

The spatial boundary of Handigaun

Before one can proceed to discover the boundary markers of a place, the extent of that place needs to be roughly known. The area encompassed by the Handigaun of legends, or Vishalnagar, was very large. The residents and some chronicles recollect that it had 99 toles or neighbourhoods, or simply 99 courts. The symbolism behind the memory can be traced to the nine pith of Handigaun, where mother goddesses are still worshipped variously as Saptamatrika, Astamatrika or Dasamahavidhya. The ritual worship at Tunaldevi acknowledges these pith as the power places of the ekadasa Rudras, or the eleven Rudras, and their consorts. Given the concept of the mono-god/goddess-protected settlement, these nine pith could have shaped the memory that 99 individual tole constituted the original town. Hindu myths tell us that the Vedic god Indra destroyed the 99 forts of the Asuras, the original inhabitants of the Indian subcontinent, during the Aryan onslaught. These people, addressed as Dasa or Dasyu in Aryan literature, later came to be known as the Saka. The Saka were divided into eleven major groups just as there were eleven Rudras. The Kirat, from whom the Jyapu seem to have descended, was one of these Saka groups. It would seem that the numbers 3 (the three-headed god image of the Indus-Saraswoti valley and the three bricks for the next world as we see in Chapter 5), 9 (the number of pith and gateways), 11 (the number of Rudras, the number of residential quarters of Mohenjodaro), 27 (3 x 9, or the number of piers in the granary of Mohenjodaro or the lights in the baumata of Indra Jatra), and 99 (11 x 9, or the total number of Rudra-Shaktis around Handigaun) were ‘magical’ for them. The palace of Bhadgaun is also popularly reckoned to have 99 courts. Rather than indicating the real physical extent of the town, this litany of
magical numbers, particularly the number 99, may demonstrate more the connection of the Kirat and the Jyapu with the Asura, the people of the Indus-Saraswati Valley.

During the late Lichchhavi Period, the administrative boundary revisions seem to have reduced Vishalnagar to the area delimited by the Narayan of Sanogaucharan in the southeast; the Narayan of Chardhune in Naxal in the southwest; Tukucha/Gairidhara in the northwest; and Dhanaganesh in the northeast. The areas to the south of the Manamaneswori of today appear to have been demarcated as a different sub-place. Within the remaining small core of Handigaun, there is a large number of temples that testify to its sustained importance in ancient times. These temples may be grouped into three sets: the outside set, the boundary set and the in-town set.

The outside set of temples has Tunaldevi to the north at Chandol, Dhanaganesh to the northeast at Panchedhara, Satyanarayan and Saraswoti to the east, Manamaneswori to the southwest, and Bhatbhateni to the west. It is obvious that all of them were not erected at the same time in history; instead, their sequence of installation must have followed the changing sect scene in Handigaun. The eastern flank appears as the Narayan sub-set, which includes Baraha, Dhanwantari, Hayagriva and Satyanarayan. The western flank similarly appears as the Shakti sub-set including Maheswori, Brahmayani and Vaisnani.

The perimeter set of temples consists of Bhimsen to the northwest; Bhairav, Krishna and Narayan to the northeast; and Kartikeya to the southwest. The grand temple of Kartikeya, the first son of Siva, whose image is wrongly called Garud-bahini Bhagabati today, is a rarity and as such the pride of Handigaun. A lesser image of Matsya-Bhairav closes the perimeter in the mid-west. A large temple of Mahadev, now reduced to just the sanctum floor, is located to the east of Kartikeya. Also, in older days, dabali, ceremonial platforms located at exit crossings, marked potent peripheral spots.

The in-town set of temples is located on the eastern side and has Vaisnani (Tunaldevi Dyochhe) at the centre in Dathutole; Nateswor to the north at Thataltole; and another Nateswor to the south at Kotaltole. These three temples are located within the residential neighbourhood of the Maharjan, Prajapati, Dongol and Kasai groups. As in other Newar towns, Ganesh is seen in several niches.

The tutelary god of Handigaun is the Bhuteswor Bhairav of Thataltole. He is constantly gazing southwards from the roadside in front of Krishna Mandir. He commands first attention in most of the rituals associated with the settlement. The site of Bhuteswor, along with the pith that is now occupied by the Satyanarayan, appears to have been the most potent of all sites in Handigaun since ancient times, even before the Lichchhavis came to power. These two sites seem to have been given a new cosmic status with the installation of Kamalasan Narayan and Satyanarayan respectively. The Siva set of temples also centre around Thataltole and the site of Satyanarayan. When Handigaun was re-organised as Haripur in the early medieval period, the central deity, Krishna, was also installed in this very place, Thatal-tole. The spot occupied by Bhuteswor, topographically the highest point in Handigaun, and that occupied by Satyanarayan, the lowest, both seem to have earned their early cosmic appeal through their geographical positions as landmarks. We will revisit the locations of gods when we consider the ritual macro- and micro-geometry of Handigaun in later chapters.

With no vihar and only four chiba, Handigaun today has only a few practising Buddhists, most of whom are Dongols. The oldest chiba is located in an open space called Salmichaur, behind the street near
Nyalmalohn, and has an inscription dated 1622 CE. It is possible that in ancient times there was a major Buddhist establishment near the Tunchen area, where even today the Dongols gather for ritual worship during Buddhist festivities.

The original site for funeral rites was located in the Panchedhara area near the current Dhanaganesh temple. In the funeral *pati* to its north, until recently were found the images of Bhairav, Siva, Vishnu and Vaisnavi. These days, the dead from the central and northern parts of Handigaun are taken across the Dhobi Khola river to its east bank for cremation. Those from the southern part (Kotaltole) are taken to Tunaldevi for cremation.

**Socio-religious practices of Handigaun**

Although Vaishnav religious places and temples are dominant, the majority of the population is Saiva. Umamaheswor images are found in several locations and are highly venerated. The Prajapati’s clan deity is Harihar, a combined image of Siva and Vishnu popularised by the Lichchhavis as their clan deity in order to bring the Saiva practice close to Vaisnavism. From this perspective, it seems that the Prajapatis were Sivites before adopting Saiva-Vaisnav practices.

The Maharjans venerate Mahadev and Ganesh as their clan gods. The offering of an
animal sacrifice during Maharjan clan worship is ritually hidden from the view of Mahadev and is instead made to Ganesh. For Maharjans in ancient times, Siva was the one who received the sacrifice, for Siva was then a sacrifice-accepting god. Their rituals appear to have been modified to suit the changing nature of Siva during the first millennium CE. In some rituals of the Maharjans, such as in their important secret festival of Chya-guthi, the mediation of Ganesh is not necessary even now; instead, sacrifices are offered directly to Siva. The ritual worship of Ganesh with animal sacrifice is a religious practice dating from only about the thirteenth century, and the current Maharjan practice must have been influenced by the practices of that time. We can also see the new development as a direct influence of Shakta practices as Ganesh accepts blood only in the Newar society. The third clan group, the Dongols, venerate Nasadyo, or Siva in absolute joy, who, physically, is abstracted as a 'bindu' or point at the centre of a triangle. He accepts animal sacrifices, particularly buffaloes.

In totality, we can see that all three clans of Jyapus in Handigaun are Saiva; they worship the same god in different forms and with varied levels of assimilation of other and later religious cults. Of these, the practices of the Maharjans reflect the most ancient and enduring tradition.

As in other Jyapu societies, the presence of direct Shakta ritual practices is also noticeable in Handigaun. In the classical, religiously tolerant practice of Jyapus, the two chiba of Dathutole are as venerated as the Uma-maheswor close by. Early morning ritual offerings are made by the Jyapu without discrimination. All the religious images, chiba, and temples are visited daily. The temples of Bhimsen, Krishna, Vishnu, Saraswoti, Kartikeya, the images of Umamaheswor and the chiba of Dathutole are more frequented than Dhanaganesh and Satyanarayan, which are visited on special occasions and on the way to the fields.

The socio-religious functions of a Newar society are handled by one or more guthi, each of which is essentially a corporate body entrusted with carrying out a certain social or religious function. These functions may relate to the life cycle activities of a clan group, to religious functions of importance to a larger group, or to social activities. As in any Newar settlement, there are many guthi in Handigaun.

The guthi were formed in the long forgotten past so that social burdens could be shared by the community; they were usually assured financially through land grants. In recent times, the trusts for major temples and festivals were taken over by the government following the formation of the Guthi Corporation in 1964. The result has been a slow erosion of festivals; today many festivals are held in only their essential aspects. In Handigaun, all the major chariot festivals are conducted either by the local government, by the Guthi Corporation, or through contracts. In the eyes of the local people, the Guthi Corporation has failed miserably as a custodian; it is held directly responsible for the process of decay that has set in. Still, festivals are festivals and the Jyapu are the Jyapu, and, despite the official mismanagement and limited finances, all festivals are ardently participated in by the whole community. Widespread participation is also ensured since several subsidiary guthi were involved in conducting each festival and since
subsidiary guthi were private and, as such, were left out of the government takeover. Among the festivals detailed in this book, the jatra of Tunaldevi and Satyanarayan are held under the auspices of the Guthi Corporation, which awards contracts to the traditional guthi. The municipal ward office, through a similar contract, undertakes the jatra of Dhanaganesh.

Jyapus are a god-fearing group whose lives are full of rituals and worships. Family rituals are mediated by the priestly Karma-charyas, particularly those officiating at the Bhatbhateni temple. The worship of their clan god is a major annual ritual of both Jyapus and other Newars. Called digu-dyo, these pith and power place markers of clan gods, are usually specific to clans and are generally located outside the town. Several shapeless natural stones have been placed around the paved area at digu-dyo sites. The digu-dyo sites of the Maharjan, Prajapati and Dongol clans of Handigaun are located close to each other at Gahan Pokhari, Maligaun and Bhatbhateni. Some are further away at Dhunbarahi and across the Dhobi Khola river at sites a little to the south of the new bridge to Chabel. The Gahan Pokhari site has a temple of Harihar also. The digu-dyo site at Maligaun is also used by other Newars, such as Shresthas. The individual clan-specific festive day could fall anywhere within an entire month ending on Sithinakha or Kumar-Sasthi (Jestha Sukla Sasthi according to the lunar calendar). On that day, the whole clan assembles at these pith to make offerings to the digu-dyo and feasts follow. The festive month ends with a visit to the Kartikeya temple on the day of Kumar-Sasthi.

Jyapus fill their days with working in their fields and their gods recognise their presence every day because each day begins with religious rites that bring them blessings. Their life cycle rituals, the annual rituals of the gods, town sanctification festivals, and the upkeep of many other similar social, cultural and religious traditions fill up the Jyapus' lives on earth. Their lives are fully occupied with Mother Nature and the gods who have chosen to make Handigaun their home. Both the mundane and the religious roles of man and his place in each realm are ideas always alive and active in the Jyapu mindset of Handigaun. For them, peace lies in living or, more precisely, in living in peace with all the gods they have felt the presence of since time immemorial.

Notes

1 Inscriptional evidence in the Valley goes back only to 184 CE in the Lichchhavi Period.
2 See box 'Seeds of disharmony', Chapter 12, page 107.
3 The inscription of King Basantadev, located at Adi-Narayan Temple at Thankot and issued in the first decade of the sixth century CE, includes a reference to the eighteen groups with craft skills. Later, in the Malla Period, we find mention of thirty-six, sixty-four, eighty-four and more jats, or sub-castes. Sub-castes are not indicative of religion but of profession. In the Lichchhavi Period the varna system of social division was applied only to the Hindu community.
4 According to Manusmriti, x, 44, the Kirat are said to be 'barta Kshatriyas'. 'Barta' was used to refer to tribes which did not come under the influence of Brahmanical practices. They are also seen as followers of Rudra, the vedic form of Mahadev.
5 Some of the occupational groups within the Jyapu class today, such as the potters (Kumahs), and some others from the Udas class, such as brickmakers (Awahs), are said to be of Kirat descent.
6 Some chronicles classify Kumahs as Vaisya.
This data is taken from a household survey done for a solid waste management study (Kathmandu Valley Urban Development Project).

Power places, or pith, are spots where the spirit of a god is said to be present.

The presence of such terms in the Newar urban vocabulary conveys the concept of a town as a bounded area.

What Niels Gutschow sees as 'a typical infrastructure of a Newar town' is actually a much tampered with situation in the case of Handigaun and possibly also in the case of Maligaun. The structure is a remnant of a mono-mother goddess-protected township of Kirat times. (See: N. Gutschow, 1985) For an analysis of Bhadgaun showing it as an amalgamation of three mono-goddess-protected Kirat townships and their corresponding dyochhe and pith infrastructure, see S.R. Tiwari, 1998.

In all the others, Ganesh accepts only fruits, sweets and the five pure foods (panchamrit). Ganesh adores sweets like laddoo.

The ritual requirement is a nirakar (formless) stone representing the clan god. The godly spirits are called in through rituals to reside in the stones during the worship and are sent back at the end of it.

The sites across the river are said to belong to settlers who came from Banepa during the course of early medieval events.
Chapter 4

The Kirat arrive in Kathmandu

It is well recognised that Kathmandu was a Kirat domain before the Lichchhavi took over. Chronological records are further unanimous in recording that Gopals (‘Cow-herd Rulers’) and Mahisapalas (‘Buffalo-herd Rulers’) preceded them. These groups were named Abhir centuries later in Lichchhavi inscriptions. Gopalarajavamsavali also gives the surname Gupta to the Gopals and states that they came to the valley from outside. They are said to have settled in the southwestern rim of the valley, where people of Abhira origin can still be found. From Lichchhavi inscriptions, we can see that Gupta mahasamantas were very powerful and that the Gopala population had remained in the valley even after the Kirat takeover. Early Lichchhavi inscriptions name many persons of Gupta and Gomi lineage, thus underscoring their large presence in the valley.

At the height of Abhira Bhauma Gupta’s power (as Sarvadandanayak Mahapratihara), he bestowed a lot of tax waivers upon the area between Kirtipur, Thankot and Kimsi, places where the Gopala population was concentrated. As evidence, we can cite Ganadev’s inscription at Kisipidi, DRR-XLIII, which, while addressing the residents of the village of Kadung uses an effaced word, ...palaka’, seemingly a reference to ‘gopalaka’. Ka, Kadula and Kadung were Lichchhavi Period names of villages around today’s Satungal. It is indeed the same area as Matatirtha, which some vamsavali say was the capital of the Gopala kingdom.

The Gopals and the Mahisapalas were edged out by the Kirats, who, according to the same chronicle, consolidated themselves from within. However, some Nepali anthropologists (N. Nepal, 1983) maintain that the Gopala and the Mahisapala were the aboriginal settlers and that the Kirat came from outside. Whether migrants or an indigenous tribe, the Kirat appear to have organised into a state about the beginning of the first millennium BCE. This can be computed by allocating an average of 30 years for the rule of each of the 32 Kirat kings named in Gopalarajavamsavali. ‘Kirat’ as a word signifying a clan, however, does not occur in any Lichchhavi inscription in the valley. It is found used only once in one inscription, DRR-LXXXV, and has been interpreted (M.R. Pant, 2042 BS) as referring to a particular type of staff member in the royal household. However, this interpretation, which is based on literary sources, is easily challenged on the basis of the inscription itself. It has been shown (S.R. Tiwari, 2001) that it is a reference to a Kirat god; the inscription is about the repair of a temple embarked upon by the Lichchhavis in honour of the Kirat god, Kirat Varsadhar. This corroborates the position of the chronologies that the Kirat ruled from within the valley before the Lichchhavi did. One may also speculate that the group referred to as satha by King Mandev in his inscription of Changunarayan is the Kirat. As the Gopala held important positions during the
Lichchhavi rule, the Kirat would have been the only group left to oppose the Lichchhavi.

M Slusser (1982: p. 8) has suggested that Kirats 'may have drifted south from the Tibetan plateau. These immigrants were probably ancestral to contemporary Nepalese hill tribes, the Magar, Gurung, Kirati (Limbu, Rai) ...and to the Tamangs who were well established on the slopes within'. Her comments appear guided by the Kirati's use of the Tibeto-Burman language and their predominantly Mongol features, particularly among those Kiratis resident outside the valley. It is, however, believed that the banishment of the Kirati to eastern Nepal is a mid-Malla Period phenomena spurred by the reluctance of some of them to fit into the social system enforced by Jayasthiti Malla. Hyapus also use a language with similar roots although they do not have Mongolian features. Some chronicles inform us that they had earlier established themselves in the Bagmati River valley after suppressing the Gopala and the Mahisapala.

It is very unlikely that the Lichchhavi would not have used the services of the Kirat population, as they appear to have remained in the valley until the time of Jayasthiti Malla. Some Kirat folklore suggests that there was no war between the Kirat and the Lichchhavi and claims that, in fact, they practised intermarriage. Some chronicles also state that the Lichchhavi had power handed down to them through negotiations. If that was the case, just as people of Gopala descent were present in the Lichchhavi administration, so also we should be able to find people of Kirat descent in their inscriptions. But so far historians and other experts have not come up with any Kirat names. We shall have to await further research into the subject.

N.M. Thulung, a learned Kirati himself, quotes Kirati folklore to suggest that the Kirat were Maluta and that Maruta, an early form of Rudra or Siva, was their ancestor. Accordingly, they were originally from 'Mong' but had moved to some part of China. There they split into the Chyan, Tyan and Hyan genets. The Kirat belong to the Chyan genet. The Chyan later moved to Hindi, the Indus Valley, from where they moved on east to Nepal. Kirat legends are emphatic that they did not come from the east or the north as those who followed the course of the Brahmaputra River are called 'Lahati' by the Kirat (N.M. Thulung, 1981: p. 130). These memories of Kirat priests, or homey, must be of a latter period and could be a reference to the Chi'n, Han and Tang dynasties of China. The Tang dynasty, of course, is considerably later than the period we are talking about, and it is in the Tang Annals that we find mention of the Lichchhavi palace of Kailashkut Bhavan, which proves that there was regular contact between Nepal and Tibet. But no historical knowledge of earlier direct contact between the Chi'n and Han dynasties and Nepal is known. However, the various dynasties of the Chinese empire did have contacts with the Tarim Valley, and thus with the Indus.

The Kirat worshipped Siva. And so it seems did the Kushan, the Kui Shing branch of the Yeu-Chi who came to the Indus Valley around the first century BCE. This fact is illustrated by their coins, which show relief images of Siva with a trident. It is likely that the Yeu-Chi as a whole worshipped some form of Siva, and the practice of Saivism outside of Aryan stock appears to have existed prior to Hindu times. It is equally revealing to note that marital relations of the Nepali royal house was extended to Tibet around the time the latter-day Yeu-Chi established the Tang dynasty in China. This seems like a renewal of links remembered from a past long ago.

**Pre-Aryan tribes of the Indus**

As the time spans mentioned by the chroniclers suggest, the history of the formation of the kingdom in Kathmandu Valley appears
The Kirat arrive in Kathmandu to have started around the time the Aryan takeover of the Gangetic plains was completed. As Aryans came in waves between 2000 BCE and 1200 BCE and continued to expand their hold from the Indus Valley to the Gangetic plains, the original tribes inhabiting the area east of the Hindukush range and south of the Himalaya must have been pushed out northward, eastward, and southward. Called 'Dasa' or 'Dasyu' in the Vedas, these people were excluded from Aryan society because they held different religious views. They came to be called 'Saka' by such ancient writers as Manu, from which their continued presence until at least the time of Manu, i.e., the fourth century BCE, can be surmised. This has to put to rest the earlier hypothesis that the Aryans annihilated the Saka. Modern western anthropologists have concluded that the pre-Aryan settlers of the Indus-Saraswoti valley were of Austro-Asian or Indo-Scythian stock, and it needs to be noted that the Newar show more affinity to this race than to Mongols.

Hindu legends and literature mention that the Saka were produced by the cow of Vashistha from her sweat in order to destroy the army of Vishwamitra, another sage of the legends (W. O'Flaherty, 1995). This Vashistha was the royal priest of the Dasa kings of Panchal. Thus, Sakas, Dasas and Dasyus are the same people who inhabited the Indus-Saraswoti area prior to the Aryans. They were white-skinned tribes, and, according to the Manusmriti, x, 44, comprised of eleven groups: Pundra, Odra, Dravid, Kamboj, Yaban, Parad, Pahlav, Chin, Kirat, Darad and Khas. (Some Kushan coins carry a hint that they too were of Saka origin.) Although they moved out of their homeland, these tribes restricted the Aryans to the river plains and were not liquidated. They were brave and must have been an equal force culturally as well.

The dispersal of the Saka

The Manusmriti is dated by experts to around the fourth century BCE. By that time the Aryans had fully consolidated their hold on the Gangetic plains and the Hindu religion had already reached its zenith and beginning to face questions from within. The epic wars were long since over but the Saka were still around and important. From the later formation of ruling houses, the following pattern of dispersal of the Saka can be discerned.

The Chin, after being pushed out through the Karakoram Pass, may have formed themselves into the Chi'n dynasty in the Wei Valley at the foot of the Chin Ling Mountains. The Hindu treatise Vishnu Weivarta Purana seems to recognise this early movement from the title itself. This was to become the first Chinese empire by the third century BCE. It would be of interest to us, who are taking a look at Handigaun in Kathmandu, to note that today in the city of Sian there is a small group of people whose language is very similar to Newari, the language of the indigenous settlers of Kathmandu. The splinter groups of the Yaban, Khas, Pundra, Kirat and the Kamboj spread themselves west to east across the valleys of the Himalayan ranges and apparently could not and did not cross over to Tibet. The Kamboj moved further down the eastern end of the Himalaya and went on to form what is today Cambodia, the country of the Kamboj. There, too, they were pushed down as far as Java in Indonesia. Later, they returned to Cambodia, and their King Priya Verman built the world-famous Angkor Wat in the twelfth century. Likewise, the Odra, later called the Andra, ruled the area at the foothills of the Vindhyachal mountains in central India. The Dravid and the Pahlav pushed further south of the Odra country to the Deccan. The Pahlav and Dravid ruling houses were to reassert their strength towards the close of the first millennium CE. The Pahlav king, Mahendra Verma, created the great Mamallapuram temples.
This great dispersal of the Saka seems to have placed the Khas, Pundra, Darad, and the Kirat, in the area which is now the Kumaon region of India and Nepal. The Kirat most likely formed their kingdom east of the Gandaki River and extended to the area of the early Kamboj. Moreover, the possibility of the Pundra’s presence in Kathmandu Valley along with the Kirat cannot be ruled out. This might have resulted due to Khas consolidation in the western part of Nepal and in the Kumaon area of India.

Like the other sub-groups of the Saka who dispersed to other parts of the Gangetic plains, the Kirat also eventually established themselves as a ruling house in the valley. They ruled for 32 generations until they were overthrown by the Lichchhavi around the middle of the first century CE. They were apparently pushed eastwards into the Tamakoshi and the Arun river valleys. A sizeable number appears to have continued to stay on in the Kathmandu Valley too.

As newer forces made inroads into the Indus Valley and the Gangetic plains, the Saka must have been pushed uphill and further to the east. In the fourth century BCE, the Greeks attacked the Indus Valley and set up the colony of Bactria. The Aryans themselves must have pushed outwards from the Gangetic plains in the process. In the second century BCE, Bactria faced attacks by the Mongol Scythians, or the Yeu-Chi, who ultimately formed the Kushan Empire in the same area by dislodging the Greeks. The Kushan empire later extended up to Mathura and east of it. It is well known that the Chi’n emperors of the Wei valley built the Great Wall of China to stop the entry of the Yeu-Chi, consequently leading the Yeu-Chi movement to the Indus area instead. In the process, they also cut off links with their place of origin, the Indus, thereby paving the way for the formation of the Kushan empire. Kirat folklore, recalled earlier, apparently remem-
The Kirat arrive in Kathmandu

called Chapagaun (G.M. Nepal, 2040 BS: p. 15). The Prajapati of Handigaun, Bhadgaun and Thimi are Kumahs. The Awale of Bhadgaun and Lalitpur are a breakaway group of the same tribe. The Kumah and Awale form part of the contiguous Jyapu community that includes Maharjans and Dongols.

The most remarkable cultural developments of the people of the Indus-Saraswoti civilisation were their urban centres and buildings made of burnt bricks. Among the other archaeological remains are terracotta bull figurines and seals with similar imprints. The earliest archaeological finds of Kathmandu Valley are strikingly similar. In the next chapter, we will try to trace the spread of the art and skill associated with these artefacts.

Kathmandu's building culture provides a link between Manusmriti, which says that the Kirat were a splinter group of the Saka, and the Nepali chronicles, which state that the Kirat ruled the valley in pre-historic days. The similarities among the cultural practices of bygone days leave little doubt that the Kirat did indeed come from the Indus-Saraswoti Valley.

Notes
1 'Gopalika' are commonly used in late Malla inscriptions to refer to the people of the Matatirtha area. Cf the inscription on a chaitya at Machchhenarayan dated NS 829, inscription of Machhagaun Vaisnavi dated NS 840, the Thankot Narayantn inscription dated NS 789, etc.
2 The descendants of the Gopala and the Mahisapala may be the Gwa and the Hale (called the Sapu and the Mehpu in Newari ) still living thereabouts.
3 The Kushan arrival in the Indus Valley should be at least two centuries earlier than the usually believed period. This is apparent from the fact that the Chir scroll discovered by J.H. Marshall in 1913, is dated to Aja Samvat 124. Aja Samvat started in 169 BCE, and not in 58 BCE, which is when the Vikram Samvat started.
4 It is notable here that the kingdom of Panchal was located in the Ganga-Jamuna area, where the Saka must have been pushed to by the Aryan onslaught on the Indus-Saraswoti area.
5 Note the legend 'Shao n....ooh shke koshano' in coin no. 32 found in Tilaurakot. (Nakamura et al, 2000: p. 184)
6 A section of the Kamboj seems to have pushed northwest and formed their stronghold northwest of the Indus Valley. This supposition is substantiated by the fact that the Kamboj state existed there until its assimilation by the Mauryan empire around 250 BCE.
7 A Lichchhavi inscription names one of the two early royal palaces as Pundrirajkul, possibly a palace of the Pundra. See S.R. Tiwari, 1996.
8 Doons are river valleys that lie between the lower foothills of the Mahabharat and the Chure.
Chapter 5

The gods arrive in Handigaun

The long urban history of Kathmandu, which spans close to two thousand years, has stamped the indigenous population with a distinctly festive socio-cultural nature. The presence and assimilation of several religious cults, the predominantly agricultural economy, and the strong community culture have resulted in the accretion of several festivals of varied ages and practices. Be it the impressive chariot festival of Rato Matsendranath of Bungmati and Lalitpur, the chariot festival of Seto Matsendranath of Jamal and Lagan, or the Bisket Jatra of Bhadgaun, the origins of many of the key festivities of the valley are attributed, even in chronicles, to legends. Although their exact origins may seem shrouded in mystery, an analysis of festivals in terms of their associations with and assimilations of a main religious cult can roughly indicate the historical time frame in which they were first introduced.

Many of the festivals of the towns of Kathmandu, Bhadgaun and Lalitpur were specific to the roles of these towns as capitals, roles they acquired following the split of the valley into three city-states in the mid-fifteenth century. Some of these festivals have since acquired a pan-valley nature. Others, particularly those that provided divine blessings to ruling houses, developed some differences from their original versions in order to highlight their later independence or to reflect later tutelaries. On the other hand, an abandoned capital, such as Banepa, with its deserted ruling house, probably changed its festivals in order to suit its new status as an ordinary city. As Kathmandu Valley appears to have been often split into more than one kingdom since the Transitional Period and then reunited just as frequently, several such capital-specific festivals had already taken on a local flavour by the Malla Period. The role of political supremacy must be an important consideration when we look at the origins of the festivals of Handigaun, even as this town, too, had lost its position as a capital towards the beginning of the eleventh century CE.

A festival in the valley may be described as a dramatic acting out of the happenings in the life of the cosmos. Both gods and humans have roles in it. Gods might play a simple scene of visiting relatives, re-enact a crisis made in heaven or on earth, execute a sanctifying or energising act or simply explain themselves and their characters to the ever-willing audience of humans. The most important and elaborate dramas are about the ‘gods in power’, or the religious sect of the most powerful social group. However, several others, such as Ropain Jatra and Hile Jatra, are linked to the peasantry and their agricultural practices and seasons. Still other festivals have a direct relationship with the Hindu or Buddhist festive lunar calendars. Some others, like Bisket Jatra of Bhadgaun and Chandeswori Jatra of Tokha, do not follow the lunar calendar but are instead held according to the solar calendar. Howsoever their time of celebration is cal-
The gods arrive in Handigaun, festivals display a complex picture of the people’s socio-cultural reckoning of what life is all about.

The fact that festivals have been a feature of Kathmandu’s urban society since early historical times is substantiated by the accounts of foreign travellers. For example, at the time of King Narendradev, towards the end of the seventh century CE, Wang Huen Che, the Chinese representative in Nepal and India, wrote:

The Nepalis enjoy dance and drama accompanied by musical instruments such as drums and trumpets... The Nepalis have a tradition of sacrificing lambs to their gods.

Che seems to have been impressed by the many festivals in the then capital town of Maneswor. If Che were visiting today, he would still observe the same old drums (dhime), trumpets (karnal), and gongs and cymbals (jhyali) being played in many festivals, particularly those of the Jyapu. Indeed, festivities and lamb sacrifices were so common in the valley that the Lichchhavi rulers, who did not deem the sacrifice of animals acceptable, imposed a tax called mallakara on the sale and sacrifice of mallah or fluffy lambs! (G.M. Nepal, 2040 BS) Lichchhavi inscriptions also prove that the locals included buffalo sacrifices as part of their rituals. Indeed, Jyapus in general, and those in Handigaun in particular, skillfully sacrifice lambs and buffaloes even today. This fact lends credence to the assertion that Jyapus are great upholders of tradition. We find that some of the most ancient festivities of the Nepalis have survived among the Jyapus.

Festivals and jatra are cyclical events. Handigaun celebrates several annual festivals, which follow the cycle of seasons. It also has festivals which follow four- or twelve-year cycles. The jatra of Satyanarayan, the jatra of Bhatbhateni and Tunaldevi, and the jatra of Dhanaganesh are unique to Handigaun. Other festivals such as the Ropain, Hile, and Gai jatra are celebrated in Handigaun as well as in many other small Newar towns. However, since the place-specific festivals involving chariots and smaller khat are closely associated with town form and play an important role in defining a place, a close look at the origins of the two khat jatra—the jatra of Satyanarayan and the jatra of Bhatbhateni and Tunaldevi—is especially informative.

In Kathmandu, every small-town festival claims that its origins are far in the past. Because of the lack of written evidence, verifying such claims has been a problem for researchers. The residents of Handigaun, however, make no such claims about either of the two big festivals that take place here, the jatra of Bhatbhateni/Tunaldevi and the jatra of Satyanarayan. They only say that both festivals are unusual, even by their reckoning, and that they do not remember how far back in history they go. But whether this claim is made or not, there is sufficient indication to prove that they are quite ancient traditions, certainly dating back prior to the Malla Period.

Tunaldevi Jatra: a Kirat heritage?
According to Padmagiri Vamsavali, a chronicle written in the late Malla Period, the divine couple Bhat and Bhateni established the town of Vishalnagar following the eclipse of the Kirat capital of Kiratsur, or Suprabhanagar, which, it wrongly states, was near Thankot. The divine husband and wife had then proclaimed Swoyambrat king. This reference dates the tradition of Bhatbhateni to the end of the Kirat Period, but the chronicle is silent about when or why the couple attained godly status. It is also not explicit about who Bhat and Bhateni were. Although a Sanskrit place name like Suprabhanagar would be patiently unacceptable for the Kirat capital, the chronicler’s information that a Kirat settlement was located near Thankot can be largely substantiated through Lichchhavi inscrip-
tions in the area. These show non-Sanskrit place names and refer to settlers belonging to non-Brahmanical groups (under the religious leadership of Brahmungs, Shulmungs, etc.) and even today the place shows traces of ancient water supply system components such as ponds (Dahachowk and Pokhari Bhanjyang) and the ancient Kirat religious site of Sivaka-devkul (now called Chandanvarateswor). Although these archaeological vestiges do not necessarily prove the existence of a Kirat capital there, that a Kirat settlement was extant in that place can certainly not be just the figment of a chronicler’s imagination. It is possible that the Kirat temple of Ka or Kassura was named by the Lichchhavis as Sivaka-devkul; inscriptions (cf. Ka-tala in Inscriptions R-XXXVIII through to R-XLIII) testify that the area was called the principality of Ka in the sixth century, clearly in reference to the Kirat god Ka. (See also Chapter 7: ‘Religions of the Khas and the Kirat’.)

Although the names of kings such as Swoyambrat, Vikramaditya, and Vikramkesari appear borrowed from the Hindu royal lineages of the Narmada region of India, as the chronicle itself states that Queen Pingala, who later became part of the Mother Goddess pantheon of Nepal, hailed from there, kings with the same names ruling in Nepal could also have led the chroniclers to draw such inferences. One such case is that of King Bhoj, who is mentioned in the same chronicle. A very famous historical king in the Godavari area of India and a king of Suprabhanagar in Kathmandu Valley shared the same name, Bhoj. Several historical records are available to prove that King Bhoj ruled the valley in the Transitional Period. Since he was a co-ruler with Rudradev and we have an inscribed find which reads ‘pura 3 suprabhantapa...rudradevoro...’ the rule of King Bhoj from the city of Suprabhanagar around the years between 1012 CE and 1015 stands historically verified.

We can thus see that Padmagiri Vamsavali, in terms of place names and royal names, reflects the memory of a time at least six hundred to one thousand years after the Kirat were edged out of power. The chronicler’s deduction was seemingly a result of substituting the name of a capital city of the Transitional Period for the name of the Kirat capital, which the chronicler also seems to have assumed was located in Thankot on the basis of the Kirat settlement of Katala and Kadung in that area. The chronicler’s assertion that Kiratsur was in Thankot was possibly further guided by memories of a pre-Kirat Gopala capital, which was located near the Matatirtha area. Whereas Kiratsur in Thankot could have been a reference to Katala, it must have been the place which was called Suprabhanagar around the eleventh century and which was the Kirat capital at the time. This historical mix-up, inadvertent though it was, provides us with a link to explore the origins of the Tunaldevi festival of Handigaun as Supra-bhanagar was the name given to the Lichchhavi capital Maneswor during the Transitional Period. It may also be that the capital town of Kiratsur had been earlier shifted to the place the chronicler knew as Suprabhanagar. While Padmagiri Vamsavali enjoins us to double check on the relationship between Handigaun and the Thankot area, the Tunaldevi festival of Handigaun also provides us with a surviving cultural linkage between the two historic areas.

The residents of sat gaun near the Mata-tirtha area celebrate an interesting annual festival called Vaisnudevi Jatra, which culminates in the coming together of the seven sisterly Vaisnudevis at the mother temple of Vishandevi in Balkhu. This festival is said to predate the Lichchhavis and some have speculated that it belongs to the matriarchal tribes living in that area. Chronologies inform us that the area was the capital of the Gopala rulers who ruled before the Kirat. The descendents of these tribes, the current Nanda Gopal
Shresthas (or Sapus), have a legend which claims that the Vaisnudevi or Vaisnavi of Tunaldevi is their goddess and that she was taken away from them in the past. The similarities between the ritual practices in the shrines of sat gaun and those in Tunaldevi lend credence to the claim that there is a link between them. This linkage must come out of the possibility that the goddess (a female form of Ka?) was relocated from Kiratsur or Katala to Handigaun, when the Kirat capital might have been shifted there towards the close of the Kirat Period.

Since the jatra of Tunaldevi predates at least the Lichchhavis, it would likely exhibit some surviving accretions that belonged to Lichchhavi times. The female goddess of Bhatbhateni, who is Brahmayani, is believed to be the daughter of the Vaisnudevi at Tunaldevi, just as the Vaisnudevi of Balkhu is said to be the mother of the seven sister goddesses of sat gaun. The fact that the spirits of both the temples of Bhatbhateni and Tunaldevi are ajima suggests they date back to the pre-Lichchhavi Period, when Saptamatrika cult practices were popular.

Confirmation of Bhatbhateni Jatra
Evidence collected from Lichchhavi inscriptions demonstrates that several festivals, including (M)andipi Jatra, Dwarodghatan Kailashkut Jatra, and Barah Jatra, were celebrated in the valley in the Lichchhavi Period. The festival of Barah Jatra was Vaisnave but was not capital-specific. Dwarodghatan Kailashkut Jatra, as the nomenclature itself makes clear, is a Varsavardhan Jatra of the palace of Mahasamanta Amshuverma, the Kailashkut Bhavan. The celebration of this inaugural anniversary festival was apparently at Vodwara, a ceremonial name believed to have been applied to the north gate that faced the Gahana Pokhari (See Chapter 18, 'Kailashkut Bhavan of Amshuverma'), which is here likened to an ocean. The inscription at Khopasi jointly issued by Sivadev and Amshuverma (DRR LXIII) suggests that this festival was timed to coincide with Andipi Jatra. Until recently, the guthi member residents of Handigaun had to go to Khopasi (they now go to a forest between Sanga and Nala) to replace the lingo raised at the start of Tunaldevi Jatra every year. (At present, it is done only in those years when a replacement is needed.) In this ceremony, the members go to the forest and set a he-goat free. On the fourth day, the goat is sanctified by sprinkling water (persaune) and the first tree touched by the horns of the goat is auspiciously felled and dragged to Handigaun. The date of the inscription and the date for setting the goat roaming are one and the same, Chaitra Krishna Panchami. The purpose of the charter is to urge the residents of the village to annually deposit 'balls of white earth for the long life of the palace', presumably to white-wash the palace. For such a purpose, the issue of a charter during a dark lunar fortnight is unusual as the bright lunar fortnight period is more auspicious and almost all inscriptions use such dates. This choice must have been made so that the date would coincide with some existing religious ritual that followed another system. At least one other inscription, DRR-XIX, confirms that the date was associated with a religious festival of significance. The odd timing of the issuance might be explained by this coincidence.

We should also note one more inscription of Arnshuverma's (DRR-LXXV) that hints that he made further royal arrangements for the festival of the goddess of Andipringga. That it may have been directly associated with Andi Jatra is discerned from the fact that the inscription is located in the area where the lingo is chosen. The main theme of the jatra is arrangements for supplying ritual materials such as oil extracted from black sesame seeds (hamhum?) and barley powder, or sattu (kumhum?). Both these materials are needed
The temple of Tunaldevi at Chandol (top, left) and the Havan worship in progress during the Tunaldevi festiva; (top, right). The sketch (above, left) shows the temple plan and indicates the location of the inscribed stone. Also shown (above, right) is a diagram of the vedi used.

The inscription states that such materials, in the past taxed from the villagers of Sanga, would henceforth, from 609 CE, be purchased by a direct grant from the palace. It appears that Amshuverma made new arrangements for Andipi Jatra on several fronts.

Andipi Jatra was not associated with either Narayan or Siva, for if this had been so, the god would have been mentioned by name,
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as was the usual Lichchhavi inscriptive production. Thus, this festival must have been associated with a faith other than Saiva or Vaisnav. Andipi Jatra was held near the Lichchhavi capital and had special annual grants for its celebration. The size of these annual grants suggests that it was a very important and expensive festival. The grants include money to buy 22 ghatika and a grant in kind for five ornaments of the best quality and an odd number of pieces of silk cloth. Twenty-two ghatika, or pitchers, are required in the ritual worship of Tunaldevi, which suggests a connection with the Rudra-Shakti tradition (eleven Rudras and eleven Shaktis). The stipulation that there be an odd number of pieces of clothing also fits the ritual requirement of redressing the trio of Bhat, Bhateni and their boy-child, who are key participants in the festival. Evidence that the Tunaldevi temple was extant at that time is found in the worn images of the matrika in its sanctum and on its dated stone base, or lakasi-lohn as a Newar would call it, which must have been used to support and hold a wooden column. Three other undated but similar stone bases suggest that the temple had a four-post inner mandap in those days.

As the Lichchhavi capital of Maneswor was at Handigaun, or Andigram as it was known in the eighth century, it follows that Andipi Jatra refers to the festival of Andigram and that it was held in this very area (see also Chapter 8: ‘Andipringga: the Kirat Handigaun’). It is this festival, arguably in a modified form, that is alive within the current celebration of the festival. The nature of the special annual grant of the Lichchhavi suggests a link between the jatra of Bhatbhateni and Tunaldevis. The rituals today still require ‘not a pair [i.e., an odd number of pieces] of unstitched cloth’, five ornaments, and twenty-two ghatika or small water pots, almost an exact replica of the demands of the inscription.11 The festival, although now largely Shakta in character, has Vaisnav links and could have been an important festival of the later Lichchhavi also. Since Andipi Jatra and Tunaldevis Jatra are related, we must hypothesise that the origins of the former dates back to the days of the Matrika and Ajima faiths.

The funding provided by the state is clearly for the ritual dressing of Bhatbhateni and the worship of the Tunaldevis pith. The expensive component of Bhatbhateni Jatra, the making of the images of gods in rice, and the khat festival, however, were not funded by the grant from the Lichchhavi palace.

In conclusion, inscriptions corroborate the existence of the site and the festivities of Andipi Jatra in the Lichchhavi period. From the reference to ghatika, ornaments and dresses for Andipi Jatra, we can confirm that the divine couple, Bhateni and Bhat, also existed in Lichchhavi times and were located in Andigrama.

Medieval reference

Gopalarajavamsavali, a chronicle written in the fifteenth century, credits the Thakuri king Narendradev and the priest Bandhudatta Acharya for starting the festival of Bungmalokeswor Matsendranath Jatra of Lalitpur and Bungamati. The climax of the jatra of Tunaldevis of Handigaun and the bathing of Matsendranath fall on the same date, Baisakh Krishna Pareba. Since Tunaldevis Jatra, as Andipi Jatra of the Lichchhavi days, was already extant, Matsendranath Jatra appears to have been celebrated at the same auspicious time. The ritual bathing of Rato Matsendranath is done with sacred water followed by panchamrit: milk, butter, honey, sakkhar, and curd, whereas the khat of Tunaldevis is dipped in the waters of Gahana Pokhari.

Gopalarajavamsavali also refers to Bhatbhateni and thus substantiates that Bhat and Bhateni were revered at that time and that their worship had standard rituals. The chronicler
calls the images of Bhateni-Bhat ‘jhare’, which can be translated either as ‘hanging dolls’ or ‘images on stilts’. The festival described in the chronicle is still current in Bhadgaun and makes the Saparu Gai Jatra there very different from the same festival in other towns. The relevant portion of the text is translated below:

In the month of Gunla of the year of the auspicious marriage, the jhare are displayed. The ritual preparation and erection of the mvanda (bannered pole) is to be done on Ghantakarna Chaturdasi, while the actual display of the jhare runs from Gunlathva until Srawan Sukla Triyodasi. On the day after the pole is brought, it is dismantled in the street and taken inside; then the gods are fed with rice after the Santaja ritual. On Gai Jatra, Bhadra Krishna Pareba, the images are taken out to the street on a frame and displayed for four days. Then the frame is disposed of ritually in a river in the evening. The images are worshipped like the doll gods of Bhat and Bhateni and the god in the form of the banner is thrown into the river. Samaya is distributed. It is not necessary to take the frames around the town in a procession.

**Satyanarayan Jatra**

The jatra of Satyanarayan is a grand, elaborate festival involving three khat fashioned after lotus flowers. The Hindu trinity of gods—Brahma the creator, Vishnu the protector and Siva the destroyer—participates in the festival. They are carried around the town in an act of sanctification atop rotating lotus khat. The extensive use of bamboo and the absence of wheels in the construction of the khat suggest its early origins. The participation of Kamalasan Narayan, who represents Brahma, and Chokteswor Narayan and Umamaheswor, and the use of panchamrit in the propitiation rituals at the Bansbari pith temple suggest that the jatra began in pre-Tantra, post-Bhairav days. The festival must date from the Lichchhavi Period or after it, as it was only then that the Narayan cult became strong in the Valley. It is important to note that one of the initial rituals is the offer of a lamb sacrifice to Bhuteswor Bhairav, who has been the tutelary god of Handigaun since before Lichchhavi times. The ritual seeks permission from Bhairav for the khat jatra. The lotus-shaped khat is used only in this festival at Handigaun; it is not seen in any other festival anywhere in the valley. This uniqueness is indicative of the important position Handigaun held in the valley in the past.

![The khat of the Satyanarayan Jatra](image)
The gods arrive in Handigaun

(sodasa-dala-padma) and a thousand petals (sahasra-dala-padma) are commonly used symbols in Tantric practices. Lotuses with eight petals symbolise the eight groups of consonant sounds, forms of Eros (Ananga), and the ‘five organs and the three modalities of the mind’ and are frequently used as a base for ritual mandala. Likewise, Vishnu is shown standing on lotuses with twelve petals. Sixteen petals are indicative of the sixteen phases of the moon. The symbolism of lotuses with thirty-two petals is not mentioned in either Tantrism or the Purans.

The symbolism of the Number 32

The pada devata (gods who reside in the outer squares of the vastu-purusha-mandala) number thirty-two in traditional architectural thought. According to Vishnudharmottara, these represent the thirty-two nakshetra, which have been said to represent the ‘helio-planetary cosmogram’ (S. Kramrisch, 1976) and which accommodate both the solar and lunar cycles. Thirty-two is the number of eclipses that occur in the Hindu Great Year, the Adhisamvatsara. Cosmic cycles renew themselves after each of such astronomical periods. Thus, a lotus with 32 petals potentially represents all 32 gods of the Rig Veda with Brahma at its centre. It also represents the Adhisamvatsara. In musical chhanda, anustubh metre, with its 4x8, or 32, syllables is a symbol of the celestial sphere. The presence of 32 characteristics (lakshyana) is also said to make everything heavenly and perfect. Such symbolism takes us to the days of Vedic thoughts dominant in the Lichchhavi Period of history. Incidentally, one of the major inscriptions of Jayadev II, an illustrious king of the late Lichchhavi Period, provides crucial evidence on the issue of the Satyanarayan festival as well as on the symbolism of the lotus.

In his Pashupati inscription, King Jayadev II has composed several poetic stanzas about a proud lotus, which laughs showing its golden yellow anthers and vermilion petals, and are compared to a row of bright teeth (dyuti danta panktya). The simile drawn between the petals and the teeth seem to point to the number 32, as if it were a two-layered sodasa-dala-padma. Interestingly, the poem adds that the lotus was flanked by other lotuses as it was offered in worship. The description of this set of lotuses is almost identical to the jatra of Satyanarayan, which also involves a total of three lotus-shaped khat. In the inscription, dated the ninth day of the bright half of Kartik, Sambat 157 (733 CE), laughing proudly, the lotus of Jayadev speaks thus:

Forsooth this is not a hollow stalk of lotus composed of reeds;
I am made of silver by the king.
How, oh men, can the two lotuses of Sri and of Brahma,
Which, though possessing a fresh brilliance, look like me?
Or all over the broad earth not one [flower] like me is found,
Neither in the delighted hearts of men, nor in [Lake] Manasa;
Neither the brilliant sun, nor the day, nor the lake produces any difference in me.

(D.R. Regmi, 1983: Vol II, p. 94)

King Jayadev II wrote the above verse more than a millennium ago on the occasion of a special worship called Padmapuja, when a silver lotus was offered to Lord Pashupatinath. The Queen Mother Vastadevi was then seeking heavenly peace and well-being for her departed husband. Kartik Sukla Navami is a Vaisnavite ritual day known these days as Kusmande-Navami. This used to be a very important day in both Vaisnav and Sivite traditions as it is said to be the first day of the Satya-yuga. Since this fact is not noted in the inscription and since other historical evidence demonstrates that the inscrip-
tion was issued on an anniversary day related to the grandfather of Jayadeva II, it must merely be a coincidence that it was also the anniversary of Satya-yuga. (For details, see Chapter 19: ‘Mangriha loses power’.) At present, the devout of Kathmandu pay homage to Lord Vishnu by visiting the four Narayans on this day. On the same day, Siva, who affects the change of yugas, is also worshipped. As if to echo the religious function of padma-puja, Jyapus who have lost either of their parents or a husband offer 108 lights to the khat as dipadana to wish the deceased the attainment of all three vaikuntha, the heavenly abodes of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. Sivites used to offer padma-puja, or worship to Siva, with lotus flowers on the same day. Another stanza of the composition that brings the celebration even closer to the jatra of Satyanarayan goes thus:

Is this a lotus from Ganga’s stream,
Which was growing in the water on Sambhu’s head?
Or [is it] a lotus seated on the head of Sambhu,
With water of the river Mandakini?
Or [is it] a lotus come down desiring to see the new lotus blooming in heaven?
Or is it a beautiful, lovely row of the air carriers of the blessed gods?
Or is it the lotus descended from the hand of compassionate Lokeswor?

The inscription does not name any public festival associated with the puja directly, but the stanza quoted above sounds as though a festivity of khat in the shape of lotuses held up in the air to signify heavenly flying crafts was held prior to the padma-puja. This is very much like Satyanarayan Jatra faithfully celebrated to this day.

Except for the fact that nowadays the festival is held on Aswin Sukla Purnima and not on Kartik Sukla Navami, this festivity of Jayadev’s and the present one are very similar. The shifting of the dates of older festivals is not unusual if new festivals of newer and more powerful sects fall at the same time. We have seen, for example, that the festival of Indra has shifted backwards by 48 lunar days from Kartik Sukla Pareba to Aswin Sukla Dwadasi. The lotus festival also appears to have shifted backwards by 24 lunar days. The period of the shift respects the rule of multiples of eight days, as related to the phases of the moon. The new date falls on the very fortnight that major Shakta festivals also culminate. Both these factors appear responsible for the rescheduling of the festival.

The ritual worship of the khat and Bhairav at the start of the festival must be done by a Rajopadhyaya from Deupatan. The current priest and his ancestors have no ritual duties in any temple or regarding any images in Deupatan; instead, they appear as the priests of the royal house of Handigaun. Handigaun housed the kings only during the Transitional Period and before. The non-involvement of the Karmacharya priests along with the use of a Rajopadhyaya places the origin of this festival in pre-Tantric days, even though the classification of priests as Rajopadhyaya is a Malla Period arrangement.16

The rituals associated with the jatra of Satyanarayan show linkages to several places and elements such as the stepped well of Kotaltole, a pith at Bansbari and two intermediary points on the river Khahare’s upper reaches. An in-depth analysis shows that these are remnants of salient points of a Lichchhavi water system in Handigaun. (See Chapter 14: ‘Lichchhavi waterworks about the capital region’.) These links also point to the Lichchhavi origin of the festival.

Transitional and Malla memories
We have already noted that one of the khat of Satyanarayan Jatra carries Chokteswor Narayan. Today the Jyapu of Handigaun go to Bansbari, an area of Lichchhavi importance
and now occupied by the villages of Dhapasi, Dharampur, Tusal and Chapali, to get the gods who participate in Satyanarayan Jatra. The village Chapali possibly derives its name from Chaupalli (palli was a suffix denoting a settlement in Lichchhavi times). The presence of a Lichchhavi inscription by Gangadev at Chapali points to the town's eminence in that period. As Nuwakot became a threat to Kathmandu Valley, the higher reaches of Chapali were made into a kwatha, or fort, and the area was renamed Chayau-kwatha in early Malla days. The folk memories of Handigaun appear to keep the godly spirits of this fort alive in Chokteswor Narayan.

Other festivals of Handigaun
Of the many festivals of Handigaun, a third festival commanding considerable participation is the jatra of Dhanaganesh. On the face of it, it appears to be a late starter as the popularity of Ganesh is assigned by experts to around the thirteenth century. But if examined carefully, we discover that the jatra of Dhanaganesh is more than just the jatra of Ganesh. The khat actually carries two images, one of Ganesh and the other of Bhairav. The Bhairav carried on the khat is a mukut of Hayagriva, a form of Vishnu also popular among the Jhaju as Maha-Bhairav, whose image is enshrined in the temple of Dhanaganesh. The presence of both Bhairav and Ganesh shows that the festival is a proto-Sivite one. It is also equally curious to note that although the propitiatory rites for the festival take place in the temple of Dhanaganesh, the khat jatra starts from a place, called Vau-li and located on the ridge to the west of the
temple. As the temple is located in an ancient funerary spot, it is difficult to argue that it is a logical place for the siting of Ganesh. Maybe, it was in this high place that the earlier Ganesh was located. The presence of Bhairav at the funerary site, however, would be quite logical in the early Saiva practices of the Jyapu. Bhairav’s presence at the site is also recognised by rituals associated with the jatra of Tunaldevi: the rice images used in the latter festival are disposed of here at Parale chhwasa. The spot Vau-li also carries memories of Bhairav in its name itself.

The jatra of Dhanganesha is held on the same day as the jatra of Chandra-Vinayak Ganesh of Chabel. Handigaun claims, and some researchers agree, that the original site of this jatra was Handigaun. In the temple of Dhanganesha in Handigaun, there are images dating from the early Lichchhavi Period. The Chabel Chandra-Vinayak site too is equally old. A proto-Lichchhavi temple, usually reserved for housing Siva or Vishnu images, is now inside the larger temple at Chabel. The temple of Dhanganesha has other images from the Lichchhavi Period, like matrika and basaha; Ganesh was obviously put there later. The jatra should be logically relegated to the Malla Period as none of the extant Lichchhavi images in the temple participate in this festivity. Only the presence and participation of Bhairav seem to point to the assimilation of older traditions. Beyond this, we are not able to place the festival more accurately since there are no other sources.

Towards the end of the tenth century, King Gunakamadev is said to have started other festivals such as Indra Jatra, Krishna Jatra, and Lakhe Jatra, but by this time Handigaun had already lost its role as a capital town. Therefore, despite the valley-wide popularity of the temples of Krishna and Saraswoti in Handigaun, these gods do not have chariot festivals. The Krishna temple was possibly set up only during Handigaun’s reconstruction as Haripur about half a century after Gunakamadev and, understandably, the Krishna Jatra he started did not belong here. The case of the other festivals he started appears to have been similar.

Both the festivals of Bhatbhateni/Tunaldevi and Satyanarayan are, in sum, very early traditions. In later chapters, we will take a closer look at each of these festivals.

Notes
1 The only festival that has a twelve-yearly cycle in Handigaun is the dance of Pachali Bhairav, which visits several other important sites of Kathmandu also.
2 Various other statements of the chronicle may be interpolated to infer that Bhateni could be the ‘Pingala’ it refers to. ‘Pingala’ means ‘one with a yellow colour’ and Bhateni in the temple of Bhatbhateni is indeed yellow.
3 The Kirat were led by the priests named thus. Later chapters relate this fact in more detail.
4 An inscription in Patan dated approximately 1012 CE shows King Bhojadev as a co-ruler along with Rudradev. A colophon of about 1015 CE in ms. Astasahasrika Pragnyaparamita (Cambridge Univ. Lib. Add. 1643) also shows him as a ruler.
5 Artefact No. HSN 31 of the Italian Archaeological Excavations is a seal unearthed in 1985 and carries this inscription which states that King Rudradev ruled from a ‘tripura’, or a capital town, called Suprabha. The place would also have been called Suprabhanagar or Suprabhapura.
6 The sat gaun, or seven villages, which form this group are made up of the villages of Panga, Satungal, Boshigaun, Machchhegaun, Taukhel, Kirtipur and Lohankot. Two sub-castes using the surnames Gwa (‘cowherd’) and Hale (‘buffalo-herd’) are concentrated here even today.
7 The Gopala society has been said to comprise of matriarchal tribes, with mothers as heads of families. Today, the group leader of this festivity in each village is an untouchable Pode of the Newar community. In the Vaisnavi temple at Tunaldevi, a member of the same sub-caste group also takes sacrifices on behalf of the goddess. Podes do not celebrate the *ihi* marriage ritual, an omission which suggests that they originally belonged to a tribal clan outside the Newar mainstream.

8 The Narayanchaur inscription mentions this festival. Epigraphists have added a full stop between the compound word 'deyamandipi' wrongly making it '...deya. Mandipi...'. The correct ending, however, is 'deyah' or 'deyam'. In this inscription 'deyam' is used, making the next word 'Andipi' and not 'Mandipi'. 'Andipi Yatra' means the festival belonging to Andi. From other inscriptions, it is known that Handigaun was called Andigram in the eighth century. The inscription is thus a direct reference to a festival of Handigaun.


10 The current *guthi* is composed of Prajapatis. Before even going to get the *lingo*, the Dongols have to prepare *hyangu-thon*, a strong red-coloured rice beer. The beer preparation, a lengthy process, starts in the month of Magh, about two months before the day the *lingo* is raised.

11 On the first day of the *jatra*, as the trio from Bhatbhateni temple reaches the banks of Ikchhumati (Tukucha) near the temple of Tunaldevi and as other gods also arrive, a long ritual, similar to the Chaturdasi worship of Tunaldevi, takes place. Twenty-two small earthen jars are needed as part of the ritual offerings. While ornaments and clothes are required for Bhatbhateni, these 22 *ghatikas* are required for the worship of Tunaldevi, the Goddess of Andi. Each *ghatika* contains a special brew, *katahawun*, and is covered with a small earthen plate, *pala*, containing ritual foods consisting of beaten rice (*chiura*), ginger (*aduwa*) and jaggery (*shakkhar*). The set as a whole is called *samaya*.

12 ‘Shwau vivahajyun dan gunilana jhure boye malka, vidhana, ganthakarna chaavadasi konhu mwanda chine, gunila thova tihrishi konhu boya, dumoi. Thwa konhu budhyara suye, jhare lasa thanga thuwa santi sayanke shimalasa thanga thuwa santaja yanke pahra palasa thanga sayata konhu jhwanpanasa thangava mula lamna, yo thanga mula khasa choya pyamhnui liwa yunakosa khavangava, puja yaye, Bhatinibhit jhare dekam the puja hinsadekam lakha hole, *snaya* yangava *jhopayayata deshamsa chhaye mmaulua*. (Gopalarajavamsavali, Folio 61b.1)

13 The moon actually passes through 27 or 28 configurations in its monthly course. The augmentation to 32 is a result of the incorporation of solar time and space into the diagram as the *vastu-purusha-mandala* is a symbolic combination of solar and lunar spaces and times. (S. Kramrisch, 1976)

14 Folk memory of early days includes the memory of a festival which had nine *khatas* and spanned three days. These days it spans a day and has three *khatas*, all of which are dismantled on the third day.

15 Only two Lichchhavi inscriptions were issued on this date. The earliest one, dated Kartik Sukla Navami, Samvat 78, and issued during the rule of King Narendradev, clearly qualifies the date as *pranyugadau* or the start of the eons, or *yugas*. The second one is that of Jayadev, which he issued when his mother performed *padma-puja*.

16 Although Rajopadhyayas officiate in most Vaisnava sites from the Lichchhavi Period, the resident priest of the Satyanarayan of Handigaun is a Shrestha.

17 The village of Dharampur is a largely Maharjan village. An inscription of Amshuverma located at nearby Dhapasi names the area as Pranalidimaka, which, in Lichchhavi parlance, very likely means a watershed or reservoir village. From *terminology* used in Lichchhavi inscriptions, such as *gungdimaka* (a watershed to the north of Changu), *tilamaka* (water canal), *lakhanaka* (moat), etc, we can infer that the suffix 'dimaka' is related to a water system. Using contextual considerations we can infer that it is a reference to an intake or source.

18 Chayan-Kwatha-Iswor may have been shortened into Chokteswor. The *guthi* members say they go to Kailash, the mountain abode of Lord Siva, to get all three divine spirits needed for this festival. This Kailash is actually a high point southeast of Dharampur and south of Chapali.

19 Cf. The wording of an inscription at Lubhu Mahalaxmi temple dated NS 778: *thvo kunhu srinat srissri mahalaxmi hayagiri mahabhairavah*.

20 It is clear from the inscriptions on the original *toran* of Chabel Ganesh temple that the temple dates from the fourteenth century. The tiered temple is actually an over an older, Lichchhavi-style stone temple of the fifth or sixth century, now encased in metal repousse works and terrazzo. Other similar temples from that period are used to house Siva *linga*.
The travels of the brick and the bull

The distance from Handigaun to the Indus-Saraswoti Valley is a long one, both physically and chronologically. But since the Jyapu are possibly descendants of the ancient Kirat, who themselves are one of the Saka subgroups, we will have to traverse the distance in time to see what the Saka were like before the arrival of the Aryans in the Indo-Gangetic plains. On this journey, we shall see many similarities that bear out my hypothesis that the two are very closely related.

The ancient civilisation around the river Indus, an area that lies mostly in Pakistan today, was that of the Saka and pre-dated the arrival of the Aryans by about two thousand years. Their towns seem to have begun taking shape as early as the first half of the fourth millennium BCE, as indicated by the archaeological remains of Rahman Dheri in the upper Indus (B. and R. Allchin, 1982: Ch. 6). This civilisation was sufficiently advanced to use an alphabet and writing. Although as yet undeciphered, the style and maturity of their writing indicate a greater level of sophistication than Kish near Babylon, where an alphabet was also in use at about the same time. The people of the Indus Valley excelled in pottery, brick-making, carpentry, weaving, and ivory work, and had established for themselves a highly successful mercantile economy. Society was expressed physically in brick architecture and planned townships of superb quality. In the past century, archaeological excavations have explored the ruins of many of their towns, of which Mohenjodaro and Harappa (both in Pakistan) and Lothal (in India) are the major ones. But it is clear from excavations that the civilisation had extended as far east as the river Jamuna in India. The easternmost Saka outpost unearthed by archaeologists so far has been at Alamgirpur, a town a little to the north of Delhi, which was lived in until the sixth century BCE. Therefore, contrary to general perception, the actual physical as well as chronological distance between Kathmandu and the Indus-Saraswoti civilisation town is not so great. (The Sakya town of Kapilvastu is even closer, about which more follows below.)

The one-square mile area of Mohenjodaro is planned in a grid iron pattern: two streets run east to west and three go north-south, dividing the city into twelve quarters of equal size. The streets are wide and the whole town is walled in. The middle quarter on the west edge is raised to a height of about fifty feet to form the plinth for central structures such as the palace, the great bath, the granary, and the flour mill. All other quarters are residential.

Constructed entirely of 12x12x27 cm bricks and timber, the private houses were served with well water. The whole town was provided with a drainage system of superb quality. The houses were designed with rooms placed around a courtyard and the outside walls were windowless. From the Indus Valley, thousands of terracotta figu-
The travels of the brick and the bull

A terracotta bull from Satyanarayan, Handigaun, and (right) seal of a bull from Mohenjodaro

rines, obviously personal religious artefacts, have been recovered. Representations range from a horned and masked Siva to mother goddesses and humped bulls. Indeed, the humped bull figurines, which total more than three quarters of the finds, testify to the popularity of a cult similar to that of the Saiva traditions that later developed within Hinduism. Some seals display a three-headed, horned, masked and seated (kurmasana) image, said to be the non-ithyphallic form of Pashupati Siva (K.C. Koirala, 2051 BS: p. 18). The worship of fertility in the form of mother goddesses also appears to have been common, and the presence of large water tanks in the central western quarter has prompted speculation about the existence of water worship. Since no temples or remains of religious buildings have been found or recognised as such at Mohenjodaro, Harappa or Lothal, one can surmise that religious faith remained only in the personal realm. However, archaeologists have concluded that worship of a primal form of Siva was popular in the Indus-Saraswoti civilisation.

Burnt brick shunned by the Aryans

Aryans arrived in the Indus Valley as nomads. They regarded cities as well as the bricks they were made of as a nuisance and attached no importance to them. Their god, Indra, even earned the epithet 'destroyer of cities'. Naturally, the Aryan religion did not promote the art of making bricks or the science of planning towns. On the basis of literary sources and on the evidence of relief carvings from Sanchi and Barhut, one can see that the Aryans reverted back to the natural state and started building with bamboo, wood and thatch. Almost a millennium later, they were to rediscover both bricks and city planning on their own in the Indo-Gangetic plains. It is not generally recognised how much this latter development was the contribution of the Indus people whom they had overrun earlier, but the similarity between the towns and the house forms of the Aryans and those of the people of the Indus-Saraswoti civilisation deserves closer scrutiny.

The Aryans themselves did not make use of the towns of the Saka, the people of the Indus Valley, and when the Greeks arrived thereabouts in the third century BCE, Aristobolus was to observe 'the remains of over a thousand towns and villages once full of men' (P. Brown, 1968: p. 2). While Hindu thoughts about architecture and planning were crystallising, the ruins of the Indus-
Kushan supremacy

It is interesting to note that Manusmriti says that the later Greeks, the Yaban, were also Saka. The similarity between Vastusastra texts and the principles of architecture as outlined by Vitruvius seem to suggest that this may be true, especially as the Greeks arrived in the Indus Valley about a century after the composition of Manusmriti. When the Yabans arrived, the Indus Valley area was under the rule of the Kamboj. King Aj consolidated it as Arochasia in the second century BCE, following a short Mauryan occupation. A century later, Gondaphrenes founded the state of Gandhar there. Soon after, the Kushan set themselves up, displacing all three states in the Indus.

Saraswoti civilisation were open to observation. Despite this, early Aryan or Vedic building apparently remained a product of the carpenter rather than of the mason even after the Aryan settlements had conglomerated into small towns. Only in about the sixth century BCE did architect Maha-Govinda start using a grid-iron street layout as villages grew into towns, demanding planning. In Kausambi, near Allahabad, huge bricks (48x30x5 cm) were used for the first time in the fifth century BCE. Both the re-surfaced brick-making and town planning show a striking similarity with the techniques of the Indus Valley days. The Prastara planning of the early Hindus—their courtyard houses, early Buddhist monasteries, the location of the royal palace in the town—appear to be direct spin-offs of the Indus-Saraswoti traditions.

Gandhar architectural traditions from Takth-i-Bahi show that Aryans had assimilated some Greek traditions from the Bactrians. A review of the details of these buildings certainly points to other sources as well, but these have so far remained untraced. The building enclosing the stupa court and the monastery of Takth-i-Bahi are both based on the courtyard planning principle. Although free standing, the enclosing side wings contain no windows on the outside. It could hardly be just a coincidence that this was also the practice of the Saka of the Indus Valley and that the ruins of their cities were still all around to be seen. The design of the cornice fragments found in Takth-i-Bahi and its motifs have been linked to Greek origins by some researchers (U. Wiesner, 1978), but the very developed and different overall building form of the stupa can hardly be explained from this perspective. Nor can the development be simply attributed to the internal wisdom of the Kushan, who are believed to have been nomadic before they settled in Gandhar. The form of the stupa of Takth-i-Bahi presupposes knowledge about religious buildings on high terraces but not about multi-floored buildings. It is the Indus remains which must have provided the visual stimuli for such developments. That the Indus civilisation did build multi-floored buildings on multiple terraces is demonstrated by the ruins of staircases. However, as time took its toll on the upper timber structures, to the Kushan the upper floors of buildings on multiple terraces must have looked like heaps of bricks and mud atop terraces. In consequence, the idea of multi-floor buildings as a reference seems to have been lost to the Kushan.

It should be due to this overriding Greek influence, however, that stone as a material of construction was preferred for a structure which appears based on barrel vault and dome forms made of brick. Brick technology seems to have acquired negative associations as it belonged to the vanquished Saka. The Gandhar Kushan apparently avoided it for this reason. It is also likely that with the Saka long since displaced, the technology for making burnt bricks was no longer available. In the same vein, the building prototypes seen
in relief on the Buddhist stone edifices of the Sunga and Andra periods only show a collection of small thatched cells of hermits and a few other similar rudimentary temple buildings. The Hindu artist was evidently deliberately not depicting the built forms made of bricks which were already well developed in the Saka republic. The knowledge of brick making had not only travelled out of the Indus Valley into newer areas, but its association with the Saka and their religion seems to have survived as well. Such ideological associations between the brick and the stupa must have encouraged Mauryan emperor Ashok and the Gupta to think about building in stone.

The travels of the brick

Brick technology was not an Aryan re-discovery. Religious ideology as well as the knowledge of brick-making and road patterning, water supply and drainage systems must have accompanied the vanquished as they made their way into the wilderness. For the Saka, used to living in fertile valleys with pliable mud, the new environs of the high and rocky hills to the north, east and south must have seemed anything but friendly. The mountainous country had hardly any mud suitable for making bricks. Thus it was natural that brick architecture was eclipsed in the Indian subcontinent for quite some time. Water supply and drainage was not always a problem in the new areas and the application of this knowledge may also have been quite unnecessary.

With the passage of time and distance, however, we find that the brick made a comeback in many of the sites to which the Saka had dispersed. Along with bricks, the water system and the tank and the terracotta bull also reappeared.

The next brick building culture is found among the Sakya of Kapilvastu. From Mohenjodaro of the Indus Valley to Kapilvastu, the distance in time is about 2000 years. But from the perspective of the eastern and latest outpost of the Indus-Saraswoti civilisation, Alamgirpur, Kapilvastu is quite contemporaneous. The Sakya of Kapilvastu and the people of Alamgirpur were separated by just 400 miles. Dated from the seventh century BCE onwards, the town of Kapilvastu—its buildings, ramparts and its brick tumuli—suggests that the brick-maker and the bricklayer, not the carpenter of Aryan towns, comprised the majority of workers. Recent archaeological excavations at the site of the Mayadevi temple in Lumbini, the birthplace of Lord Buddha, have yielded a brick vedi (platform) as well as the remains of the foundation of a large brick Brikkshya-Griha temple
dateable to before the third century BCE (S.R. Tiwari, 1996). It is also in Pali literature, such as *Jataka* and *Mahavamsa*, that we find mention of the *ithaka-vaddhaki*, the bricklayer, as an important member of the building group. In these texts, the eighteen traditional crafts related to building are named. This social division is much akin to that of the other Saka tribes such as the Kirat and the Pahlava. The case of the Khas would naturally be similar. The Sakya, Koliya and the Malla of Buddha’s time—called ‘bratya’ by *Manusmriti*—seem to have belonged to the Khas sub-group of the Saka.

Bricks start showing up in the Vindhya-chal area in India a little later. The Ashokan Stupa at Sanchi was originally built in brick about the middle of the third century BCE. An archaeological exploration at Besnagar has unearthed foundation works in brick belonging to a Vishnu temple dating to about 150 BCE; bricks and lime mortar are the construction materials. The excellence of the brickwork testifies that it was the handiwork of bricklayers of long experience. The temple does fit into the time frame since references suggest that the worship of divine images in Hinduism started only during the time of Panini, whose writings are dated to around the fourth century BCE (K. Deva, 1995). Besnagar is close to Sanchi, the capital of the Sunga, who were ardent Hindus. However, this brick-making phase of Hindu architecture appears to have been very short. The first of the Buddhist *chaityas* to be built in brick is a post-Mauryan example from Ter, south of the Vindhya-chal mountains. Besnagar and Ter fall in the region occupied by the Odra and the Pahlava, other tribes belonging to the Saka group. Here, too, the use of brick and the skill in brickwork appear to be a result of Saka presence.

Archaeological excavations in Kathmandu have not been extensive so far. Even so, the archaeological finds at Satyanarayan at Handigaun suggest that by about the second century BCE, brick construction in Kathmandu had already reached an advanced stage. By any logic, this period predates the coming of the Lichchhavi to Kathmandu. This construction has to be placed during the Kirat Period, and we must assume that bricks were definitely a part of their built culture. An inscription of Lichchhavi King Basantadev from Thankot mentions a people with specialisation in eighteen crafts (*astadasa prakritin*). These people lived in Jolpringga, a Kirat settlement renamed Jayapallikagram by King Basantadev himself. There are references to non-Lichchhavi and non-Brahmanical settlers in several early inscriptions of the valley, proving that Kathmandu had gone through a prolonged rule by the Kirat, members of the Saka community.

It can thus be concluded that brick-making remained a preserve of the Saka throughout their migratory history and that they revived it wherever the geology of the new areas permitted it. Their town and building activity was extensive enough to support eighteen different building trades or guilds (*seni* or *prakrita*). The presence of such distinct social groups is seen among the Pahlava, the Sakya and the Kirat. Obviously not Aryan, these groups were representatives of the Indus-Saraswoti civilisation.

**Arrival in alluvial lands and the resurgence of the brick**

From the above discussion, it is evident that the brick reappeared in Kapilvastu, Besnagar, Kathmandu and Ter. What is interesting is that none of the brickwork excavated shows any evidence of gradual development. All four places, while located outside of the Gangetic plains, are also where the Saka moved to escape the Aryan onslaught. In these very areas, we also see the resurgence of the eighteen building trades. In their long
travels, the Saka came across alluvial lands only in a few places, and Kathmandu Valley was one of them. It is here that they used the art and craft of brick-making to the maximum. It must be the Kirat who initiated the brick and wooden form for temple structures in Kathmandu Valley, a fact that can be inferred from the existence of two distinct styles of architecture in the early Lichchhavī Period.

The first of these early royal temples of the Lichchhavī was in the avaran format and was constructed in stone (M. Slusser, 1972). The form appears to be an early stage in the architectural development of temples in stone but used a fairly developed set of carved motifs. A single slab of stone forms the roof, which has a finial structure over it. The extant examples of these temples that can be seen at Banepa, Panauti and Pashupatinath are about a metre high and a meter square in area. Handigaun also has some plinth remains of similar temples. The shape of the columns, with a concave cut on the inside, indicates that most of these temples were erected for Siva linga. Inscriptions DRR-III & IV also indicate that the temple structures were erected in the shape of srimatsamsthanā and laxmibat for Siva and Vishnu respectively. Since such names are just generic classical terms, we are not able to evaluate these forms. Similar temple forms, as exemplified by the linga shrine of Mahakuteswor, were built in India in the early Chalukyan period. While it could well have been an independent development based on Hindu prescriptions, the Lichchhavī temple and its pillar with a concave inside nonetheless shows a direct relationship with the yoni of the linga. Even temples that housed other gods were possibly designed in the same way. All these date to the fifth century, a little earlier than the Mahakuteswor temple from central India.

The second type, which appears to have preceded the avaran type, are rectangular temples constructed in brick and wood. The most important of these for us is mentioned in an inscription of Amshuverma’s, DRR-LXXVI. This was a temple called Matindevkul, which housed mother goddesses, obviously of non-Lichchhavī and non-Gupta origin. That this was a brick and wood temple is clarified beyond doubt by the inscription itself. That the temple belonged to the Kirat too can be inferred from the fact that the people of Kirat descent even now congregate annually at the temple of Mahalaxmi at Tyagal (M. Slusser, 1982: pp. 96-97), further east of the location of the inscription. Since the word ‘matin’ appears to be a degenerate form of ‘matrinami’, or ‘mother goddesses’, and since the area still went by the name Matilam Ksetra as late as 1497 CE (D.R. Pant, 2050 BS), it becomes clear that the Mahalaxmi dyochhe of Tyagal lies where the Matindevkul of the inscription is supposed to have stood. The present structure is a rectangular, two-storeyed brick-and-timber temple in the dyochhe format.

There are many rectangular temples of similar basic design in the valley today, most of which were renewed in the late Malla Period. These rectangular temples house Bhairav and Bhimsen, as well as Bal-Kumari Ajima and other mother goddesses. (S.R. Tiwari, 1989) As Bhimsen is equivalent to Bhairav in Tantric thought current in the valley, all rectangular temples appear reserved for Siva-gan and matrikas venerated in Nepal from the pre-Lichchhavī Period. Many of such sites also have pre-Lichchhavī or early Lichchhavī images, numinous stones or other remains. These temples are not regular square-tiered temples and their proportions differ from those prescribed in classical Hindu Vastusastra. Whereas Hindu design principles call for darkness in the sanctum, the rectangular temples of Nepal are always used with the long side as the frontage, and earlier ones have fully open fronts and sides. This structure is clearly related to the congre-
gational type of worship. Rectangular temples are rare in India and are certainly not of Gupta or Chalukyan stylistic origin. The lack of importance given to the side axis further shows that it belonged to a stream of thought other than Hindu; they are obviously designs from the Kirat domain.

The bull and the buffalo horns
Along with the brick, the rectangular temple and the eighteen building trade groups, the religion of the Saka would also have arrived in Kathmandu with timely adjustments and developments. The ritual artefact of the humped bull has been a consistent and enduring feature of the religious ensemble of the civilisation that preceded the Aryans in the Indus-Saraswoti area. Terracotta figurines of a humped bull is as common in Saka areas as findings of the brick itself. Indeed, as in the Indus-Saraswoti towns, the Lichchhavi layers in Kathmandu Valley, particularly in the areas of Handigaun and Naxal, yield a large number of humped bull terracotta figurines.

Given that the Lichchhavi were Vaisnav to start with and that they had also consecrated Siva linga shrines along river banks by the time of Mandev (r. 464-505), finding images of bulls does not appear unnatural initially. But it is quite evident from Lichchhavi inscriptions that royal personages had tried several times to integrate the two faiths, as if they were at loggerheads with each other. It stands to reason that a large proportion of the population must have followed the Saiva personal faith similar to that practised in the Indus Valley and that their beliefs were a challenge to the Vaisnav and the public Saiva faiths. The creation of images of Hari-Shankar to satisfy both groups does hint at the existence of a Saiva group that belonged not to the Siva linga worshippers but to the Siva image-worshipping cult of the Kirat. Also, as the evidence of matrika sculpture shows, the cult of the mother goddess was quite common. That the Lichchhavis did not like this practice much is proved by the fact that only later inscriptions venture to address them as mataram, matindevkul, etc. This evidence proves that the other tribe resident in the valley at the time of the Lichchhavis practised the personal Siva cult and iconographic image worship as well as the cult of mother goddesses, while the terracotta bulls of Handigaun and Naxal must point to the presence of a people with a faith similar to that of the Indus Valley civilisation.

In addition, the Jyapu’s continuing tradition of offering the horns of a sacrificed buffalo to their pith temple of Nriteswor reminds one of similar traditions found in the Indus area. The way the Jyapu of Handigaun respectfully tuck such horns over the gateway arch of their temples is akin to the pottery decorations from Indus-Saraswoti towns of Lewan, Kalibangan and Kot Diji. Indeed, the tri-leaf crest of the mask of the Bhairav can be linked to pottery decorations from sites such as Mundigak (now in Afghanistan).

The settlements in Kathmandu also use stone water conduits as well as water tanks to replenish ground water. The towns are characterised by a well thought-out drainage and supply canal systems. In the remains of the Pahlava city of Mahabalipurum, too, the use of a central water tank and a drainage system is observed. The Pahlava also used brick and timber in common buildings.

The evidence of the terracotta bull, the brick, the water tank and drainage system strongly supports my proposition that the people of the Indus Valley reached Kathmandu as the Kirat. Helped by a friendly geology, they revived their knowledge prior to the arrival of the Lichchhavi. The building support group of the Lichchhavis must also have been the Kirat astadasa prakritin, the eighteen craft guilds of the Kirat. Their different
status was finally recognised by Jayasthiti Malla in the mid-Malla Period.

Three bricks from this world for the next
Life for the Saka as a community of civilised builders may not have begun at Mohenjodaro. Their origins go further back in time to Mundigak in Afganistan and then to central Asia. It certainly did not end in Mohenjodaro either. Individuals are, however, mortal, and birth and death are not escapable. Through imagining gods who did not die a mortal’s death or through the imagined birth and rebirth of souls or other such schemes, the Saka, enabled by their thinking ability, wished and thought they were an immortal civilisation. The three clan groups of Handigaun—the Maharjan, the Dongol and the Prajapati—have interesting rituals that show the Newar linkage between perceived life before, life now and perceived life later.

When an infant boy is six or eight months old (or, when girls are five or seven months), a ritual called *machajanko* is held. It is celebrated by most non-Mongol Nepalis and is a rite of initiation to rice. At the end of the ceremony the initiated child is made to choose an object from an array laid out. What s/he chooses is believed to indicate the main professional activity that s/he will be involved in as an adult. The articles of choice, such as a gold ornament, a book, a pen or paddy, are usual, but in the ceremonial package of the Newars, particularly the Jyapu, the choice also includes soil and a brick. As paddy symbolises the agricultural profession, soil and a brick respectively symbolise land, pottery and brick-making. The importance of the trades of the Maharjan and the Dongol (agriculture) and of the Prajapati (pottery and brick-making) and the Awales (tile-making and laying) is highlighted by this practice. It may be added here that these are exclusive family trades and traditions and that other Newars would not be able to take up such trades even if they wished to. As we have already seen, family specialisation in the eighteen trades is at least a 2000-year-old tradition; other Newars only appear to be apeing the Jyapu and the Kumah.

Bricks are significant in death rituals as well. As the dead body of a Newar is taken for cremation, three bricks are ritually laid at the first crossroad along the route before the dead body is taken past. The belief behind this ritual is that the three bricks are taken by the dead person to build his/her house in the next world/life.

It is not only mortals who need bricks. In the Jyapu, Awale and Kumah traditions, a very important secret ritual, *gaidupuja*, is held annually on Yomari Punhi, or Margasirsa Sukla Purnima according to lunar calendar. Performed by an assembly of two members from each local tole, a neighbourhood unit, who together form a *guthi*, the rituals last four days and four nights. The closing ceremony requires the members of the guthi to perform a rite of ritually consigning the godly spirit they had worshipped to flames of straw. Here, too, three bricks are offered along with a two-wicked light, one wick to show the path from this world and the second, the way towards the next world. These bricks are for use by Mahasura, Kayesura and other gods who will depart to their own world until the next year, when a Dongol will again call their spirits to come into the human body of the head of the guthi, a Maharjan.

To conclude, the importance of the brick in the life cycle rituals of the Jyapu and the Prajapati is evident. Brick-making and brick-laying is a matter much greater than just a family trade. Seemingly, man’s travels in life cannot be complete without bricks, at least not for the Maharjan, the Dongol and the Prajapati, and not for their gods either.
Notes

1 Ancient Hindu thought prescribed eight different plan forms for towns. *Prastara*, which had nine square quarters and grid street pattern, was one of them.

2 By contrast, the design of the Lichchhavi *chaitya* of Kathmandu incorporates knowledge of building with multiple floors and multiple plinths.

3 Some analysts, speculating that the Indus people were Sumerians, have linked it to Sumerian traditions (S. Grover, 1980). It is, however, more likely that they came from Central Asia in the fifth millennium BCE (Cf. B. & R. Allchin, 1982).


5 Buddhist literary sources, such as *Sumangala-Vilasini* and *Suttanipata* present the ruling dynasty of the Sakya as ‘Okkaka-kula-sambhabo’ or descended from the family of Okkaka, who are said to have ruled the Kosala kingdom. The literary story that the Sakya clan was generated by the incestuous union of the sons and daughters of King Okkaka is a concoction hardly believable.

6 The translation of relevant parts by D.R. Regmi in *Inscriptions of Ancient Nepal* reads as follows: ‘Now that we have repaired carefully in the temple of Matin all the worn-out wood constituting the doors, frames, panels, windows, etc, which have been entirely destroyed for a long time because a large number of the mice and mongoose that had attacked the building had fallen through the crevices in the layers of and now to ensure its good condition for a long time to come…’

7 A *dyochhe* is literally ‘the house of God’ and a form of Newar temple. The name is a literal equivalent of the Sanskrit term *devkul* used in Lichchhavi inscriptions. The use of the terms ‘devkul’ or ‘dyochhe’ makes these temples different from Hindu temples, for which the terms *prasad, bhavan*, etc, and *devnul* were respectively used in the Lichchhavi and Malla periods. A *devkul* is a Kirat temple.

8 The Vaital Deul temple in Bhuvaneswor is one of them. It is also dedicated to the Mother Goddess Kapalini-devi.

9 A similar ritual, called *pasni*, is performed by the Aryan group also, but the brick is not an item shown to the child.

10 ‘Gaindu is not a classical Vedic god but a representation of Rudra which accepts animal sacrifices.’ See K.C. Koirala, 2051 BS: p. 109.

11 Called Chya-Guthi (eight-member group) in Handigaun because of the representation of four *toles* in it. The *guthi* is wholly Maharjan and Dongol and excludes Prajapati. Other suggestive content in the ritual is discussed in the next chapter.

12 Cf. Dangre (> Dangora > Dangola > Dongol ?) about the Masto traditions of Jumla.
Chapter 7

Religions of the Khas and the Kirat

The Kirat, as members of the Saka community, practised non-Aryan faiths. According to Manusmriti, they were 'bratya Kshatriyas', the Kshatriya status being an obvious attempt to include them in the Hindu fold. It also recognises their roles as rulers and warriors in the larger society, which is proved by the fact that many of the sub-groups, such as the Chin, Dravid, Kamboj, Kirat, Pahlav and the Odra established powerful ruling houses and empires during later periods. Their bratya status (see below) should make it clear that the Saka were adherents of their own faith and that they did not fall within the ritual control of Brahmin priests. Certainly the Saka could not have followed the Buddhist faith to start with, and they were still outside of it even when Manusmriti was composed. Without further belabouring the issue, we can state that the faith of the Saka was neither Vedic Hinduism nor Buddhism and that it was strong enough to maintain a separate entity. The humped bull, the horns of animals and the tri-leaved pipal branch were the ritual symbols of their faith.

Non-ithyphallic Siva worshippers

Gopalarajavamsavali links the legend of the Pashupati linga with the Gopala as well as with the Lichchhavi, but is silent on its link with Kirat rule. No other chronicles link the tradition of the Pashupati linga with the Kirat either. However, three ancient non-ithyphallic representations of Siva found in Kathmandu do suggest that Kirats followed Saivism of another kind. These are the images of the so-called Virupakshya from Aryaghat in Pashupatinath, the Siva of the Ganesh temple at Baghbhairav complex in Kirtipur, and the seated Siva of Chikanmugal in Kathmandu. On stylistic grounds, art historian Bangdel dates all of them to around the fourth century CE (L.S. Bangdel, 1985). These could not be images of worship of the Lichchhavi, who venerated Siva in the phallic form. Indeed, the then socio-religious context proves that these images were the icons of worship of a people of non-Lichchhavi background, i.e., either the Gopala or the Kirat. Since chronicles and Lichchhavi inscriptions show that the Gopala (or the Abhir, the Gupta and the Gomi of Lichchhavi inscriptions) were not drawn to non-ithyphallic worship, these images can only be ascribed to the Kirat. As Bangdel also describes them as pre-Lichchhavi art, their stylistic dating has to be pushed back to the first century and before.

We have already observed that the seals from the Indus Valley bear a three-headed, Rudraadhyaya in Yajurveda describes the ritual worship of Rudra. All physical life with limbs (jaghatmak) is said to be manifestations of Rudra himself. He is Bhava for two-footed animals and Sarva for four-footed animals. His alternative name, Kapardi, is applied to his image with long tangled tresses of hair tied in a coil at the top.
horne, masked and seated (kurmasana) image, a non-ithyphallic form of Pashupati Siva. On this basis, one can say that the people of Mohenjodaro followed some sort of non-ithyphallic Saivism. Among other Sakas, the Dravid of South India followed a religion similar to that of the Sudrak of the Elephanta area in the Western Ghats of India. As if to prove the point that the Kirat and the Sudrak were similar or the same, the time period of Kirat rule in Nepal is also referred to in the Sumatitantra as a period when the Sudrak calendar was in use.

The Vedas do not contain any reference to the worship of Siva or of his phallic form. The Yajurveda refers to Rudra, whose godly characteristics underwent changes to become the Siva of Hindu religion as bratapati (K.C. Koirala, 2051 BS: p. 107). This change brought the Saka and the Kirat practices nearer to Hinduism and in the process made the Kirat seem like a Saiva sect. The reference to Rudra as bratapati does indicate that the bratya religion was based on the veneration of Rudra. This has been interpreted to mean that the brata are those people who did not practise the ritual life cycle rites such as pregnancy, birth, coming of age, death, etc., as their god Rudra himself did not need such rituals.

Sukla Yajurveda, XVI, contains a description of Rudra. He is nilkantha, or blue-necked, has two hands, carries a bow and arrows and his hair is jatajuta, or twisted on top in long brown tresses. The Virupakshya image from Aryaghat does not have these characteristics and so it cannot be Rudra according to iconographic dictates. The image also does not fit the lakshyana, or ritual requirements, of the deity as spelt out in various texts, including Hindu ones such as the Vishnu-Dramottara and the Matsya-Purana. The Virupakshya of Aryaghat is two-armed, has a closed, vertically aligned third eye, wears his hair down to his shoulders, and has a crescent on his head. His facial expression is peaceful. What the hands of the image carry has not been explored as religious sentiment has prevented excavations. It is believed that the image is pushing itself upwards and that it will ultimately rise to the surface and fall over as the Kaliyug, the current eon, ends, giving rise to the name Kali, as the image of Virupakshya is popularly known. Hindu calendars tell us that Kaliyug lasts 432,000 years and that 2000 CE is only year 5101 of this eon. There is, therefore, a long time ahead before Virupakshya reveals himself to full view.

Clearly, the image at Aryaghat is neither Virupakshya of the Puranas nor Rudra of the Vedas. The third eye and the crescent ornament, however, do point to a religious image with characteristics close to those of Siva. Anthropomorphic Siva images conforming to Puranic texts have been found, too; one of them comes from Handigaun and is dated to around the seventh century CE. Since the so-called image of Virupakshya co-existed with the non-ithyphallic Siva executed according to the required Hindu lakshyana, we may surmise that it belonged to a non-Aryan Saiva sect that lived in Kathmandu Valley. The Siva of Kirtipur and the seated Siva of Chikanmugal testify to the popularity of the non-ithyphallic Saiva faith among these people of ancient Kathmandu Valley. That non-ithyphallic Hari-Shankar images were also set up by Lichchhavi Mahasamanta to bring together differing groups also indicates their large presence and religious preference. Some Jyapus, particularly Prajapatis, to this day, worship Hari-Shankar as their main deity.

Terracotta and wooden god images
The fact that only a small number of non-ithyphallic images have come down to us despite such a long rule by the Kirat in the valley may be explained by the proposition that theirs was a personalised religion like that which existed in the Indus Valley. Cult objects were not made in stone or metal as they were
Religions of the Khas and the Kirat

Earliest terracotta images of Nepal

Italian archaeologists have unearthed a reddish-yellow earthenware cult image of a goddess named HSN-10 from the precincts of Satyanarayan in Handigaun. Dated to ca 50 BCE, it has to be placed in the Kirat Period. The style of the image is reminiscent of the famous female image from Mohenjodaro.

A terracotta image of a goddess in the store of Changu Narayan has been dated to around the second century CE by Mohan Prasad Khanal. The nature of its clothing, posture, ornaments and other stylistic features show the influence of or similarity with early Kushan traditions.

not required to last beyond the life of the faithful individual. It is therefore no coincidence that all the most ancient images housed in the temples of Kathmandu Valley such as Adinath of Chovar, Rato Matsendranath, Seto Matsendranath, Bhatbhateni and Chandeshwor of Bhadgaun are made of mud and wood. The Siva linga of the Kumbheswor Mahadev, which is said to have been established earlier than the current central image, is wooden. It has been recently revealed that the Siva linga of Chandeswor near the Chandeswor of Bhadgaun is also made of wood.

Kirat images of worship appear to have been first created in wood and mud. Some ritual practices hint that images might have been made of boiled rice earlier. It would be logical that as more permanency was aimed at, the Kirats started using terracotta since such a technique was already in use for the humped bull figurines. In the last stages of their rule, they seem to have started using soft yellowish stone (called sankhu stone by art historians). One Lichchhavi inscription, DRR-XLVIII, vividly portrays such a tradition while describing the state of the images of mother goddesses consecrated by Prince Bajrarath, who ‘had set up statues of mother goddesses made of earth, but they, in course of time, decayed, and their hands and legs broke and fell’ (tr. as per D.R. Regmi, 1983). Bajraratha then replaced the image with one sculpted out of stone. That the other Kirat cult objects made of wood, mud or terracotta suffered a similar fate is not unlikely.

Pottery as a traditional trade among Newars has remained the purview of the Prajapati, the Awale and the Kumah, all of whom are believed to have Kirat origins. They were ones who were authorised to make the images of gods in terracotta. The tradesmen, the Kulala (potters) and the Tantubaya (weavers), are referred to in the Vedas alongside the Dasa, thus reaffirming their non-Aryan affiliation. In Kathmandu, among the Jyapu community, a loom is a common household item and all Jyapu women, traditionally, used to engage in cotton thread-making and weaving. As a matter of fact, the initiation rites related to weaving were performed at a site atop Phulchoki hill, a place of Kirat veneration, until modern times drove the rites, as well as weaving, into the background. All these objects and practices relate to traditions of non-Lichchhavis. We find from Lichchhavi inscriptions located near Thankot, reportedly a major Kirat settlement, that cloth-making was of such industrial proportions that it was a taxed activity. Clearly, the industrial skills of the Jyapu, the Kirat, the Saka and the Dasa were similar, and they appear to form a continuous chain of development. Even the artefacts of choice were the same: terracotta bulls are a common denominator of the Indus Valley and Kathmandu. Since the Lichchhavis had nothing to do with miniature terracotta bulls as cult objects, the preponderance of terracotta bull figurines in the Lichchhavi layers of Handigaun and Naxal substantiates the presence of a significant Kirat population in this area.
The buffalo sacrifice: a Kirat ritual
The Kirat of Kathmandu Valley appear to have stuck to their faith even after centuries of domination by Hindu and Buddhist doctrines. Although direct references to the Kirat as a social group are absent in Lichchhavi inscriptions, the inscriptions do contain references to social groups other than the Gopala. These groups, which were not led by the Brahmins and therefore bratya by definition, are the Kirat. A case in point is the inscription of Basantadev at Thankot, dated 507 CE, which, while addressing the dwellers of the settlement of Jaya Pallika, makes the following statement:

Be it known that...King Sri Basantadev has issued this edict after having inquired after the welfare of Brahman purassaran, Vramh-mung, Shul-mung, Tepul..., these elders, and the village brotherhood including those with the eighteen family trades... In the village with the foregoing boundary, from those who have already entered as well as from those intending to enter, only the Brahman, the chiefs and those with the eighteen traditional trades shall reside...

This inscription recognises that the residents of Jaya Pallika were of two types. The first mentioned and possibly the one commanding a higher status is the social group with Brahmans as elders. This is clearly the Hindu group. The second is the social group led by Vramh-mung, Shul-mung and Tepul(-mung?), which must be non-Hindu and which consisted of eighteen family trades. Since the eighteen trades are mentioned last, they must have been at the lower rungs of the society in official Lichchhavi hierarchy. Although Vramh-mung, Shul-mung and Tepul(-mung?) are mentioned here as village chiefs or elders, their authority, particularly that of the Vramh-mung appears to go beyond religious following. Other inscriptions show the terminology of Vramh-mung was also used for an important post in the government for about fifty years during the rule of Basantadev and Ganadev. Vramh-mungs appear to have been employed as conveyors of royal orders to areas on both sides of Chandagiri hill, roughly corresponding to the ancient concentration of the Kirat around the areas of Kisipidi and Tistung.

As the ‘-mung’ in Vramh-mung and Shul-mung is a suffix indicating rank, ‘Vramh’ and ‘Shul’ must be the base names of these elders. The possible origin of Vramh is found in the fact that Newars call Brahmans ‘Vramhu’ or ‘Vermu’ and that the Kirat of eastern Nepal remember their horn@ priests being called ‘Verma’ in the past. The Newar term ‘Vermu’ does not derive from the term ‘Brahmin’. It is a degenerate form of Vramh-mung arrived at by dropping the end letters ‘ng’. The Vramh-mung must, therefore, have formed the priesthood of the Kirats. The Vramh-mung and Shulh-mung figure again in an inscription issued by Mahasamanta Amshuverma to Tistung village in 614 CE. Part of his statement is as follows:

...ever thinking of doing good to all living beings..., Sri Mahasamanta Amshuverma, within your village, big and wild she-buffaloes have been distressed and pained. To remove the pain on both sides, in exchange for this land, I have ordered the relocation of your village to lower lands of my own with
Chustun River to the east...you also shall present as gift three hundred agile male calves for ritual sacrifices to the present Shulh-mung and Vrah-mung. To make this known...

This order declares that the land of the old village is a reserve for wild buffaloes and enjoins the villagers to gift necessary sacrificial animals so that the wild ones are not further endangered. It is clear from the inscription that the sacrifice of a buffalo calf was part of the traditional worship associated with the Shulh-mung and the Vrah-mung. Since these names refer to leaders of the non-Aryan society of the Kirat, we can conclude that the Kirat, the people carrying the eighteen skills, followed yam-karana rituals, which are ritual sacrifices of animals. That the Lichchhavis had imposed a tax called mallakara on sacrificial animals is borne out by other inscriptions. In particular, an inscription dated 590 CE issued by Sivadev and located at Bishnupadukafedi specifically contains the complete and explicit phrase 'mallakara karani-yam'. They seem to have taxed the animals since such sacrifices were made by the Kirat.

That annually at least 300 buffaloes were ritually sacrificed by the Kirat in Tistung region is clear. In addition, others sacrificed pigs, fowl, goats and lambs (mallah). Since Rudra has been said to be the god of the craftsmen and other gods are placed lower in the hierarchy, we can guess that the Kirat offered such sacrifices to their bratyapati.

Not just the above traditions, but even the cult of mother goddesses extant in Lichchhavi days could not be the tradition of the ruling class. The Shakti cult as we know it today is a later development following the introduction of Tantrism, and we must assign the earlier practice to the Kirat. This surmise is strengthened by the fact that all early images of mother goddesses are shaped from the gray sankhu stone, like the image of Kali or Virupakshya. Lain Singh Bangdel also places...
Dongol musicians in a jatra (above); and a mother goddess in a trance during a religious dance (top)
the matrika stone images in the pre-Lichchhavi category.

The Khas of far-western Nepal and other tribes

Several traditions of the Jyapu of Kathmandu show commonalities with ethnic groups also said to have Kirat or Khas origins but who live outside the valley. Such commonalities cannot be ascribed to social contacts during recent or medieval historical periods and thus must be the consequence of common practices from earlier times. The Khas inhabit far-western Nepal, particularly its northern regions. One group, which has Mongolian physical characteristics, is called the Matwali Khas; the rest are simply called the Khas. The Matwali Khas are called thus because of their unconcealed consumption of alcohol. Since they do not wear the sacred thread, janai, they are non-Aryan. The Mugal of Mugu, the Byaasi of Darchula and the western Nepal Tarnangs form the majority of the Matwali Khas.

Matwali Khas venerate a formless spirit called Masto. Masto is a pertune deuta, or a god spirit that can ritually possess a human medium, or dhami. The shaking body of a dhami indicates the residence of the spirit in his body. The ritual preparations for a dhami have to be made by a second religious functionary called a dangora. Anthropologists believe that Dang got its name because of its being a dangora area. Musical instruments such as the sahanai, sarsing, damaha and the jhyali are used in worship. Masto is not housed in temples but is said to reside in certain natural spots or in trees. Matwali Khas have a 'settlement-protector Masto' inside the village and a 'nature-protector Masto' outside it.6 Animals are sacrificed to Masto. Full moon days, or purnimas, are important festive days. The Magar of Rolpa celebrate their key festival on Mangsir Purnima. Among many sub-groups, including the Khas of Tibrikot, Masto is said to be of twelve types (bahrabhai Masto).7 The main festive days of the dhami in Tibrikot, Jajarkot, Jumla, etc, are Baisakh and Kartik purnima. Srawan and Magh purnima are also celebrated in connection with Masto, and in Jumla, Srawan Purnima is the most important.

In addition to the tradition of Masto, the Matwali Khas also worship Malika, Bhuiyar and Pitta. Srawan Sukla Chaturdasi is Malika’s day. The people of Jajarkot venerate Masto. In Achham, in addition to Masto and Malika, Barada Devi is greatly venerated and is offered a buffalo sacrifice on Kartik Purnima. The Tharu of Kanchanpur also worship Bhuiyar or Gau. The term ‘gau’ stands for the protector of the cowshed and cows (‘gostha devata’ or ‘gaindu devata’). The Magar of Rolpa call their god Baju, or Grandfather. The Tharu of Dang-Deukhuri, who have Mongolian features and surnames like Khas and Khausia, do not use a Brahmin priest; their worship ritual is instead conducted by a high priest called Mahatuwa.
The Khas of the areas around Kashmir, Kangara and Garhwal in India worship such gods as Assu, Kassu and Mahasu. Similar in character to Masto, ‘Mahasu’ is a shortened form of ‘Mahasur’, whose cult is a form of proto-Saivism. Like the eleven Rudras of the Vedas, Mastos are also eleven in number. The inclusion of one ancestor of the clan as a Masto has led to the belief in bahrabhai Masto, or the twelve-brother Masto. The suffix ‘to’ is used by the Khas to show respect, just as ‘su’ used by their counterparts further west in India. Thus, both ‘su’ and ‘to’ are replacements for ‘asura’ and are used to indicate a godly, not a demonic spirit. The Gau or Gaindu spirit worshipped by the Tharu is a form of Rudra which accepts animal sacrifices.

That Masto is a protector of cows, and thus a gaidu devata, can also be seen from the fact that the believers address the god spirit, which makes its temporary presence felt in the body of a dhami, as Gosain. Gosain and Masto are interchangeable. Those who worship Masto in Khas country, also worship malika, bhut and pret. Chaturdasi days are dedicated to both Siva and his Shaktis. We can see that the Khas religion is dominated by Masto, its female counterpart and the gun, all very similar to Siva, Shakti, and Siva’s gan. Siva and his creations as outlined in the Srimavadagavata are all feared and venerated equally.

The Jyapu and the Khas:

**some commonalties**

Much like the Ghar Masto and the Ban Masto (the ‘home’ and ‘forest’ Masto), the Jyapu, too, have two places for their clan god, a pingam type pith outside the village and another inside the village. Jyapus (Maharjans and Dongols) worship Mahasur in an open vedi to the northeast of Handigaun. This is the correct geographical position for a Rudra spirit (isana devata). In Handigaun, the in-village place is a small temple without images, popularly called the temple of Nateswor, located to the southeast. All the Shakti goddesses also have a dyochhe in town and a pith outside the town. Among the Jyapu, malakars or gathus are ordained worshippers of mother goddesses. In their rituals, they welcome the spirits of the goddesses into their bodies, very much like a dhami invites the pertune Masto into his physical body. During the period the goddesses stay in their body, mediums, like dhams, go into a hysterical, shaking trance. Their masked dances, or gathu pyakhan, are held in this state.

The clan in Kathmandu which worships Mahasur is called Maharjan. They appear to be called so because as Mahasur-arjaka, or worshippers of Mahasur, their worship is Maharjan. As a dhami needs to be prepared for communion with Masto by a dangora, so the Maharjan need the help of the Dongol. The similarity in nomenclature of the two is striking to say the least. The Khas Tharu have their ritual worship conducted by Mahatuwa, a name comparable to the Maharjan of the Jyapu. (Tharus add ‘wa’ to male names and with the exclusion of the suffix ‘tu’ that is used for respect, the reference should be to Maha).

The sacrifice of buffaloes is required in all the major ritual functions of the Jyapu. Like the matrika, the Siva or Nateswor of Maharjans, Dongols and Prajapatis, also accepts buffalo sacrifices. Buffalo is a required sacrificial item in the worship of Nateswor and Tunaldevi on all chaturdasi and in the worship of the Mahasur on Mangsir Pumirna, or Yomaripunhi. Samaya, the feast that follows such festivities, derives its name from the Tantrik orientation of the rituals.

Chaturdasi and purnima are dates of great importance in the festivities among the Khas of the west and the Jyapu of Kathmandu. The worship of ajima on chaturdasi is traditional among the Jyapu. Their original status as female counterparts of Siva can be easily observed in their rituals. Like the
Magar of Rolpa, Jyapus celebrate Mangsir Purnima as Yomaripunhi. The god Baju of Rolpa is much like the Apajujudyo, or Ajju, of the Jyapur.

Just as the Khas of the west believe in bhuyiar and pitta, so the Jyapu worship chhwasa, which comprise bhut and pret. Dongols in particular also worship Dakini. Along with the worship of Dakini and Sakini (Dhumah and Simmah), the creations of Rudra and Rudra himself are worshipped by both the Khas and the Jyapur.

The gau, or gaindu, spirit worshipped by the Tharu is another form of Rudra that accepts animal sacrifices. The Jyapu of Kathmandu also worship this form of Rudra with a buffalo sacrifice on Yomaripunhi. This particular worship is called Gaidu Puja. Along with Mahasur, Jyapus also worship Kayesura or Ka-asura (cf. the Kassu of the Khas) on the same day. In festivities, both the Khas and the Jyapu use similar musical instruments. The Jyapu, however, have many more musical instruments such as the pyanta, kota, ponga, devakhin, dabadaba, gha, danga (mridanga), koncha khin, dhime, kaha, damaru, nade khin, and maga khin (madal). This proliferation can surely be ascribed to their long and developed urban lifestyle.

To relate the Jyapu to the Kirat of Kathmandu Valley of a long ago past, we have the formless Mahasur and matrikas, or mother goddesses, and the tradition of buffalo sacrifice. As the Kirat were followers of Rudra-Siva, the iconic Rudra and his creations, such as Bhairav, Yatudhan, Vetal and Yogini, could also have been worshipped. All of these gods are commonly worshipped by the Jyapu. Yatudhan is rare but is worshipped as the guardian of the dance space in the Gathu Pyakhan of the Malakar. Their strong cultural similarity with the Matwali Khas of the west points to their common origin. There can be hardly any doubt that the Khas and the Kirat belonged to the same Saka group in pre-Hindu times and that the Khas of western Nepal and the Jyapu of Kathmandu are their respective modern-day descendants.

**Commonalities with the Kirats of eastern Nepal**

Rais and Limbus, who have Mongoloid traits, also claim Kirat descent. They worship Thewa Samang, a brave warrior-type male god and Yuma Samang, the earth goddess. They use jhankri or shamans in their rituals; a male is called yeba and a female yema. The original shrine of Rato Matsendranath in Bungamati was obviously dedicated to a goddess, Bungayumi, as the town was so named in Lichchhavi times (Bungayumi > Bungamatrina > Bungamati). It is the goddess Yumi of the then Kirat of Kathmandu that is still remembered by the Kirat of eastern Nepal as a yema. One form of yema is the goddess of a spring source, who, by making a hole in the ground, can make a spring come out—an ability still ascribed to Matsendranath. It is in such a memory of the Kirat goddess that Matsendranath is taken as a female entity in some rituals associated with his festival. Similarly, the god Gainyan of the Rai is like Gaindu of the west and Kathmandu. Neither Rais nor Limbus use Brahmin priests; nor do the Jyapu of Kathmandu or the Khas of the west.

The Kirat are also linked to ancestor worship (pitr-deuta) as their two main godly spirits of reverence are translated to mean 'grandfather' and 'grandmother'. With changes in Kathmandu Valley, the sites of ancestor worship appear to have been annexed by the mainstream and are today referred to as ajju and ajima places. The hathewa of the present-day Kirat are for the Jyapu of today the hathon-dyo. Hathon-dyo are simultaneously worshipped as Bhairav and Indra, the gods that symbolised the power of the state to rule prior to the popularity of Vaisnav Hinduism, which shifted such
symbolism to Vishnu. Thus, some of the hathon-dyo are said to be representations of Kirat kings (e.g. Akash Bhairav of Indrachowk is said to be Yalam, the first Kirat king of the Valley), while to this day, the presiding priests at all Bhairav temples in Kathmandu Valley are Maharjans.

Kirat gods and goddesses
From the above review of Lichchhavi inscriptions and ancient Hindu literature and the commonality of traditions seen among the Kirat of the east, the Jyapu of Kathmandu and the Khas of the west, we can draw up a list of the Kirat's major gods and goddesses. The Kirat venerated the formless Rudra spirit, Ka or Sivaka; Yeba or Ajju; non-ithyphallic Siva; mother goddesses in the form of Matara, Yumi, or Ajjima; and their own ancestors. Uma and Mahalaxmi, along with Maheswor depicted with Siva and his gan, formed the major non-ithyphallic images. Naturally occurring round, upright and long flat stones and their spaces seem to have formed power places respectively for locating their ajima as well as Sivaka and Bhairav. Other available smaller stones became bhut and pret.

The symbolic fall of the Kirat aniconic long flat stones
A large number of the aniconic stones and a few iconic representations which continue to be venerated in some way today come down to the people of Handigaun, and of Kathmandu at large, from Kirat days. Many of these stones were assimilated or annexed into local faiths that gained strength later. Many Bhairav stones have remained as Bhairav, chhwasa and hathon-dyo. Many of these upright stones have since been accepted as Siva linga, while many small round stones have become kumari. Others (e.g. the stones at Kwalakhu in Lalitpur) remain unexplained. Despite the fact that Kathmandu Valley has been largely tolerant of other religions, it appears that some of the gods and god images of the Kirat did not enter popular folds.

Possibly for such reasons, several early jatra of Kathmandu Valley show peculiarities that are notable. During the jatra of Tunaldevi at Handigaun, for example, just before the khat is dipped in the pond, Gahana Pokhari, a long stone lying across its path at a place called Nyalmalohn must be walked over. This stone, venerated at other times as Bhairav in the shape of a fish head, lies face down and has an eye of Bhairav carved in it. Otherwise aniconic, this divine stone is nonetheless part of an important ritual during the jatra. Since this ritual could not be depicting the victory of a Vaisnav goddess over a Shakta Bhairav, this Kirat Bhairav did not come within the Shakti fold. The ritual appears to be only symbolic. Every twelve years, the spirit of the stone is said to revisit Handigaun to see and participate in the festival.

A similar tradition is seen in Pharping during the Hari-Shankar Jatra. The jatra of Pharping involves Gopaleswor, said to be the clan god of the Gopala. Pharping, called Phalapringga in Kirat times, is said to be the area of powerful Bhairavs including Pachali Bhairav of Kathmandu. Several Bhairavs such as Kal-Bhairav, Rakta-Bhairav, and Svachchhanda-Bhairav (Vaulohn) take part in the jatra of Gopaleswor here. There is participation from all except one reluctant flat stone, which has to be won over.

During the jatra, a long flat stone lying face down near the temple of Jankeswori, has to be trod upon by the khat of Seshnarayan (Sikhanarayan), a god of Lichchhavi origin. This ritual takes place at the end of the festival. However, every twelve years, the khat of Seshnarayan is stopped by this stone, and that khat cannot reach the Gopaleswor temple. If other prevailing spirits force this crossing, the jatra has to be repeated again until the stone stops the festival. The last time the khat was
Religions of the Khas and the Kirat

not stopped was in 1826 CE. It is recorded that that year the chariot festival had to be repeated three times. In other words, this aniconic god, like the one in Handigaun, also appears to come ‘alive’ every twelve years. But Nyalmalohn of Handigaun is apparently less powerful than Vaisnavi.

Although these stones have lost their power, their locations mark older sacred sites. In the next chapter, we trace the form of Kirat Andipringga using such early sacred stones and their locations.

Notes
1 In some Jyapu festivities, such as the Bhat Jatra during the festival of Tunaldevi, god images are made from boiled rice. In this particular case twelve images are made, ten of which are various non-ithyphallic objects of Siva/Mahasur cult worship; the other two are Nayọ and Naki, their keepers. A group of Prajapatis makes the images.
2 For details on the terracotta mother goddess of Changu, see M.P. Khanal, 1981.
3 Its wordings is ‘...mahatirnshthapata asanmnrmayastah kalakramena chiranatnayati vishrnm bhagnaptitapa nipapa jata...’. The replacement images were carved in stone to assure a longer life. The inscription is dated 573 CE.
4 The term ‘homey’ means one who performs the ritual of soma.
5 Differing translations have been made by Regmi, Bajracharya and others in connection with this inscription. The words ‘mahati mahisipidetyatas’ have been translated as ‘much harassed by she-buffalos’ by Regmi and as ‘big distress related to buffalos’ by Bajracharya. This is actually ‘mahati mahisipida+etyatas’, which should be translated as ‘the distress of wild she-buffalos and the pain caused to each other’. Similarly the words ‘vhanvndeptit + astu ...yankaraniya’ have been totally left out by translators. Bajracharya translates ‘yankaraniya’ as tax. This should be translated as ‘as presently practised ritual sacrifice’.
6 Called Charthan and Banthan respectively in Jumla.
7 Some Chhetris of central and eastern Nepal also regard Bara Masta as their clan god.
8 Dongols act as functionaries only in rituals associated with the worship of gods (devakarma). For the jatakarma or life cycle rituals of Maharjans, the yajnmana function is performed by Karmacharyas.
9 Samaya is the sharing of blessings in the form of prasad served on completion of a ritual activity. Samaya is served with beaten rice, or baji, in Samayachara ritual practice, whereas in Kaulachara practice kaula baji is served. Roasted buffalo meat is a key ingredient in Kaula baji.
10 The worship of Mahasur on Yomari punhi is peculiar to some Maharjans and their associated Dongols. For example, the Maharjan of Satgaun do not have this festivity.
11 In this name, ‘thot’ stands for rice beer; during ceremonies rice beer is poured out of its mouth to be drunk by the devotees. For Jyapus, rice beer is usually a divine drink and an auspicious liquid.
Chapter 8

Andipringga: the Kirat Handigaun

The antiquity of Handigaun can be established from its festivals as well as from archaeological expositions and inscriptions handed down from the Lichchhavi Period. An exploration of the origins of the festivals of Handigaun takes us even further back than the Lichchhavi Period. This is particularly so in the case of the Tunaldevi Jatra, whose origins, through the evidence of at least two of the late Lichchhavi records, must logically be dated to the pre-Lichchhavi times of the Kirat and Gopala periods. Although the written historicity of Kathmandu Valley has been proved only as far back as the Lichchhavi Period, to about 184 CE, it is clear from inscriptions that quite a few socio-cultural rituals and activities from a time preceding it have survived through the Lichchhavi Period to this day. These are associated with several power spots with revered numinous stones that enable us to look at the rudimentary determinants of the older town form. These remnants of Kirat times in the physical area now occupied by Handigaun are explored in this chapter.

Name proves Kirat roots

Archaeological excavations at Satyanarayan have unearthed an inscribed cut-stone jaladroni, a drinking water bowl, which names the area Andigram. (G. Verardi, 1988: artefact no. HSN 142) With a date corresponding to 4 March, 749 CE, the text of the inscription starts as follows: Om andigram pradiyam jaladroni. It does not need any esoteric argument to prove that the current name of the place, Handigaun, is a direct derivative of Andigram. The name ‘Andigram’ carries the Lichchhavi suffix ‘gram’, meaning ‘settlement’ in Sanskrit, attached to the root name ‘andi’, which is non-Sanskrit. Lichchhavi inscriptions carry so many other names of towns, rivers, state offices and titles derived from a non-Sanskrit language of Tibeto-Burman origin that this is not at all unusual. A Tibeto-Burman language has been said to be the lingua franca of the Kirats, the pre-Lichchhavi rulers and settlers of the valley. From inscriptions, it can be seen that Kirat towns located on higher grounds carried the suffix ‘pringga’ such as

The drinking water trough with the placename ‘Andigram’ inscribed on it
Khopringga (Bhadgaun), Phalapringga (Pharping) and Makhopringga (Khauma of Bhadgaun). In the indigenous tongue, the simplification of complex names occurred through the removal of complex sounds. That ‘pringga’ degenerated variously to ‘pim’, ‘pin’, ‘pa’ and ‘ping’ can be seen from a study of names of Kirat places still extant. In a like manner, the name ‘Andipringga’ had been transformed into ‘Andipi’ by the mid-Lichchhavi Period. The later name ‘Andigram’ is clearly a partial Sanskritisation of the place name Andipi achieved by replacing ‘pi’ with the usual suffix ‘gram’.

A few decades before the Andigram jaladroni was installed, the state had provided a cash and material grant for a festival called Andipi Yatra through the Naxal Narayan-chaur charter. This festival is clearly named after the place, Andipi. As the charter itself is about the capital area and the grants are grouped with other grants for the annual maintenance of the palace, it can be inferred that this Andipi Jatra took place close to the Lichchhavi palace.

For a location around the Lichchhavi palace to retain its Kirat name, it must have already been a well-developed settlement of the indigenous people by the time the Lichchhavis came to settle. The renaming of the place as ‘Maneswor’ after Mandev, the Lichchhavi king of the second half of the fifth century appears to have only remained in official records. The common people apparently continued to prefer to use the older name. A new name, Haripur, given to it by King Balvantdev some time later, was also apparently rejected. For these rejections to happen, Andipi must have continued to be home to the original residents of Andipringga. When it witnessed vandalism in the thirteenth century during internal squabbles among the Mallas, it had come to be called Endala (<Andala < Andigwala < Andigram) as the suffix ‘gram’ got replaced by the ‘gwala’ or ‘gla’ that was usual for place names during that period. In due course, Endala became Nandala and progressively degenerated to Nara. The same root word ‘andi’ thus continues to live today in both its current names: Handigaun and Narah. As the population of Handigaun has remained undisturbed since the Malla Period and as we see continuity with earlier periods, it is logical to conclude that the Maharjan, Prajapati, Dongol, Manandhar and the Kasai of Handigaun have been there for almost two thousand years. In the preceding chapter, we saw how the Kirat, the Khas and the Jyapu are very close to each other in terms of their religious practices. By inference we can say that Andipringga, the Kirat township, is still inhabited by their descendants.

Today, the Jyapu of Handigaun maintain relations with their clan groups in Dharampur (Dhalampu), Manamaiju and Tusal. Dharampur is a totally Maharjan village. The functional relationship between Dharampur and Handigaun can be traced back to Lichchhavi times (see Chapter 15). The Prajapati clans of Handigaun are related to those in Thimi, Lalitpur and Jaisideval in Kathmandu. The Prajapati consider themselves higher than the Haku-Kumah (another group of potters like the Prajapati) of Bhadgaun and do not eat rice prepared by the latter. Little linkage is seen to their jat in the sat gaun, including Kirtipur and Panga. This is surprising given that one Lichchhavi inscription indicates that there was a direct religious connection between that area and Handigaun and that both have a large population of Maharjans. The Prajapati of Handigaun and the Munikar of Maligaun appear to be associated with Bungmati and the Bungmati Matsendranath in terms of religious practices. This is possibly a vestige of the days when Bungmati was the home of Bungayumi, the Kirat goddess.

The status of the Kirat state can, to some extent, be surmised on the basis of Lichchhavi inscriptions. The central administration of the
Kirat state was organised into four main departments, or adhikarana: Kuthera, Shulya, Lingvala and Mapchok (D. Bajracharya, 2025 BS). While the Kuthera department collected a portion of agricultural products as tax, the Shulya department appears to have collected tax on sacrificial animals. Several types of non-agricultural taxes such as those on wood/timber (sinkara) and on weaving/cloth (chailakara) were levied. The use of free labour for state-sponsored activities also appears to have been practised from Kirat times as the associated terminology, such as kasasti and jhalandu, are non-Sanskrit. Similarly, the use of terminology such as rogamachou gate officers (dauvarika) even in Lichchhavi palaces also points to an established state procedure for dispensing justice from the palace in Kirat times. Otherwise, the retention of root words of pre-Lichchhavi or Kirat origin in such names cannot be explained. In a country with such advanced administration and organisation, it is normally expected that the pringga, or Kirat townships, would also have been culturally developed.

In our discussions of the origins of the festivals of Handigaun (Chapter 5: ‘The gods arrive at Handigaun’), we have outlined how the capital of the Kirat may have shifted from Ka-tala (Thankot) to Suprabhanagar at Handigaun. We have also seen that the name ‘Suprabhanagar’ was a substitute for ‘Handigaun’ conditioned by the memory of the Transitional Period of the history of the valley. Andipringga, therefore, could have been the Kirat capital too in the later Kirat Period. That this is the case is underscored by both the festivities of Handigaun and particularly by its vars-vardhana puja (See Chapter 2: ‘The “birthday” of Handigaun’).

Religious determinants of the form of Andipringga
A town is basically shaped by its functions. Like all our traditional towns, rituals would also have mediated Kirat settlement spaces, especially as the Kirat were a god-fearing and ritual-loving people. An analysis of the earliest known settled forms indicated by the Lichchhavi inscriptions show that religious elements were located at nodal points of movement in the town, just as they are in medieval towns. An area south of Maneswor, as detailed in the Naxal Narayanchaur inscription, DRR-CXLII, provides an illustration. Lying to the south of Andipringga and forming a part of Maneswor, Tamrakutitasala and Samvapur, this area has all its nodal places highlighted by the placement of religious elements (see Figure ‘Polygonal approximation’ on page 149). These religious elements provided for rituals associated with the life cycle, religious sanctification, and the protection of living spaces. As in medieval days, so too in early towns these elements appear to have been major determinants of the physical shape and extent of a settlement.

One of the creation legends of the valley mentions that Vishalnagar was the first town within its confines. It is said to have extended from Sankhamul, the confluence of the Bagrnati and Hanumante rivers, to Budanilkantha in the north of Kathmandu Valley. The legend, possibly woven in the mid-Malla Period, carries the memory of Handigaun as it was within the larger town of post-Kirat times. This extent of Handigaun is too large for any settlement in the historical period claimed by legend and should be taken as a reference to the central capital region of the Lichchhavi. It is said to have been gutted in a large fire which left only the current area of Handigaun intact thanks to the Siva linga near Bhimsenth, which intervened to stop the fire. Thus the Siva linga, which could belong to the Transitional Period, is revered to this day. We will see later that the fire was caused by civil strife in the late Lichchhavi Period and is not as ancient an incident as the legend claims (see Chapter 10). However, the importance and antiquity
of this site are underscored by the fact that two of the nine early mother goddess sites are around it. Still fresh is the memory of the pond Kva-pukhu, which marked the settlement limits and extended from Vauli up to the rear of the current residence of the French ambassador. Kva-pukhu formed part of the remains of the rivulet Khahare, a man-made river earlier called Dhammakhushi (Dhanakhushi) after Dharmadev, the Lichchhavi king of the mid-fifth century. The original course of the rivulet went through the Handigaun settlement, when Dhaticho linked the ridge of Handigaun to form a continuous line of high land to Dhumbarahi.

The Kvacha: a diminutive Kva-pukhu
Kirats venerated the aniconic Assur, Kassur or Siva-Ka-asur as well as Mahasur or Rudra-Siva. The gan of Siva would also have remained aniconic and so would the form of ancestor worship. These aniconic deities are mainly worshipped in shrines or spots with natural stones and trees called piths, or power places. Moving these deities was facilitated by transferring their spirit (prakat) into sacred liquids such as water or rice beer (thon or jaand) kept in large pots—ghataka or kalasa or ghada; the Jyapus still transport gods this way. Using a ghada (kvacha in Newari) as an auspicious receptacle seems to have been practised since Kirat times. Many Bhairavs, for example, are said to reside in such pots during festivities. In Kirat times, Kvach seems to have been synonymous with Bhairav. It is apparently for this reason that the pond on the northern limits of Andipringga was named Kva-pukhu (Bhairav Pond) and the pith of the Bhairav at the embankment of the pond called Vau-li. In Andipringga, the jatra of Satyanarayan also recalls this traditional means of transport. Each of the three divine spirits participating in Satyanarayan Jatra—Bhuteswor, Narayan and the Maheswor family—are transformed and transported from a pith in Bansbari to the guthi house at Kotaltole, Handigaun, in a kvacha. The spirits are then ritually transferred into their corresponding latter-day images. In later Tantric practices, soma, an intoxicating liquid, was equated with Shakti, and meat with Siva; as a result, both Siva and Shakti are worshipped in ghada. Even today, the Munikar of Maligaun go to Chakra-Kunda, Taudaha, twice a year to bring the renewed spirit of Matsendranath in a ghada with five special white flowers floating in it. The five flowers represent the five Adibuddhas as Matsendranath is as much revered by Buddhists as by Hindus. Clearly, the Kirat kvacha made its mark on all the religious practices that followed Bhairav.

Andipringga, of course, was devoid of Narayans and of Siva linga, which were set up by the Lichchhavi, and of Krishnas and Bhimsens, who arrived still later, in the Malla Period. But it did have Mahasur, Rudra, Siva,
Bhairav, as well as the ancestor gods and the sets of eleven and seven mother goddesses. And the people of Andigram did not destroy the places of the older gods, as once in a while they continued to feel the need for the gods of its forefathers also. Seemingly, all the gods co-existed harmoniously; and the seasons of their activities were staggered so that each could make its presence felt whenever the astral positions so demanded.

Thus the religious determinants of early Handigaun are visible in several layers of pith and feared sites that overlap in space and time. And a faint trace of the urban form of each cultural period can be gleaned by separating these layers according to their associated religious faiths and cults. An attempt to separate the complex conglomeration into a series of single religious systems would require sequencing religious development over historical time. As Hindu religion dominates Handigaun today and as Buddhist traces are very limited, we will limit ourselves to the sequencing of those cults that were closer to Hinduism, the most important reason for their continued survival. In historical sequence, we find the following succession of cult associations:

(i) Worship of Goshtha devata or Rudra accepting sacrifices;
(ii) Worship of Mahasur, Rudra and the other ten (ekadasa Rudra);
(iii) Siva gan worship (bhut, pret, pishach, Bhairav, Vinayak, Dakini, Betal, etc) with Sivani and ten others (female consorts of the ekadasa Rudra);
(iv) Ancestor worship;
(v) Saptamatrika;
(vi) Vishnu worship;
(vii) Phallic worship or the redefined Saiva cult; and
(viii) Astamatrika, Navadurga and Shakti cults (Tantric practices)

Since several cult objects of the first five associations have been dated by historians as pre-Lichchhavi, tracing the urban form of Andipringga of the Kirat Period is done here through an analysis of the locations of the religious and cult sites belonging to only these first five cultural associations.
Worship of Goshtha *devata* or Rudra accepting sacrifices

It has been acknowledged that Rudra used to be offered sacrifices of bulls in days long past, before Hindu society banned their slaughter. The ban came into force as the bull’s identification as the *bahana* (carrier) of Siva became strong.

*Shulagava yagna* (the sacrifice of an ox on a stake) predated the Brahmanical *yagnas* and belonged to non-Brahmanical religious groups. Several references to *shulagava* worship to Rudra can be found in the scriptures, particularly the *Grihyasutra*. Prescribed as a ritual-seeking protection for domestic animals, particularly cows, this *yagna* to Rudra was held at night outside and to the northeast of the village in *sarad*, or autumn. These days the Maharjan and Dongol practices recollect this early Rudra cult on Yomaripunhi, the full moon night of the month of Mangsir (which fell on 3 December in 1998). About midnight, eight Maharjan and Dongol believers assemble and go to a place called Meh-shya-gah (literally ‘the pit for slaying buffaloes’) and conduct a secret ritual similar to *shulagava yagna*. Instead of a bull, a he-buffalo is ritually sacrificed. After the ritual, the group of eight, the *chya-guthi*, disposes of the bones and entrails in the pit itself and, under the cover of darkness and unobserved by others, takes the sacrificial meat to a sacred building which is kept sealed all year round. They make a hole in the wall and go in. Here they spend the next four days conducting long rituals cut off from society. This ritual worship is unrelated to any other power place structure around Handigaun and thus stands on its own. Whereas Maharjans in the western parts of Kathmandu Valley, particularly those in
Thankot, Balambu and Kirtipur do not perform such rituals, those in the northern parts, such as Dharampur, Tokha and Tusal do. That they are actually performing the adjusted shulagava yagna is proved by the rituals being conducted in the dead of night in a spot to the northeast of the settlement; the nature of the vedi revealed at the site; and the exact calendar timing.

The secret in-town pith of the Maharjan and the Dongol is located at the Chya-guthi Chapa at Kotaltole. Sources unwilling to be named say that the pith has an image and that the ritual worship is done to its spirit residing in a kvacha. Since my sources are lay Maharjans and Dongols unable or unwilling to describe the image, the identity of the image could not be positively established. However, they agree that it is Siva in a form other than that of Umamaheswor, Ardhanareswor or Nriteswor. They also agree that the rituals at Meh-shya-gah are also directed to Siva. That the image is not a Siva linga is proved by the fact that a meatless offer of a share of the feast is made to the linga at Bhimnani as part of the ritual at the Chya-guthi Chapa. The only sacrifice-accepting Siva linga in Handigaun (taken as Bhairav during the homa ritual sacrifice of an animal) is located in the temple of Manamaneswori at Tangal. As the informants also rule out a formless Nriteswor, who is also a sacrifice-accepting Siva and since the location of Meh-shya-gah and the rituals there point to the Rudra-Mahasur cult, the secret image would, most likely, be a Rudra.

**The ancestral sites (the digu-dyo)**

Areas with non-Sanskrit settlement names in Lichchhavi inscriptions show a concentration of a type of primitive proto-shrines which are variously revered as Bal-Kumari pith, Bhairab pith or digu-dyo site today. All such primitive proto-shrines are equally feared as sites of resident bhut and pishach, a characteristic associated with funeral sites. These appear to be memories of long bygone days when these were burial places. The shrines themselves are designed in a manner similar to places where the dead are laid to rest even today in the case of some communities claiming Kirat descent, e.g. the Kapali of Kathmandu Valley and the Rai of northern and eastern Nepal. As Kirat funerary sites, these proto-shrines seem to have assumed divine associations because of the tradition of ancestor worship. As funeral sites, they are expected to be, and indeed are, a little outside 'the settlement. As both power relationships and ancestor worship may have dictated, royal individuals may have been interred within the town next to the palace itself. Tunchhe, located near Bhuteswor, seems to have been such a site within Andipringga. In general, the burial grounds formed the periphery of the settlement and separated it from adjacent agricultural land.

Around Handigaun, nine such peripheral sites still exist; they play various associated religious functions for the Jyapus. Those annexed for digu-dyo (the ancestral site for the Dewali, i.e., the annual worship of clan gods) rituals are at Maligaun (for the Maharjan and the Shrestha), Gahana Pokhari (Prajapati), Subarna Bhavan in Bhatbhateni (Dongol), Dhanwantari (Dongol) and two sites east of Dhobi Khola river (Dongol). Two of the digu-dyo sites of the Prajapati of Handigaun are at Dhumbarahi and do not appear to form a physical set with others. These were apparently sited close to their workplace, brick kilns (C.S. Antoni and G. Verardi, 1985) that were zoned away from the settlement. A pith associated with the Dongol (the shrine of Dakini) is also at Dhumbaharahi. The site at Vishalmagar has become a Kumari and the one at Panchedhara, which is a funerary site in popular living memory, is a site of Dhanaganesh and still has a matrika image from the pre-Lichchhavi Period.

No one in Handigaun can offer digu-dyo
worship before the Dongol do theirs at the Subarna Bhawan site; this fact underscores the primacy of the Dongol as the jajaman clan and also the primacy of this site in relation to the other four sites belonging to the Dongol clans. Since it is popularly held that the sites east of the Dhobi Khola river belong to those who later migrated to Handigaun from Banepa, the two sites at Subarna Bhawan and Dhanwantari temple must be the original ones. Of these, the one at Subarna Bhavan appears to have been the first to be acquired for dugu-dyo worship. This site also gives us the oldest inscribed date for a dugu-dyo site in Handigaun—1673 CE. Both sites appear located close to river banks (although the Tukucha rivulet has now receded further to the west). Rituals indicate that the Subarna Bhavan site is related to the ancient funerary site located to the north of the current Bhatbhateni temple, which was apparently relocated there in the middle Lichchhavi Period. The Dhanwantari site is also a relocation as it was apparently set up by Dharmadev around the same time. Its other name, Dharamthali, recalls this act. The other fact that points to the shift is found in the funerary tradition still current among the Jyapu of northern Handigaun during its last procession: a corpse has to be rested at a point west of the Dhanwantari site. (See Diagram ‘Andipringga determinants set I’.)

Other historical sources demonstrate that dugu-dyo worship, prior to the division of the valley into three kingdoms, used to be held at Manameswori by the royal household only. Chronicles mention the Maneswori site only in accounts of the eleventh century and the first royal Degu-tale temple (Tana-dewal of Kathmandu) was built only in the time of Mahendra Malla. Thus, dugu-dyo ancestral worship tradition seems to be a late Malla Period development. One can agree with the chroniclers that King Bhuvan Malla (c.1512) started the dugu-dyo worship for the general population in the beginning of the sixteenth century. It is said that he ordered his people to worship any naturally available site with formless stones as dugu-dyo because of overcrowding at Manameswori (L.B. Munangkarmi, 1966).

Maharjans have only one site at Maligaun which is also used by the Shrestha of Handigaun now resident around Bhim-nani. These Shresthas were the earlier keepers of the images used in the jatra of Satyanarayan. Today they are the resident priests at the temple of Satyanarayan. In the figure on page 61 (Andipringga determinants set II) these dugu-dyo sites are shown as Siva-cult sites as Mahadev is the god (in addition to other spirits) worshipped during the dugu-dyo rituals by the Prajapati, the Maharjan and the Dongol of Handigaun. Although a buffalo is not required, goats are sacrificed during worship. Digu-dyo do not, however, accept the sacrifice of chickens. Rituals show a mix of Tantric and Hindu practices conveying the late origin of some aspects of the rituals.

The dispersal of dugu-dyo sites by clan association shows an interesting geometry of spatial relations. It can be seen from the diagram that the four sites on the outermost ring are now used by the Dongol, the intermediate one by the Maharjan and the innermost by the Prajapati. They point to a common central object of focus, the Tunaldevi Dyo-chhen, and to the centrality of the goddess Tunaldevi in the scheme of Andipringga. This same spatial focus can also be observed in the dispersal of the nine power places around Handigaun.

The nine power places around Handigaun
The larger boundary of Handigaun is ritually defined by the position of nine power places, or pith, where the Rudra-Shaktis are believed to be resident. As these are pingam-dyo, these sites are the outermost ring of protection. These pingam sites are different from the Saiva
The Brick and the Bull

Shakti *pith* of Puranic origins, which are power places where parts of the body of Siva's first wife, Satidevi, are believed to have fallen as it was cut into pieces by Lord Vishnu. Pingam appear to be Kirat sites of veneration named *digvara* in Lichchhavi inscriptions and as *digu* and *gvara* in late Malla inscriptions. These nine power places are: (i) Mahalaxmi at Naxal (west of Chardhunge); (ii) Chundevi at Bhatbhateni (south of the temple); (iii) Tunaldevi at Chandol; (iv) Dhanwantari at Dharamthali (Khahare); (v) Mother goddesses at Satyanarayan (east of the complex); (vi) Mother goddesses at Charnarayan of Maligaun; (vii) Manamaneswori at Tangal; (viii) Sankata/Mahankal at Bhimsenthan; and (ix) Mahalaxmi at Duwanani (midway between Bhuteswor and Bhimsethan).

Lichchhavi inscriptions attest to the antiquity of the Satyanarayan site at Handigaun, the Tunaldevi site at Chandol and the Mahalaxmi site at Naxal. Pre-Lichchhavi *matrika*

*[Diagram image]*

© Andipringsya determinants set III: the Mother Goddesses
images are found in the Tunaldevi, Satyanarayan and Chamarayan sites. The presence of other images of later religious affiliation, along with Rudra-Shakti images, is also notable. Many of the sites appear to have been annexed for the positioning of later gods in the course of religious developments.

At Tunaldevi, Lichchhavi characters are found inscribed in a square block of stone now used as an edging in the northeast corner of its brick plinth. This is actually a stone shoe pad to house a timber post, the *ltaha sigatvakaha* in Newari building terminology. Along with the availability of three other similar but uninscribed stones, this pad substantiates the existence of a four-post mandap-style temple at the site as early as 476 CE. The inscription records that the stone base was laid on the second bright day of the full moon fortnight of the month of Jestha, *jestha mase shukla diva* 2, in the Sakara year 397. The inscription is a one-liner with just the date; it does not name the god or goddess of the temple. As the site also has a Lichchhavi chaitya, it certainly must have been venerated by Buddhists as well. Until thirty years ago, the site also housed an antique wooden image of Saraswoti.

One folktale in Handigaun suggests that the goddess Tunaldevi eloped with a Pore, an 'untouchable', and so she resides in the pith away from town and not in the *dyo-chhen* in the middle of the town. During the annual *jatra* of Tunaldevi, even these days, a Pore sits astride the central image at the Tunaldevi temple and he takes the first blood of the sacrificial buffalo. The current officiating Pore calls himself a *duva*, or a keeper, and comes from a Pore clan of Brahmatole in Kathmandu city. The practice of having a Pore preside over key rituals at *pingam* sites is common; it is also observed in the case of the Vaishnudevis of Satgaun, Kageswori, Dolakha Bhimsen, Nuwakot Bhairavi (lately assigned to a *dhami*) and Kankeswori. The Vaishnudevis of *satgaun* also have *duvas* as keepers. Some of these *duvas* are actually Po or Pore. This custom has been linked by anthropologists to a matriarchal social custom in the indigenous social group of the valley pre-dating the Kirat. Thus the veneration of Tunaldevi should have preceded the construction of the *mandap* temple. The ritual *hom* worship also points to its pre-Lichchhavi origins. Sacrificial offers are made to twenty-two divine powers (the eleven Rudras and their consorts) here on all Chaturdasi days. On this ground, the spirits of Tunaldevi would seem to be a Rudra-Shakti group current at least from Kirat times and possessing some characteristics from Grihya Sutra faiths.

Among the nine sites, *hom* is required only at Manamaneswori and Tunaldevi on every *chaturdasi*, although these days this ritual is followed only at Tunaldevi. The goddess at Manamaneswori does not accept animal sacrifice, but the Siva there is a sacrifice-accepting Bhairav *avatar*. In contrast, Tunaldevi accepts buffalo sacrifices and her blood-stained image, it is believed, should be washed only once a year, on the Dwadasi of the month of Chaitra.

Chamarayan of Maligaun and Manamaneswori of Tangal show Lichchhavi Period *linga*. *Gopalarajavamsavali* refers to the Satyanarayan site as *D~alakanirnam*, a reference to the mother goddesses extant there. *Dvalakanimam* later became Duimaju and is annually remembered during Tunaldevi Jatra. At this time, Duimaju and the *gan* of Rudra-Siva are made out of cooked rice (see the *Bhat-Jatra* section in Chapter 10). Duimaju, the two mothers, have a peacock and a lion as their carriers. The iconographic equivalent image is, thus, of Kumari and Mahalaxmi. Several other popular practices recognise the presence of these spirits at Dabali. Once the *khats* of the *jatra* of Satyanarayan arrive at this place, they cannot be rotated as it is believed that the guardians of the space do not permit it. This practice underscores the fact that Duimaju do
not recognise the Vaisnav celebration. At this very place, during Dasain, panchabali, the sacrifice of five different animals, is offered in memory of Duimaju, or the goddess of Andipringga.

When the Pachali Bhairav is brought to Handigaun every twelve years (this landmark event happened last on 29 November, 1999) for a dance with the eight mother goddesses at Dabali, symbolic respect is paid to the matrikas at Satyanarayan. This is conveyed through a short dance as they start from the Satyanarayan Matrika pith.

The pith of Mahamaya at Naxal, popularly called Kumari, is now inside a private plot to the north of Bhagavan Bahal. The site is linked to Handigaun through Tunaldevi Jatra, when the goddess visits Dabali, Handigaun, to oversee the readiness of the preparation of Bhat Jatra. She is then taken around the settlement to display her approval and appreciation of the people of Handigaun, before leading the entourage of Duimaju to Tunaldevi and the chariot of Tunaldevi back to Handigaun on the final day of the festival.

The Dhanwantari site overlaps with the first set discussed above. We have already seen how Dhanwantari, or Dharamthali, is actually a relocated funerary site and is more a digu-dyo than a matrika site. Rituals practised during the festival of Tunaldevi indicate that both the Mahalaxmi of Naxal and Tunaldevi were originally located near Dabali Handigaun. This likelihood is further reinforced by the rituals associated with Dabali during the festivals of Satyanarayan and Dasain. The Manamaneswori site appears forced into local memories as a pingam, conditioned by the legends of nine pith, ninety-nine courtyards, etc. Manamaneswori does not indicate the presence of more than one mother goddess. Manamaneswori, who is Mahalaxmi, was a goddess of the Malla clan before the advent of Taleju. The local Jyapu refer to the khat of Mahalaxmi as Manekhat possibly a shortened version of Maneswori khat. By these considerations the number of pith of mother goddesses from Kirat times still at their original sites seems to have been just six.

The Duvanani site is lost but it appears to have been a pith located in the residential area of the diva, the keepers of Tunaldevi. The site is recognised during the dance of Pachali Bhairav as homage is paid here too. The Rudra-Shakti cult site at Maligaun is remembered during the ritual visits following some festivals only.

It is of interest to see that the Tunaldevi, Duvanani and Maligaun sites fall in a north-south line that also has Tunaldevi Dyochhe—the central religious element of Handigaun—and Dabali. This suggests the use of cardinal geometry for the relocation of Tunaldevi. The western and the eastern boundary of Handigaun traced by these sites indicates the river limits of the past. Tukucha Khola is defined by three sites and Dhobi Khola by another three. It also indicates a smaller Handigaun limited by the sites of Satyanarayan, Maligaun, Manamaneswori, Chundevi and Sankata. This Handigaun must predate the Vishalnagar period. We will see later, when we discuss Lichchhavi Handigaun, that its immediate physical boundary was extended to Naxal Chardhunge in the southwest to make room for the larger capital town only then. Furthermore, the rituals associated with the jatra of Satyanarayan extend nearly up to Budanilkantha, as if to corroborate the legendary northern boundary of the Vishalnagar of the Lichchhavis.

Spatially, five of these sites—Chamarayan of Maligaun, Manamaneswori of Tangal, Chundevi of Bhatbhateni, Sankata and Satyanarayan—indicate the furthest settlement limits that can be associated with Andipringga as framed by the other two sets of determinants, Shulagava and digu-dyo sites. Of these, the matrika site of Satyanarayan
Determinants of Andipringga based on New Year rituals, sets I and II, Bhairav traditions and jaat dispersal
temple, Sankata at Bhimsenthan and Mahalaxmi pith at Duvanani seem to form the inner set. In addition, the Mahalaxmi, Binayak and Bhairav site of the Dhanaganesh temple to the north is a pingam with Rudra-Siva gan power. All of them are located inside the 'rings of funerary places' and outside the settlement. The sites at Naxal, Tunaldevi, Duvanani and Satyanaryan appear to be primary ones because key rituals take place there, whereas in other sites such practices are optional. As Naxal and Tunaldevi appear to be re-located sites, ritual importance in older times can be linked only to Dabali, Duvanani and Satyanarayan. The last must have acted as a farm protector as it is the only site on the way to the lowlands. As farms were limited to the western side of Handigaun and as the digu-dyo sites are quite close, the sites of Chya-guthi Chapa of Set I and of Sankata/Mahankal of Set III are almost indicative of the settlement limits. Four of them—Bhimsenthan, Kotaltole, Satyanarayan and Meh-shya Gah—are almost equidistant from the same central spot as pointed to by the digu-dyo sites. The dispersal pattern indicates the centrality of the Tunaldevi Dyochhe in the physical scheme of the layout of elements.

The Duvanani site must, as the name itself implies, indicate a gateway, making Andi-
pringga a town approached from the north. The concentration of several activities during jatra at or about the Duvanani site suggests its importance as the residence of the duwa. Legend has it that at Duvanani, every ninth generation, a group of gathu will attain siddhi, or knowledge, and materialise, turning the existing eight groups into nine. They will then all get their masks and spears from a filled-up well. The 81 go about dancing, and it is only these true gathu that are ordained to dance in the four dabali of Handigaun. These dabali are at Bhimsenthan (now lost in the yard of a club building), the Krishna Mandir crossing, Dabali and Ganesh chowk on Kotaltole Street. No other gathu, not even the Pachali Bhairav or the Navadurga of Bhadgaun, are permitted to dance in these dabali. Another folktale states that the spirit of Tunaldevi comes up to Duvanani on a white horse during the night of her festival.

As this third set of ritual determinants appears to have been much disturbed during the Lichchhavi Period, it has been used only as a background to establish the nature and extent of Andipringga. Below, we consider the Bhairavs and other Siva-Rudra gan gods, which reconfirm the boundaries shown by all three sets of determinants.

Bhairavs, Chhwasas and Ganeshes

Bhairav sites are located at Bhimsenthan, Bhuteswor, Krishna Mandir and Nyalmalohn. The chhwasas around Handigaun are located at (i) Parali, some distance to the north of Bhuteswor Bhairav and on the road; (ii) on the road to Maligaun, a little to the east of Nateswor chowk; (iii) on the road a little west of Nyalmalohn; and (iv) at Dhalaku. Ganesh and Ganesh-associated sites are Dhanaganesh; Vau-li, the Ganesh Jatra starting point north of Thataltole; and Ganesh in the middle of Kotaltole. The number of Ganeshas in Handigaun is very small for an age-old Newar town. The positioning of fales (or patis) at Dabali and west Kotaltole indicate exit points. Other fales have been lost, but they were located at Bhimsenthan and Nyalmalohn. This set of elements suggests that the settlement boundary of Andipringga was very close in pattern and extent to that of the current core of Handigaun.

As Bhairavs and chhwasa are seen in other places as Kirat king or Kirat overlord indicators, these are also taken as Kirat sites. Of the four Bhairavs of Handigaun, the Bhairav of Bhuteswor is the most important. Several ritual practices point to this power structure. Before the jatra of Satyanarayan can start, the Bhairav of Bhuteswor demands the sacrifice of a young lamb. This ritual is, in a sense, like getting permission to hold the festivity in his area. This is a clear indicator that Bhairav was the tutelary god of Handigaun and that he commanded the respect of the gods who came to the place later. The concentration of several temples built later, such as those of Siva, Kamalasan Narayan (or the Maha-Vishnu), Krishna and of another Narayan, around the Bhuteswor Bhairav is testimony to the potency of the site. Folk belief has it that the jaand poured at Bhuteswor during festivities flows down to the Bhairav at Dhalaku. The secondary status of the Dhalaku Bhairav is symbolically conveyed in this belief.

The central place of Andipringga, the Kirat antecedent of Handigaun, must have been presided over by the Bhairav of Bhuteswor. This appears true from the standpoint of the physical topography of Handigaun also, as Bhuteswor is the highest elevation in the area. Culture shapes what man sees in his surroundings and for the first settlers, physical features must have dominated. Bhuteswor must have thus attained spiritual centrality in primordial Andipringga.
The central goddess: Tunaldevi

The pre-Lichchhavi god sets are completed by the Dyochhe of Tunaldevi located in the centre of the settlement. Located at Dyochhe-tole in Dathu-tole, it is in an area populated by a majority of Maharjans. Its geometric centrality in the scheme of the settlement is evident from its name, Dathu-tole, or 'the ward in the middle'. What comes as a surprise is the low-key role of this site in the daily religious cycle of Handigaun, becoming active only during the jatra of Tunaldevi. With the nearby Valansima, this site carries the memory of an in-town member of a twin set of sites defining a Kirat settlement.

As was usual for Kirat towns, the same tutelary god would have an in-town as well as an out-of-town location. We have already seen the set in relation to the Mahasur cult (Meh-sya-gah and Chya-guthi-chapa) and the Bhairav cult (Bhuteswor and vau) practices. The Tunaldevi Dyochhe, the in-town temple, also has an out-of-town counterpart now located at Tunaldevi at Chandol. This pith is incongruously far off compared to the size of the town. It appears possible that this incongruity is a result of Lichchhavi action that re-located this goddess of Andipringga, along with Mahalaxmi of Naxal and the Duimaju of Satyanarayan, further outwards as they set up their capital with Vishnu dominance. It is for this reason that all three of them come to Dabali, Handigaun, during the penultimate day of the chariot jatra of Tunaldevi. From a detailed consideration of the festival (see Chapter 10), it can be seen that the earlier out-of-town pith should have been located near the current site of the matrika at Satyanarayan. The Duimaju was also removed from about the same place. The actual site of the Duimaju appears to be where the Saraswoti temple stands today. Similarly, Mahalaxmi of Naxal appears to have been shifted from Dabali and later brought closer at Manamaneswori, a fact remembered in the name of the khat used to carry the Mahalaxmi back to Andipringga, Manekhat. The move was so complete that the family of the priests of Tunaldevi, the spirits now resident in the Bhatbhateni temple, were also exiled to the periphery. Legend has it that during the jatra of Tunaldevi, the divine couple of Bhatbhateni comes to Nyalmalohn to inspect the festivities. In the same way, the dead among the townspeople resident to the south of Dabali in Kotaltole are taken to Tunaldevi at Chandol for cremation. Quite clearly, there was a complete shift of the pith and the associated funerary place. It is not clear why the dyochhe was allowed to remain in its original location. It may have been left as it did not interfere seriously with the new Vaisnava scheme of religious spaces.

Nyalmapukhu, the pond

The water supply for the Kirat settlement of Andipringga was apparently met by the pond Gahana Pokhari, which today is associated with the Tunaldevi festivities. The name 'Nyalmapukhu' is a corrupted form of 'Narah-Ma-Pukhu', which literally translates as 'the pond of the mother goddess of Narah'. Located to the southwest of the Kirat settlement area, the pond's current name testifies to its similar festive role in Kirat times also. The festivity had a strong utilitarian reason: the pond had to be cleaned and filled up with water twice every year, once during the driest period and again before the rains, in order to ensure clean and sufficient water supply for the settlement. The pond was located outside the settlement limits as was usual in Kirat towns.

The extent of Andipringga

The Bhairav pith define the human domain boundaries of Andippringga and are reinforced by the pingam set a little outside. These boundaries must have been established in ancient times as the boundary determinants are neither Lichchhavi nor Malla creations. The po-
position of the drinking water conduits, the *dhunge dhara*, which are Lichchhavi elaborations, substantiate its immediate limits as they are located between the *digu-dyo* sites on the outside and the Bhairav and *pingam* sites on the inside. Those on the northern and eastern side clearly relate to the agricultural envelope around it. Since the south and west *digu-dyo* sites are intact, the construction of Rana palaces to the west and south did not materially change the bounding nature of the *digu-dyo* sites. The loss of the extended drinking water system to the west is apparent as the *dhunge dhara* between Naxal and Vishalnagar on the west side, e.g. Naxal Bhagabati *dhara*, Nandikeswor-Bahal *dhara*, Gairi *dhara* and Bhatbhateni *dhara* are too far from the Andipringga boundary to be of much use. This lost system, the diverted Khahare River and the intervening ponds were largely Lichchhavi creations.

The *digu-dyo* sites to the east are on the other side of the Dho Bi Khola and may indicate the earlier continuity of Handigaun township down the slopes to the east. The eastern extent of the Kirat settlements must have ended along the height and been closed by two nature protectors, the site of Mehshya-gah and the temple of the goddess of Andipringga. As Kirat townships do not appear to have been located on or extended along such slopes anywhere else, we should look for other than Kirat settlers adjacent to Andipringga. Inscriptions from the mid-Lichchhavi Period come in handy as explanation. In Lichchhavi times the street going down from Dabali and between the *dhara* and the temple in the Satyanarayan temple area and beyond, across the river, was called Vrijjikarathya, and was still remembered in the mid-Malla Period as Vijayarathapatha. The first Vrijji state had disintegrated in the plains south and west of what is the Nepal Terai today by about the middle of the first millennium BCE. Some of the people of Vrijji appear to have eventually come to Kathmandu Valley and settled (besides the Kirats) on the lower reaches of Handigaun. As the *digu-dyo* sites to the east are across the river, one has to infer that the Vrijjis and the Kirats settled about the same time. Archaeological excavations at Satyanarayan have revealed structural remains from about the second century BCE, roughly providing us the date of the earliest established settlement there. The brick-based buildings are clearly pre-Lichchhavi and date from Kirat Period.

These considerations indicate that although the religious association of Handigaun is an accretion over at least two millennia, the physical extent and outer limits have remained the same all throughout. The same street pattern that exists today sufficed to encompass many of the elements identified in the period of Andipringga. We will see in the last chapter that the Lichchhavis expanded the town outwards to the south and the west twice as their capital city grew in size. Only one major pathway, the one which possibly linked Vauli with Ganesh Chowk in Kotaltole appears to have been erased over time. This fact is conveyed by the discontinuous route of the Ganesh Jatra of Handigaun.

The conjectural layout shown on page 67 were prepared with some interpretative input from the *jatra* of Tunaldevi along with determinants Sets I and II and the Bhairav traditions of Handigaun. The spots where the ceremonial poles are raised (Dabali and Bhuteswor) and the three other places of festive importance, the *dyochhe* (the house of the goddess), the *bhachhen* (the house of the priest) and the *tunchhen* (the house of the chieftain) are considered to be in-town landmarks. During the same festival, the *pith* of Duwanani displays its ancient place as a gateway to the settlement.

It will be seen that almost all of the current populations of the Maharjan, the Dongol and the Prajapati are housed within the area de-
fined. Whereas the inner main street of Andipringga has survived only in disjointed segments, the outer major street pattern seems to have remained the same even after Lichchhavi occupation. This conjecture shows that the house of the chief occupied the northeast sector of the settlement and that the chief priest was also located thereabouts. The chief goddess, Tunaldevi, was located to the southeast. The southwestern part of the core today appears to be a Lichchhavi addition as it is excluded by the layout.

Notes
1. Minor spouts were fixed to these rectangular bowls to facilitate drinking. The jaladróni is different from the outlets with makara motifs, which are a central feature of the pit water supply system, or pranali. Jaladróni are usually placed on the side walls.

2. The reading given in Verardi's (G Verardi, 1988) report should be corrected by replacing the first word in the second line, 'bhaktyahvam', with 'bhaktyamhum'. Here, 'hum' is a title of the donor Priyavarma.

3. The Yangahiti inscription of Narendradev dated 643 CE enjoins the Avira reserve land of Sivakadevkul area (Thankot Mahadevgau) to provide for the maintenance of Bhuvaneswor Devkul of Maneswor, or Handigaun.

4. The officers ‘sindri-dauvarika’ and ‘vetra-dauvarika’ are related to the Lichchhavi palace functions of painting and repairing wattle walls (‘sindri’ derives from ‘sindura’ and ‘vetra’ is a Sanskrit term for ‘vet’, a reed of the bamboo family).

5. This name is a ceremonial reference to a spot between Handigaun and the pond Kwa-pukhu and is a Bhairav power place. The khat of the Ganesh and Bhairav of the Dhanaganesh festival starts here. (‘Vau’ means Bhairav and ‘li’ is a narrow path in Newari.)

6. Legends confirm the tradition of using the ghada as a receptacle for divine spirits. For example, the god Matsendranath, whose coming is narrated in the chronicles, was brought in a ghada from Kamakhya. It recurs in the legend of the debate between Sankaracharya and Amar Vana.

7. ‘Chapa’ means a community building. Many large chapa buildings are found in areas occupied by the Jyapu in other towns. The Chapa of Handigaun is unlike the rest as it is not open for other uses.

8. Since the horns and part of the forehead of the sacrificed buffalo is offered to the imageless Nateswor shrine at Kotaltole, the image of their secret worship would not be a duplication of this form.

9. No archaeological investigation of such sites has been carried out yet. At least two sites where land erosion has exposed the understructure have been observed by this author and both show burial structures. These two sites are Lagankhel Stupa in the southwest comer of Lalitpur and Bhakunde Ganesh on the link road east of Chyasal, also in Lalitpur.

10. In addition to the usual numinous stones, the digu-dyo site of the Prajapati at Gahana Pokhari also houses an image of Harihar (a single standing image whose left half is Siva and right half is Vishnu).

11. This site is also the digu-dyo site for the Singh of Chhetrapati (the clan to which the late Nepali Congress leader Ganesh Man Singh belonged).

12. Incidentally, this is a rare case of a Shrestha being the officiating priest of a Narayan temple. All other Narayans in the valley are officiated by Rajopadhyaya priests.

13. A mandap-style temple, derived from the yagnya mandap for sacrificial worship rituals, is a square-pillared pavilion temple with two rings of pillars, sixteen in the outer square and four in the inner square, as stated in 2/20 of Saradatilaka. The current temple of Tunaldevi, reconstructed from the plinth upwards by Rana Prime Minister Padma Shumsher at the turn of this century, has four pillars on the inside. The outer square is fully open with three-bayed double column structures on the west; the rest of the sides are walled in at the corners with unshuttered openings in the centre. The carved struts, or toran, and the windows are from the late Malla Period, however.

14. The images of Duimaju, the Malla Period name of Dwalakanima, goddesses of the gateway, are also seen at
the Lalitpur and Bhadgaun palace complexes. The Duimaju of Lalitpur is aniconic, consisting of three upright stones with rounded tops and flanked by later images of Mahalaxmi on one side and Bhairav and Ganesh on the other. The images around indicate that the central stone is a sacrifice-accepting Siva and that the other two are the Duimaju, the two early consorts of Siva.

15 Now occupied by the temple of Saraswoti, which was relocated here from a site down the hill in the 1970s.

16 Parali is an intriguing place. Its importance in ancient times is made clear by the rituals of Bhat Jatra. Locals of Handigaun are generally unable to explain the name, but some suggested that it comes from Paratva, the neighborhood on the outside, which has long ceased to exist.

17 Here, a trace of the fate is still discernible. A club building replaced the one at Bhimsenthan in the 1960s.

18 When the pond was repaired in 1999 and a deep tube well sunk near it, the fact that it supplied water to the stone water conduit at Satyanarayan was brought home by the temporary drying up of the water conduit.

19 An inscription of one of the Mahapatras of Lalitpur at Satyanarayan dated NS 534 (1414 CE). Obviously the last part of the name is a degenerate form of rathapatha (temple route) and ‘Bijaya’ is a derivative of ‘Brijaka’. Other authors have wrongly placed Vrijjikarathya at Naxal (G.M. Nepal) and Devapatan (G. Bajracharya, D. Bajracharya and D.R. Regmi). See also: S.R. Tiwari, 2001.

20 The khat participating in the Tunaldevi festival, each with twelve images, are taken out of these three places. Tunchhen and Dyochhen are associated with other rituals also.
Chapter 9

The art and antiquities of Andipringle

Having discussed the nature and extent of Andipringle, the Kirat Handigaun, one should naturally expect to find antiques coming down from the Kirat Period here and, indeed, Handigaun does provide an inquisitive and open mind with many. Although the period in question was contemporaneous with the formative stage of Hindu/Buddhist art in the Indo-Gangetic plains but with religious faiths of a different background as well as a contrasting geographic setting, the form, content and style of Kirat art can hardly be assessed through a comparative methodology. Disregarding this context, however, most Nepali art historians have used comparison to date the early religious or secular sculptures of Nepal and are consequently limited and prone to be misguided by their methodology itself. They use the early sculptural art styles of the Indo-Gangetic plains belonging to the Gandhar, the Kushan and particularly the Gupta periods, ranging in time from the second century BCE to the fifth century CE, as standards for comparative dating. The physical distance that separated the Kirats from the Gandhar and the Kushan, and Nepal’s location outside of the Gangetic cultural dispersal routes of the Kushan makes the assumption of later Kushan influence far-fetched. It is equally important to note that the expansion of the Kushan Empire to Mathura and beyond, while reducing the physical distance, was actually accompanied by a stronger political and social distancing of Nepal. Also, as the Gupta Empire came into being only in 320 CE, the consequent revival of Hindu art in the Gangetic plains was too late to influence both Kirat and early Lichchhavi art of Nepal. With the unearthing of the statue of the Lichchhavi King Jayaverma, dated to 184 CE by the inscription on its monolithic base, and of several other matrika images from early Nepal, the Nepali sculptural tradition appears to be one which stands on its own. It could not be, and is not either, merely a regional extension of the larger Gangetic culture. Bangdel writes:

Until recently, artistic tradition of Nepal was considered to be a regional extension. Consequently, much of the scholarship emphasised the issues of cultural and artistic continuities, rather than unique characteristics of Nepalese art. The arts of the Lichchhavi and post-Lichchhavi periods have been extensively studied, essentially based on its aesthetic appeal in connection with the Gupta idiom. (L.S. Bangdel, 1995)

We can see then that what Nepali art historians were doing was comparing Nepali works of arts to a later tradition, assuming they were extensions of the late Mathura and Gupta traditions. The finding of Kushan coins, two of Kadphises and one of Kanishka, from unidentified places in Kathmandu Valley, is cited to show contact between the valley and the Kushan. For a country known for its trade at least since the third century BCE, these finds...
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are not suspect at all. What is surprising is their limited number given that Nepali goods such as athpate radhi, or carpets, chamar and kasturi were prized exports long before the coming of the Kushan. The Arthashastra of Chanakya, written in the court of Emperor Chandragupta (r. 326-302 BCE), provides proof of such exports. Continuing the ‘extension of the Gangetic culture’ approach, others have looked for Gandhar and Kushan antecedents to Nepali traditions. However, the tradition of Gandhar art is a development that followed the disintegration of the Greek kingdom of Bactria and is dated as starting about the second century BCE. The development of the Kushan style is almost contemporary to that of the Gandhar style. It is well known that both movements matured only in the following three hundred years and could only then have been powerful enough to start influencing traditions in neighbouring areas. Given such a background, it would be more appropriate to see early Nepali art as a stream which developed on its own. It is in this context that we have to look at pre-Lichchhavi and/or Kirat antiques from Andipringga.

When it comes to the tradition of aniconic worship and non-Tantric Saptamatrika traditions, there are no earlier parallels to Nepali art in the Indo-Gangatic plains. Kramrisch recognises this to some extent:

The shapes in which the Newars [sic] venerated their own divinities, which had preceded the gods of Buddhism and Hinduism in Nepal, sharply differed from the latter...The numinous stones are formless and timeless.

(S. Kramrisch, 1976)

The venerated stones of Andipringga

The most ancient stones coming down from pre-Lichchhavi times can be seen at all six digu-dyo sites, eight of the nine matrika sites, at the Dhanaganesh and other Ganesh areas, at Kumarithan of Vishalnagar and at Bhairav and Chhwasa sites. Naturally occurring larger stones are usually christened Bhairav, chhwasa or chhetrapal. The smaller round ones are taken as mother goddesses, or matrika. Barring a few stones, which were possibly added in recent times, most of the stones are naturally occurring stones which have weathered the reverence of believers expressed in their pouring water, milk and jaai over them as well as by smearing them with vermilion and saffron powder and paste. The stones of Tunaldevi were also immersed in water until the natural spring source dried out recently.

The Bhairav stone of Nyalmatole, a long flat stone facing down, shows a line drawing in the shape of an eye. What the rest of the stone image looks like is not known: the stone has never been lifted as the locals believe such an act would bring bad luck to the township. Legend has it that the fish-shaped stone was washed ashore by the brook Khahare in the days it flowed through the settlement. The ‘stone-fish’ was so big that its tail extended half-way to the temple of Saraswoti at the east end of the street. These days the tail end is revered as a chhwasa.

The Saptamatrika

It is generally agreed that Buddhism entered Kathmandu Valley with the early Sakya and the Lichchhavi as they migrated following excesses perpetrated by Emperor Virudhak on the Sakya and Emperor Ajatashatru on the Lichchhavi republics to the west of the river Gandaki. About that time, other ethnic groups of the Vrijji republic also appear to have entered the valley. Vaisnavism took roots in Kathmandu with the decisive arrival of the Lichchhavi about the first century CE, gaining strength over the mid-Lichchhavi Period. The Vrijji appear to have brought with them the embryonic Kaula? Tantric traditions, which were later to gain strength in some parts of India, including Kashmir. The Saptamatrika tradition of Kathmandu, however, is funda-
The mother goddess of Kotaltole (above, right); the torso of Siva from Bhimsenthan (above, left); HSN-10 of Satyanarayan (below, left); and the aniconic mother goddesses of Tunaldevi (below, right)
mentally different from these practices and its origins cannot be attributed to this wave of migrants. It is known that the tradition of mother goddesses, particularly the worship of Gajalaxmi, was popular in Sunga times in Magadha India (c. 150 BCE). The counter-vailing tradition in Kathmandu is the worship of the image of Gajalaxmi of Chyasal in Lalitpur. The Saptamatrika in Nepal, and also at Handigaun, however, all show a characteristic posture of sitting on a pedestal with one leg folded and the other hanging down to touch the ground. This posture is little known in Indian traditions. The link to Kushan traditions is only made through a comparison of the heaviness of the body and of the ornamentation. The Nepali treatment of sculpture in muscular heaviness has been said to be a reflection of a people used to physical hard work (S. Kramrisch, 1964). The best one could suggest from the available evidence is that this tradition is a modified Kirat version of the Bishandevi tradition extant in the villages of the southwestern parts of the valley.

N. Nepal proposes that the Gopala (and the Mahisapala too) were ‘the aboriginal herdsmen of the Bagmati region’ and concludes that they are the ‘primogenitors of the Newars’ (N. Nepal, 1983). The presence of Hale and Gwa jaat among the Newars of the Tistung-Taukhel-Chitlang region show that the Gopala and the Mahisapala are ‘genuine historical folks, not mythical ones, and their historicity should not be doubted while their pedigree as enumerated in the vamsavali chronicles is fictitious’. Thus the Newars of today have sect groups originating from all three pre-Lichchhavi tribes of the valley—the Gopala, the Mahisapala and the Kirat. The Gopala and Mahisapala societies were matriarchal. Over the course of time, they appear to have broken into seven daughter genets occupying the seven villages of Satungal, Boshigam, Machchhegam, Taukhel, Kirtipur, Lohankot and Nagam (Panga). In the annual Satgaun Jatra, or the festival of the seven villages, all the guardian goddesses of these villages come together at the site of their mother, the goddess Bishandevi of Balkhu. A man of the Pode jaat, a ‘low-caste’ group within the Newar community, leads every goddess to the site where the festival culminates. Several non-tantric matrika sites and temples in other parts of the valley also have guardian Podes. In Handigaun, Tunaldevi Matrika of Chandol, which a less-common folklore of Taakhel area in Tyangla near Kirtipur claims to be the goddess of Satgaun ‘stolen’ by some early kings and taken to Handigaun, also has a Pode guardian. In fact, this Pode is regarded as the husband of the goddess.

These seven daughters appear to have become the Saptamatrika following the end of the Gopala leadership in the valley. Referred to as ‘Valavaladevi’ in Gopalarajavamsavali, these goddesses appear to have acquired social recognition, albeit uneasy, by the early Lichchhavi Period.

It may be because of this background that the stylistic treatment of the seven mother goddess images is far removed from that of any of the Gangetic traditions.

At Manamaneswor, Satyanarayan and Maligaun, there are no pre-Lichchhavi aniconic stones to be seen now. Instead, at the latter two sites, several stone images belonging to the set of Saptamatrika from the pre-Lichchhavi Period can be found. The Saptamatrika of Maligaun are the best preserved. One or two such images are also seen at Dhanaganesh and Tunaldevi. Several iconic images are seen at the Bhimsenthani site, some of which are stylistically datable to the Lichchhavi and Transitional periods. The oldest object of reverence here, however, is a headless image of Siva, datable to the pre-Lichchhavi Period.

The goddess of Tunaldevi, the relocated goddess of Andipringga, is definitely of pre-
Lichchhavi origin. We have put the aniconic stones of Tunaldevi under Kirat heritage here since the legendary king who captured the Gopala deity and brought it to Handigaun must have been a Kirat and not a Lichchhai.

Just as without the god Enlil, no king could have the power to rule and just as a city without a temple for Enlil could not be the capital in Sumeria and just as even Hammurabi had to seek his confirmation from Enlil, so too the Kirat rulers must have sought to confirm their power by moving the goddess Valavaladevi from the Gopala capital to their own. As was usual in Kirat tradition, the relocation of the goddess would have been done at two sites, one outside the town and the other inside it. The out-of-town site is possibly occupied by the current Satyanarayan and the in-town site was near the Tunaldevi dyochhe at Dathutole. As the Lichchhavis came to power, the new out-of-town site of Valavaladevi came to be called Valasokshi-devkul. As the Lichchhavi derived their power to rule from Lord Vishnu, as per Vedic Hinduism, Valasokshi-devkul was possibly annexed as a Vishnu site and the goddess Valavaladevi of Andipringga was moved out to the current site of Tunaldevi at Chandol. The new place, just outside their capital town limits, gave her the new name Torandevi, the Goddess of the Gateway.

The Valasokshi goddess of the older dyochhe is still venerated as Valansi-Ma under the large siplikan tree south of Tunaldevi Dyochhe. She still commands worship prior to the goddess of Tunaldevi Dyochhe, a protocol of seniority as it were. It is not just a simple coincidence that the Newari name Valansi ('si' means 'tree') sounds similar to Valasokshi; it is the same, hinting that 'sokshi' may stand for 'tree' as much as for 'water pitcher'. The medicinal characteristics of this tree were recognised in ancient medicinal literature as well as by societies in Indo-China, the Philippines, India, Burma, Sri Lanka and Nepal. In certain parts of Nepal, this tree is called barun and worshipped as a water god after Barun, the Hindu god of water. This religious association is only seen in Khas, Kirat and Newar areas and obviously belongs to a time when they had a common habitat, the Saka territory of the Indus Valley. The siplikan is botanically called Crataeva religiosa of Nurvala\(^3\) variety and is recognised as representing divine water. There can be little doubt that all these beliefs support the idea that Valasokshi-devkul is the image of a water goddess.

This relocation of the pith of the goddess of Andipringga most probably took place in 476 CE, as Mandev further asserted his power over dissenting tribes. Such a scenario of the past is not mere speculation but a reality asserted by the rituals and routes of the annual jatra of Tunaldevi, which is detailed in the next chapter.

At Tunaldevi, the principal mother goddess is located centrally in the arrangement. On either side of the central aniconic stone are other stones, the rounded ones being other mother goddesses and the larger and sharper ones Bhairav, chhwasa, etc. The stone toran over it and the side uprights creating an opening niche around the idol are later additions. Tunaldevi also has an accompaniment of a set of later images that artistically translate the spirits of the aniconic stones as per tantric literature and practice.

In conclusion, one more antiquity of Andipringga, which may pre-date the Saptamatrika images, must be noted. This antiquity, dated to c. 50 BCE by Italian archaeologists and found at the Satyanarayan site, is a yellowish-red terracotta figurine of a female deity (G. Verardi, 1988: artefact no. HSN 10). It shows little or no likeness to Kushan art traditions. The figure is possibly Siva's consort Parvati in the form of Gauri. Her style of dress, the fact that she is holding something like a mirror in one hand, and the use of beads in
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Ornaments all could be linked to Gauri. One can hardly agree with the archaeologists’ suggestion that it is a piece of a cornice for the image looks like a part of a larger cult object made for worship and which stood against a support. The goddess has a narrow waist, huge hips, and small breasts. The heaviness associated with the so-called pre-Lichchhavi style seen in images of mother goddesses is missing totally. The style of dress that comes down from her neck to below her breasts to hold a sash is a rarity in itself. The ornaments worn are round pendant earrings, four-ringed keyuras, bracelets, and a wide necklace. Its slim proportions are not only very attractive but also prove the fine artistry that existed in earthenware craft. Given the weight and heft of the stone sculptures of that time, this figure comes as an educative departure.

Notes

1 E.H. Walsh is said to have received all three coins from Col Pears of the British Residency in Kathmandu. Very few Kanishka coins have been found in the Handigaun archaeological site. Such finds are rare in other archaeological sites of Kathmandu also.

2 Kaula is a tantric practice associated with the worship of goddesses. The kaula practice is extensive among Newars today. (Cf. the ritual repasts of Kaula Baji/Samaya Baji, footnote 9 in Chapter 7).

3 Several Kushan coins show the goddess Inana in this posture. This seems to indicate that such an image was greatly revered by the Kushan as well. This, along with the design of the trident and Siva, could well show a memory of Indus cults.

4 The term ‘devkul’ is applied to refer to non-Lichchhavi temples in the inscription. The name Valasokshi is seen used in a Lichchhavi inscription of later years. That the term ‘vala’ meant water can be seen from the fact that the area where the original Valavala goddess resided still shows two variations of the same term (Balakhu and Balambu) in which the suffix ‘vala’ has been replaced with ‘khu’ and ‘ambu’, which mean water in Newari and Sanskrit respectively. Therefore, Valavala must have been a water goddess. According to a Buddhist legend, Valavala is also said to be a handicapped stutterer living in the reign of King Vrishadev. A craftsman and an agriculturist, Valavala could be a distorted adaptation of the follower of Valavala-devi of the Gopala and the Kirat. (See S. Kramrisch, 1964, for details of the latter legend.)

5 In modern botanical literature, the plant was originally described as being from Indo-China and the Philippine islands, where it is used medicinally. The Nepali siplikan was later described as a new variety of Crataeva religiosa (var.) Nurvala. The distribution of Nurvala is all over India, Burma and Ceylon. The medicinal use of its flowers, fruits, leaves and bark are mentioned in Ayurvedic and Unani medicine. (K.R. Kirtikar and B.D. Basu: Vol I, pp. 191-193) The plant is also known as baruna in some literature and has religious significance in Hinduism. The siplikan wood is also used in Nepali chudakarma rituals (P. Regmi).

6 The toran and mandal were added to many of these sites as they doubled as digu-dyo sites during the late Malla Period.
The most ancient festival of Handigaun, the Tunaldevi Jatra, is also the most elaborate one. Although its inspiration could have come down from the Gopala Period, the major themes and activities of the festival relate to Kirat practices. With evidence from inscriptions, we can say with certainty that the festival was current in Andipringga when the Lichchhavi made it their capital. The celebration also appears to have picked up additions during the late Lichchhavi and the Transitional periods.

Festival rituals start annually on the lunar calendar’s Chaitra Sukla Astami with the raising of a lingo, or ceremonial pole, at the dabuli near the Bhairav at Krishna Mandir and end a month later on Baisakh Sukla Navami with its ceremonial lowering. The key activities of the festival are held in the first twelve days. The symbolism of raising the ceremonial wooden pole, which signifies the authority to rule, at the start is important as it indicates the socio-religious power of the goddess Tunaldevi.

The name Tunaldevi is derived from ‘Torandevi’, literally meaning the ‘goddess of the gateway’ and appears to have gained currency after the Lichchhavis relocated it outside the northern gateway of their capital in 476 CE. The duwa, the traditional custodian of the temple, however, claims that the name is derived from Das Toran Matrika, a term used to denote the power place of the ten Mahavidhya. This is obviously a memory of a much later period, when Tantric developments annexed the site into the knowledge aspect of the Taleju tradition. The Sat-Kon mandal in front of the temple is evidence of this later annexation. Thus, Torandevi could not have been named after the Das Toran Matrika; its antecedent is toran, the archway.

Gods in crisis or happenings of history?
The origin of Tunaldevi has been linked to Bishandevi of Balkhu near Kirtipur from anthropological perspectives as well as from commonalities among some of the associated rituals. As the goddess seems to have represented the power of the state before the Kirat period, she was brought to Andipringga to invest the power to rule in the new conquerors, the Kirat, and was located around the current Satyanarayan temple site. The pre-Kirat goddess Bishandevi thus seems to have become the presiding goddess of Andipringga. As was usual in Kirat pringga towns, an in-town residence for the goddess, a dyochhen, was built in the centre of the town. By the time the Lichchhavi took power from the Kirat, she had become accepted as a local, place-specific goddess and seems to have become better known as the goddess of Andipringga than as Bishandevi.

With the change of the ruling house and the Lichchhavi affinity to Vaisnavism, the divine source of the power to rule also shifted to Lord Narayan. As Lichchhavi religious behaviour was guided by Shruti Shastras, its...
Gods in crisis or happenings of history?

compiler Veda-Vyasa, or Dvipayana, believed to be an incarnation of Lord Narayan himself, was revered and a temple in his memory was apparently set up in the very area occupied by the goddess of Andipringga. This temple was built as early as the sixth century. An emphatic symbolic statement of change was carried to posterity by the name of the temple—Satyanarayan. Other changes seem to have quickly followed. In later Lichchhavi days Bishandevi of Balkhu acquired renewed popularity as Valavaladevi, and the goddess of Andipringga was also renamed Valasokshi-devkul and continued to take up residence near Narayan. The newly designated goddess apparently also shared the same dyochhe in the town. As in Lichchhavi parlance ‘devkul’ denoted temples belonging to the Kirat faith, this change of name must have helped eclipse the pre-Kirat origins of the goddess. It may also be that the name ‘devkul’ seemed better suited now that the temple was shared by two (‘kul’ in Sanskrit is a ‘family’). As time progressed and the Shakti cult took hold in the society, the duo was further transformed into Dwalakami-ma. The goddess is now also remembered as Valansi-ma (Mother Goddess).

Worsening circumstances seemed to have resulted in yet another shift of location for the goddess; several ritual practices of the festival point to the fact that the goddess of Andipringga was forced to a still newer location, a banishment, so to speak, to outside the town gates. This apparently happened when King Mandev was ruling. However, the dyochhe of Valasokshi-devkul, presumably, did not pose any problem and seems to have retained its original place. In course of time, the retention of the earlier dyochhe as well as Valansi-ma seemingly caused a reversion to their earlier separate status. Today, it can be observed during rituals that the worship to the image of the goddess of Andipringga is offered at Tunaldevi Dyochhe, while that to Valansi-ma is offered under the siplikan tree located behind it in the garden.

The officiating priestly couple of the temple would have fought against the exile of the goddess as they, too, were apparently disgraced and banished to outside the town limits. However, even as Vaisnavism became stronger, Valavaladevi continued to be revered; the banished priests acquired divine status themselves and got embodied in Bhatbhateni. It must have been amid such scenes that the temple of Tunaldevi was relocated and the temple of Bhatbhateni came into existence. With renewed vigour and by incorporating the crisis, the festival of the goddess of Andipringga continued to be celebrated. Religious annexation was called for as a saving grace and Valavaladevi progressively became Bishnudevi, Vaishnudevi and then Vaisnavi. Apparently at this time, or a little later, Mahalaxmi came to occupy the role of state goddess. Further changes in the religious preferences of the rulers seem to have brought other banishments from the Dabali area of Handigaun: by the end of the Transitional Period, the Mahalaxmi Manamaneswori had also been pushed out to Naxal and the remaining spirit of the two goddesses of Dabali relegated to the same site as Tunaldevi. The current ritual and progress of Tunaldevi Jatra certainly seems to support such historical happenings at Andipringga as it developed into Maneswor, the Lichchhavi capital.

Unlike so many of the festivals of Kathmandu Valley towns, where ritual purification of the town to avert human crises is the theme, during Tunaldevi Jatra humans are not in crisis. It is the above-mentioned crisis of the gods that forms the undercurrent of the jatra of Tunaldevi. It is as though sometimes the gods themselves find themselves in a bind and to resolve it, they, too, have to perform rituals. These rituals of the gods have become festivities for the humans. Tunaldevi Jatra has
many peculiar aspects which make sections of the festivity seem quite strange even to residents of Kathmandu used to the eccentricities of many festivals. Indeed the oddness of this festival is proverbial. Kathmandu residents use it as a proverb to mean a strange rarity: ‘Kahin nabhayeko jatra Handigaun ma’ (literally, ‘A happening like nowhere as the festival in Handigaun’).

Apart from Tunaldevi, several other gods and goddesses play a part in this festival. Mahalaxmi of Naxal and the couple at the Bhatbhateni temple are the key visiting celestials. We have seen earlier that Naxal Mahalaxmi is one of the set of nine piths, including Tunaldevi, around Andipringga. Mahalaxmi ensures that everything goes as ordained and her role is accordingly set.

Bhatbhateni, a couple condemned never to set foot on earth

The images at the temple of Bhatbhateni are hung in the air. Such a treatment of godly images is not usual and typifies the situation, a crisis made in heaven but enacted in this mortal world. A popular folktale presents the crisis in an interesting context. (Contrast it with Padma GirI Vamsavali version of how Bhatbhateni established Vishalnagar in Chapter 4.)

Once upon a time, when King Brahmadev was ruling in the city-state of Vishalnagar, a pious Brahmin couple named Sudev and Sudevi lived in Handigaun, a locality within Vishalnagar. They were very god-fearing and lived a life full of devotion to Lord Vishnu; indeed, they became so learned that they earned the name Bhatbhateni. Lord Vishnu, pleased with their single-minded devotion, came down to them and offered them a boon of their asking. Sudevi expressed the wish to have a son with all the qualities of the Lord himself. Contemplating her wish, the Lord told Sudevi that since she was already too old in this life, her wish would be granted only in her next life. Saying this, the Lord vanished into the heavens. As it happened, both Sudevi and Sudev were born again into Brahmin families at Vishalnagar and as chance would have it, they got married again. But this new life was not an easy one. They were impoverished farmers. The couple, however, were very religious, truthful and law abiding, and always kept their word. They were a couple of excellent character and became known far and wide for this attribute.

One day an old Brahmin named Suddhadev came to stay with them. After hearing about their impeccable character, he decided to leave one of his walking sticks in their custody as he was going on a twelve-year pilgrimage. It was worth a lot as he had sold all his property, bought gold ornaments with the cash, and stored them inside the stick. The couple agreed to keep the stick for him until his return. But life became more and more difficult for the couple. On the eighth year of the pilgrim’s departure, a son, who had all the thirty-two attributes of the true Narayan, was born to them. They named him Villa, after Villi-chakreswor, a name of Vishnu. In the meanwhile, the walking stick had been attacked by wet rot to reveal the hidden treasures. To meet the cost of post-natal care and pressed by adversity, Sudev and Sudevi sold the stick and the ornaments, thinking that the owner was too old not to be dead after so many years.

One day when the boy was four years old, he was, as usual, given a bath and oiled. The couple was relaxing after their morning chores and all three were sunning themselves on a straw mat on the street in front of their home. The warmth of the sun was pleasing and the boy had dozed off. Their pleasure was short-lived, however, as Suddhadev returned to claim his stick that day. Uncharacteristically, the couple chose to lie: they told the returning pilgrim that his walking stick had been eaten up by moths. Suddhadev did not
believe that a couple renowned for truthfulness would lie and was saddened to hear the fate of his stick. Irritated by the loss, he looked up into the sky as if to seek justice from the heavens. Anger possessed him as he saw an eagle hovering there. Addressing the couple, he cursed them, ‘Impossible! Liars should find no land on this earth to set foot on. Look, if my stick with all the gold ornaments inside, can be eaten up by moths, as you say, then, sure as the sun, that eagle there in the sky, could swoop down and lift your boy away into the air.’

And, lo and behold! The small eagle swooped down to the mat and lifted the boy into the sky! The pilgrim could not believe what he saw. It was as if the eagle had come to prove what Sudev had said was no lie. The couple, mustering up all their past religious merit and calling for supernatural strength, flew into the air to snatch back their son from the eagle. At that moment, the boy showed his true form, that of the four-armed Vishnu-Narayan himself, sat astride Garud, which was the true form of eagle, and declared, ‘Oh, Brahmins Bhatbhateni, for your penance and devotion to me in your earlier life, I gave you a boon. Because of that, I allowed myself to be born from your womb. Now you are relieved of your cycle of life and birth and you will remain in the sky as gods.’

Thus the divine status of Bhatbhateni was established and to this day the couple is hung in their temple so as not to touch the earth. Next to them, their boy Vishnu-Narayan, astride Garuda, is also in the air.

Analysis of the folktale: some problems and some hints

The Kirat connection is given away by the name of the child, Villi-chakreswor. The Gopala connection is hinted at by the Jyapu belief that the child is Nanda Gopala, who is associated with the Krishna cult. But the folktale is designed around the Vaisnavite faith, and the god-fearing couple, Bhat and Bhateni, are presented as the human parents of Lord Vishnu. Even after the revelation and despite the granting of divine status to the couple, they are made to stay clear of earth as branded liars according to the curse of Suddhadev. Sentencing the liars doubly was, apparently, justice for the aggrieved. The supernatural happenings should have made the return of the items entrusted for safe keeping unnecessary as what the pilgrim had thought impossible and had uttered as a curse became reality. The story ends as though Suddhadev had reconciled himself to thinking that moths really had eaten up the gold-filled walking stick.

The festival of Tunaldevi, however, shows that matters did not end that way, for the major activities of the festival start as the couple Bhatbhateni, along with their child, go to a non-Vaisnavite goddess to seek further heavenly intervention. The goddess

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**Bhat in the Tunaldevi festivals**

The Karmacharya priests of Bhatbhateni say that Bhateni, the female image in the temple, is the daughter of the goddess at Tunaldevi. Once a year she, along with her husband, Bhat, visits her maternal home. Except for the repairing and repainting of the faces of the images done by the Chitrakar, no other ritual is performed on their departure from the temple or arrival at Tunaldevi.

For their journey they are dressed and bedecked with ornaments and flowers only for the benefit of the devotees.

In contrast, for Tunaldevi, hom and other ritual worship are performed during which a Karmacharya officiates on behalf of Bhat, the son-in-law of Tunaldevi. The tradition of having a son-in-law officiate as a priest is a curious practice among the gods, but among humans it is quite common among some ethnic groups of Nepal.
Tunaldevi, interceding on behalf of Bhatbhateni, goes into a pond at Handigaun at the climax of the festivities in what amounts to a symbolic search for the lost ornaments. The pond, called Nyalmapukhu by the Newars of Handigaun, is also called Gahana Khojne Pokhari. This name, which translates as 'Pond for the Search of Ornaments' reflects the climax of the annual jatra of Tunaldevi. By the same token, the festival itself is also popularly called Gahana Khojne Jatra, or the Festival for Searching Ornaments.

The folktale does not call for a search, as the gold ornaments were sold, not lost. So what is the festival about? Local explanation is that the climax of the festival is a search for the ornaments of Mahalaxmi, which she had lost earlier while frolicking around the area. This is not even hinted at by the festivity sequence as the khat of Mahalaxmi does not go around the pond before the day of the search at all. Thus, she could hardly have lost her ornaments there. In the first leg of the festival, the khat of Mahalaxmi actually goes straight to Dabali to inspect the ritual preparations there.

Another problem is that folklore does not show any linkage to Tunaldevi, whereas the festivities show several linkages. The wife of Bhat, Bhateni, is said to be the daughter of Tunaldevi. The couple also officiated as the priests of Tunaldevi in their time as humans. The inscriptions at the temple testify that the divine couple is especially venerated by Brahmins; folklore presents them as Brahmins also. It is believed also that Karmacharya priests get their authority to worship Tunaldevi from them. In addition, the goddess is revered as Brahmayani. During the festivity, Bhat is said to 'lose his caste' as he partakes of the offerings at Tunaldevi and has to undergo purification rites later. Although no one is allowed to see these purification rituals, information from officiating priests indicates that the rituals performed are not aimed at simple caste purification. The actual rituals performed are part of the tantric das karma, or life-cycle rituals. They ritually replay the birth of Bhat, his growth, his ordination, his marriage with Bhateni, and the birth of his child. At the end of the rituals, Tunaldevi comes around to empower the couple with divine standing. Clearly the divine status of the couple is not conferred by Lord Vishnu, as told in the story. There is little doubt that the festival tells about the powers of Tunaldevi and not those of Vishnu. Moreover, the image of Bhat does not wear the sacred thread, a requisite for a Brahmin. The Brahmin Bhat of the story seems to be simply a mistaken recollection of a Brahmung Bhat. In Chapter 6, we already know that Brahmungs belonged to the Kirat priest class.

The folktale is said to be a memory of happenings during the rule of King Brahmadev of Vishalnagar, but no such king is named in chronicles. Hiuen Tsang, however, recalls in his travelogue, a King Brahmadutta in Vishalnagar of Vaishali. Indeed the opening sequences of the folklore seem to suggest that the happening is related to the move of the Lichchhavi from Vaishali to Kathmandu and the story may be roughly placed in the first century CE. (S. Beal: p. 71)

The jatra of Tunaldevi gives an 'usher's role' to a khat of Mahalaxmi, popularly called Manekhat. The khat seems to have derived its name possibly in memory of King Mandev of fifth-century Nepal, who apparently gave a greater role to Mahalaxmi as Maneswori. The seating of Mahalaxmi of Naxal on the Manekhat and her critical role appears to suggest that Mahalaxmi not only knew what had happened to the gold ornaments of the story but had also tried to keep this knowledge to herself. After the search for and finding of the ornaments, Mahalaxmi goes back to Naxal, but not before bowing down to the khat of Tunaldevi three times, in acceptance of her folly, as it were. The festival sequences un-
equivocally show that it is the goddess Tunaldevi, who held all the power and also the ornaments in the end. Also, as the Tunaldevi Khut moves into town and settles in Dabali, the seat of the state power, it becomes evident that the festival is about the power to rule and its annual ritual transfer to mortal kings. The ‘gold-ornament-filled walking stick’ of the folklore appears to be a metaphor for the power to rule, the golden royal sceptre of ancient Nepal. That such was the truth is hinted by a record in the Tang Annals of China.

According to the Tang Annals, the Lichchhavi king, Narendradev, used to proudly show visitors a glowing pond and a stream near his palace. On one such occasion in 657 CE, the king told the visiting Chinese envoy, Wang Huen Che that ‘there was a golden casket in the lake. It appeared but was submerged when anyone wanted to take it. Its gold was the gold of the diadem of Bodhisattva Maitreya, the future Buddha. It was guarded by the Fire-Serpent.’ (S. Kramrisch, 1964: p. 18) As Handigaun was the Lichchhavi capital, he could well have taken Wang Huen Che to Gahana Khojne Pokhari. As Narendradev and Wang Huen Che were both devout Buddhists, the diadem of Maitreya, the Buddha to be, is a reference to the golden stick of the story. This could well be taken to mean that possession of the diadem meant the power to rule. What Tunaldevi Jatra does is bring out the submerged golden royal sceptre annually and confer the power to rule on the one in power at Dabali, Handigaun, where a dabali platform of Kirat and Lichchhavi authority survives to this day.

It can be seen that the festival is a replay of the power struggle between Chandeswori/Vaisnavi and Mahalaxmi with Brahmayani as the cause. The sequence of the festival seems to say that Chandeswori had temporarily entrusted the Brahmayani of Bhatbhateni with the power of the state for safe keeping. This transfer is marked in time by the raising of the ceremonial pole at Bhuteswor. In the folktale, a child was born to the Brahmins and the royal sceptre given in trust was sold off in his eighth year. After Brahmayani’s breach of trust enabled Mahalaxmi to usurp power, Brahmayani visits Chandeswori to relate the facts and helps in its return back on the eighth day of the festivities. On the seventh day Mahalaxmi seemingly makes a show of her power as she visits Dabali, Handigaun, where a second ceremonial pole will have been raised in addition to the one in Bhuteswor. That this place signifies the power to rule explains why the two ceremonial poles are raised in the beginning of the festivities. But as the three face each other at Tunaldevi, Mahalaxmi is reconciled to returning the usurped power and she guides Chandeswori to the pond. Gahana Khojne Jatra is concluded on the ninth day. That Dabali of Handigaun is the space where such powers are to be used is reiterated as Tunaldevi proceeds to the platform and stays there for two days. In the folktale, the couple Bhatbhateni is made into gods of the sky by Lord Vishnu four years after they sell the staff on the eighth year after being entrusted with it. In a parallel structure, on the twelfth day of the festivities,
Chandeswori/Vaisnavi visits Bhatbhateni after their das karma rites are over, and symbolically re-energises them into celestials again. Only then do they go back into the temple. In the folktale, Bhatbhateni’s betrayal of trust took four years to become public. In the festival sequence, this interim period is symbolised by the four days in which the family of Bhatbhateni stays out of the temple without celestial powers. Despite the seeming problems, the folktale does turn out to be a reflection of the festival sequences.

** CALENDAR OF TUNALDEVI JATRA 
- Ceremonial lingo raised Chaitra S8
- Images at Tunaldevi bathed and oiled Chaitra S12
- Buffalo sacrificed to Tunaldevi and head taken to Tunchhen Chaitra S13
- Bhatbhateni taken to Tunaldevi, and Mahalaxmi to Dabali for Bhat Jatra; festivities at Tunaldevi Chaitra S14
- Festive worship at Tunaldevi; Bhatbhateni taken home Chaitra Purnima
- Tunaldevi Khat Jatra; festive dip in Gahana Pokhari Baisakh K1
- Laba Jatra, hom, Khadga Jatra Baisakh K3
- Bhatbhateni taken inside temple Baisakh K4
- Bichapuja following Saturday
- Lingo lowered Baisakh S9

The festival
As practised these days, the month-long festival is a web of complex social and religious activities. The calendar above shows its landmark activities.

Warming up for the festival
The jatra of Tunaldevi theoretically starts with the ceremonial beginning of the preparation of hyangu-thon; a special vermilion-coloured rice brew, on Magh Sukla Pratipada as the process of repeated boiling and distillation takes a long time. On Chaitra Krishna Panchami, the Prajapati members of the guthi responsible for the renewal of the lingo proceed to the forest near the village of Khopasi east of the valley if a new pole is required. By Chaitra Sukla Pratipada, the ceremonial pole
arrives; it is dragged all the way as lifting it off the ground is not allowed. The festival starts with the raising of the lingo, the ceremonial poles in two places, one at the dabali of Bhuteswor and the other at Dabali, on Chaitra Sukla Astami. The day coincides with the main day of Nav Ratra of Chaitra, or Chaite Dasain. In the first chapter, we discussed the symbolism of the raising of the lingo as a New Year's celebration related to the Kirat era and as a celebration of the birthday of the settlement of Handigaun. The authority to rule on earth is said to be given to a king by Indra in Aryan tradition, by Vishnu in Hindu tradition and by Bhairav in the Rudra-Kirat tradition. The raising of one of the lingo near the main Bhairav of Handigaun reflects such Kirat memories. The exact site is in between Bhairav, Tunchhe (the residence of the chieftain) and Bhachhe (the residence of the priest) and pictures the central place of the township during Kirat times. The other lingo is raised at Dabali and similarly illustrates its ancient connection with the goddess of Andipringga as well as the spatial symbol of Lichchhavi power. Dabali was the eastern entry point of the ancient town, topographically immediately above the original pith of the goddess.

Minor festivities start at various sacred sites around Handigaun, including the residences of the gods and goddesses. Small troupes of Jyapus play ritual musical instruments while visiting them. With the raising of the lingo, all the pith and temples in the town start warming up. The crisis as told in folklore starts to brew. On Chaitra Sukla Dwadasi, the goddess Tunaldevi gets ready by having her annual bath and oiling. The next day a buffalo is sacrificed to her and rituals are performed. At midnight the head of the sacrificed buffalo is despatched to Handigaun accompanied by a discreet group of representatives as an invitation to Bhatbhateni to visit Tunaldevi. This invitation is taken to Duwanani, at one time a grassy lot but now the area on which the gate houses of the town are built, just outside the built limits of northwestern Handigaun. After a brief ritual of entry, the gift is taken to Tunchhe, where it is worshipped by a Kasai. The head is then taken by the Karmacharya priests who officiate on behalf of Bhatbhateni.

Every year, come Chaitra Sukla Chaturdasi, the couple Bhatbhateni re-live their grave family crisis. Because they lied, they lost their self-esteem and their boy. A consultation with the mother of Bhateni, the goddess Tunaldevi, is in order. The couple plans to seek the wise opinion of and an appropriate intervention by Tunaldevi. But the gravity of the situation calls for discretion so that people do not become aware of the real reason for the visit. The ritual moving out of

As a prelude to the festival, the god images at Tunaldevi are washed and anointed with oil on Chaitra Sukla Dwadasi. The next day, a buffalo sacrifice is offered to the mother goddess Tunaldevi. Her human companion is a Pode, or deula, who sits on the upper platform over the goddesses playing a jyali (a nekhkin instrument). A sacred thread is tied around the goddess and the Pode (considered to be the husband) to make them ritually one. He takes the blood and other sacrifices as a token of his role as keeper. Later, a small group carries the head of the buffalo back to Duwanani at Handigaun and then on to Bhachhen, the house of the Karmacharya priests. This procession will also be accompanied by funeral music and they take a back lane to their destination. Although music is played, it is ordained that no one should hear it or come out to watch the procession.

The meat of the sacrifice is largely reserved to serve the group of 64 persons who will make the bhat deuta, or god images made of boiled rice, the next night at Dabali Handigaun.
Festive routes of Tunaldevi Jatra

Four distinct routes are used during various segments of the festivity.

**Route A:** Used by the divine images of Bhatbhateni as they travel to Tunaldevi and back; this path follows the course of the Tukucha River.

**Route B:** The route of Mahalaxmi of Naxal traces the Lichchhavi main streets from Chardhunge to Gairidhara, Tangal and Gahana Pokhari. It shows that the festive main street of Handigaun starts from Nyalmalohn. The central place of Dabali in the structure of Handigaun is emphasised. The route then follows the ancient main streets to Tunaldevi via Bhuteswor, Bhimsenthan, Dhalku and on to Vishalnagar Kumari before moving west to meet route A at Tukucha.

**Route C:** The *bhat deuta*, the god images made of rice, take a narrow lane due north from Bhimsenthan via Kwapukhu and proceed to meet Mahalaxmi at Vishalnagar Kumari, and follow her route thence onward; this establishes that the small lane currently linking Vishalnagar to Handigaun was an important pathway in the past.

**Route D:** As it is taken for a dip in Gahana Pokhari, the *khat* route of Tunaldevi re-establishes Nyalmalohn as a crossover point. It is from Nyalmalohn that Bhatbhateni are said to watch the festivities.

These routes clearly set out the folk memories of the shifting of all three of the key goddesses from Handigaun. The shifts are shown by the arrows in the diagram, Andipringga determinants III, p. 64.
**The bhat deuta**

The set of rice images consist of a *Vau* (Bhairav in the shape of a temple finial), a *nayo* (headman), a *naki* (head lady), a peacock, a lion, two *gajurs* (finials), a *trisul* (trident), one *mandal* stone, a palm with three fingers in a holding posture, a palm with all five fingers raised, a skull cup, a *jalankheka* (mirror), two *khengwara* (egg-shaped guardians), two *kangwara* (skeleton-shaped guardians), and twelve *gwaja* (cone-shaped lumps of rice in *salicha*, small earthen plates). Life is put into each by threading the objects with needles of reed (*nigalo*). This is done by the Dongol.

The symbolism of the images connotes Rudra and his two consorts, one with a lion as her carrier and the other with a peacock. The two finials, the *khengwara* and the *kangwara* symbolically represent two temples protected by Rudra *gana*. The headman and his wife are priests, maybe Bhatbhateni.

A male goat is sacrificed and its entrails offered to *Vau*. The sacrifice-accepting Rudra and associated rituals testify to its ancient origin. Bhat Jatra is a re-enactment of the shifting of the ancient temple from Dabali to Tunaldevi.

The temple starts in the afternoon. The three-member family is taken out and their clothing and ornaments removed to show their loss of power and prestige as well as to make them anonymous. The temple sanctum is locked up. As ordinary people experiencing great anger and agitation, they rather unceremoniously lie down to rest until dusk at the *sattal* of the temple. The Chitrakar make up and re-colour the images as per traditional practice.

Just before dark, a crowd from Bhatbhateni and Handigaun gathers to take part in the procession. They are the near and dear humans gathered to support and sympathise with the troubled gods. Bundles of incense sticks are lit and the air is filled with scented smoke, as if to heighten the darkness. Amid chants of ‘Bhatbhateniki Jaya’ (literary, ‘Victory to Bhatbhateni!’), the gods are lifted from their places of rest and carried by bearers as if they were dead bodies; they are not dead, however, but just devoid of divine qualities. Bhatbhateni are so angry at the prying eyes that they have to be carried at a slant. Their gaze cannot face directly up or it would kill the animals in the sky and neither can it be horizontal lest the mortals on the ground die. Their gaze cannot even face downward as the creatures under the earth might perish. Through a back lane, the funerary route from Bhatbhateni to Tunaldevi (which has a funerary mound still in use by ordinary mortals) is followed; past the mound, they climb up the slopes to the temple. The *pati* in front of the temple of Tunaldevi is for visitors. Once Bhat-Bateni arrive, they are dressed again in their usual garb and hung on a series of pegs on the lintel as ordained. Their journey is over and for this night and the next day until dusk, this is their temporary sojourn.

By about midnight, other gods in the locality learn about the crisis, which has brought Brahmayani and Vaisnavi together. They also hastily gather in small palanquin-like *khat*. The most important god to start moving after Bhatbhateni is Mahalaxmi of Naxal.

**The key ritual**

As Bhatbhateni arrive at Tunaldevi, major ritual activities start at two sites in and around Handigaun. One is at the *pith* of Mahalaxmi at Naxal, where the goddess Mahalaxmi is prepared to be carried in her *khat* to Dabali at Handigaun. At Dabali, in an adjacent building called Jalefale, a group of 64 persons assemble for Bhat Jatra, or the festival of rice images. At Jalefale (literally, *ja*, *le* and *fale* re-
spectively mean rice, earthen cooking pot and a pati at the entry to the town), a party of Suwal cooks from Naxal arrive. The Dongol of Handigaun come with rice and the Prajapati with earthen cooking pots. The cooks from Naxal cook the rice and a group of Prajapatis prepare god images.

The images are given a variety of symbolic forms and are put in earthen receptacles called lalepa. Chitrakars, the traditional painters, come from Kathmandu (there are no Chitrakars in Handigaun anymore) to paint the rice forms as divine images. The painting is done with black soot prepared on ~ite. As the images are readied and put into special receptacles, they are lined up along the fale facing west. About this time, the Dongol arrive to worship Tunaldevi; their offerings are displayed at her dabali. By then Mahalaxmi of Naxal is also on her way to Dabali.

It is almost midnight when the khat of Mahalaxmi arrives at Dabali from Naxal; three khuts from Handigaun are already waiting there. The most important is, of course, the khat of Tunaldevi carrying the god images from Tunaldevi Dyochhen. The other two are the goddesses from Tunchhe and Bhachhe. The khat of Mahalaxmi inspects the rice images and the materials for worship. Satisfied with the preparations, she gives her approval. Twelve persons carry the images in their hands and take them to Tunaldevi through Kumarithan at Vishalnagar. Here the entourage awaits the arrival of Mahalaxmi as she and Tunaldevi, after inspecting the preparations at Dabali, are taken round Handigaun as a mark of approval and appreciation. At Vishalnagar a special lasakusa (welcome) ceremony is called for and Kumari provides the key to a golden gate believed to be located at Tukucha (Luhnchoka). The entourage, along with Mahalaxmi, goes through Tukucha and stops a while below the hillock at Tunaldevi. Here, Mahalaxmi takes a rest and is given a ceremonial feeding of rice (maranakeu) in large leaves (dyonalapte). The khat of Tunaldevi goes straight up the hill and after going round the temple thrice it retraces its steps a little. It is then warmed up by a specially lit fire before going up the funerary hillock, the masan, and again brought to the temple precinct. The khat is then rested to the southwest of the temple, facing north. As other arrival rituals are completed, the mukut images from Dyochhe in Handigaun are placed inside the main temple along with their aniconic forms. The entourage of Mahalaxmi then moves up to the temple. Mahalaxmi is placed facing east at the southwest corner of the precinct in her khat. The rice images are lined up in and around the temple.

With his powers of worship drawn from the god Bhat, a Karmacharya priest sits on a bed of straw and starts a long ritual worship of Tunaldevi, which takes him until the morning. It is during this ritual worship of Tunaldevi that 22 earthen ghata filled with kata-thon and with their mouths closed by a pala are offered to the eleven gods and goddesses there. The pala contain beaten rice, dry fried black soyabeans, choyla (pieces of seasoned meat roasted on a straw fire), aduwa (ginger) and sakkhar (brown sugar), the five ingredients jointly called samaya. This puja is in the hom format and these days is practised in Tantric form.

After the worship, the rice images are carried back to Handigaun to a place on the road a little to the north of Bhuteswor-Bhairav called Parale, or Hiti-Mahankal, where a chhwasa-dyo resides. The twelve gwaja kept in salicha are also brought back here and offered as ritual prasad to all the other potent gods and spirits of Handigaun, both good and bad, who have chosen to stay away from the festivities. It is believed that all of them gather around the chhwasa-dyo to accept the offer.

The next day, Chaitra Sukla Purnima, the goddesses consult each other about the crisis as hundreds of devout visitors flock to
pay homage to Bhatbhateni, Mahalaxmi, Vaisnavi, and to the other mother goddesses there. Many of them offer chickens to the main goddess. Tunaldevi agrees to intervene on behalf of the couple in crisis and sets rolling the process of restoring the honour of Bhatbhateni. At dusk, Bhatbhateni move back to their temple. A group of musicians plays a funeral tune, which will accompany the visitors until they reach their destination. The idea behind the music is to keep people inside their houses (it is traditional to let funeral processions pass unobserved). It is notable that funeral music is not played when they are taken to Tunaldevi. This may actually indicate that Bhat dies a ritual death at the time of departure from Tunaldevi. Folk memory has no explanation other than that for the funeral music. Memory has it that during their sojourn at Tunaldevi Bhat-Bateni consume ritual offerings (prasad) consisting of meat and rice beer taboo for Brahmins and thus become impure. They have to undergo purification rites before they can enter their own temple. We have already discussed that the actual rituals performed are not purification rites but das karma rituals that include birth rituals. Bhat is reborn through the rituals, a fact that seems to confirm that he dies a ritual death upon his departure for home. Similarly, the annual deaths of Shakti cult goddesses are enacted in many festivals of the valley; in fact, this ritual is quite traditional. The rebirth of Bhat is not immediate. Bhatbhateni will rest hung on the wall of the temple facing east until the auspicious time, which is still three days away.

The climax
In the early afternoon of the next day, Baisakh Krishna Pareva, the mukut Tunaldevi is carried from her temple to Bhimsenthan of Handigaun in a small khat led by Mahalaxmi. There she is transferred to a grand chariot, a replica of the temple about a third in scale, bedecked, and made ready to move. Several umbrellas, which are considered prized donations, are tied atop the chariot. This chariot will be preceded by a small palanquin-type chariot called Manekhat from now to the end of the day. The chariot jatra starts a few hours before the auspicious time of the bathing of the Matsendranath at Bungamati as the climax of the festivity is timed precisely with the annual ritual bath there. Wheel-less and borne by an enthusiastic group of youths, the chariot and its pilot move toward their destination. Both stop to accept offerings of worship as they move through the main streets of Handigaun. The route goes from Bhimsenthan to Bhuteswor, Dabali, Kotaltole, Nyalmalohn and down to Gahana Khojne Pokhari.

Thirty-two young Jyapu boys carry the wheel-less chariot on their shoulders with the help of long bamboo poles tied to timber beams. As the chariot arrives at Nyalmalohn, the long stone there has to be stepped over. Then the chariot starts going down the slope towards the pond. Just a few yards down the slope, it hesitates for a moment before continuing towards its destination. Both stop to accept offerings of worship as they move through the main streets of Handigaun. The route goes from Bhimsenthan to Bhuteswor, Dabali, Kotaltole, Nyalmalohn and down to Gahana Khojne Pokhari.

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As the duo arrive at the edge of the pond, the Manekhat goes round the pond thrice in ceremonial reverence, and as it makes its way, the khat jostles the large crowd of spectators, who come from all over the valley and beyond. The chariot of Tunaldevi then goes into the pond amid the cheering cries of the crowd, searches for and collects the jewels, and comes out. The crowds rush to the chariot to get prasad. Her job done, Mahalaxmi proceeds
Images of gods made of rice at Dabali laid out for inspection by Mahalaxmi

The khat of Tunaldevi takes a festive dip in Gahana Pokhari to search for the lost gold of the gods
immediately back to her *pith* in Naxal.

The main chariot of Tunaldevi then moves straight east to the *dabali* at Dabali, where it is kept for the next two days. The symbolism of coming back to the *dabali* after seeking out the diadem is two-fold. First, she goes to her rightful original place and second, she blesses the ruling house, represented by the *dabali*, with the continued power to rule. On the evening of Chaitra Krishna Tritiya, as a secret Tantric ritual for the restoration of life to Bhatbhateni starts outside their temple, Tunaldevi is transferred to her small *khat*. She then comes to Bhatbhateni, by now already restored and purified through the rituals. Here, Tunaldevi performs a ritual re-empowering of Bhatbhateni. This part of the festival is called Khadga Jatra. As this section concludes, Tunaldevi goes back to her *dyochhe* and Bhatbhateni are also taken inside their temple. And for one year, until the next cycle of crisis brings them out of the temple, they will reside there, accepting the worship of the devout and protecting them from evils in the sky.

The closing
The first Saturday after Tritiya, Bhatbhateni is again the site of festivities, called Bichapuja or Kshyamapuja. The representatives of all *jats* of Newars from Handigaun come in reverence to seek pardon from Bhatbhateni for any mistakes they might have made as human beings during previous festive acts. Dongols bring all the materials needed for worship. Kusles arrive to play their traditional instruments. Shresthas come with money to meet other costs. Khadgis participate by bringing meat and also by ceremonially chopping off the heads of chickens offered in sacrifice. And with Maharjans bringing their *kwancha* full of rice beer, Prajapatis performing the ritual worship and Karma-charyas taking charge thereof, the arrangement and individual roles of *guthi* members are complete. Worship by the community, followed by a feast ends the key sections of the *jatra* of Tunaldevi for the year.

Bichapuja is the only ritual activity in the total sequence of the festival that is not scheduled according to the lunar calendar; instead, it is determined by the day of the week. It is common practice in the valley to worship Brahmayani on Saturdays: throughout the year the temple of Bhatbhateni is thronged by devotees on Saturdays. Thus, this part of the festival seems to bring the temple back to the normal worship calendar. For this reason Bichapuja is also sometimes explained as a reinstallation rite.

The involvement of the Shrestha is also required here for the first time during the festival. We have already learnt that the Shrestha of Handigaun are the resident priests of Narayan and it must be because of the hanging boy Vishnu that they come. The rituals thus recognise, albeit at the fag end, the divine child astride Garuda as Nanda Gopal.

Tunaldevi remains outside her *dyochhe* until Baisakh Sukla Astami, when a ritual worship is performed. The goddess is then taken inside her *dyochhe*, where she will rest for a year. Only in the next year on Chaitra Sukla Chadurdasi will she again come out to go to her *pith* at Tunaldevi temple. And on the ordained day of Navami, the next day, the *lingo* is ceremonially brought down at Bhuteswor and Dabali to finally mark the end of the festivities in totality.

The Bhat Jatra component of Tunaldevi Jatra provides the clue to the ancient nature and characteristics of the divine spirits residing in Dabali of Handigaun and replays their transfer to the new temple site at Chandol in letter and spirit. The images of *nayo* and *naki* are of priests prior to their banishment; the third eyes in their foreheads signify their Saiva stature and nature. Three implements—a trident, a scull cup and a mirror—and two
carriers—a lion and a peacock—are indicative of the two consorts of the god represented by the key image of Vau himself. The name remembered for the key image seems to suggest that he is Bhairav, and the narrow lane called Vau-ll that lies between Bhimsenthan and Kwapukhu, the route the rice images take on their way to Tunaldevi, corroborates this. The use of the entrails of a sacrificial goat in the ritual worship of the image of Vau also places him as Bhairav. The provision of two sets of guardians associated with Rudra-Siva, khengwara and kangwara, provides the clue that his character had assimilated that of Rudra. This assimilation is further confirmed by the representation of his two consorts, Gauri and Chandeswori. That he is Rudra is further indicated by the fact that this rice image is placed outside Tunaldevi Temple and to its northeast, the directionally correct ritual place. The guardian images of khengwara and kangwara are also placed there. In addition, only the rice images of the symbolic implements of Gauri and Chandeswori are taken inside the temple, whereas the lion, the peacock, the nayo and naki, and the gajur images are lined up outside the temple gates. This clarifies who the residents of the temple of Tunaldevi are. The two gajurs are indicative that two temples are associated with the ritual. They could well represent the fact that both the Duimaju and the Shaktis, who were both banished to the same place by the Lich-chhavi, were a set of two each. Bhatbhateni also seem to be priests associated with Chandeswori and not with Vishnu. Thus at Tunaldevi we find an overlap of three cults, the Bishandevi cult of Balkhu, the Rudra-Shakti cult of Andipringga and the Duimaju of Dabali. It may be because of such overlaps that the central goddess of Tunaldevi is referred to as Siva-Vaisnavi, the toran over the central doorway of the temple thus shows Siva sitting atop the head of Vaisnavi.

In sum, the current festival of Tunaldevi is an amalgamation of several traditions. The Bhat Jatra component includes within it, through various tutelary images, the sequence of transfer of state power. The initial power of state seems to have rested in Vau or Bhairav. It was then enjoyed by Duimaju and/or by the two consorts of Rudra, Kumari Gauri and Chandika. It seems to have gone to the hands of Bishandevi as she assimilated them first as Valasokshi/Valasi-ma and later as Tunaldevi Vaisnavi. With the gahana khojne component, the power, although contested by Mahalaxmi as she had it for a short period, is already in the hands of Chandeswori/Vaisnavi alone. The coming of the Shrestha in the penultimate Bichapuja at Bhatbhateni temple seems to herald the impending transfer of power to Vishnu. Bhatbhateni apparently played a key role not only in creating a contest between Vaisnavi and Mahalaxmi but also in transferring the powers of the state to Vishnu. Gahana Pokhari seems to have gained importance only at this later time. Spatially, the powers of the state seems to have been located at Bhuteswor first and later at Dabali, both spots identified by the initial rite of raising the ceremonial poles. The continued state power at Dabali is reflected by the fact that it is the pole at Dabali that goes down last on Baisakh Sukla Navami. Throughout, the festival is a celebration of the power of the ruling tutelary god or goddess as well as of the state, the sceptre of Narendradev’s story being an example of historical authentication.

The Kirat cult association of the goddess of Andipringga and the das karma rituals for Bhatbhateni should make them Vrahm-mungs, the priests of those days. If a Pode had been the husband of the queen, who later acquired goddess status as Valavaladevi or Bishandevi, did they have Vrahm-mung priests also? The indigenous belief is that their priest was their son-in-law, a tradition
still common in some tribes of Kirat origin in Nepal.

Did the Sudra rule in Kathmandu Valley before the Lichchhavi did? The Sudraka Samvat mentioned by the author of *Sumati-tantra* corroborates Sudraka domination in the pre-Lichchhavi valley. It appears that the Sudraka is an alternate name of the Kirat and the Sudraka Samvat must have had its New Year’s Day on Chaitra Sukla Pratipada too.

**Notes**

1. Older legends about the site centre around the romance of Siva and Parvati and make it into a temple of Chandeswori or Chandika. It is from this legend that the area where the temple is located gets the name Chandol.


3. This is the name in some published versions of the legend, but the Dongol of Handigaun venerate him as Nanda Gopal, a Krishna cult reincarnation of Vishnu.

4. The Krishna cult was also popular with the early Lichchhavi, a fact underscored by the imagery associated with the earliest Lichchavi temple, Changunarayan. It may be noted also that Lord Krishna himself was born as the eighth child of Vasudev and Devaki according to a popular Hindu myth. Here, Nanda Gopal is born on the eighth year as a child to Sudev and Sudevi.

5. The name ‘Nyalmapukhu’ stands for the pond (*pukhu*) of the mother (*ma*) of Narah, which is another name for Handigaun. This makes it quite apparent that Tunaldevi is the mother goddess of Handigaun. She is the same as the goddess of Andipringga.

6. The oil for the bathing of the image was apparently supplied by the villagers of Sanga (DRR-LXXV). Amshuverma also seems to have relieved the villagers and made supplying oil a responsibility of the palace from 609 CE onwards. Today the oil is provided by the Guthi Samsthan.

7. ‘Chitrakar’ literally means ‘a painter’. The Chitrakar painted the images of gods and other religious paintings.

8. These days only vermilion powder is sprayed over the images. Until a few years ago paint made from black soot was used. Older people say that till about forty years ago, the Chitrakar came from Kathmandu to paint the rice images with multiple colours.

9. A shorter version of this *hom* is also done on every Sukla Chaturdasi. It would thus seem that in the old days there were a total of twelve such *pujas* in one year. This might explain the large amount of money, five *panapuran*, that was set aside by the Lichchhavi royal household for this purpose.

10. Cf. Jatra of Indrayani of Kirtipur, Navadurga of Bhaktapur, etc.

11. The tradition of offering umbrellas to gods is age-old and symbolises the offering of all that one has. In early history, only kings and emperors had that privilege. An umbrella is placed over the finial in the case of a temple and over the *hermika* in the case of a stupa.

12. The ritual worship is *hom* and only Karmacharya priests can conduct the proceedings since they represent Bhat.
Chapter 11

The Vishalnagar of legends: 
the first settlement or an expanded 
Andipringga?

The Handigaun of today is contiguous with another locality to its north named Vishalnagar. In fact, the name 'Vishalnagar' is often used to refer to a larger area which includes Handigaun and Chandol. Hindu legends about the creation of settlements in Kathmandu Valley, as retold in Pashupati Puran, present Vishalnagar as the first town settled in the valley. At the time of settlement, Vishalnagar is said to have been even larger. Remnants of cultural practices that may be observed in many sites in the area comprised by the extensive Vishalnagar of the legends do provide interesting linkages to these legends; consequently, the claim of a very long history comes quite close to being substantiated.

Creation legends about the valley and the settlements therein are found as anecdotal references and stories in the Puran and the vamsavali. Religious overtones dominate the legends, making them sound like myths. All of these legends are either Buddhist or Hindu and one is surprised at the general absence of legends based on Kirat faiths. Hindu legends only make passing references to Kirat settlements, whereas Buddhist legends do not mention them at all. It could be that because they were the indigenous settlers, the Kirats did not feel the need to claim Kathmandu as their habitat from ancient times as did the newcomers, the Buddhists and the Hindus. Another possibility is that they were so far down the social hierarchy by the time the Purans came to be told or written that they had no social power to propagate a lasting legend based on their own faiths. Yet another likelihood is that Kirat legends are already ensconced in the stories of the immigrants.

Both the major religions of Kathmandu Valley, Hinduism and Buddhism, came with immigrants such as the Nanda or Gopala, the Vrijji, the Sakya and the Lichchhavi, whose original habitats stretched from Mathura in the northwest to Pataliputra in the southeast on the plains of the river Ganga. This wave of immigration started around the fourth century BCE, probably following the disintegration of the Nanda kingdom and the coming to power of the Mauryas, and apparently thinned out after the break-up of the Kushan Empire in the second century CE. Unlike the indigenous settlers, the Kirats, who were possibly illiterate1 in the current sense of the term, the immigrants were literate, and had some form of writing as well as a large body of literary knowledge. Their fertile imagination created several legends about the creation of the valley and its settlements. Parallel and similar, these legends appear to have been woven by the leaders of both religions, possibly during the early Malla period or during the Transitional Period, in order to win followers.

The Buddhist creation legend comes from the Swoyambhu Puran, which is based on Vajrayan Buddhism, a development that followed the Tantric influence on the earlier
form of Mahayan Buddhism. Whereas Mahayan Buddhism gained popularity starting in Ashokan times (in the third century BCE), Vajrayan developments started about the mid-Lichchhavi Period in Nepal (the sixth century) and took several centuries to gain strength. It was firmly established by the beginning of the Malla Period (the twelfth century).

A Hinduistic Saivism seems to have been established as an enduring faith during late Kirat times; it was to face the domination of Vaisnavism, however, as the Lichchhavi royal house took to Vishnu strongly in the first quarter of the first millennium CE. The parallel continuation of Kirat faiths, Hinduism and Buddhism apparently seems to have led to conflict as the new faiths gained sufficient strength to start challenging each other. The massive dislocation of Buddhist vihar, the revival of the cult of Shakti, or the mother goddesses, the resurgence of Saivism, the starting of major attempts to introduce socio-cultural unity (e.g. through Matsen-dranath), the arrival of Sankaracharya, and the starting of a new era of Nepal Samvat (Pashupati Vattaraka Samvat) all hint that it must have been in the Transitional Period that this religious conflict and consequent rebuilding took place. The legends appear to have been woven about this time or a bit later as a morale booster for each of the faiths. Although in acts of one-upmanship, unrealistic time frames and mythical figures or personalities from the original states of the story-tellers were introduced, together these legends do, in fact, show the weaving together of the ancient places and incidents connected with the valley. Since the legends were written long after the period they talk about, many late developments crept in either through lapses of memory or, more likely, through efforts to make them sound more realistic to the people of later periods. In particular, references to older places and the names of those places were prone to alterations.

All creation legends, whether Buddhist or Hindu, present Kathmandu Valley as a large lake in the beginning; then the gods of either faith descended down to open a passage for the water to drain out of Chovar Gorge and make it suitable for human habitation. Geologists confirm that the valley was truly a lake several millennia ago and that its deepest sections were on the southern part of the valley floor. Hindu legends further state that after the valley was already occupied by humans, another geological accident of cataclysmic magnitude, a landslide, occurred in the northwestern part of the valley, blocking rivers (such as the Bishnumati and the Dhobi Khola, which today flow south) and making them flow east through Gokarna into the Bagmati River. Geologists confirm that such a massive landslide did occur north of Bansbari and Dhapasi about 8000 years ago. Although one may wonder how such pre-historic incidents are faithfully remembered by legends, they could have become part of a memory kept alive through a long but continuous history of aboriginal settlement in the
valley. As Bansbari still exhibits the aftermath of a landslide, some recurrence of the geological cataclysm seems to have happened within the memory of local civilisation. The ancientness of the settlement of Vishalnagar may be as true as are the geological facts of the valley.

One chronology, Nepal Desho Itihas, presents a variation of Pashupati Puran in that a king named Dharmadutta, blessed by the goddess Bhagabati, laid the foundation of a city extending from Budanilkantha to Kotwal, which came to be known as Vishalnagar. After having ruled for a thousand years, Dharmadutta and his people deserted it. Eons later, Vishalnagar was reorganised and delimited within the area from Sankhamul to Budanilkantha. Although the expanse from Budanilkantha to Kotwal is too large to be acceptable as a settlement area, the later delimitation is a possibility. The vamsavali goes on to add that 'after a long period of Kirat rule, the first Lichchhavi king, Nimittakal, resettled his army and people in Vishalnagar'. Thus the legend hints that the Kirat inhabited Vishalnagar before the immigrants settled there. Bhumiverma, the fifth Lichchhavi ruler according to this chronology, is alluded to have built his palace at Vishalnagar. Dharmadev, a later king from the same lineage, is said to have rebuilt the town of Vishalnagar with 99,000 houses.

Padmagiri Vamsavali credits the divine couple Bhatbhateni with having established the town of Vishalnagar at the end of the Kirat period. Chronicles are silent about who Bhatbhateni were or where they come from or how they got the power to establish a town. Tradition has it that the couple gave birth to a Vishnu incarnate, Nanda Gopal. According to this belief, Bhatbhateni can be seen as a local variation of the Krishna tradition of the Mahabharata. Today the mother goddess at Bhatbhateni is worshipped as Brahmayani, one of the Astamatrika Shaktis, and as the protector of the upper regions. If anyone, particularly children, is affected by the evil forces of the sky, the yaksa or the souls of the dead (pishach, bhut, pret, etc, in local parlance), offerings are made at the temple. Touching the feet of the god and goddess there and getting their blessings is believed to relieve ailments. Every Thursday and Saturday, hundreds of devotees flock to the temple with offerings.

To re-iterate, local folklore has it that the couple Bhatbhateni is Brahmin. However, in the associated annual ritual of rebirth and jat karma, an ihi ceremony, a ritual peculiar to Newar girls, is performed for Bhateni. Likewise, the image of Bhat also does not wear a janai, the sacred thread Brahmin men must wear. Local memory also has it that Bhat is the son-in-law of the goddess Tunaldevi and the house priest. The confusion would be settled if Bhat were a Vrah-mung and if the popular association of Bhat with Brahmanical origins is a case of mistaken identity. Vrah-mungs were the religious leaders in Kirat society, parallel to the Brahmins of the Hindu society.

From the above ritual practices and folk memories, one can see that the couple Bhatbhateni shows a mixture of Kirat and Gopala traditions and that they represent socio-cultural assimilation over a long period of time. The accumulation of several cultural layers should lead to the conclusion that the couple Bhatbhateni was popular in Kirat times. They might have acquired their physical image and setting as they regained popularity in later years, possibly following the exit of the Lichchhavi.

The earliest written historical reference to the tradition of Bhatbhateni occurs in Gopalarajavamsavali, a document from about 1390 CE. This reference not only attests to the popularity of the tradition but also shows that the worship rituals associated with the couple were of a very special nature and that they differed from other standard rituals of the
time. For the chronicler of the *Padmagiri Vamsavali*, which appears to have been written around the same time as the *Suoyambhu Puran*, the temple of the divine couple of Bhatbhateni was certainly a physical reality.

The temple of Bhatbhateni

In a small square beside the main road midway between Tangal and Baluwatar, there is a small but much-worshipped temple. At first sight, it may even escape the viewer as it does not face the street and is shielded by a set of *pati* and *sattal* around it. In traditional style, its two tiers of roofs are made of gilded copper. The sanctum pit is square, and a higher platform circumambulates it; the projection of the first roof shades this platform. The second roof is half the size of the first roof and is crowned by a golden finial, or *gajur*. Several umbrellas offered by devotees are clustered over the finial. Metallic birds in flight decorate each corner of the roofs.

A closer look will show that the wall space between the two roofs is cluttered with an assortment of utensils donated by the devout. Very few temples such as Jayabagheswori at Devapatan and Adinath of Chovar have this feature, which appears reserved for the temples last visited by women who committed *sati*. Utensils and ornaments apparently signified the ultimate possessions of women in those days and were offered before a woman immolated herself on her husband’s funeral pyre. These days, since *sati* is no longer practised, devotees offer utensils on any important occasion in the family, like the birth of a child or the cure of a long-standing illness.

The temple faces north, a rarity in Kathmandu. The most amazing feature, however, is the celestial images inside: a pair of fully-clothed upright images of full human scale hang in the air, bedecked in silver jewels and wreaths and with much venerated silver feet. They present their mesmerising gaze towards the west. The male god is red and his consort yellow, the colour of the body of Brahmayani. Nearby hangs another much-worshipped image of a hanging child and a bird. This is Gopal, an incarnated form of Vishnu-Narayan. The *pingam* stone of the temple is to its north, along its geometric axis in what
is now a separate courtyard past the sattal. Animal sacrifices made to the goddess are carried out on the nirakar stones in front of the vedi. Originally, the temple court appears to have been open. All the pati and the sattal date to Rana times and all seem to have been relocated. Only the pati to the south of the temple appears in its correct position.

On the basis of its architectural style and extant inscriptions, the temple structure is identifiable as a late Malla construction. The top roof eaves house a plate inscription recording repairs done 158 years ago by the Jha Brahmins of Indra Chowk in Kathmandu. The oldest silver ornaments used on the images are also from this period or later. It has been rehabilitated several times in the Shah period, most recently forty years ago when King Mahendra donated copper sheet roofing. The temple appears to have enjoyed great popularity during the early Shah period.

However, the wood and mud image of the deities and the artistic style of their faces and eyes both suggest the ancientness of the cult; their style hints that the tradition may have originated about the same time as Rāto Matsendranath. Once a year, during the festival, the images are unclothed, revealing several patches repaired with rice paper. The traditional restorers and painters say that the rituals associated with the purification and gathering of soil from Mehpi are so arduous and lengthy (it takes four days and nights) that repairs are made with rice paper these days. The pattern of body paints shows beaded regal ornaments, particularly on the male image.

That the temple of Bhatbhateni is located in Vishalnagar proves to a large extent the linkage of Bhatbhateni to early happenings there.

The space bounded by the Bagmati River to the east and south, the Vishnumati River to the west, Sankhamul to the south, and extending north to the very base of the Sivapuri hills at Budanikantha is the site of the primordial town of Hindu legend. The same general area, defined by Guheswori in the east and Swoyambhu Chaitya in the west, is called Manjupattan in Buddhist legends. Thus, both dominant religious faiths in the valley recognise that the first settled area was in the middle of the valley. It apparently included Naxal, Handigaun, Deupatan and Kathmandu town as we know it today. Although Hindu legends use Hindu sites as reference boundaries and Buddhist legends use sites they venerate, it is clear that the settled physical space is one and the same: the ridge area, or tar, between the Bagmati and Bishnumati rivers. The claim by both in-migrant religions that the settlement on the ridge was created by their gods suggests that the settlement was extant when they arrived. The area must have been settled at the beginning of the history of settlements in the valley floor. As a matter of fact, the space between the Bishnumati and Bagmati rivers is further dissected by the Tukucha and Dhobi Khola rivers. Thus, both the legends suggest the centrality and ancientness of Handigaun, Vishalnagar and Naxal, the area between the two inner rivers Dhobi Khola and Tukucha. Although the time frames are distorted and creation myths differ depending on the cult affiliation of the author, whether Buddhist, Hindu, Shakta, Vaisnav or Saiva, these references still authenticate the antiquity of the place referred to as Vishalnagar in Hindu legends and Manjupattan in Buddhist mythology.

If the place is indeed so ancient, neither the name Vishalnagar nor Manjupattan could be its original name. This is simply because both are derived from Sanskrit, which came to the valley only with the immigrants, mainly the Lichchhavi, and neither place name occurs in any Lichchhavi inscription. One Lichchhavi inscription does, however, ascribe to a section of the area the name Brihatgrama, whose lit-
eral meaning—a large settlement—is the same as that of Vishalnagar. The popularity of the name Vishalnagar in the Malla Period and later could be due to its association with the Lichchhavi, who came from Vaisali.

We have seen in earlier chapters that the place went by the name Andipringga in pre-Lichchhavi days. Therefore, it must be the same Andipringga, a Kirat settlement, that later became the capital city of the Lichchhavi. It may be said that the creation of Vishalnagar by Bhatbhateni is, as reported by Padmagiri Vamsavali, a memory of the settlement of new people in an older area.

The festivals of Handigaun seem to indicate that Handigaun enjoyed the status of a Kirat capital at some time in history. The presence of Bhairav at Bhuteswor and the raising of a ceremonial pole there are two such indicators. Not one vamsavali, however, makes any statement to this effect. If we recall the discussions in Chapter 5: 'The gods arrive at Handigaun', in connection with the origins of the festivals of Handigaun, we realise that the claims in Padmagiri Vamsavali that the Kirat capital was called Suprabhanagar and that Suprabhanagar was at Thankot, are both wrong.

Although it is possible that the town of Vishalnagar was resettled following the eclipse of the Kirat capital of Kiratsur, a part of Padmagiri Vamsavali, at least in terms of place and royal names, reflects the memory of a time at least six hundred years after the Kirat were edged out of power. Although Lichchhavi inscriptions do show that a Kirat settlement was located near Thankot and some surface remains are still around to support that claim, these archaeological vestiges do not necessarily prove that the Kirat capital was there. The Sivaka temple (currently Chandanvarateswor), however, provides a hint that it was indeed the capital for some time. From available historical documents and archaeological objects, we are able to see that Suprabhanagar was actually the same as the Handigaun area in the Transitional Period; Suprabhanagar must simply be the new name of the Lichchhavi capital Manesworp in the Transitional Period. It would therefore be possible to conclude that Padmagiri Vamsavali itself provides the clue that Andipringga might have been the capital of the Kirat sometime after it was shifted from Kiratsur at Thankot. Kiratsur seems to have got its name from the temple of Sivakadevkul, apparently of the god Kassur, or Ka, of the Kirat. The earlier Kirat capital seems to be the same as the Lichchhivi sites of Katala, or Kadung, the locality which housed the image of the Kirat god Ka. The chronicle seems to have remembered the shift to Andipringga as the same locale was Suprabhanagar of the Transitional Period. Also, unlike the statement of the chronicle that Thankot was called Yelang, inscriptions show that the Kirat settlements in the area were called Ka, Kadung, Thencho, Jolpringga, etc. Yelang actually referred to the Patan area during the time Padmagiri Vamsavali was composed. The chronicler seems to have further mixed up the memory of one of the last palaces of the Kirat, which other popular memories place in Patan. The mound with brick ruins just a few yards northwest of Patan Durbar Square is still called Patuko-don (literally, 'the hillock of Patuk' in Newari) in memory of King Patuk's palace. We can conclude that Kirat palaces were located at Kadula, Patan and Andipringga at various times. Several chronicles also recall the frequent shift of Kirat palaces.

As the legends and chronicles were written centuries later and the possibility of mixing up facts increased, different names appear to have been coined for the Kirat capital towns, which were shifted several times during their long reign.

Just as the ancient names of the Kirat capi-
tal towns have been lost, the neutral name Andipringga was also eclipsed amid the religious claims and counterclaims of Hindus and Buddhists.

Notes
1 The lack of any written records from the Kirat Period makes this likelihood high. However, literary compositions of the Sudraka, as later Hindus called the Kirat, are known and the Kirat could very well have been as literate as the in-migrants. See Chapter 12: 'The Lichchhavi take over'.
2 *Swayambhu Puran* is said to have been composed in the early fifteenth century, but the legend could go back to the thirteenth century. (D.R. Regmi, 1965: pp. 565-571)
3 Buddhist legends tell of the great debate between Sankaracharya and Amar Banda, a Sakya Buddhist leader, and how deceitfully Amar Banda was defeated into taking a premature samadhi. The verbal conflict between the two religious leaders took place at Bhagavan Bahaì, Naxal Chardhunga.
4 In the year 1039 CE (NS 159) a warlike situation prevailed in the valley; this is noted in a colophon of a manuscript entitled ‘Hamsayamala’, which describes the period as ‘mahayuddha pravartamane kale’ or, literally, ‘when the great war was going on’.
5 One *vamsavali*, *Nepal Deshko Itihash*, says this geological incident occurred as late as the sixth century, during the rule of Mahidev. Archaeological finds in Handigaun indicate that there was heavy flooding at about that time.
6 Handwritten manuscript in the Kesar Library collection.
7 In Buddhist legend, the town is Manjupattan and its first ruler Dharmakar, who ruled for one thousand years and then abandoned Manjupattan. According to *Swayambhu Puran*, the second Buddhist king, Sarvananda made a new capital at Sankashya. Sankashya is possibly named after the river Hanumante (called Sanko in Lichchhavi times) and refers to the area south of Sankhamul (Sanko-mula). Folk memories of the location of the palace of Sarvanada connect it to a mound at Guita, Patan.
8 Some chronicles name this king Bhumigupta. In this book, unless called for by the context, the name Bhumiverma is used.
9 See Chapter 10: 'Gods in crisis or happenings of history?'
10 In an *ihi* ceremony, pubescent Newar girls ritually marry a fruit called bel. This ritual is believed to prevent a girl from being widowed when her mortal husband dies.
11 See Chapter 7: ‘Religions of the Khas and the Kirat’.
12 The reference is ‘Bhatini Bhat jharen dekam the puja hinsaddekam lakhwa hole’ (Folio 61B, line 2). Although the sentence has not yet been satisfactorily interpreted, it is clear that the worship ritual was ‘similar to the worship following the remaking of the doll-like Bhatini Bhat’.
13 Tukucha gets its name after the hillock of the Narayanhitër Narayan, who was apparently called Srituk Narayana. The Ranipokhari inscription of King Pratap Malla names that area Tukachala. Other explanations of the name given by some writers (like B.L. Pradhan) linking the name to Newari words such as ‘tu’ or ‘tuki’ have little substance and are incidental at best.
14 See also Chapter 5: 'The gods arrive at Handigaun'.
15 Yelang is derived from the Tibetan name for Patan, Ye-rang, as noted in Tang period records.
The Lichchhavi take over

On the basis of Kirat nomenclature, we identified Handigaun as Andipringga, a town of the Kirat Period; and also dated the festival of Andipi mentioned in one Lichchhavi inscription to the same period. From the nature of the festivities and the chronicle Padmagiri Vamsavali, we saw the possibility that Andipringga may also have been a capital city towards the end of Kirat rule. The goddess of Andipringga seems linked to the post-Gopala traditions of the Saptamatrika, or the seven mother goddesses. However, both the Gopala and the Kirat periods of the early history of Kathmandu Valley have remained cloaked in mystery because evidence from inscriptions starts showing up only from the late second century CE and history becomes authenticated only from the reign of the Lichchhavi king, Mandev, in the second half of the fifth century. Chronicles tell us that Kirat rule came to an end with the conquest of the country by the Lichchhavi. This seems to have happened when the Sudraka era ended.

In history, a political or social change of great importance is often recorded by starting a new era, or samvat. Sumatitantra, a treatise composed in Kathmandu Valley (N.R. Pant, 2043 BS) sometime between the sixth and ninth centuries CE, provides the names of various eras used in Nepal at that time. These names can provide clues about the dates of major changes in the famous ruling houses in Nepal and the region. Several such eventful years can be computed from the treatise, including 3101 BCE, 1101 BCE, 301 BCE, 169 BCE, 78 CE, 576 CE and 880 CE. Sumatitantra calls the samvat used in Nepal at the start of the Lichchhavi rule Sakaraja Samvat and not Saka Samvat. One medieval document also calls this same samvat Sakara Rajaversa. The difference is notable as Sakara Rajaversa means the epochal era started by Sakara kings. According to Panini, the famous ancient Sanskrit grammarian-cum-lexicographer, a Sakara is a descendant of the Saka. Sakara is also used in classical documents to mean the people who speak Sakari, the language of the Saka. Both could be applied to the Kirat. But why, one might ask, would the Lichchhavi use the samvat of the Kirat? One possibility is the claim of the Kirat of eastern Nepal that the Lichchhavi were their lesser blood brethren and that the kingdom of Nepal was taken by the Lichchhavi without a war (N.M. Thulung, 1981). But the sequence of eras shown in Sumatitantra itself is reason enough to conclude that the previous era, Sudraka Samvat, current during the later Kirat rule was discontinued with the Lichchhavi takeover. A peaceful change, with a shift of power among brothers, should not have called for a change at all. It seems that the Kirat lost power in some way, yet were still influential enough to get the new era named after them. One might suspect that such a situation is politically impossible. Yet we will see that as the second Lichchhavi king
of Nepal, Bhumiverma, came to power, this is exactly what happened.

*Sumatitantra* was written in Nepal. It shows the country’s advanced state in astronomical and astrological sciences. It may be for this reason that Huien Tsang, the great Chinese scholar-traveller of the seventh century, noted that the Nepalis were highly advanced in this field. It is also notable that his comment must have been made on the basis of comparisons he made after visits to most of the other capitals of that time, from Kapisa to Pataliputra.

Bhaskerverma, who established the Lichchhavi state in Nepal, was issueless, so he adopted Bhumiverma as his heir. Since other chronicles call this adopted son Bhumigupta, his clan association is not clear. It would seem that he was adopted from a Saka family and was thus a Sakara; consequently, the new *samvat* that followed Sudraka Samvat was named Sakaraja Samvat. Both eras referred essentially to the Kirat, one era to their own rule and the other to denote the rule of one of their offspring adopted by a Lichchhavi. This gives us sufficient reason to think that Sakaraja Samvat mentioned in *Sumatitantra* is not the same as the Saka Samvat of the Kushan, even though both seem to have been started in the same Gregorian year, 78 CE. We will explore this idea in more detail below.

**Pinpointing times of historical changes**

The fact that political changes of far-reaching magnitude occurred in 301 BCE can be established with reference to the start of the reign of Chandragupta Maurya in Magadh, exactly as may be inferred from *Sumatitantra*. The gap separating the setting up of Sunga rule in 185 BCE and the beginning of the Sudraka Samvat in 169 BCE in Nepal must mean that Sudraka rule does not refer to the Sunga, who were Brahmin. Sudraka apparently refers to the local rulers of Nepal, as we also do not find Sudraka rulers in India at that time. Literary works present the Sudraka as legendary kings, one of whom composed a play entitled *Mrichchhakatika*. The Sudraka clans of the Western Ghats of India were, around the eighth and ninth century, non-ithyphallic Siva worshippers and also practised naga and other water rituals. The Kirat of Kathmandu had similar religious practices initially. Putting the two together, it seems that the Sudraka are the same as the Kirat
identified as rulers by our chronicles. The reverence of proto-Siva, Ka-asur, and the similarity between their professions and those of the Hindu Sudra caste group seems to have led Hindus to refer to Kirats as Sudrakas. Lichchhavi inscriptions claim that in the current Thankot area there was a temple of the god Sivaka, who appears to be the Kirat’s tutelary god, Ka. As if on cue, the chronicles are also unanimous in stating that the Thankot area was the capital of the Kirat for a long time. Some chronicles also tell that the Kirat and the Mauryas disagreed a great deal and even fought a war when Emperor Ashok was the Mauryan ruler in Pataliputra. This appears to have led the Kirats to use their own era, the Sudraka Samvat, when Mauryan rule came to an end. According to Sumatitantra, this change of era happened in 169 BCE.

Incidentally, Sumatitantra, does not mention Vikram Samvat, which started in 57 BCE to mark the end of the Sunga period and the beginning of the Andhran period in the general area of Maghād. One could conclude that this era was not of importance to Nepal at the time Sumatitantra was composed. This is understandable as Vikramaditya, who is believed to have started Vikram Samvat, ruled from his capital Pratisthan on the banks of the river Godavari in India. It is also a fact that year reckonings based on the Vikram era start showing up in Nepali historical documents only from the sixteenth century. Thus, the legend of Vikramaditya carried by some vamsavali must be a late insertion made when the Vikram era gained importance in the late Malla Period. The spatial dislocation of the Pratisthan palace by the river Godavari in central India to place it in Godavari in Kathmandu and the time dislocation of the legend makes it irrelevant to the history of early Kathmandu Valley. It could be only for such reasons that the epochal year 57 BCE is missing from the listing of Sumatitantra. Otherwise, the Lichchhavi would have preferred the Vikram era of the Satavahana over the Saka era of the Kushan in so far as it did not belong to the enemy camp.

Lichchhavi Samvat 1: a Sakara comes to power
Lichchhavi inscriptions generally mention the year of their issue and the name of the king on the throne. Sometimes details about the occasion the inscriptions commemorate for posterity are elaborate: the muhurta, tithi, month and year are given. Inscriptions use at least two different calendars, the second one having its epochal year in 576 CE. As the early history and culture of Nepal has always been a matter of comparative placing with respect to the Indo-Gangetic region, the earlier calendar is said to be the Saka calendar of the Kushan, with its epochal year in 78 CE. Inscriptions themselves do not name eras; the numerals indicative of the year of issue are simply preceded by the word ‘samvat’. In Sumatitantra, we are told that the earlier Lichchhavi calendar was according to the rule of Sakaraja, or Saka kings. Unlike the Lichchhavi, the Kushan who started the Saka Samvat in India were of Yue-Chi descent. Despite this, Nepali historians continue to assume that the first Lichchhavi era is the same as the Saka era of the Kushan although they provide no satisfactory explanation why the powerful kingdom of the Lichchhavi would use the Kushan calendar at all. That they

The Mitra of Nepal
The Sunga rulers of Magadh were Brahmin and the used the last name ‘Mitra’. The first of the rulers was Pushpa Mitra; he was followed by Agni Mitra. Lichchhavi inscriptions show the presence of families with the last name ‘Mitra’ in Nepal also; for example, there were itinerant traders Guha Mitra (R-X), Sri Vastran (Srivatsa?) Mitra, Sridhara Mitra, Sridhruba Mitra, Srisoma Mitra, etc. (DV-171)
would have used it becomes doubly doubtful as the Lichchhavi had lost part of their territory in the plains, including their capital city Vaishali, to the advancing forces of the Kushan. The standing of Jayaverma, the fourth ruler of the newly reorganised Lichchhavi state, clarifies that the Lichchhavi were well and ruling strong when Kushan King Kaniska\(^2\) completed the consolidation of his empire. Since this is the case, it is untenable that the Lichchhavi of Nepal would have used the calendar started by the Kushan; at least certainly not in their early years.

Saka Samvat was founded by the Kushan in the year 78 CE. Sakara Samvat was also started in Nepal in the same year. Apart from marking the political changes in the general area of Magadh does the year 78 CE mark some remarkable change in Kathmandu also? Sumatitantra indicates that this year was indeed a landmark: it could mark the year the Lichchhavi made Kathmandu their new capital. Saka Samvat is Chaitradi (meaning that the new year of the Saka era starts in Chaitra Sukla Pratipada), while both the samvats used in Lichchhavi inscriptions are Kartikadi (starting in Kartik). This difference is significant; it means the Lichchhavi and Saka samvat could not be the same. Therefore, while the Chaitradi Saka Samvat was initiated in Magadh, a Kartikadi Sakara Samvat was initiated in Kathmandu. It could be that sometime in March/April of 78 CE, Saka Samvat started as the Kushan took over Vaishali and that six months later in September/October, 78 CE, the Lichchhavi Sakara Samvat started as the Lichchhavi state of Nepal stabilised. An exact verification of the truth is a virtual impossibility because no inscription of the first Lichchhavi era provides the name of the weekday involved.\(^3\)

Analysts of Indian history\(^4\) have suggested that the Lichchhavi republic of Vaishali had disintegrated by the end of the long rule of Bhaskerverma and agree that he was issueless. Nepali chronicles also confirm that Bhaskerverma had no sons. Bhaskerverma’s long rule should, however, lead to the conclusion that the Lichchhavi moved to Kathmandu sometime during the rule and campaign of territorial expansion of the Kushan King Kadphises I (c. 40-90 CE). As the Kushan expansion continued, Vaskerverma appears to have moved his capital from Vaishali to safe and distant Kathmandu. Part of the Lichchhavi territory was ceded to Kadphises in the process. It is known that the Kushan empire extended from Gandhar to Magadh and south up to Sanchi and was ruled over from a western capital in Peshawar and an eastern one in Mathura. The loss of the Lichchhavi capital of Vaishali and the setting up of the Kushan capital in Mathura must have been at the same time. The founding of the Lichchhavi capital in Kathmandu must also have occurred then. Six months seem to have elapsed between the setting up of Kathmandu as the new Lichchhavi capital and the promulgation of the new era; this is indicated by the difference between the Saka and the Sakara samvats.

The loss of the Lichchhavi republic of Vaishali would not be a reason for Bhaskerverma to start a new era. He seems to have lived another six months before Bhumiverma became king. The fresh lineage brought into the Lichchhavi kingdom when the adopted heir took to the throne would, however, be a remarkable enough reason to start a new samvat. Thus the new Lichchhavi samvat and the Saka Samvat are co-terminous for six months of the lunar year. As Kaniska had marked the Saka era (starting in March 78 CE) by the adoption of Buddhism, so Bhumiverma appears to have marked it by taking to Kirat Saivism, which may have been his religion by virtue of his birth as a Sakara. The landmark date that marked this change was apparently Kartik Sukla Pratipada (Sep-
The Lichchhavi take over

tember/October, 78 CE). Thus, the first Lichchhavi samvat marks a time when a Sakara came to power in the Lichchhavi state. (See Chapter 14: ‘King Jayaverma of Mali-gaun’.) Is it not a wonderful coincidence that the second Lichchhavi samvat was started when Amshuverma, the adopted son of King Sivadev I, and also possibly a Sakara, ascended the Lichchhavi throne? (See Chapter 18: ‘Kailashkut Bhavan of Amshuverma’.) This change in ruler also brought about a shift in religious affinities.

Liberal religious practice leads to religious dissent
The Lichchhavi are often depicted as followers of Vishnu and their society structured around the four Hindu varnas. If the Lichchhavi had been ruling out of Kathmandu since the time of Pashupreksha, as some chronicles claim, some Vaisnavite sites would have existed. But this was not so: Bhaskerverma lived in a religious environment devoid of Vaisnavism. There were, however, other saviours to entice him into their folds.

Said to have existed since time immemorial and to be self-created, the linga at Pashupatinath is the only historical linga in Kathmandu not set up in memory of some dead individual. This fact defeats historical rationality as all the other Siva lingas of Lichchhavi origin are death memorials of families seeking the passage of their deceased loved one unto Siva (sivatva). Whatever be the truth of the origins of Pashupatinath, the Pashupati linga pith is the first religious site of the Nepali Lichchhavi kingdom. Chronicles claim that a legendary Lichchhavi king, Supushpadev, was the builder of the temple. Parallel legends and chronicles subscribing to the Buddhist faith claim that Swayambhu was self-created and that one devout believer, Shantikar Acharya, built the stupa. This is the only mound which did not have a funerary association.5

Thus, even though Bhaskerverma may have been a Vaisnav while at Vaishali, amid several choices he took to the Pashupati cult in Kathmandu Valley. Hindu legends and chronicles alike would have us believe that

Seeds of disharmony
Nepal has been characterised as a country where two religions, Hinduism and Buddhism, exist peacefully side by side. Evidence shows, however, that it must have gone through at least one civil war resulting from religious disharmony. The legendary great fire that gutted Vishalnagar was the result of such a strife. It led to the removal of all Buddhist monasteries and the Kirat Saiva temple of Bhuvaneswordevkul from the capital town.

The distrust between followers of Saivism and Vaisnavism within Hinduism and the discord between the followers of Hinduism and Buddhism were great in early times. The seeds of discord between Buddhists and Brahmans are apparent in Anuparam’s inscription at Handigaun from Mandev’s reign. And even Mandev’s father, an ardent Buddhist, may have been a victim of the discord. Another inscription likens the popularity of Buddhism with ‘utter darkness of foul thoughts’ (kumatigraetha-ghorandhakare). Lankavatara, a treatise dating from 920 CE, provides veiled hints of a religious war. This second incidence of strife again uprooted several monasteries from the Deupatan-Gokarna area and led to their relocation, mostly in Lalitpur.

The distance between religions decreased as all the cults were later strongly overwhelmed by Tantric thought. Also, Jayasthiti Malla’s reinforcement of the division of society into professional groups rather than into religions helped foster harmonious co-existence. Since his rule, the vaunted harmony between Hinduism and Buddhism has been true.
the first Lichchhavi king was a devout follower of Pashupatinath, or Siva; he performed, they point out, a long penance at the temple. Although he had lost Vaishali, through the powers of his newly earned religious merit, he was able to carve a state in the valley and around it, particularly in the southern girdle of settlements. Bhaskerma’s actions seem to have encouraged later kings also to chose a religion of their liking and to seek the power to rule from among the different gods the variety of sects of Kathmandu Valley had accumulated.

History authenticated by inscriptions shows that the Lichchhavi kings enjoyed the liberty of choosing their personal religion from among Vaisnavism, Saivism and Buddhism. Ordinary people must have had similar choices too. In fact, they had more choice; in addition to the three religions preferred by rulers, there were the Saptamatrika Shakti cult, the Rudra cult, and others. As the original population was led by Brahm-mungs, Shuhl-mungs and the like, the eighteen professional groups might have had more cults to choose from. This liberalism of religion was akin to the creation of a secular state, but it also created potential for religious conflict of serious dimensions.

Because of the Lichchhavi kings’ practice of religious tolerance, both temples and stupas, along with local religious monuments,
must have started being built everywhere. With the passage of time came various Hindu
and Buddhist legends, each of which claimed
ancient rights of its religion on Andipringga.
Vishalnagar got the image of a city with Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswor living as
brethren. The same place became Man-
jumpattan for Buddhists. Hindu legends made
the city stretch north to south, Buddhist ones
west to east. At the centre of it all was the
palace, wherein lived Lichchhavi kings who
periodically switched between the two
religions. All these brought about the creation
of overlapping cosmic images over the same
physical space.

The Saiva cosmic image
Except for King Bhashkerverma and Regent
Amshuverma, the Lichchhavi rulers were not
strong adherents of Saivism, even though
most of them did consecrate linga as memo-
rials of death. As a matter of fact, the Saiva
cosmic image appears applied at Deupatan,
which is where Bhashkerverma did his pen-
ance. In Deupatan, the physical reflection of
Saiva cosmology, the use of the tripura and
dharma patterns of planning, with Siva
Pashupati at the tip of the arrow, proves that
Deupatan was planned using Hindu dictates.
Even now Deupatan shows surviving traces
of both patterns, an unmistakable legacy of
Lichchhavi town planning.

The Saiva cosmic image of the valley
appears to have been fixed early on, and the sites
chosen for locating linga markers must have
been important to the original group of set-
tlers. Legends recognise this to be the case
with Pashupatinath, which they link to the
Gopala days. The general lack of Saiva sites
in the Matatirtha area, speculated to have had
concentrations of the Gopala, and the strong
tradition of Bisandevi in these very areas do
not support the idea that the Gopala were
Saiva. They instead appear to have been fol-
lowers of the Saptamatrika cult. The sites

annexed by the Lichchhavis for locating key
Siva linga later are more likely to have been
of importance to the Kirat, whose religion was
close to Saiva practices.

The Vaisnav cosmic image
As general practitioners of shruti shastras and
Hinduism thus defined, the Lichchhavi be-
lieved that the religious source of their ruling power was derived from Lord Vishnu. Thus Lord Vishnu came to enjoy a place of honour in Vishalnagar. The centre of Vishalnagar was defined through the placing of the new tutelary god Vishnu (Satyanarayan) in Handigaun, a place of pride. He was also Veda-Vyas, the master who put the shruti shastras together. As the power of the Madhyamarajkul increased (more of which later), this cosmology was expanded to cover the whole valley by placing Narayans in the four cardinal directions (See Chapter 14: 'King Jayaverma of Maligaun'.)

The Buddhist cosmic image
The most ancient duo defining the Buddhist image of Kathmandu appears to be the Jamacho hillock in the west and the Manichur hillock in the east, both annexed from the Kirat culture of veneration. As the affiliation of the Lichchhavi royal house with Buddhism became stronger, new sites were developed just a little below the earlier two. With Vishalnagar as the centre, the westerly direction not taken by a Vaishnav or Saiva image was taken for Buddhist cosmology with the consecration of Swayambhu hillock as a stupa site. The new eastern site of Khadgajogini Guheswori, or Gun Vihar, also became popular. This was apparently achieved during the rule of Vrisdev. These developments clearly corresponded to the fact that the northern eastern part of Kathmandu Valley was occupied by Buddhist vihars, as substantiated by inscriptions from that period.

The power place of Guheswori of Deupatan was then popularised as a Buddhist site, thus bringing the eastern spot closer to city limits. Just as the west end of the symbolic Buddhist axis extended outside the river limits of Vishalnagar/Manjupattan, so too the east end of the axis was closed with the pit shrine of Guheswori, a site already popular as Ambutirtha. This extension of the symbolic axis, as legends record, happened at the time of Sivadev. A story was woven around it and Guheswori was presented as the location of the root of the primordial lotus, which marked the spot for the stupa. That the site got quickly eclipsed is given away by the fact that Guheswori was ‘rediscovered’ by King Pratap Malla. This required assigning the site to both religions, Hinduism and Buddhism, at the same time. Thus, it also became popular as a Saiva-Shakti site. With the spread of the Buddhist vihar to Patan, the cosmology was widened to cover the whole valley; the construction of chaitya on the Phulchoki and Chandagiri hillocks, apparently occurred.

Kalas motifs from Bhuvaneswori at Pashupatinath and from Dhando Chaitya at Chabel
The Lichchhavi take over

only after the mid-tenth century. All the cardinal directions were thus brought into the fold and overlapped with the same general location of the four Narayans of the Hindus. The set consisting of Jatamatrocha of Vipaswibuddha near Ichangunarayan; Dhyanocha of Sikhitathagata near Sikhanarayan; Phulocha of Viswobhubuddha near Bishankhunarayan; and Dhilacho of Manjushree near Changunarayan thus defined the cosmic image for the Buddhists.

This strong physical presence of Buddhist monuments at all Vaisnav sites suggests that a major Buddhist element must also have been placed in Madhyamarajkul, the centre, for at Handigaun we find Satyanarayan, the central element of the Vaisnav cosmic framework. Several archaeological finds related to Buddhist relics at Satyanarayan sites substantiate a significant presence of Buddhism in the middle and late Lichchhavi Period. Since there is nothing to suggest any Buddhist reverence of the site now, it must have been lost in the religious conflicts of the past. The strong anti-Buddhist statement contained in the inscription of Anuparam dedicated to Satyanarayan strongly suggests that the Buddhist centre marker might have been removed during the rule of King Mandev. This seems to have led Italian archaeologists to propose that the remains of a foundation revealed in excavations are those of a stupa. This, however, is a mistaken interpretation; the remains are from a square temple. The centre marker may have been akin to Guheswori, or a purna kalas, as its popularity at the site is hinted at by the decoration on the inscription of Amshuverma at Dabali; here, on the top part of the stele, a purna kalas is depicted. The mother goddess pith of Andipringga seems to have doubled as a marker for the Buddhist cosmic image of the valley also.

Later legends were woven by all three major religious faiths, Saivism, Vaisnavism and Buddhism, using an imaginary framework of personages and time. Each vied with the other in these exercises in one-upmanship. The fact that these stories have stuck in popular memory shows a society splitting along religious lines. Inscriptions show such a split visibly from the later period of Lichchhavi rule, in about the sixth century. The growing challenge of Buddhism to Vaisnav and Saiva faiths, particularly after Narendradev came back from exile in Tibet with money, an army and the resurgence of the cult of Mahayan Buddhism, finally seems to have led to civil strife.

The goddess of Andipringga is revered by all

Despite the liberal attitude of the Lichchhavi royal house toward religious choice, no Lichchhavi ruler adopted the faith of the mother goddesses, or Saptamatrika. The rulers (except, perhaps, King Dharmadev, whom we will discuss in the next chapter) were so intolerant of the ‘animal sacrifice’ aspect of

The navakunda foundations from Handigaun (right) and (left) the pottery fragments with the inscription ‘vahabhoga’ ('bearer of fruition') under a kalas motif
this cult that they even imposed a tax on the sale of sacrificial animals. Their inscriptions show very limited reference to mother goddesses and no *matrika* temple was thought fit for state support. However, evidence of existing images of mother goddesses from pre-Lichchhavi times, such as Gajalaxmi of Chyasal; Srilaxmi of Kotaltole in Handigaun; the mother goddesses of Haugal Bahal, Balkhu, Kirtipur, Deupatan, Maligaun, etc; as well as inscriptive references to goddesses such as Matara, Matindevkul, Bhagabati Vijayeswori, Sridevi and Umatirtha, leave little doubt that the *matrika* cult was very much present and that it commanded a significant following among the indigenous group. As Vaisnav images came to occupy central religious places and as Buddhists and Saiva elements also vied for the same spot, the losers were the *matrikas*.

Vishalnagar was Andipringga before the Lichchhavi made it their capital. The central deity of Andipringga was the goddess of the spring source, an aspect very close to Valavaladevi also. The same spring source seems to have been venerated by Buddhists as Guheswori, represented by a *purna kalas* placed over the source. The *kalas* itself seems to have turned into a cult symbol of the goddess. The site of the goddess of Andipringga, where the Lichchhavi installed Satyanarayan later as the central marker of the Vaisnav cosmic valley, had acquired a Buddhist image too. The goddess of Andipringga acquired all these other traits also as other religious faiths were assimilated into her aniconic form. She came to be variously referred to as Andipi (by the Kirat), Guheswori (by the Buddhists), Valasokshi (by the Lichchhavi), Valan-si-ma (by the Jyapu) and Dwalakanima perhaps later becoming Duimaju (for the Saiva and the Shakta). With its many facets, this temple co-existed along with Satyanarayan for some time.

Italian archaeological excavations at Satyanarayan have exposed the foundations of a square temple S21 with a sanctum room of 2.2 square metres with 55-centimetre-thick walls all around (G. Verardi, 1988). Archaeologists have assigned the foundations to the middle Lichchhavi Period. Given the inscription at Tunaldevi, which, as has already been discussed, gives the date of the apparent relocation of the temple of the goddess of Andipringga, the archaeologists appear to have post-dated the temple foundations. I would date it to before 476 CE, bringing it a little closer to the nearby wall (with 92–72 BCE radioactive carbon dates). The surviving side wall shows that the entrance to the shrine was at a higher level than the sanctum, making it a pit shrine. A *mandap*-style temple with four corner pillars can be envisioned. That the temple may also have been in the tiered style finds support in *Gopalarajavamsavali*, which reports that a temple located near the temple of Narayan was given a copper sheet roof by King Jivagupta. The chronicle, however, shows a warped time frame and the rule of King Jivagupta, in any case, is yet to be historically substantiated.

An older temple’s foundations are indicated by the walls S1 and it appears to be the forerunner of the rectangular *dyochhe/sattal* style of temple. It is also possible this may have been the *devkul* temple of Valasokshi.

**The *purna kalas***

Motifs used in ancient times testify that a major object of cult worship in Kathmandu Valley was the *purna kalas*. Worship of a *purna kalas*, or a full pitcher, is as common today as it was in early days. The Annapurna temple of Asontole, the Batsala of Bhadgaun and the Batsala of Pashupatinath are some of the existing *purna kalas* temples and are obviously associated with the Shakti of Siva. Of these three, the Batsala temple of Pashupatinath seems the oldest. Several more ancient representations are found elsewhere in
The Lichchhavi take over 113

Kathmandu; the popular names of these places carry the suffix ‘ghal’, the Newari equivalent of the Sanskrit ‘ghat’. To name a few, there are relief panels of Lichchhavi Period purna kalas at Van-ghal (Indra Chowk), Kila-ghal (Kilagal), Nah-ghal (Nagal), Si-ghal (Sighala), etc. The kalas is known to have been venerated in Vaishali as well as in the later Gupta period. It has found several expressions, including its use as an architectural décor motif in column bases. Several such fragments are found in Kathmandu; they go back to the Lichchhavi Period. The pottery fragments pictured on page 111 are from the excavations at the Satyanarayan site. What these medallions show is a kalas. On one such fragment is a clear one-line inscription ‘vahabhoga’, meaning ‘bearer of fruition’. The name of the place during the Lichchhavi Period, Valasokshidevkul, could be translated as the temple (devkul) of the water (vala) pitcher (sokshi). Putting the two together we can conclude without doubt that the Satyanarayan site housed a temple where the cult object of worship was a jalaghat, or water pitcher. The use of the word ‘sokshi’ could imply the shape as the word means ‘a pitcher shaped like a camel’. Indeed, even today, the pitcher that is worshipped at Tunaldevi is a long-necked unti. As per current practice, the goddess of Tunaldevi is worshipped in two formats: first, havan worship to a pair of kalas (one representing Siva and the other Chandika); and second, worship with an animal, usually a buffalo, sacrifice. This dual worship pattern could be a result of the adaptation of ‘valavala devi’ into ‘valasokshi’ during the Lichchhavi Period as they did not encourage the sacrifice of animals to aniconic images personifying the angry aspects of the goddess. During times of Buddhist domination, the cult object doubled as Guheswori. During Saiva domination, it became Dwalakanima, or Duimaju. The goddesses Duimaju are believed to be able to walk across water. They accept the sacrifice of a buffalo. These characters are similar to Tunaldevi.

This shared image was, however, not to last long. The aftermath of the curious death of King Dharmadev, who ruled about the middle of the fifth century CE, ended the co-existence of the goddess of Andipringga and Satyanarayan of Vishalnagar. This happened at the beginning of the rule of King Mandev, son of Dharmadev. At this time, the goddess was forced to shed her Kirat and Shakta images; only the Saiva and the Valasokshi (goddess Vahabhoga) images remained with Satyanarayan. The same site was given a barun image as, for the Lichchhavi, Barun was the god of water. The place started being called Valasokshidevkul. The retention of the place name after the goddess shows her popularity among the common people. She must have been more popular than Narayan himself. The use of the term ‘devkul’ must also indicate a group of deities in the same temple. (See also the discussion of Valan-si-ma in Chapter 9, in which an alternative interpretation of sokshi as a tree is discussed.)

We will return to review the mysterious circumstances of King Dharmadev’s death in Chapter 16, where we will see why the goddess of Andipringga was expelled from her place in the cosmic centre of the Lichchhavi capital.
Notes

1 Harivamsa, National Archives, D. No. 6959, reported by Pant, ibid.

2 The date of Kaniska is a subject of controversy. It is placed at 78 CE by some; others place him as late as 160 CE. Also, similar sounding names of Kirat kings such as Dhaska, Tuska and Puska are intriguing.

3 Sankerman Rajvamshi interprets the phrase ‘rohini nakshyatrayute chandramasi’ occurring in Mandev’s Changu inscription as ‘Monday’, and he pushes back 1 Lichchhavi Samvat to 56 CE.

4 Jayachandra Vidhyalankar says that Bhaskerverma was regarded as the head of the Lichchhavi republic of Vaishali by the citizenry there.

5 The so-called Ashok stupas of Lalitpur, the oldest mounds of Kathmandu Valley are associated with the Kirat. The worship of ancestral funerary sites was a common practice of non-Hindus before the time of Buddha all over the region and Kirats were no exception. (See M. Slusser, 1982, for an ‘authoritative guess’.)

6 The navakunda foundation for a stupa must have a small central pit and four elongated axial pits; only the four corner pits should be square. All nine pits, or navakunda, of the excavated foundation, however, are equal squares. Thus, the remains belong to a Hindu temple.

7 This statement is made based on the fact that ‘vala’ is a water indicator and that the central stone of Tunaldevi is located in a natural source of spring water. Currently the spring source of Tunaldevi has dried up as the recharge coming from a stone water conduit, or swapanhiti, has ceased. As it was believed that if anyone had a dream about drinking water from this tap, s/he would die upon waking up, it was decided in 1976 to fill up the stone water pit and conduit. Local belief is that during the festival of the goddess, the spring source spurts water.

8 Cf. Swoyambhu Puran: When Manjushri pressed the root of the lotus into the ground at Guheswori, there came out of the ground a large stream of water. Manjushri made the water stop through Jalastambhana. (M.B. Bajracharya, 1978)

9 A similar foundation, dated to 484 CE, was seen in Deupatan and reinforces the argument that such constructions were commonly used for temples. The author has published a reading of the associated inscription in Gorakhapatra of 13 May, 2000.

10 Italian archaeologists have suggested that this should be interpreted as ‘vahubhoga’, but the inscription is clearly ‘vahabhoga’ as there is no such word as ‘vahu’ in Sanskrit. For the sense intended by the archaeologists the word would have to be ‘bahu’, which is not how the inscription reads.

11 The long ritual worship is done fourteen times a year, every Chaturdasi plus one each on Chaitra Purnima and Kagesthami.

12 The Duimaju of Lalitpur is located in the palace grounds to the south of the large water tank. It is believed that she used to walk across to fetch water from the stone conduit of the pond. (Informant: Dhanalal Awale, age 94, Kapinche, Lalitpur)
Gopalarajavamsavali presents Bhaskerverma as a conqueror rather than as someone who lost Vaishali to the Kushan. History, however, tells otherwise: Bhaskerverma lost Vaishali. It appears that as the Kushan were advancing towards Vaishali, Bhaskerverma made a pilgrimage to Kathmandu Valley and, according to the same chronicle, undertook a long penance at Pashupatinath. His purpose was probably to gain divine merit as well as divine intervention to stop the march of the Kushan. However, he seems to have been inspired to make Nepal a Lichchhavi country rather than return to his own land down south, for, with the merits gained through penance, he annexed the southern parts of Nepal, including Kanchinagar Mandal. Although the words naming the country are sadly lost to a drop of ink from the chronicler’s pen itself, the surviving word ‘daxinsanga’ means surely not a southern country but the southern part of a country. It may be inferred that the reference is to the southern part of the then Kirat state of Nepal. It is likely that Bhaskerverma annexed the southern areas under the command of the early palace of Daxin Rajkul. Incidentally, one of the Buddhist monasteries of Patan, Kwabahal, claims that it was built by King Bhaskerdev. Daxin Rajkul was located near Kwabahal. (S.R. Tiwari, 2001)

When Lichchhavi inscriptions become frequent, about thirty generations after Bhaskerverma, we find that Mandev did not have to wage war against the southern parts of the state as it had not revolted against him.

As Bhaskerverma arrived in Kathmandu before the loss of Vaishali to the Kushan, he had some time to do penance at Pashupatinath. It is for this reason that some chronicles suggest that the first Lichchhavi palace was located in Baneswor. He certainly seems to have flexed his muscles from Baneswor, a place possibly referring to Deupatan, which was planned in the form of a bow (ban in Nepali) and arrow, with Pashupati located at the tip of the arrow. (See

**Early Lichchhavi palaces**
As they consolidated their power in the valley with further annexations of Kirat territory, the Lichchhavi used or recognised two more palaces: Dixinrajkul in the south and Pundrirajkul in the north. Both are likely to have been Kirat palaces also. The central palacemadhyama Rajkul, remained the power centre until Mangriha was constructed in the same area. That Madhyama Rajkul and Mangriha were both located in the same general locality but were different buildings is clearly recognised by the inscription of Regent Amshuverma at Handigaun in which Kailashakut Bhavan, Amshuverma’s palace, is shown to have separate gateways, called Mangrihadwar and Madhymadwar, which led, respectively, to Mangriha and Madhyama Rajkul.
Chapter 12 for the karmuka plan and Saiva cosmicity of Deupatan). But Bhaskerverma seems to have died so soon after his penance and the short war that he fought to carve the Lichchhavi state of Nepal that he could hardly have had any time to built a palace or a capital. At best, he might have ruled out of the southern region of the valley or from the annexed palace of Daxin Rajkul.

His adopted heir to the throne of Nepal, Bhumiverma, must have been the king of the new Lichchhavi state, who first made a palace and a capital city in Kathmandu Valley.

This landmark political change, the coming of the Lichchhavi, happened about 78 CE. This much may be inferred from the first Lichchhavi inscribed statue of King Jayaverma (Jayadev I), who died 107 years after the founding of the era used by the Lichchhavi. Since the statue of Jayaverma was found fallen in situ at Maligaun, it may be concluded with archaeological credence that by Jayaverma’s period, at the latest, the Lichchhavi palace was located thereabouts.

Legends propose a more ancient perspective as they tell us that Bhatbhateni, the divine couple of Handigaun, laid out a large city, named Vishalnagar by medieval chronicles, where the Lichchhavi first settled their army and then later their people. It was, then, only a matter of time before Vishalnagar became the capital of the Lichchhavi. As Jayadev I was the fourth king in the lineage, the statement of the chronicles that Bhumiverma moved the Lichchhavi palace to Vishalnagar, which included the Handigaun area, appears to be a statement of historical fact.

In Chapter 11, we saw that the name Vishalnagar is not found in any Lichchhavi inscription. The name must, therefore, be either a reference to the vast expanse of the area or a later derivation from ‘Vaishali’, the first Lichchhavi republic and capital. A closer review of the Lichchhavi inscription, which uses the name ‘Brihatgram’, also shows that the construction of the capital town led to the renaming of the places between the Dhobi Khola and Tukucha rivers as Maneswor, Tamrakuttasala and Sambapura. In making the capital, the large Vishalnagar of the legends appears to have been truncated: the area between the Bagmati and Dhobi Khola rivers extending to their upper reaches in the north and to Deupatan and Chabel in the south, became known as Brihatgram.

The Lichchhavi seem to have made their capital overlap physically with Andipringga. Perhaps Bhumiverma’s Sakara origins led him to choose Andipringga, his ancestral home, as his capital. The landmark date that marked both the beginning of his rule and his return to his ancestral home, was apparently Kartik Sukla Pratipada (September/October, 78 CE). These events led him to declare Sakara Samvat to be the official Lichchhavi calendar. (See also Chapter 14: ‘King Jayaverma of Maligaun’)

It must have been following the founding of Bhumiverma’s palace that the area where it was located, Andipringga, came to be called Madhyama Rajkul. The palace was not only centrally located in the valley, but it was also named so (‘madhyama’ means ‘central’ in Sanskrit) to distinguish it from another palace called Daxin Rajkul. The name ‘Madhyama Rajkul’ later degenerated into ‘Madhylakhu’ in the local tongue. When another adopted heir, Amshuverma, became king centuries later, Madhylakhu attracted him and he built his palace, Kailashkut Bhavan, there. As a matter of fact, that the palace of Madhyaama Rajkul did exist from the early Lichchhavi Period is confirmed in a lone reference in an inscription issued by Amshuverma. There, too, it is hidden in the name of a gate of Kailashkut Bhavan.

The palace Madhyaama Rajkul, constructed by Bhumiverma in the first year of Lichchhavi rule from the capital at
Vishalnagar, was used for over 400 years, till King Mandev built a new palace. As the later Kailashakut Bhavan was located in Handigaun, it follows that it was also the site of the first Lichchhavi palace.

Specific arguments about the location of Madhyama Rajkul can be made on the basis of an inscription issued by Amshuverma in the year Samvat 30 (606 CE), which is located at Dabali, Handigaun. In it, all five gates of his palace are named. Since the gates are evidently named to indicate the places they led to as one exited the palace, their locations around the palace court can be easily established. In any case, Lichchhavi inscriptions, as a rule, list place markers anti-clockwise, starting from the northeast. Accordingly, it can be inferred from the inscription that the Kailashkut Bhavan gates were laid out as shown in the figure. The context of the inscription shows that Mangrihadwar led towards Mangriha and Madhyamadwar towards Madhyama Rajkul. Therefore, it can be concluded that Madhyama Rajkul was located to the north of Mangriha and to the northwest of Kailashkut.

With reference to the extant site of the Manamaneswori temple, which can be shown to have been located to the north and west of Mangriha, we can safely place Madhyama Rajkul to the northwest of Gahana Pokhari (Nyalmapukhu). This is where, at present, the remaining buildings of Tangal Durbar, the palace of Rana Prime Minister Bhim Shumsher, are located. Although the site was completely destroyed, archaeologically speaking, through building activities in the 1930s, many images dating to the early and middle Lichchhavi periods were not desecrated; they were, in fact, left to posterity. This archaeological evidence attests to the importance of the Tangal Durbar site from early Lichchhavi times. While Bangdel dates the image of Ganesh of Tangal to the seventh century, the posture of Ganesh—one leg folded and the other resting on the ground—and its hefty head demand an assignment to a still earlier date. This image should be similar in age to the image of Surya, also found there but now housed in the National Museum and dated by Bangdel to about the fourth century. Likewise, the two-handed image of Vishnu and another of Parvati found at the site also belong to early Hindu imagery. The ancientness of the image of Parvati is indicated by the similarities between her beaded dress, slim waist and wide hips and those of the cult image HSN 10 illustrated on page 76.

Tangal Ganesh still has a broken stone post, a silastambha, nearby. In a Lichchhavi town, a silastambha post was a standard element located just outside the town or palace gates to tie up animals of personal transport,
such as elephants and horses. We have inscriptions from the Lichchhavi period providing written evidence that such a pillar was provided outside Yadudwara, the southeast entrance gateway of the capital region. Within such posts, animals for personal transport were not allowed. The Tangal silastambha would have served a similar purpose.

The location of Ganesh, its orientation towards the exit, and the silastambha all strongly suggest that one of the gateways to Madhyama Rajkul was sited immediately behind and to the east of Tangal Ganesh. The conjectural size and location of Madhyama Rajkul in relation to the settlement of Handigaun can thus be shown as on page 205. This map was made taking into consideration the inscription, the locations of the Mana-maneswori and Bhuvaneswor devkul (Bhim-nani) temples, and the locations of Gahana Pokhari and the temple of Ganesh at Tangal. The main building of Madhyama Rajkul was apparently approached from the east and the approach axis extended to the central place, the dabali, at Dabali, Handigaun. Apparently, a ceremonial passage entered the southern end of the palace compound from Tangal Ganesh and extended into Handigaun to define the embankment of Gahana Pokhari.

About five years ago, the remains of a large-scale building foundation were destroyed during the construction of the Samudra-Mana Pratisthan building immediately north of Gahana Pokhari. The damaged walls were constructed of un-marked bricks exactly matching Amshuverma bricks in size. The backfill material deposits pointed to the early Lichchhavi Period. The northwestern area of the site had a paved layer about 120 cm below the current ground level. The area occupied by a private temple to the northwest of Gahana Pokhari, if explored, can confirm the exact location of Madhyama Rajkul as this area should have the remains of the buildings of the main entrance complex usual for palaces of that time.

As its name itself indicates, Bhuvaneswor Devkul was a site venerated by the ancient Kirat. The importance of the site since ancient times is signified by several other elements, too, such as the agam pati of Chyaguthi, a unique well provided with a stepped approach, and the images of mother goddesses found around the site. It is possible that a linga was set up at the same site and that it was the tutelary god of the capital settlement in the early days. This linga could very well be the mutilated deity of the fallen temple in Bhimnani at Kotaltole, which appears to have provided early Saiva cosmology to the capital.

One Lichchhavi inscription tells us that Bhauramagupta, one of the samanta, or regents, who became very powerful in later years, usurped land grants donated for the mainte-
nance of this temple for some unclear reason, maybe Vaisnav zealotry. Bhuvaneswor Devkul finally fell into oblivion following the religious disturbances and the great fire of the last quarter of the seventh century. King Narendradev's efforts (DRR-CXVII) to bring it back to state status apparently failed. Bhuvaneswor Devkul was, however, certainly at Maneswor, the name given to Handigaun after the construction of the Mangriha palace and used until the middle of the seventh century. It is evident from inscriptions that the Saiva site of Bhimmani was popular and active until 818 CE, when a certain Bhagyachandra installed an image of a god there (D.B. Bajracharya, 2025 BS).

We may note here that the oldest festival of Handigaun, the Tunaldevi Jatra, is participated in Mahalaxmi of Naxal and that her route crosses the Madhyama Rajkul area. The goddess takes a fixed route to come to Handigaun Dabali from Naxal and this route should be recognised as the main thoroughfare of the early days. From the pith in Naxal, the Manekhat of Mahalaxmi moves northwards from Chardunge to Lal Ganesh and then on to Gairidhara. From here the khat moves due east to Tangal Ganesh and through Tangal Durbar to Gahana Pokhari. It clearly follows the axis of the central street of Handigaun. This is so ancient and important a route that even the construction of the palace of the powerful Rana Prime Minister Bhim Shumsher could not erase it. In our conjectural scheme this street falls to the south of the main complex of Madhyama Rajkul. Since the placing of Ganesh suggests that the street was part of the ceremonial route through the palace, Madhyama Rajkul seems to have had a tripura, or three courtyard format, prescribed for palaces; its southern courtyard was to the right of the entrance at Tangal Ganesh. Apparently, the central courtyard was entered directly from the Gahana Pokhari side on the east.

Also as Hindu practice required placing a royal palace to the west in general and preferably in the northwest section of a planned town, the extent of such a palace would have used the whole of the western section of the capital town. This supposition fits well with the settlement extent of Andipringga, which occupied the area east of Gahana Pokhari. The palace location thus conforms to the Hindu dictates the Lichchhavi followed.

In Chapter 24, 'The planning of Maneswor', a conjectural planning of the capital town formed by the Madhyama Rajkul palace based on extant features and Hindu doctrinal requirements is presented.

Notes
1 Kanchinagar Mandal may be a reference to the Lele area, which was called 'Lembati' in late Lichchhavi days.
2 As a matter fact, it is his inscriptions that tell about other early Lichchhavi palaces such as Daxin Rajkul and Pundri Rajkul, too.
3 Some archaeologists, basing their opinions on ground contours, have suggested that Tangal Durbar is the site of Kailashkut Bhavan. The referred-to inscription does not support this position as we would then have to place Mangriha to the west of Tangal, an impossible situation as the Manamaneswori Temple has to be to the northwest of the palace Mangriha.
The first Lichchhavi king, Bhaskerverma, who established the Lichchhavi capital in Kathmandu Valley after Vaishali was taken over by the Kushan, had no sons. Chronicles report that he adopted Bhumiverma and made him the second king of the Nepali Lichchhavi state. It apparently took Bhumiverma four years to finish constructing Madhyama Rajkul, his palace in Vishalnagar. He was to rule from this palace for thirty-seven years. The strengthening and firm rooting of the power of Madhyama Rajkul led to the naming of the capital settlement itself as ‘Madhyama Rajkul’. As the power of the Kushan started to wane in the neighbouring empire down south, the Lichchhavi increased theirs. The fourth ruler, the illustrious Jayaverma, earned such legendary fame during his forty-five years of rule that, thirty generations later, he was remembered and thought fit to be named in a very discerning chronology of Lichchhavi kings inscribed by Jayaverma II in the Pashupatinath precincts dated 733 CE. All this was dismissed as legend and a figment of Jayaverma II’s imagination until a statue of Jayaverma I was discovered in Maligaun in 1994. Destined to become the earliest of the available Lichchhavi inscriptions in Nepal so far, the find has instilled reality into legends and chronicles; at
King Jayaverma of Maligaun during the Lichchhavi Period was thus established.

Despite this finding, the government has shown no interest in protecting or exploring the site further. In 1991, the construction of the Nutritious Food Programme building in the compound of Sita Bhavan caused massive destruction of Lichchhavi remains. Likewise, in 1994, when the excavation work for the foundations of a private commercial building started nearby, every foundation pit had to cut through what looked like a paved court just one foot below ground, but nobody bothered to stop the destruction. A passerby happened to see a fallen stone image near a foundation pit and reported it to the police. The statue of Jayaverma, thus, was an accidental discovery. Unsupervised digging had led to the loss of one of the hands of the full-sized statue. Despite the clearly visible brick platform support underneath, the government declared that the image did not belong to the site and so clearance for the new building over the site was given. The spot that had yielded authentic proof pushing back the written history of Nepal by over three hundred years to the virtual beginning of Lichchhavi rule, was thus dismissed as not worthy of protection.

The inscription on the pedestal

The full-sized image of Lichchhavi King Jayaverma was easy to identify as the inscription on the pedestal was straightforward on this issue. The complete interpretation, however, was a matter of controversy from the beginning. The first reading, given by the Deo...
partment of Archaeology, was: ‘Samvat 107 sriparamadeva...maharajesu\textit{jayavarma}'.

Cultural historian and epigraphist Regmi gave a slightly different reading: ‘Samvat 107 sri\textit{paramadeva}a[\textit{\textit{naka}}} maharajasya jayavarmma n[a:]’ (D.C. Regmi, 2049 BS). The Gorakhapatra issue of 12 Jestha, 2049 carried a new reading by S.S. Rajvamshi. Although the inscription is very clear in that the eighth and ninth letters are ‘ra’ and ‘ma’ and not ‘\textit{naca}', some interpretive speculation appears to have prompted this misreading; later in S.M. Rajvamshi’s article this mistaken interpretation was provided: ‘Samvat 107 sri pancadevapka maharajasya jayavarmana’. The noted epigraphist H.R. Shakya gave the following reading in a Newari weekly, \textit{Rajamati}, thus correcting earlier misreadings to some extent: ‘Samvat 107 sri paramadeva pka maharajas\textit{a} jayavarmana’. S.M. Rajvamshi, 1993, agrees with S.S. Rajvamshi’s reading of the word ‘paramadeva' as ‘pan’cadeva'.

Problems with the readings and interpretations

Regmi has unconvincingly tried to suggest that the year 107 could belong to the Gupta Samvat, reasoning that the developed nature of the script must postdate similar epigraphic parallels in India, where this level of development is seen only about the fifth century. The discussions provided below will prove that this position is untenable. Two other interpretations, one made by S.M. Rajvamshi and the other by Kasinath Tamot/Ian Alsop, deserve further discussion as well.

S.S. Rajvamshi is carried away by the astrological meaning of ‘\textit{deva}', a word used to refer to a lunar month consisting of one bright and dark cycle and lasting 27.93 days. He interprets ‘pan’cadeva pka’ as ‘the fourth day of the bright moon of the fifth lunar month’. The question of such an interpretation does not arise as the inscribed word in question is clearly ‘paramadeva pka’. The letter ‘pka’, meaning the numeral four, is taken by him as a \textit{tithi} indicator. Lichchhavi inscriptions have always used straight numerals to indicate a \textit{tithi} and this can be no exception. Thus misreading \textit{pa ra ma} as \textit{pa n’ca}, Rajvamshi suggested an interpretive translation: ‘Year 107, the fourth day of the bright moon of Falgun (Falgun Sukla Chauthi) Jayavermana’. This interpretation is not only based on the above-mentioned incorrect reading but also does not explain the use of the respectful ‘sri' to qualify the date. The use of ‘sri' in the context as interpreted by Rajvamshi is highly irrational. It also overlooks the letter ‘su’ suffixed to the second last word ‘maharajesu'.

Tamot and Alsop have read the letter suffixed to the second last word as ‘sy\textit{a}', making it ‘maharajas\textit{ya}', and offer the following interpretive translation: ‘In the year Saka Samvat 107, the great king Jaya Varma, the fourth, Great Lord’.

This rendering also has several problems. One, it translates ‘\textit{samvat}' as Saka Samvat and, second, it literally translates ‘\textit{maharaja}' as great king and ‘\textit{paramadeva}' as great lord. Thirdly, the suffix ‘\textit{sy\textit{a}}' of the word ‘maharajas\textit{ya}' is left out of the interpretation. The numeral four, indicated by the combined letter ‘pka’, is translated as qualifying the name of the king and is accordingly interpreted as Jaya Verma IV. Jayavarma IV would have to belong after Jayaverma II (i.e., Jayadev II), and not before.

Both the above interpretations are faulty and they intermingle readings and interpretations. The image is now cleaned, restored and displayed in the National Museum and it is obvious the inscription was definitely composed using early Lichchhavi script. The closest reading is still the first reading by, the DOA, which only left out the combined letter ‘pka’ and the short ‘\textit{ra}' over the last letter ‘\textit{mma}'. By now there is no confusion about the two letters not read in the first attempt. The following is, therefore, the correct reading: ‘Samvat 107 sri
paramadeva pka mahārājēsu jayavarmma.'

Assigning meaning
Literally 'pa ra ma' implies extreme or highest and 'deva' is god. It was and is traditional to see kings as god incarnate and the titles 'deva' and 'pa ra ma de va' have been used as royal epithets in societies that use Sanskrit. It is important to note here that in no Lichchhavi inscription has a ruling monarch used 'paramadeva' as a title. Instead, 'bhattaraka', a synonym, is used almost universally. While quite a few kings have used terms like 'Paramamahesvara' and 'paramesvara', 'paramadeva' seems to have been deliberately avoided. Of the inscriptions issued by Basantadev, three use the adjective form of 'paramadeva', i.e., 'paramadaivata', with respect to his late father and king and not, as Bajracharya and Regmi have claimed, as an epithet for himself. The Lichchhavi usage of the word 'pa ra ma de va', thus, should be translated as 'respected as a great god, the departed'. Only once, in Svamivarta's inscription (DRR-XLV), has the term been used with respect to a living person and there it is used not as a royal title but as a poetic phrase to mean 'respect as befitting a great god'; these words referred to Bhaumagupta and were used by an ardent supporter of his. Thus the term 'paramadeva' should be translated as the 'late' monarch. The word 'mahārājēsu' obviously translates as 'among the kings'. The combination letter 'pka', meaning four, qualifies 'mahārājēsu' and therefore 'pka mahārājēsu' should be translated as 'among the kings, the fourth'.

Dated statues of kings are not common, but those that have been found normally indicate some important happening in connection with the subject. Here, the epithet 'paramadeva' denotes that in the year 107, Jayaverma died. Thus the inscription informs us that Jayaverma was the fourth king ruling the Lichchhavi state of Nepal and that he died in the year 107. Thus, the literal translation of the inscription on the pedestal of the life-sized statue of Jayaverma from Maligaun should read: 'The Year 107. Among the Kings, the Fourth, Late Sri Jayavarmma.'

The dating of Jayaverma
All Lichchhavi inscriptions use two epochal periods: whereas the first Lichchhavi samvat was in use from the period of Mandev to that of Sivadev I, all later inscriptions use the second Lichchhavi samvat started by Regent Amshuverma in 576 CE. The style of carving and the use of sankhu-type sandstone—sandstone without polish—typical of the Lichchhavi before Mandev—as well as the use of an early script are sufficient to show that the statue could not belong to the second Lichchhavi epoch (P. Darnal, 1998). Analysts have been almost unanimous in dating it to the first Lichchhavi samvat. Since the publication of N.R. Pant's treatise Lichchhavi Samvatko Nirnaya, it has been generally accepted that the early Lichchhavi epoch is Saka Samvat. It may be for this reason that Tamot and Alsop translated the word 'samvat' as 'Saka Samvat' in their rendering. This would put the statue at around 184/85 CE. We have earlier argued that the first Lichchhavi samvat was initiated by Bhumiverma and started six months later than the Saka samvat. This epoch, the Sakaraja or Sakara Samvat, started in September/October, 78. (See Chapter 12: 'The Lichchhavi take over'.)

Corroboration by chronicles and other inscriptions
Two other sources, the Pashupati stele of Jayadev II and the Gopalarajavamsavali give information about a King Jayaverma/Jayadev belonging to the early Lichchhavi period. Jayadev's stele traces his own genealogy from mythological times. There are wide gaps in the Lichchhavi ruling hierarchy, however, as it only names the powerful rul-
ers. Although the hierarchy is true with respect to the period of inscription, it does omit some rulers, maybe due to their having been overshadowed by regents, and thus its very long lineage has seemed suspect to many. Because the chronicle *Gopalarajavamsavali* was written in the fourteenth century and because its account was based on inscriptions available then as well as on other written records and oral traditions prevailing at that time, its accuracy regarding early periods may be poor. Indeed, historians have not found a reliable chronicle for the Lichchhavi Period in general. It is interesting that the Lichchhavi genealogy in Jayadev II’s stele and the *vamsavali* are similar; this suggests the former was available to the chronicler, as were other sources which might have been used to fill in the gaps. It is also very likely that the chronicler would have seen the statue of Jayadev with the date. For this reason, despite its inaccuracies, the *vamsavali* assumes greater importance.

Jayadev II places Jayadev as the twentieth Lichchhavi king starting with King Lichchhavi, while the *vamsavali* places Jayaverma as twentieth in the hierarchy starting with King Vishal. The inscription on the Jayaverma statue clearly names Jayaverma as the fourth Lichchhavi ruler. Since the Lichchhavi came to Kathmandu from their Vaishali republic, we may reconcile the two records and the facts given by the inscription by supposing that the first sixteen Lichchhavi kings recalled by Jayadev II and the chronicler are memories of the earlier kingdom and that both may have been going back to the Lichchhavi republic from the period of the Buddha. In this case, the first king of the Nepali Lichchhavi kingdom would have been seventeenth in their lists. According the chronicle, therefore, Bhaskerverma must have been the first king of Lichchhavi Nepal. Indian historians have suggested that the Lichchhavi republic of Vaishali had disintegrated by the end of the rule of Bhaskerdev (another name of Bhaskerverma). It would seem that Bhaskerdev had already retreated to Kathmandu when the disintegration of Vaishali took place; he would thus be the last head of the Lichchhavi republic of Vaishali and also the first king of the Lichchhavi kingdom of Nepal. In Nepal, he was followed to the throne by Bhumiverma, whom Bhaskerverma had adopted because he had no son of his own. The Jayaverma statue makes it clear that other Lichchhavi kings before Bhaskerverma listed by the chronicle as well as by the stele must be memories of other kingdoms and thus of no direct concern to us here.

Jayaverma died in Samvat 107. Since the mean period of rule of a king in ancient South Asian history has been computed to vary between 22 to 28 years, and 107 is a plausible total for the years of rule of three to four kings, it is quite plausible that King Jayaverma was the fourth king and that the inscription itself proves that the *samvat* refers to a new epochal year. The coming to power of the adopted prince, Bhumiverma, must have been the reason for beginning a new era, and it was named Sakara Samvat after his origins. Since Jayaverma died on Samvat 107, 107 years must have lapsed after the founding of the new epoch. His position as fourth in the hierarchy is based on a count starting after the formation of the Lichchhavi kingdom of Nepal. Revisiting the opinion of B. Indraji, expressed more than 100 years ago, may be sobering (B. Indraji, 1885).

Indraji tries to establish the position of Jayadev I/Jayaverma on the basis of the chronicle and the Jayadev II stele. Allowing a mean reign of 22 years for fifteen kings between Jayadev I and Mandev, he computed that Jayadev would have preceded Mandev by 330 years. With the evidence of the current statue, if Mandev and Jayaverma were using the same *samvat*, the actual time from
his death to the beginning of Mandev's rule would have been 280 years. Adding the reign of Jayaverma as stated in the vamsavali to it, the figure would be 325 years. It is indeed amazing that applying an average reign of 22 years per ruling king as suggested by Indraji (1885) and using the chronicler's claim about the length of the reign of Jayadev, the dates corroborate very closely with the date on the recently discovered Jayaverma statue. The samvat mentioned in the statue and the one used by Mandev should, thus, be one and the same. The statue, however, refutes Indrajit's proposition that Jayadev I was the first Lichchhavi king of Nepal and proves beyond doubt that at least three kings preceded Jayaverma and that they could not have been fictitious.

The Gopalarajavamsavali gives the reigns of the four kings up to the death of Jayaverma as follows:

- King Sri Bhaskerdev - 74 years
- King Sri Bhumigupta - 41 years
- King Sri Chandraverma - 21 years
- King Sri Jayaverma - 45 years

It is seen from the above account that the three latter kings ruled a total of 107 years and that the lengths of their reigns are quite plausible. This obviously means that the year given on the Jayaverma statue belongs to the epoch started at the beginning of the rule of Bhumiverma. This could not be Saka Samvat, as that was started by a Salivahana king and not by Bhumiverma. In Chapter 12, we have already shown why Bhumiverma's new samvat would have been named 'Sakara' or 'Sakaraja Samvat', as referred to in Sumati-tantra and Harivamsa; it was later mistakenly referred to as Saka Samvat. As Saka Samvat started from Kartik Sukla Pareba or September/October, 78 CE. As Saka Samvat started in Chaitra Sukla Pareba, six months earlier, the reckoning of Saka and Sakara samvat would overlap; the year would appear the same numerically for the second half of Saka Samvat and the first half of Sakara Samvat. N.R. Pant makes the same conversion using other arguments when he converts Samvat 386 indicated in Mandev's Changu-narayan inscription to Varahamihir's Saka 387 (N.R. Pant, 2043 BS: pp. 92-105). It can be concluded, therefore that the era that started with Bhumiverma's assumption of power was Sakara Samvat. Jayaverma died on Sakara Samvat 107. This would be 185/186 CE because of the six-month gap between the Sakara and Saka samvat.

The statue of Jayaverma from Maligaun thus not only pushes the written historical record of Nepal back by more than three hundred years to 185/186 CE but also proves that the Gopalarajavamsavali is actually quite accurate about the beginnings of Lichchhavi history in Nepal. It also gives us sufficient reason to speculate that the Lichchhavi state of Vaishali was re-established at the time of Nimisha (Nimitya). Five generations later, at the time of Bhaskerverma, Vaishali disintegrated and Bhaskerverma became the last to rule from Vaishali and the first to rule from Nepal. It would also appear that the Kirat provided concessions to Supuspadev of Vaishali before they were edged out of power by Bhaskerverma. As it would happen, he handed over the new kingdom to the son of a Kirat couple. That Bhumiverma was a Kirat is supported by the naming of the new era as Sakara Samvat. This must have been the reason why Jayadev II left out the three generations of Bhaskerverma and created such a tour of mythology to show that King Vishal was the founder of the kingdom. Even as Jayadev II drew a long list, his emphatic stand that Jayadev was the twentieth Lichchhavi king is corroborated by Gopalarajavamsavali; he is not claiming royal ancestry beyond King Vishal.
The Brick and the Bull

Royal robe of the second century

The sculpture and its pedestal is sixty-eight inches high and shows Jayaverma standing erect with his left hand resting on his waist. The other hand is broken. The facial features are not Mongoloid. The whole body is simply dressed but well ornamented.

With bare arms and chest, Jayaverma wears a printed cloth wrapped like a dhoti around his waist and hanging down to his ankles. One end of the dhoti-like cloth is closely folded and hangs down from the front middle of his waist almost to his ankles. The other end is loosely folded and goes around his waist and up from the back, across his chest, over his left shoulder and drops down to his waist in the back. At the back an additional sash, wide enough to cover his hips, is tied and left hanging down to his ankles. A wide woven decorative string belt is loosely placed around his waist and tied at the back. At the right of his waist, the belt shows a fine knotted design. The king wears a head-hugging cap with a round tubular rim open at the back. A string passes through the ring and is tied at the back of his head. The royal coiffure shows hair in the back cropped short just above the neckline.

The body is fully ornamented with thick earrings, a wide neck band, a V-shaped necklace, arm bands, and thick wrist bangles. A string waist ornament with a small circular design is also worn in the front.

The location of the statue

The posture of the statue and the placement of the left hand rules out the possibility that it was sculpted to be put at a temple site for religious merit; it looks more like a court portrait, sculpted some time after the death of Jayaverma. Since the pedestal of the statue has a dowel projecting out, it was obviously meant to be put on another structure. The site from where the image was retrieved did, in fact, have a brick cubic pedestal sitting on a brick-paved court. The image, when discovered, was, thus, in situ. The exact spot is about 200 metres due south of Gahana Pokhari of Handigaun, a few paces from the digu-dyo site of the Maharjan of Handigaun. In olden days, this place was within the capital town of Madhyama Rajkul. The spot, however, appears to be part of the later Kailashkut palace and its environs, as both Madhyama Rajkul and Mangriha were further to the west and north. But Kailashkut Bhavan was constructed more than four hundred years after the death of Jayaverma. It is more likely, therefore, that it was relocated from the older palace of Madhyama Rajkul to the new power centre. There is no doubt that the statue of Jayaverma is the earliest dated archaeological sentinel of the history of Handigaun as a Lichchhavi capital. Only the stone image of Yaksha, which was also retrieved from Handigaun and is now at the National Museum, may challenge this assertion.

Identified by a name plate entitled
'Yaksha', this image is stylistically dated to the first or second century CE. The stylistic similarity of what is left of Yaksha and the statue of Jayaverma is amazing. Every detail is similar, but Yaksha appears older. What is strikingly similar is the woven string belt loosely thrown round the waists of both the images. Lichchhavi kings were identified by their belt, or mekhala, and not by a crown. This inference may be drawn from the statue and by Wang Huen Che's description of Narendradev, which states that he wore the image of Buddha on his mekhala. The presence of the same belt ornament on Yaksha could well be taken to conclude that this image is of a great Lichchhavi king who ruled earlier than Jayadev. If such is the case, we might have reduced, through our historian's preoccupation with comparative art studies, King Bhumiverma into a headless and armless Yaksha. Future discoveries from the wombs of Handigaun could complete a sculpture gallery of Lichchhavi kings.

It appears from chronicles that the religious affinity of the rulers subsequent to Bhumiverma continued to lean towards Kirat Saivism. About a century later, when King

1. Anantaligeswor
2. Machchhenarayan
3. Thankot Narayan
Haridutta Verma came to power, as chronicles report, a shift in the religious preference of the Lichchhavi royal house occurred. The middle name 'Dutta' used by this king is new to Lichchhavi kings and it has led to speculations that Haridutta Verma might have been another adopted heir ('dattaka putra' means 'adopted son' in Sanskrit). He may have been adopted from a Vaisnav family. With the popularity of Vaisnavism among the Lichchhavi royal personages and among the people to a limited extent, the Saiva cosmology of Madhyama Rajkul was apparently overlapped by Narayan cosmology after this time. As per Hindu planning dictates, Satyanarayan, a sridhar image of Vishnu, was placed to the east and a little outside the settlement boundaries (P.K. Acharya, 1995: pp. 72-80). In this process, the site of the goddess of Andipringga got a new temple beside it, as the site was outside of the eastern end of the axis of the Madhyama Rajkul palace. This act watered down the physical importance of the goddess to some extent. It must also have been about this time that Bhuvaneswor Devkul also lost its importance as the tutelary image of Madhyama Rajkul as it shed its Kirat lineage hidden in Bhumiverma.

Haridutta Verma set up the four Narayan temples in the four corner directions, with Satyanarayan at the ritual centre. The Narayan or Vishnu cult had become dominant in the Lichchhavi kingdom. The action further reinforced the centrality of Vishalnagar and Madhyama Rajkul as a new mandala of Vishnu was imposed over Kathmandu Valley. The chronicles coming from the medieval period name the corner Narayans to be Sikhanarayan at Pharping, Narayan at Ichangu, Narayan at Changu and Narayan at Bishankhu. Later religious readjustments in the Transitional Period appear to have led to the eclipse of all Narayans but Changunarayan, and they were to be rehabilitated only in the Malla Period.

Still later, putting Bhumalakkika-jalasayana, the current Budanilkantha, on the north axis, the Lichchhavi rulers further reinforced the Vaisnav cosmology. If one goes by legendary associations, the earlier place of importance in the Budanilkantha area would have been Vishnupaduka Phedi, which is located a little higher and to the northwest of the Vishnu site. The Saiva nature of this site must lead one to see it this way in the history of development.

Despite the imposition of Vaisnav cosmology, seemingly in reverence of the older order and also in recognition of the popular strength of the Saiva cult, the easterly direction occupied by Siva Pashupati was left untouched.

Notes
1 The fragment is in my collection of bricks from around Handigaun.
2 Lately S. Amatya, then Director General of the Department of Archaeology, has agreed that the spot is significant to the study of Lichchhavi history. (S. Amatya, 2053 BS)
3 Rajvamshi also suggests that the year 107 is not Saka but is the first Lichchhavi samvat, which started 22 years earlier. This position has been amply refuted already (N.R. Pant, 2043 BS). Rajvamshi's suggestion that Jayadev I started this samvat is refuted by the inscription itself.
5 Monarchs are variously referred to as 'Bhattaraka Maharaja', 'Parambhattaraka', 'Paramamaheswor', 'Parameswor', 'Maharajadhiraja', 'Maharaja', 'Ragnya', 'Raja' or 'Nripa' in Lichchhavi inscriptions. D.B. Bajracharya says and D.R. Regmi also gives examples to show that the title 'Paramadev' was used in
the case of powerful kings in India.

6 Almost all the inscriptions of Basantadev (DRR XX - XXIV) refer to the ancestry and source of royal power as 'para ma dai vat ba ppa...'

7 In DRR XLV, an officer refers to a living Bhaumagupta as 'paramadaivata'. The context makes it clear that 'Mahapratihara Bhaumagupta' has the virtual power of a state. But this is more a poetic composition than its use as an official title.

8 Regmi translates 'paramadaivata' incorrectly as 'great devotee of god'. (D.R. Regmi, 1983)

9 The poetic phrase of the inscription expressing the number of kings between Supuspa and Jayadev seems to have been translated wrongly by Regmi, Bajracharya and others as 'twenty-three'. 'Sardham Bhupativistrivih kshitibhritam tyaktvantare vimshatim khyatah srijayadeva...' should be translated as 'adding three more kings before (Supuspa) and leaving out three more after (Supuspa), thereafter came the twentieth and famed king named Srijayadeva'. Note that the term is 'vimshatim' ('twentieth') and not 'vimshati' ('twenty').

10 The first ruler may have been King Vishal and the Lichchhavi ruled for twelve generations out of Vimalnagar according to Gopalajavamsavali. The name Vimalnagar seems to have been taken because Lord Buddha had delivered the Vimalakirti sutra at Vesara. Vaishali is, of course, the country with its capital at Vesara, which is a corruption of Vishal.

11 Jayachandra Vidhyalankar says that Vasker Varma was regarded as the head of the Lichchhavi republic of Vaishali by the citizenry there. His suggestions that Vasker Varma's daughter was married to Chandra Gupta and that the plains portion of the republic passed on to the Guptas is, however, untenable, as Gupta rule started much later.

12 Some chronicles have suggested that Mauryan rule overlapped with later Kirat rule. Kautilya's Arthasastra proves that Nepal had an independent existence during the Mauryan period. This makes Kirat Nepal a neighbour of the Mauryan Empire. Nimish must have re-established the Vaishali republic after the end of Mauryan rule.

13 The treatise called Harivamsa was copied in NS 775 (1655 CE). (N.R. Pant, 2043 BS: p. 4)

14 This has been misread by others as 'Bhumvukkika'.

King Jayaverma of Maligaun
Chapter 15

Lichchhavi waterworks about the capital region

With the rising power and wealth of the Lichchhavi state, the capital town of Madhyama Rajkul also grew steadily in population. The popularity of the shruti dharma also must have reached equally great proportions and made Brahmin rituals, which demand three ritual baths every day, extensive. Even the Kirat, who still followed their Rudra cult, had increased ritual ablutions to three times a day. With such growth in the demand for drinking as well as bathing water, the earlier water supply system of the Kirat, which was based on the pond system that existed in Andipringga, would have not sufficed for Madhyama Rajkul. Gahana Pokhari, or Nyalmapukhu, would also have failed to provide the flowing water demanded by the new dharma.

The two rivers, Brihatnadi (Andikhu or Tukucha) in the west and the Rudramati (Lankhu or Dhobi Khola) in the east, could have provided the requisite water. However, there were several problems, one of which was the location of the town on a ridge some thirty feet higher than the river level. Wells did not work well and had to be very deep. On top of that, the supply of water in the rivers was erratic and not uniform in all seasons. Both rivers flooded their banks in the rainy season. Because of this, the construction of systems to supply water became a prized pious act.

Deep pit water conduits have existed in the valley almost from the time the frequency of Lichchhavi inscriptions increases. At Keltole in Kathmandu, one such water conduit was constructed about the beginning of the sixth century during the reign of King Mandev (Ins. No. DRR-XV). Soon after, King Basantadev recognised the need to regularly repair another system in the western part of the valley. However, the oldest surviving and working water conduit of the Lichchhavi Period is located at Satyanarayan in Handigaun, possibly marking access to the capital town from the east. The construction of this conduit was the pious act of the royal personage Bharavi in the year 550 CE. We do not have written evidence to show exactly when the science and technology of constructing pit conduits to supply urban areas was developed. Since it is possible to suggest that the knowledge of the pit conduit water supply system and the technology of its construction was known to the Indus civilisation and thus, to the Kirats, this could have been handed down to the Lichchhavi by the Kirat.

Given the hilly nature of the areas of early Kirat habitation, it is unlikely that they used wells. Even Lichchhavi inscriptions contain only a single reference to a well, or kupa, (cf. Kupanjaladravanika at Tebahal, DRR-CXI); clearly, wells were a rarity. That the Kirat relied on ponds to supply their settlements can be gleaned from the presence of ponds at such ancient Kirat sites as Mahadevpokhari (Nagarkot), Dahachowk (across from Than-kot), Pokhari Bhanjyang (over Gundu),
Lichchhavi waterworks about the capital region

Pokhari Thumko (over Pharping), etc. As a matter of fact, as late as the time of Mangupta, a contemporary of Bharavi's, the construction of ponds, puskaran, or khataka, in Sanskrit, was a pious act akin to the construction of a pit water conduit (cf. DRR-CVI).

Lichchhavis came from the plains and did not know about the recessed pit conduit system of water although they did know about canals. But the technique of waterproofing the bottom and sides of a pond was known since the Kirat Period. The Lichchhavi must have put the two—ponds and canals—together and the system of the stone water conduit was born. Alternatively, the knowledge existed in the memory of the Kirat and the stone conduit system was a reinvention in response to the special circumstances pertaining to the growing settlement. As legends pertaining to King Dharmadev suggest, there was a period of experimentation and failure it is more likely that the system was discovered the hard way only towards the middle of the fifth century CE (see Chapter 16). It seems that at this time the central pond of Madhyama Rajkul was fed by a canal constructed under the direct order of Dharmadev. It must have been the first time that the pond reservoir was also used to feed the stone water conduit at a lower level. It would take a further hundred years for the Lichchhavi to perfect the recessed pit system of water supply, which introduced great versatility into the system.

Rudramati dries up, causing a crisis
The ancient system of Kirat water supply, which came as a legacy to the Lichchhavi capital, was either the pond of the goddess of Andipringga, Nyamapukhu, or the pond of the Bhairav, Kwapukhu. This supply was augmented by using river water from the east. The Rudramati river was particularly unpredictable: it had flooded its banks several times and damaged the Valasokhdevkul area. The embankment wall structure, built earlier in about 100 BCE to check the inundation of its western bank was often overrun. A new, higher wall was built further east, about 25 metres from the old wall, to make space for more facilities and, at the same time, to protect it. According to a legend, a massive landslide south of the current Tusal, Tupek and Tokha area, extending from Dhapasi to Kapan, affected the flow of water in both the rivers there, leading to a change in the course of the river Rudramati. Geologists confirm that the current Dhapasi and the areas to its east is a result of marshy land movement from Ahale Dada towards Bansbari. This happened long before the historical period and what the chronicles refer to is a much later residual phenomenon, the last stages of which are still continuing to this day. This latter landslide virtually reduced the lower part of the Vishnumati and Dhobi Khola catchment areas into a pond. Over the last millennium, the pond appears to have been inundated as the Vishnumati and the Dhobi Khola and their tributaries cut deep into the marshy land. As a result, today only expert eyes can see the remains of this movement of the marshland eastwards.

The landslide apparently happened just before the rule of Dharmadev, some time in
the first half of the fifth century CE. To resolve the grave water crisis faced by the capital, Madhyama Rajkul, the Lichchhavi state seems to have commissioned a large water supply project, taking advantage of the accidentally created pond as well as of the existing natural channels of water flow such as rivulets with adjustable courses. The water so brought apparently fed Nyalrnapukha and Kapukhu; the overflow was directed to the Rudramati, forming a sort of bathing ghat to the south of the temple Bhuvaneswor Devkul, or Kotaltole of today. This project, popularly remembered by the Jyapu of Handigaun as a diversion of the Khahare River, originated from the area of the slide itself. That the headworks of this system was located at the Dhapasi area is remembered by the Satyanarayan Jatra at Handigaun and confirmed to some extent by inscriptions from the later Lichchhavi Period. This water supply system served the capital well to its last days. The regulation of flow had its own problems and popular memory has it that the ‘stream’ was capable of moving boulders as big as the stone in Handigaun called Nyalmalohn and now revered as Bhairav. However, as Handigaun lost its position as the capital to Bhaktapur and as Gunapo palace (the earlier name of the Basantapur palace) was built in Kathmandu by Gunakamadev in the eleventh century, its water supply was ultimately diverted as the ‘raj-kulo’ (literally ‘royal canal’) to supply water to Kathmandu town.

We can place the construction of the waterworks in the reign of King Dharmadev on two circumstantial grounds: one, legendary references and, two, existing place names. The legendary reference to Dharmadev describes him as a king with supernatural yogic powers and claims he was unknowingly beheaded or sacrificed at a stone water conduit charged by the pond he himself had constructed next to his palace. (See Chapter 16: ‘Dharmadev sacrificed and the goddess of Andipringga becomes Torandevi’.) The pond was apparently fed by a stream flowing next to it, as was reported by Hiuen Tsang. Place names about the headworks area also link the system to Dharmadev. Dhapasi and the areas around the legendary entry of the river into Handigaun use the root name ‘Dharma’, derived from ‘Dharmadev’. For example, around Dhapasi, we have ‘Dharampur’ and ‘Dharamthali’ and around the Khahare Khola near Handigaun we have such place names as ‘Dhati’, ‘Dhaticho’, and ‘Dharamthali’. These names seem to have gained currency after the Lichchhavi Period and apparently reflect the will of the people of the area to keep Dharmadev in living memory. Other well-known works of Dharmadev, like the chaitya of Chabel popularly called Dhamare or Dhando Chaitya show a similar linkage (Dharmadeva > Dhamade > Dhamare or Dharmadev don > Dhamdon > Dhando). Just as Dharmadev Chaitya has degenerated into Dhando Chaitya, so too the ancient name of the Khahare rivulet, Dharamevkhusi, has now become Dhana Kushi.

Lichchhavis traditionally set up Siva linga to earn religious merit and peace for the dead. Mandev also built a linga for the purpose of ‘uprooting the sorrows and maladies of all the world including himself’. Possibly known later as Dharamaneswor, this Siva linga must have been located close to the water conduit where his father was beheaded at Handigaun. We will see in the next chapter that this was at Manamaneswori. He also seems to have consecrated another Siva linga at the head of the river Vishnumati in 473 CE. This linga appears to have marked the source of the water that was channelled into the Khahare. This linga was so important for the capital as a water source marker that the population of the valley made it a tradition to go here and ask for rain if the monsoon failed to materialise. That Mandev placed it in the river Vishnumati explains the importance of
Lichchhavi waterworks about the capital region

The chariot of Chokteswor Narayan (left) and the numinous stones of Bansbari (right)

this place in the life of Dharmadev. He apparently set up the image at the ultimate source of the water conduit, in front of which, as folklore tells it, he beheaded his father. It is interesting that the Tokha inscription of 597 CE issued by King Sivadev and Mahasamanta Amshuverma names a river in the area southeast of Tokha as Jnyatikhun Nadi. This appears to be a reference to the area around Bansbari from which the natural drainage of the area was adjusted by making embankments and diverting part of the blocked water to Khahare Khola. The newly dug canal was called Jnyatikhun Nadi, or ‘River That Was Dug Up’ (literally, in Sanskrit, ‘jnyati’='known as', 'khun' or 'khud'='dug up', and ‘nadi’='river'). This is a direct reference to the waterworks, which circumstantial evidence also places in this very area.

The above reference and the inscriptive evidence about the waterworks dated to the end of sixth century CE and issued jointly by King Sivadev and Mahasamanta Amshuverma, fall in the period during which the construction of Kailashkut Bhavan, a palace renowned for its waterworks, took place. Several settlements in the area were given tax relief, presumably in return for their protection and preservation of the water system; the continued supply of water in large quantities clearly had become very important to maintain the aesthetic quality of the palace. This renewed recognition of the reservoir and headworks area is highlighted by five inscriptions, one each located at Dharamthali, Budanilkantha, Tokha, Dharampur and Dhapasi. The inscriptions at Dharamthali and Budanilkantha, both dated to 595 CE, do not explicitly state the reason for tax relief. It can, however, be seen from other inscriptions that this was possibly the year the construction of Kailashkut Bhavan was started. The other three are more suggestive in terms of our search for evidence about the waterworks.

Apart from the use of the term Jnyatikhun Nadi, the Tokha inscription also refers to a reservoir called Udakpaniya Patra located to the north of the dug-up canal. Obviously, part of the water from the reservoir was diverted to the canal. Tell-tale signs of this action are evident in the Bansbari area even now. The embankment which starts off as a spur in the southeastern end of Dharampur continues in a southerly direction towards where a row of squatters’ houses lies today and joins up with the Bansbari spur. This effectively puts the flow into the head of the Khahare Khola. The inscription located at Dhapasi and dated to
In Sanskrit, ‘pranali’ stands for ‘water canal’ and ‘gram’ is ‘settlement’. Other inscriptions corroborate that Lichchhavis used the term ‘dimaka’ to indicate a watershed area, or headworks in this case. Thus, the nomenclature clearly shows that the Dhapasi, Dharampur and Bansbari areas were the site of the waterworks.

The waterworks used part of the existing river course, possibly made dry by the landslide, and the newly dug canal to bring water into the Handigaun area. To protect the waterworks, families from Handigaun appear to have been relocated in these areas, thus creating the villages of Dharampur, Tupek, Tusal and Tokha. That Dharampur was settled much before Amshuverma’s reign is proved by the Dharampur inscription dated to 590 CE, which states in lines 6 and 7 that the village had already been granted the status of ‘kotta’ by earlier kings. The inscription further states that two additional tax waivers or reductions were made by the current edict. Dharampur must have got these favours for its role as a key settlement in overseeing the safety and protection of the great waterworks.

The chariot jatra of Satyanarayan is one of the many colourful and strange festivals of Handigaun. However, it is an apparent misnomer as Satyanarayan of Handigaun does not participate in the festival at all. The Narayan of the festival, named Chokteswor, is brought to Handigaun from the site of the reservoir and the headworks of the canal in Bansbari. Two other divine participants, Brahma and Maheshwor, also accompany him to Handigaun. The compound word ‘Chokteswor’ is a derivative of ‘Chou-kwat-iswora’ (literally in Newari, ‘kwat’ or ‘kwa’ = ‘fort’) or the fort of Chaupalli of the Lichchhavi days, which was later called Chau-kwatha in the Malla Period. The fortification was obviously located at the canal abutment. The ritual bringing over of Chokteswor is clearly a symbolic memory of the diversion of water from the headworks in Bansbari and its flow into Handigaun.

Every year, to initiate the Satyanarayan festivities, the residents of Handigaun ritually revisit the reservoir area, taking a route which exactly follows the course of the diverted Kharare Khola. For this, a group of elders belonging to the Maharjan guthi Dhimaykhala proceed to a place called Kailash with a large earthen jar, or kwoncha, filled with rice beer. The Kailash they refer to is a pith with a set of numinous stones at Bansbari. They leave their residence and congregate at Bhimsenthan, from where they proceed to Kwapukhu, east of the palace of Rana Prime Minister Padma Shumsher. Then they go through Chandol to Bansbari along the canal. Their first destination is the pith located in Bansbari at the northeastern corner of the current National Heart Centre. For the water needed for conducting rituals, they again go down to the rivulet and move along its course until they reach the end of the stream. Once the rituals are performed, they persuade their three gods to enter the rice beer jar and retrace their route home. On the way back, they stop in two places, in each of which they pour several kilograms of sleshmataka, or lapsi, the fruit of Cordia latifolia, into the water.

For the ritual worship in this festival, water from only two sites is ordained—from the stepped well at Kotaltole and from the source of the Kharare river, which the participants call Kailash. The stepped well is located to the west of Bhimnani, the site of the temple of Bhuvaneswor Devkul, and appears to be the last element of the waterworks. Along with the two intermediate steps for pouring lapsi, all the major control points of the waterworks are identified during this festival.

**Lapsi filter-beds for turbidity control**

Of the four salient stops of the initial ritual, two stand explained above. What could
be the function or importance of the sites where the ritual pouring of lapsi in huge quantities into the river is ordained? Recent experiments have shown that the hard core of the fruit, along with sand, forms a perfect filter bed and that such filter beds have been shown to completely control the turbidity and bacteria present in water. High turbidity must indeed have been a problem with the water from the marshy reservoir of Bansbari. It is indeed amazing that each and every ritual, so often dismissed as a superstitious practice, seems to have a purpose. The use of lapsi in the rituals must be seen as a high water treatment technology of the Lichchhavi.

Several Lichchhavi inscriptions show the concern of the society about water quality through use of the adjectives such as ‘clear’, ‘tasty’, and ‘cool’. The technology of coagulation and filtration had apparently been developed. Inscriptional evidence also suggests, in addition to the use of lapsi filter beds, balls of ‘white earth’ were used or limestone and copper piping may also have been made for the same purpose.

And, thus, the two intermediate stops, about two hundred metres to the north and again to the south of the Ring Road and the Khahare crossing, pinpoint the location of the filter beds along the canal route. The initial ritual of the jatra of Satyanarayan, thus, beyond a doubt, relives the annual maintenance of the water canal and its filter beds.

Notes
1 Wang Huen Che’s description of the people of Kathmandu shows that the indigenous Kirat also bathed three times a day.
2 A comparative study of the Great Bath of Mohenjodaro, the Bath of Tilaurakot and the conduits of Kathmandu would prove that the knowledge of feeding a conduit system manually by lifting water from a well was extant in Saka culture.
3 The Lichchhavi used the term ‘tilamaka’ for canals. This word, however, is of non-Sanskrit origin. Although early inscriptions use the term ‘paniya marga’ (Sanskrit, literally, ‘a path of water’), Amshuverma seems to have constructed a tilamaka first. As Amshuverma was learned in Sanskrit literature, we have to conclude that this word was preferred and it must have come from his ethnic vocabulary, which could have been Kirat. The existence of such a term must also suggest that the construction of canals was known to the Kirat.
4 This earlier structure is located about 10 metres west of the current Satyanarayan temple. This has been labelled wall 30-32 in the drawings of archaeological excavations there. (G. Verardi, 1988).
5 The flood of the Rudramati during the late 1960s cut away wide stretches of farmland and exposed this wall near the then Saraswoti temple, which has now been relocated to higher grounds at Dabali. The wall can still be seen along with the arched drainage outlet of the stone water conduit on the steep cut east of the Satyanarayan temple.
6 The landslide is mentioned by some chronicles such as Nepal Deshko Itihash, a manuscript of which is in the Keshar Library collection. Geological evidence shows that such a marsh movement did occur from Ahale Dada and that it proceeded towards Bansbari and eastwards to the current plains of the Dhobi Khol.
7 The residents of Handigaun remember that Khahare Kholra, which now runs eastwards from Chandol to feed Dhobi Khol, was dammed up by a sandy plateau extending from the southwest end of Dhumbaharahi to the north of Thataltole. The water entered Handigaun at a place called Kwapukhu, which survived until 1988, when it was filled up and reclaimed as building land. Place names such as Dhaticho (referring to the now lost plateau) and Dhati (the Khahare Chowk) carry the memory of the embankment (‘ti’ in Newari) made by Dharmadev (shortened to ‘Dha’) and its height (‘cho’ in Newari). Land sale deeds going back as late as 1946 show the Khahare along this route.
8 The settlements of Dharampur and Dhapasi were apparently called Dumlamgga-gram and Pranalidimaka-
gram in Lichchhavi times before the new names became popular as memory retainers.

This is popularly called *lankho-yata*, or rain festival.

See inscription R-LXI from Tokha, line 14. Regmi has mistranslated ‘udak’ as ‘north’ (although this meaning is also possible for the word, it is out of context here). The inscription reads ‘...re udakpaniya patra sasmandutt (r)’ and the north indicator word ‘uttara’ has already been used and thus would be a repetition if we agree with Regmi. He has also misinterpreted ‘patra’ as ‘prapata’ or ‘waterfall’. Udakpaniya patra means a reservoir for ‘udka parikha’, which is the moat immediate to the palace.

See inscription R-LXIV from Dhapasi. Dhapasi itself seems to have derived its name from its waterlogged nature (literally, in Nepali, ‘dhapl=marsh’, ‘asi=situated beside it’?)

See Gungdimakagram in Inscription no. R-LIII. That ‘dimaka’ is a water indicative may be concluded from use of such terms as ‘tilamaka’, or ‘irrigation canal’, and ‘lakhamaka’ (well?) in other inscriptions of the period. It seems that Kirat root words ‘di’, ‘tila’, ‘lakha’ and ‘khu’ stand for watershed, conduit, well and river.

Information supplied by Dr K.K. Bhattarai, a noted expert on environmental engineering in Nepal. The *lapsi* fruit core filter beds are on trial in several rural water supply systems in Nepal at present also.
Chapter 16

Dharmadev is sacrificed and the goddess of Andipringga becomes Torandevi

The Lichchhavi throne and the Madhyama Rajkul palace built by Bhumiverma gained strength as the Kushan lost power. Jaya-verma, the king at that juncture in history, capitalised on this fact and became legendary. He might even have regained some parts of his country that had earlier been ceded to the Kushan as he became famous both as the twentieth king in the ancient Lichchhavi royal lineage and the fourth king in the Nepali Lichchhavi lineage. It appears that for about two centuries thereafter Lichchhavi kings continued to rule from the Madhyama Rajkul palace. The religion of the rulers since the introduction of the Vaisnav cult at the time of Haridutta Verma had apparently oscillated between Kirat Saivism and Vaisnavism until this time. Alongside these two religions, the popularity of Buddhism had also steadily increased. The climax seems to have occurred towards the end of the fourth century CE as King Vrisdev himself took to Buddhism.

Unfortunately, parricide seems to have followed. The Gopalarajavamsavali recalls that Vrisdev was killed by his son Shankerdev. For reasons unknown, he ordered his own son to behead him at a water conduit pit. It was apparently a pious act on his part. This incident probably happened at Shantipur of Swayambhu hillock, the most likely site of the water conduit built by Vrisdev. (S.R. Tiwari, 2001) It seems that Shankerdev took to Buddhist asceticism (cf. Vrita mrigendra of DRR-I) and worship of the naga (cf. Varuna Mahendra-vapusha of DRR-XVI, which suggests rain-making ability); he was so loyal to his father that he may have done penance as instructed by his father at the very site his father met his death. Shankerdev’s son Dharmadev went even further and took to rituals which called for animal sacrifices. He apparently became more adept than his father and grandfather and earned the name ‘Nriparshi’ (a term for a king and ascetic). For three generations, the Lichchhavi kings had consistently followed Buddhism and lifted it to a higher standing. Since at least Vrisdev was a follower of non-sacrificing Buddhism (cf. the phrase ‘sugata shasana pakshyapati’ of DRR-CXLII), the parricide is difficult to explain unless we assume that some cult variation popular at that time demanded human sacrifice. Some form of Tantric Buddhism had apparently come into existence by then. It is interesting to note here that the Chabel inscription (DRR-XII) uses the term ‘Magha 2 varse kale’, which could be translated as ‘during the reign of the second king paying tribute to the rain god’ and thus placed in the reign of King Dharmadev. It would appear that the Chabel chaitya was actually built by a woman in honour of King Shankerdev and with a wish to perform a ‘strange body ritual’ too. It may be that this woman, who seems to have been a queen of Shankerdev’s, performed a samadhi similar to the one conducted by Shankerdev. This turn of events and religious affiliations seems to have heralded
Dharmadev’s own end as well as that of the tenure of the Madhyama Rajkul palace.

It is evident from the first inscription issued by Mandev found at Changu and dated 465 CE, that his father, Dharmadev, also met an unexpected death. He was not ill; Gopalarajavamsavali states that his death was yet another instance of parricide committed by a son unaware that he was killing his own father. The circumstances of the parricide involving Dharmadev are as shrouded in mystery as are the reasons behind Vrisdev’s self-execution. The chronicle’s misreporting of the reignal sequence from Vrisdev to Mandev has often led historians to dismiss the account of these parricides in the Lichchhavi house as hearsay. The dismissal was also often argued on the grounds that the suspected Hindu outlook of the chronicler could have led him to frame an imaginary story of self-execution by two kings known to have adopted Buddhism or to have leanings towards it. It is as though the chronicler was meting out punishment to the kings for switching their religion. Gopalarajavamsavali credits Vrisdev with the construction of Swoyambhu Chaitya and Dharmadev for Chabel Chaitya, also called Dhamare Chaitya in popular memory. We can see that Dhamare Chaitya was built at the time of Dharmadev but not by him. Anyway, naga-based Buddhism, which Swayambhu Puran credits to Manjushri, seems to have taken root with Vrisdev and gained strength through the reigns of Shankerdev and Dharmadev. We should instead think that the new royal religious preference must have caused such a setback to Vaisnavism that the priests plotted to have Dharmadev removed through the hands of the heir apparent himself. The result was that, for almost a century thenceforth, Lichchhavi kings kept a distance from Buddhism.

The death of Dharmadev was followed by the consecration of two images of Tribikram Vishnu by Mandev as part of his coronation rituals. Since the consecration of this form of Vishnu is ordained in the Shruti Dharma Shastra for kings who commit homicide unwillingly, Mandev seems to have been indirectly suggesting that he had indeed committed parricide. The consecration of the Tribikram Vishnu should lead to the conclusion that in his heart, Mandev had realised that he had killed his father and that it demanded an action of atonement, at least for the happiness of his mother.

But for an inscription incidentally discovered, all these conjectures would have looked as speculative and unjust as dismissing outright the parricide as the creation of a chronicler’s fertile mind.

An inscription comes to light
On the 13th of April 2000, a stone Siva linga with a huge base located about 80 cm below the ground and obstructing the excavation for the foundations of a new building was unexpectedly found. Upon examination, it was found to contain some inscription on one side of its base. Below the Siva linga, a nauakunda brick foundation extended all round to make a square of ten feet six inches, while the ancient foundations continued to a depth of six feet. For fear that public authorities would suspend her building permit, the house owner tried to hush up the find. The inscription became news only four weeks later, when all the foundations had been sealed and the Siva linga set up in a neighbour's plot.

The initial portion of the inscription, whose date is equivalent to 486 CE, unequivocally confirms that Mandev cut off the head of his father Dharmadev, perhaps even unknowingly, as claimed by Gopalarajavamsavali:

On the first day of the bright fortnight of Asadha 407 Samvat, King Dharmadev, whose body had been made a share of those who light the funeral pyre, King Mandev [the Lichchhavi, who had taken to the role of deer in a
Dharmadev is sacrificed

Dharmadev is sacrificed, still in pain, in order to enable the passage of the cut body to the heavens, offered here, as a closing ritual, one hundred coins in the auspicious ghee-filled patras placed in the nine pits. As advised by the priest Kedar, himself guided by the opinion given by the astrologers, I slew you. As your headless body was seen in the rain of blood, alas, the lord of the heart of Sri Mandev will not be seen anywhere anymore! As the truth is revealed, this (ritual) has been made for the relief of all the three dukha: fear, anger and pain. This clarification is also made to seek the understanding of the present kings and those of the future. With the heartfelt and unsullied love bestowed by (my mother) Rajyavati, this Siva (will become) Siva of all the lokas. A grant of land, to the south of Thumaishingrama 250 bhumi, royal land of 80 bhumi at Mayatapalli, 250 bhumi to the east of Thempringrama, (is hereby made).

Clearly, Mandev had slain his father at the behest of the priest Kedar. It is quite clear that the action was as advised by astrologers and learned priests in his consult. Even though the inscription does not tell what the advice of his priest was, it is obvious that behind the parricide were intrigues stemming from the religious jealousy of the priests and astrologers. The pain had stayed both with Mandev and his people, who were scared and angered at the same time. A later scribe seems to have added that the immediate ancestors of Mandev had taken to 'the role of a deer in a forest'; apparently they had taken to Buddhism, the cult of rain and forest rituals. This situation would have made the death of Dharmadev look like a heroic sacrifice for the believers in the new religion. It seems to have made the three kings prior to Mandev divine in the view of the followers of the naga-based Buddhism.

Folk legends are found woven around the incidents, and from them, inferences about the circumstances of Dharmadev’s death can be drawn. We will see later that his death seems to have brought forth such wrath from the new king, Mandev, that it had great consequences for the religion and social life at Handigaun.

The folk legend about the death of Dharmadev:

The circumstance of Dharmadev’s death became folk legend over the course of time. It is popularly recited as a tale associated with the goddess Khadgajogini of Sankhu. Although venerated by both Hindus and Buddhists these days, the temple embellishments leave little doubt that the resident goddess is Blue Tara of the Vajrayan faith. The legend, which is popular with Buddhists, goes as follows:

In ancient times, there was a king who had developed yogic powers through meditation and devotion to Yogini. After he ascended the throne of the kingdom of Vishalnagar, he built a pond near his palace and had it filled with a flow of water realised through his meditation. Nearby, he constructed a recessed pit with three golden water spouts with the traditional makar motif. Again through meditation, he made water flow out of these spouts.

However, one day, the water spouts went dry. Astrologers were consulted and they decreed that water would resume flowing from the taps if a person possessing all ‘thirty-two qualities of perfection’ could be sacrificed in front of the conduits to the goddess of the water source. The king found that in his whole kingdom, only he and his son, the heir to the throne, had the requisite qualities. The king decided to offer himself in sacrifice and secretly planned to have his son execute him. He instructed his obedient and unsuspecting son to proceed at the stroke of midnight to the water conduit pit where he would find an enshrouded and prostrate person. He ordered his son to cut off that person’s head without disturbing him or removing the shroud. The
The Brick and the Bull

prince carried out the instructions to the letter.

As predicted, water resumed flowing. But the makars on the spouts were aghast at parricide committed in front of them and turned their faces away in disgust. The falling head of the sacrificed king took wing before reaching the ground and flew to the temple of Khadgajogini in Sankhu.

It is interesting to note that the folklore also explains the parricide as the doing of astrologers and priests and Mandev's newly found inscription confirms it. It is also interesting that the inscription uses the term 'vipra' and not 'Brahman'. Although the distinction might be slight, the priest Kedar of the inscription might have been an adept at religious practices other than Shruti Dharma. The Swayambhu inscription apparently describes the actual religious function that was held for the peace of Shankerdev; here King Mandev and his wife, Satalaxmi, are stated to have been taking part in a ritual, 'pitrinimitta patistivakshya saisthava vidhana', to quote its exact words. This ritual appears to be the follow-up to a samadhi ritual in which the passage to the heavens (nimitta) of the departed grandfather (pitr) was apparently assured by doing some worship over the covered dead body (pattitavakshya). The worship was apparently to Yogini and lasted sixty days (saisthava?). Apparently Kedar belonged to the nascent Yogini cult and he used that to redress the hurt feelings of the Vaisnav faith (cf. Mandev's description of his piti as Lichchhavis that had taken to the cult of the deer). The prevalence of such rituals seems to have paved the way to remove Dharmadev in the same way as his grandfather had been forced from the world. They made it look like an act of devotion to the new religious doctrine the king had taken to and also timed it to make it appear ritually correct in the dictates of the Vaisnav festive calendar.

That Dharmadev's departure was timed for an auspicious day of the Vaisnav calendar can be guessed from the Changunarayan inscription which states that his Queen Rajyavati was on that day busy performing a ritual offer of food to Lord Vishnu. From the new inscription of Mandev's, one can conclude that the ritual resting of the departed soul was held on Asadha Sukla Pratipada; this should be an anniversary day of the death itself. As per the Vaisnav calendar these days, the next day, Asadha Sukla Dvitiya, is the day of Jagannath Yatra—an important day for the Lichchhavi Krishna cult of Vaisnavism. Rajyavati could well have been celebrating this ritual worship at Changu. It is also clear from the phrase 'asyandivasa purovayam' in the Chabel inscription that the woman of the inscription had possibly committed a suicidal ritual on Dasami, the day before the anniversary of the death of her husband (DRR-XII). Therefore, we may surmise from the Chabel inscription that Shankerdev died on Asadha Sukla Ekadasi, the day of Harisayani. Apparently an analogy was created by the priests: the death of the king was timed to fall on the day Lord Vishnu goes on his annual rest. The strangeness of the act, as alluded in the Chabel inscription, is also possibly a hint towards Shankerdev's samadhi too. Both pratipada and ekadasi are also important days in the Vaisnav festive calendar.

Although there are several aspects of the legend which do not appeal to scientific reasoning, the references to real places and extant elements provide curious connections.

The Narayanhiti

At Narayanhiti, there are two stone water conduits with the unusual design of makars with snouts twisted backwards. These are popularly believed to be the conduits where the slaying happened. Obviously carved afterwards to show to the people that the legend of the makars really happened, they must
belong to the historical period when the antiquity and power of Khadgajogini needed to be reaffirmed and when King Mandev needed to be freshly discredited. That this place could not be the actual site of the stone water conduit, which was near the Lichchhavi palace, is confirmed by other variations of the folktale, which are similar but carry an elaboration of the ending of the tale. One such variation is as follows (B.L. Pradhan, 2055 BS: p. 49):

As the prince washed his hands and khadga and left the place, the water became clear and started flowing regularly. As he reached Tukucha River, he saw that the river was carrying a flood of insects. The prince was greatly surprised as he entered the royal palace...

The above ending implies that the Lichchhavi palace was located to the east of the Tukucha River, but since the slaying was done in the Lichchhavi palace precincts, the actual conduit should also be to the east of the Tukucha. The contradiction in the story is a result of mixing up the Narayanhatti palace with Madhyama Rajkul. However, the Narayanhatti site, located near the Lichchhavi site of Tukanarayan, could well have been the site for a different water conduit. In the Lichchhavi days, a highway also linked this place to Madhyama Rajkul. It is also likely that the conduits were reconstructed by King Gunakamadev when he shifted the capital to Kathmandu about five hundred years later; other legends state that at that time the Narayanhatti area had become the funerary site of Kathmandu town. However, the replacement of the conduit with the new motif and the renovation of the water conduit appear to have been undertaken with state sanc-
tion around the time of Pratap Malla.

Pratap Malla, for several reasons, is most likely the ruler who got the new stone spout carved and installed at Narayanhatti. Pratap Malla seized the throne of Kathmandu by holding his father prisoner at Sadashiva Chowk in Bhaktapur palace and by murdering a trusted relative. This is probably the real reason he tampered with and renovated all sites with links to the Lichchhavi Period paricides. He probably wanted to show his people that worse had happened in the past; and emphasise that he had only held his father prisoner and not killed him. While he was learned in Tantric practices, Pratap Malla's lascivious personal life had also made him deeply superstitious. In his time, several legends about Tantrism and its supernatural possibilities were composed and artefacts, like props for a setting, were set up to further their popularity. One may note, in particular, the fish image in Ason Chowk, the Guru Mapa of Itum Bahal, and Mahankal of Tudikhel.

The new temple at the shrine of Khadgajogini is his creation too. When a severe drought hit Kathmandu in 1659, he apparently got rain to pour down through the Tantric ritual of exposing to light an ancient text believed to have been written in the blood of nagas and kept in the inner sanctum of the temple of Shantipur in Swayambhu. His interest in exploring and furthering Buddhist legends is substantiated by his other major work, 'rediscovering' and constructing the Guheswori temple near Pashupatinath and developing it into a Tantric yogini pith. Today, Guheswori is also worshipped as Blue Tara, a mirror image of Bajrayogini. Afterwards, as Ranipokhari was being constructed in 1670, several stone water conduits around it were renovated. One such conduit at Tuka-chala, the current Narayanhatti area, was apparently renovated in the format described by the folk legend. The earlier stone conduit was removed and put as a decorative element in the temple of Lunchun Lunbhu Ajima, which was reputed to have been set up by Gunakamadev and which was also reconstructed by Pratap Malla. This must have been Pratap Malla's way of atoning for having destroyed the work of Gunakamadev at Narayanhatti. The new site for the decorative deployment of the old conduit, Keltoloe, was apparently chosen since a water conduit constructed by Mandev was located nearby. The resulting design is a temple entrance with an alcove on each side, usually reserved for guardian images, with upturned stone water conduits. One of them, which appears very old, might be the actual conduit where Dharmadev was sacrificed.

Daniel Wright seemingly took the time frame of the legend as truth and thus wrongly dated the Narayanhatti conduit to about 460 CE. The style of the stone work as well as this circumstantial evidence, however, require it to be dated to the late Malla Period. The conduit artefact which is possible to date to about 460 CE or before is at the Keltoloe temple of Lunchun Lunbhu Ajima. Both the Ajima and Khadgajogini are famous for the cult that Pratap Malla practised.

Khadgajogini and the head of Dharmadev

There is little doubt about the antiquity of the site of Khadgajogini. It had a flourishing Buddhist monastery called Gumvihar in the Lichchhavi Period. The name is still in current memory and its ritual importance to the Buddhists of Kathmandu Valley is still enormous. But the construction of the temple and the installation of the goddess Khadgajogini was the act of King Pratap Malla. This fact is established by his inscription at the site dated 1655.

According to folk legend, the severed head of King Dharmadev took flight and landed at the feet of the goddess Khadgajogini. The resident priest claims that the head is the one
located in an upper room of the monastic quadrangle of Khadgajogini complex. Experts have found it is actually a sculpted head of the Buddha, dating from around the ninth century CE (M. Slusser, 1973). Its style, simplicity and similarities with the stone sculptures of the time make this dating quite agreeable. In addition, this head is near an older copper-sheet chaitya cast more than four hundred years after the purported incident and belonging to Gumvihar. Since the copper-sheet chaitya is an older artefact than the head, the legend seems to suggest that Dharmadev was devoted to chaitya worship. Piecing together the other acts of Pratap Malla, it would also seem that Dharmadev was a follower of the early Yogini cult of Buddhism in the valley. Both practices must have been reasons for the displeasure of the priests in the Lichchhavi Period.

Further hints about Dharmadev's religious affiliation

The earlier discussed Deupatan inscription states that Mandev learnt of the parricide upon seeing the body spurting forth blood, but he seems to have taken more than twenty years to tell the truth. His inscription at Changunarayan, set up in 465 CE shortly after he became king, is worded so as to hint that Mandev did not know about the death of his father; he is depicted as getting the news from his mother Rajyavati, who was herself told about it during a ritual worship. Interestingly, the inscription at Changu hints at the central theme of the legend that the king offered himself in sacrifice to meet the ritual need for a pure and perfect human being. It states that Dharmadev had a profound knowledge of sacred texts and practised sacrificial yagnas using pure animals as offerings (cf. the phrase of the inscription: ‘...e jesa pashubhih suran’). This corroborates the legend and certainly shows through his religious preference that he had the potential to offer himself in sacrifice.

In addition to revealing Dharmadev's penchant for animal sacrifice, a sacrilege from the Vaisnav viewpoint, Mandev also states that his father won the hearts of people through his saintly character, nriparshchhcchaitarai. The use of this term indicates that Dharmadev led an ascetic life, performing sacrifices, perhaps away from the palace. He may have lived in the Buddhist monastery of Gumvihar. The religious intrigue hatched by the priests seems to have brought him out to the water conduit.

Chronicles note that many of his acts were related to Buddhist piety. Since the legend claims that his head flew to a Buddhist site as his last abode, there is reason to suspect that he was partial to Buddhism. Moreover, he did belong to a time when Vajrayan Buddhism was in its infancy and the increasing influence of the Rudra-Shakti cult was making inroads into it. Goddesses Chandi and Chamunda, for example, were slowly being duplicated and transformed into yogini.

The inscription goes on to add that Mandev's mother did not burn herself with her husband and that she and her son performed the funerary rites together. The Deupatan inscription substantiates that Dharmadev was cremated as per Vaisnavite rites, but this cremation at the Daxinmurti area of Deupatan was only of the headless body. As is usual with sacrificial practices, the head of the sacrificed animal was probably offered at the yagya site itself. The folk legend's claim that the severed head flew away to Sankhu must prove that Dharmadev's sacrificed head was offered to Chaitya Bhattaraka of Sankhu. The Yogini cult must have been behind the sacrifice, as a sacrifice to a chaitya is a sacrilege in the Mahayan perspective. The saisthava vidhana mentioned in the Swayambhu inscription and the yogini rituals of the Satapatha Brahmana appear to have been fit into the ritual.
With the single act of execution, the priests and the astrologers appear to have removed Dharmadev as well as created a hatred for the Kirat and the Malla, the possible followers of the Rudra-Shakti cult, in the mind of young Mandev.

**The true site of the execution**
The folk legend states that a magic pond was created by the king through his *yogic* powers. The seventh century Chinese envoy to the court of King Narendradev also mentions a pond located to the southeast of the ancient palace, whose magical qualities were often described by King Narendradev to him; the pond could be seen from the terrace of the palace of that time. Hiuen Tsang has also included a note on this magic pond in his travelogue (S. Beal, 1981: Book VII, p. 81):

> To the southeast of the capital are a small stream and a lake. If we fling fire into it, flames immediately arise; other things take fire if thrown into it, and change their character.

All three descriptions match the pond of Gahana Pokhari of Handigaun, whose magical qualities are still celebrated to this day (see Chapter 10). With Madhyama Rajkul located at Tangal Durbar, even the directional relationship of the pond and the palace is matched with that described by Hiuen Tsang.

The water in the pond was brought by diverting a river from its source near a place past Bansbari now called Dhapashi and once known as ‘Pranali-Dimaka-gram’ (literally ‘Village of the Water Source’); Hiuen Tsang does indeed report that there was a stream. That the diversion of the stream course into Handigaun was most likely the feat of Dharmadev is hinted by the fact that the nearest ancient village is also named Dharampur (popularly Dhalampu). Gahana Pokhari, however, seems to have been there before the time of Dharmadev and its construction is not related to his *yogic* powers.

We have already noted that King Pratap Malla’s action in replacing the original conduit of Narayanhiti with a new one carved with the *makars* with their backs turned pretends that the place of execution was the Narayanhiti. Incidentally, the recessed pit of this water conduit is also unusual: the pit is very big and holds a pond too. This must also be a design twist willed by Pratap Malla to make his people take the legend literally. One of the medieval *Thysaphu* diaries records, however, that Pratap Malla’s search for the actual conduit of execution had actually proved fruitless. The conduit constructed by Gunakamadev was the one Pratap Malla chose to prove as the site of execution. The unusual design gives away that it is a *naga pokhari*. Piecing together other available facts and legends, we may show that it was Gunakamadev who effaced the true conduit of execution when he removed the infamous conduit and relocated it in the newly set up funerary site of Narayanhiti in the eleventh century. We may note here that when Regent Amshuverma issued the charter of Handigaun in 608 CE, he allocated annual state grants to two sites, which appear named after Mandev or set up by him, namely Maneswor and Dhara Maneswor. The name Dhara Maneswor has been interpreted as a ‘fluted’ or ‘sharp-edged’ Siva *linga*. Several Siva *linga* from the Lichchhavi Period exist today, but none of them are fluted in design. As a matter of fact, as all the Lichchhavi Siva *linga* designs are similar, this characterisation simply appears to be a case of misinterpretation. In simpler terms, *dhara* is a water conduit and its usage in that sense is still current. Apparently, the conduit had acquired national status and it seems to have been maintained as a religious site, until the Yogini cult became a strong sect at the time of Gunakamadev. He seems to have not only uprooted the conduit and relocated it in a
funerary site he may even have got it filled up, thus making it impossible for Pratap Malla to locate it. The actual site of execution must have been at Handigaun, where Madhyama Rajkul was located. It may be that the conduit was located in front of the Manamaneswori Siva linga. This may explain why Deo’s archeological excavations at Manamaneswori (in 1968) yielded a Transitional Period archaeological layer at the court level. If we dig deeper, the conduit pit, in all probability, is still there.

The next nearest stone water conduit is the one at Satyanarayan, which was constructed in the year 550 CE by Bharavi; it and the Lichchhavi conduit of Gairidhara are both fed by Gahana Pokhari. It could, therefore, be inferred that the conduit of Manamaneswori was also fed by the same system and was to the south of the palace. Popular memory of a three-conduit water pit in Handigaun is related to a legendary dhara at Tunaldevi temple. This memory, however, is more the result of the relocation of the goddess, which seems to have been carried out as a reprisal.

Apparently, as the jatra of Tunaldevi remembers, particularly through its Bhat Jatra sub-component, it was the goddess of Andipringga at Dabali/Satyanarayan who was expelled from Handigaun and placed outside the town limits. It appears that the shift was so thorough that it included the Buddhist component of the site also. Today the Buddhist reverence of the goddess of Andipringga is recalled by a small Lichchhavi chaitya placed axially to the east in the temple precincts at Tunaldevi. Popularly, however, the very strong Shakta association has led devotees to venerate the unmistakable chaitya as a panchamukhi Siva linga.

The goddess of Andipringga is moved out in reprisal
The execution of Dharmadev for the pleasure of the goddess of the water conduits fed by Gahana Pokhari, the pond of the goddess of Andipringga, apparently precipitated several actions. Firstly, Madhyama Rajkul fell into disuse, and Mandev constructed a new palace and moved into it. Secondly, the cult of sacrifice and the goddess of Andipringga were exiled from the capital city to Tunaldevi on its outskirts. Buddhist worship of the site as Guheswori, a form of Khadgajogini, was obliterated at the same time. Popular memory labels her move as the result of her elopement with an outcast, a Pode. It is also likely that the vipra, the Brahmg priest Kedar, and his wife, the leaders of the intrigue, may have faced execution by hanging. They seem to overlap with Bhatbhateni in popular memory and are depicted as being hanged outside the town. A short digression may be worth at this point to explain how this overlap happened.

After all, most legends remember Bhatbhateni as the gods who made Swoyambh (which appears to be a pseudonym for Vrisdev, or Swoyambhu-virata, the creator of Swoyambhu Chaitya) the king of Nepal. They add that he was followed to the throne by Vikramaditya (probably a pseudonym of Shankerdev’s) and then by Vikramsri or Vikramakesari (again a pseudonym for Dharmadev’s). The rule of the three and their religious affiliations were put to an end by Mandev; legends tell that a great fire destroyed Vishalnagar when King Bhojdev took power. Still other legends state that King Bhoj took power with the help of battisputali (literally, 32 butterflies) and that he was an enemy of the previous three (S. Levi, 1905). The battisputali seems to be an allusion to the rite of sacrificing a person of battis-lakshana in the story or possibly to the thirty-two yogini. If it was Bhatbhateni who had made Swayambrat king, then it was the vipra Kedar who had put Mandev on the throne albeit through a conspiracy leading to the execution of his father. In this sense, the Vaisnav following would
have lauded the priest and they would have, in course of time, become the Vaisnav Bhatbhateni. The similarity was set by the legend popularising the notion that the couple had begotten an incarnation of Vishnu as their son. It may be because of this overlapping image that Karmacharya priests have to officiate in the worship at Tunaldevi with strength drawn from the image of Bhatbhateni.

The only inscribed evidence that the goddess of Andipringga was reinstated at its new site is the Lichchhavi stone column base of Tunaldevi temple, which gives us the date of a possible re-siting as 475 CE. It is possible that there is something more written on the hidden side, as the building element in a pith temple of the mandap style would have two of its sides exposed.

The date on the stone suggests that it was more than a decade after Dharmadev's death that the temple was again built for the revered goddess of Andipringga. Mandev's reprisal must have ultimately failed during the period of his rule. Chronicles state that he himself consecrated the temple of Maneswori and relate other incidents connected with this temple only in the late Transitional Period, circa 1030 CE. Manamaneswori became a royal tutelary goddess still later. Since the female consort of Maneswor, which is today housed in a temple called Manamaneswori, is a late Tantric goddess, the chronicle may be referring to the construction of a new pith temple for the goddess at the new site of Tunaldevi. Manamaneswori is a major Shakti of Handigaun, but she participates in the jatra of Tunaldevi from her dyochhe at Naxal.

Thus, Mandev did not build a new palace because the Madhyama palace was old; the palace was very much in service. The reason for building and moving to a new palace was to get away from it all, as it were. After his death, this new palace became famous as Mangriha. With the construction of Mangriha, Andipringga also came to be known as Maneswor in state nomenclature. But the memories of the central palace of Madhyama Rajkul and of the death of Dharmadev were to stay for a long time, until Gunakamadev took the initiative to seal off all memories of it. The goddess of Andipringga was transformed into the goddess of the gateway, Torandevi. The state once again allowed the festival of Andipringga to visit the Lichchhavi capital. It was even expanded and enriched to reflect the unfortunate reprisal of the past when Amshuverma came to power almost a century later.

Notes
1 This thought is based on the word 'ngyapayatavichitya', which occurs in line 27 of the Swoyambhu inscription, DRR-XVI.
2 Note the words 'bichitrnam deyadharma meno karayitveha' in the same inscription.
Dharmadev is sacrificed

4 This part of the inscription appears as a later addition.
5 Amshuverma uses deer symbols in his Bungamati inscription (DRR-LXVIII). The inscription DRR-XCII shows three human figures with two deer in between, as if in memory of these happenings. In the middle of his Batuk Bhairav stele, Narendradev has used similar symbolism but with a dharmachakra instead (DRR-CXXIV). All these obviously relate to Buddhism. The last inscription has a stray word ‘drakshyasamvidhanam’, which may be telling.
6 The name of the king associated with the tale is sometimes said to be Vikramaditya. (M Slusser, 1973) Daniel Wright, The History of Nepal, names the king simply as ‘Mandev's father’.
7 Adapted from several retold versions such as those of L.B. Munankarmi, M. Slusser, B.L. Pradhan, etc.
8 These days, the worship of Changunarayan as Jaggannath happens every Wednesday. The gradual erosion of the Krishna cult has also brought about new Changu celebrations on Ashadha Sukla Dvadasi too.
9 He learnt these practices from exponents of the tradition in South India, Gyanananda and Lambakarna, who were brought to his court from India for the purpose.
10 For Tukachala, see the inscription of Pratap Malla at Ranipokhari, Sanskrit Sandesh, No. 10, 11 and 12, pp. 55-58.
11 One Lichchhavi inscription does contain the fragmentary word ‘vajrayana’.
12 Tunaldevi's ritual worship is similar to that of Kageswori, who is located at Sundarijal. Through Kageswori, we can link the goddess of Andipringga with Khadgajogini.
13 The jatra of Tunaldevi remembers their original place of residence as being a little to the east of Gahana Pokhari.
14 'Vikramaditya' is a title applied to a king who starts a new era and we can see from the Chabel inscription DRR-XII that a new era had indeed been started after Vrisdev; it was called Magh Varsa. Therefore, the reignal period 2 must stand for the rule of Dharmadev.
15 Dharmadev is referred to as ‘Kesarimatyebha Vikrama Sthira’ in line 21 of DRR-XVI and this seems to have prompted both these names.
16 Only with Jayasthiti Malla, who ascended the throne in about 1386 CE, did Manesvoriyaralabdhabratapa (which means ‘Blessed by the Boon of Maneswori’) start being used as a royal title.
Mandev became king one or two years before he issued his first charter in 465 CE. The aftermath of the parricide had caused rebellions both to the east and the west of the valley and it was possibly a result of the feeling of religious hurt among a section of the society. Mandev’s military forays crushed these rebels, the Malla, and possibly also the Kirat, both of whom were worshippers of the spirit of the dead and possibly followers of the cult of sacrifice too. Siva linga worship had come to be an approved cult. This pushed the nascent Vajrayan as well as Naga and Yogini cults, into the background. The practice of non-ithyphallic Saivism of the Kirat people continued to exist.

Within a few years of his father’s death, Mandev’s mother, Rajyavati, also died. Memories of the parricide were still bothering him and he prayed for peace by setting up two images of Vishnu Tribikram. These images were placed on the banks of the two rivers that bounded the capital region: one at Lazimpat close to the western bank of Tukucha River (called Brihatnadi in those days) and the other at Tilganga, Pashupatinath, on the eastern bank of the Bagmati River. The Shruti Shastra, which guided the life of the Lichchhavis, ordains the setting up of a Tribikram image, either in the performance of the rituals related to a coronation (H.R. Joshi, 2030 BS: pp. 15-21) or to atone for the bad merit earned through murders committed unknowingly, as ordained in Vishnudharmottara (G.P. Bhattarai, 2041 BS: p. 42). One can see that the reason behind the choice of the site of Tilganga at the confluence of the Bagmati and Tilganga rivers was because it used to be the site for ritual coronations—corroborated by the fact that it continued to be so up to the Malla Period. The siting of the Lazimpat image as well as the dating of both images to 467 CE should also suggest that Mandev was also responding to the dictates of Vishnudharmottara; his purpose, too, seems to have been atonement.

He did not continue to rule from Madhyama Rajkul palace for long, possibly as he wished to show that it was virtually a new state authority. Spurred also by his desire to remove the stone water conduit where he killed his father out of public reach, he seems to have decided to build a new palace and enclose the conduit within its grounds. Apparently, construction was started as soon as he had quelled the palace intrigues and the uprisings within his state. Consequently, the Handigaun area within Vishalnagar continued to be the seat of Lichchhavi power.

Mandev’s period of rule was a prosperous one and became the pride of the Lichchhavi state. His palace was christened Mangriha after his death, and it replaced Madhyama Rajkul as the centre of power. The first charter starting with the announcement ‘Um Swasti Mānagrīhāt’ was issued only in 506 CE; thenceforth, it became a standard starting phrase for all charters of the
Lichchhavi kings for more than a century. The tutelary Siva linga of his palace, too, later became famous as Maneswor. Still later, the capital city itself came to be called Maneswor.

Mangriha remained the royal house until the time of Vimarjunadev (641 CE). A little before that, the rise to power of Mahasamanta Amshuverma and the near-total eclipse of the power of the Lichchhavi king, Sivadev, had led to the construction of Kailashkut Bhavan, a de facto palace, in 602 CE. The latter became a symbol of actual ruling power and, in 641, King Narendradev occupied Kailashkut Bhavan possibly to oust the samantas once and for all. The occupation of Kailashkut Bhavana and the recapture of the Lichchhavi throne by Narendradev was not a peaceful transition but came after a well-fought battle, which could have led to the damage or destruction of Mangriha. This led to the ultimate disuse of Mangriha. Indeed, after 641 CE, mention of Mangriha is lost from the inscriptions altogether. Only Maneswor continued to remember both the deity and the capital.

Location of Mangriha
To the northeast of the Gokarna Reserve forest and within its boundaries across from the Uttarprayag ghats, a rock-hewn cave is guarded by the Royal Nepal Army in the belief that it is Mangriha. We know that the Lichchhavis were far too developed to rule from an underground rock-hewn structure. The Gokarna cave may actually be a Kirat palace or another edifice prior to their move to Lalitpur at Patukodon, a place which is still awaiting archaeological investigation. Others have linked Mangriha with Manigal or Mangalbazar. We know that the latter place was strategically accentuated by Siddhinarasimha Malla as a southern counterpoint of his palace only in the seventeenth century. All these speculations are so far removed from the location of the Tribikram images that they can hardly be taken as reasonable speculations at all.

Polygonal approximation of Mangriha, the capital city, based on the Lichchhavi inscription no. R-CXLIII
That the palace of Mangriha was located somewhere between Lazimpat and Tilganga can be inferred from the location of the Tribikram Vishnu images set up by King Mandev. The setting up of two Tribikram images points to the boundary of the capital region, Vishalnagar, bounded by the rivers Bagmati and Tukucha. The current Manamaneswori site is almost at the geometric centre of the line joining the sites of the two images.

Mandev was the first ruler in Lichchhavi Nepal to issue coins of copper, chakkras, which later became popular as mananka. This royal mint was established close to his palace and to its south. Such a conclusion can be easily made from the polygonal approximation of the area described by the Naxal Narayanchaur inscription (R-CXLIII).

Later, this mint area apparently grew into a small secure settlement called Tamrakuttasala (literally ‘Workshop for Stamping Copper’) and in time expanded towards the west of Mangriha. The findings of terracotta crucibles, the remains of Lichchhavi minting equipment, are today common in the areas south and west of the Manamaneswori temple. This provides us sufficient grounds to exactly locate Mangriha in Handigaun (S.R. Tiwari, 2001).

From the two Lichchhavi inscriptions, one at Narayanchaur and the other at Dabali, Handigaun, one can see that Mangriha was located directly south of the earlier palace of Madhyama Rajkul and southeast of the Maneswor temple. As the Maneswor of the Lichchhavi times is situated inside the temple of Manamaneswori, north of Bal Mandir in Naxal today, it becomes obvious that Mangriha must have been located to the southeast of the Manamaneswori temple. Along with the polygonal approximation, the remains of minting activities, and the location of the Manamaneswori temple, the following facts drawn from the Narayanchaur inscription prove beyond a doubt that Mangriha was located to the north of Bal Mandir and to the southeast of the Manamaneswori temple:

- The Maneswor royal court, or mane-svararajangan, was located to the southeast of the temple of Pravardhamaneswor; and
- The palace area was to the east of Kampro-yambimarga, the highway that linked Kapan with Indrachowk.

What were Mangriha and Maneswor like? 
Because of its long occupation, we can assume that Mangriha must have been a secure, well-built, and developed palace. Unfortunately, not much has been written or investigated about its form and nature. Neither physical remains nor descriptive writing about Mangriha is available and the only inscriptive detail available about Mangriha comes from the Naxal Narayanchaur inscription, dating from a period when it had already been deserted as a royal palace. We can, however, on the basis of rudimentary information available from various sources, throw some light on the nature of the palace of Mangriha through a comparative approach. We can investigate the terminology used in the inscriptions to establish the nature of the palace by comparing it with other palaces of that time; in stylistic doctrinal terms, Mangriha can be seen as contemporaneous to Amshuverma’s
Kailashkut Bhavan and King Harsa’s palace in north India. The assumption that they are contemporaneous is justified by the fact that the Lichchhavi and the Magadh both followed Vedic/Hindu religious practices and therefore can be reasonably assumed to have used the same planning doctrine.

Ancient epics and the Jataka texts use various terms for palaces such as ‘nivesa-prasada’, ‘raja-bhavana’, ‘raja-griha’, ‘raja-nivesana’, ‘vasaghara’, ‘antahpura’, and ‘vimana’. Of these, ‘raja-griha’, ‘raja-nivesana’ and ‘vasa-ghara’ were used to denote palace complexes within a walled enclosure. In Lichchhavi inscriptions, royal residences have been variously called ‘rajkul’ (cf. Daxin Rajkul, Pundri Rajkul), ‘rajabasaka’ (cf. Salambu Rajbasaka), ‘griha’ (cf. Mangriha), ‘kuta-bhavan’ (cf. Kailashkut Bhavan) or ‘adhivasabhavan’ (cf. Bhadra Adhivasa-bhavan). Kailashkut Bhavan is referred to as ‘prasada’ in Amshuverma’s Handigaun inscription dated 606 CE. The name ‘Mangriha’ suggests that this palace was a complex of royal residences set within an enclosure defined by a wall or some other bounding element.

From inscriptions, it can be inferred that Mangriha may not have had a prakara, or wall, around it as the reference to a bounding element is ‘ali’ (cf. ‘Manesora-raja-angana-ali’ in the Narayanchaur inscription). In Lichchhavi usage, ‘ali’ as a word does not necessarily describe the material nature of the bounding element. That a built-up wall was not used around Mangriha is reinforced by the fact that ‘prakara’ was a word that has been used to denote a walled enclosure in other Lichchhavi inscriptions (cf. Narendradev’s Yangu Bahal inscription’s reference to ‘purba-prakara’, or the east wall of Avayaruchi Monastery, and to ‘daxina-purba-prakara’, or the southeast corner of the wall of Kalyangupta Monastery). Mangriha had a courtyard (cf. raja-agana) and it also had a moat around its main courtyard.

It is likely that such an ali was simply built by piling the earth excavated to form the moat around it. Of course, as the available description comes from a time almost a century after its disuse, walls could have been lost through lack of care too. In its heyday, it could simply have been an inward-looking courtyard house with its angan in the middle as we can see from discussions below that it had other courts to its south as well as north.

The inscriptive wording ‘Manesora-raja-angana’ could be inferred to mean that Mangriha had more than one courtyard, as it was the usual custom to refer to the outermost court as raja-angana only if the palace had many courtyards (A.K. Coomaraswamy, 1992). In this sense, and, on the grounds that Mangriha was used for such a long a period of time, it should have had more than one court. A three-court configuration (tripura) was usual at that time. Both the Kailashkut Bhavan, a seven-storey building with its copper-sheet kuta roof and King Harsa’s palace with its main central building called Dhavala-griha, were built using a three-court configuration. The same inscription also puts the royal chapel of Mandev (Pravardha-Maneswor) outside the raja-angana and thus suggests that the temple court was different from the raja-agana court. This chapel court clearly formed the northern court. The palace also had a forecourt with a pavilion for public audiences to the south. It appears, however, that by the time the Narayanchaur inscription was issued, possibly by Jayadev II, a century after Mangriha had been abandoned as the royal palace, both the forecourt and the backcourt were already open public spaces. The main element, prekshena mandapi, of the forecourt, and the main element, maneswor temple, of the backcourt were still extant as outer elements of the raja-angana.

The raja-angana of Mangriha palace had a prekshena-mandapi to its south, and public entrances on the east and west sides. This much
can be drawn straight from the inscription. A *prekshena-mandapi* is a pavilion where the visitors were screened before being introduced into the palace and is possibly similar to the ‘*vinicchaya-tthana*’ (judgement hall) of the *Jataka* texts. The inscription does not mention anything about an entrance to the royal court through the *prekshena* pavilion but this is not sufficient reason to conclude that a south entrance did not exist. It is obvious from the inscription that between the main street leading to Tamrakuttasala and the *prekshena* pavilion, there was a wide space; in the intervening period, it appears that the moat to the south of the palace had also disappeared. The space is possibly the forecourt, which at one time may have enclosed the *prekshena* pavilion. Normally, a *sankrama* (a drawbridge or secure bridge) would lead directly to the main gate and its associated security rooms of the palace and the city. In the inscription, the drawbridge and the moat are separate and protect Tamrakuttasala, which housed the mint. The original security arrangements were, or so it seems from the inscriptions, tuned around to protect the mint instead in the later period.

Near the northwest corner of the main central court of Mangriha was the *pravardha-maneswor* temple. The application of the suffix ‘*iswor*’ suggests it was a Siva *linga* set up by Mandev himself. The temple faced west, just as Pashupatinath does, and had a paved circumambulatory court around it. The Lichchhavi Siva *linga* in the hall of this temple is Maneswor; Maneswori is a later Tantric goddess also housed in the same building. The subsequent raising of the floor without doing likewise to the very large *linga* has made it appear like a *linga* without a *yoni* base. The polish on the stone leaves little doubt that it is a Lichchhavi work of religious art.

Near Pondimandapika, a little to the east of Mangriha, the ground was raised. This change of level indicates that one more moat was close by. Still further to the east, a wet mud moat separated the royal sector of Maneswor from other areas and from the surrounding countryside. The gatehouses and the commanding officers (mahapratihar) quarters were located to the southeast of the capital. In ancient times, as per the prevailing classical dictates, it was usual to plan capital cities with a water moat (*udaka-parikha*) in the innermost ring, a mud moat (*kaddama-parikha*) as a middle ring and a pleasure moat (*sukha-parikha*) on the outside. Indeed, the Narayanchaur inscription shows all the *parikhas*. To the east of the quarters of the commander and outside the city gate (here called ‘*yadu-dwar*’) Maneswor had gardens and Valasokshi Devkul. The river Rudramati to the east formed the *sukha-parikha*; a possibility underscored by the ancient embankment wall protecting the Satyanarayan site, Handigaun, still standing to this day.

Located between Tukucha and Rudramati (Dhobi Khola) and bounded by gateways at Chardhunge and Sanogauchar to its southwest and southeast respectively and by inner gateways at Tangal and Dabali, Handigaun, the capital town of Maneswor, was planned according to the *vastushastras*. At its centre was Maneswor, the temple. The central court of Mangriha seemingly completed the *tripura* plan with the conduit court to the north and the entrance court to the south. In the last chapter, we discussed how the conduit court was sealed, possibly by Gunakamadev; this paved area from the Transitional Period confused one Indian archaeologist and made him doubt, in 1968, the Lichchhavi dating of the whole site. A deeper dig, however, could have simply discovered the Lichchhavi conduit. How else do we explain, the large waterworks, *vottarino-karita-pranalaya*, that originated from the *Pravardha-Maneswor*?

That *kutgara*, *kutgriha* or *kutbhavan* is a building with a ridged roof suggests
Kailashakut Bhavan had such a roof. Both the Chinese envoy Wang Huen Che and other inscriptions\textsuperscript{12} corroborate that. However, we do not know what the roof of Mangriha looked like. During the construction of a building just inside Bal Mandir in the general area of Mangriha, a large area containing the remains of the foundation of a complex of Lichchhavi buildings was built over about ten years ago. The archaeological layers contained tiles much like those found at the Satyanarayan site. We could, therefore, say that Mangriha was built of brick walls and had sloping tile roofs. From the pit of a new underground water tank there, a piece of a large brick with the Lichchhavi characters ‘ra..ma’ was retrieved. It seems a special brick used for the consecration of an important building. That could only refer to Mandev’s work and to the consecration of Mangriha.

**Mandev’s further reprisals?**

Mandev’s war with the rebels to the east and west of the valley were followed by several aggressive actions in and around the palace itself. One such reprisal was the removal of the goddess of Andipringga from her site at Satyanarayan, which she had occupied since Kirat days, long before the installation of Satyanarayan itself. It was pushed out of the capital town to its north. Its new location marked the entry to the capital region and it came to be known as Torandevi. Although his action must have caused further tension among the followers of the cult, Mandev may have obtained temporary peace of mind by physically removing the Kirat and Shakta goddess of Andipringga, to whom animal sacrifices must have been a usual affair.

In due course, Mandev probably realised the futility of his action, and a temple for Torandevi was consecrated at the new site within a decade of her expulsion. The annual festival of this goddess seems to have been allowed to resume with renewed vigour in Maneswor. The Bhat Jatra component was added to legitimise the relocation. The original festival, in which the chariot visits the pond to renew the sceptre’s power, was continued with heightened vigour. Tunaldevi, however, was given the folk image of having eloped with a ‘low-caste’ Pode of Kirat royal blood through his family lineage link to Pachali Bhairav. To match her new husband, the colour of the goddess became green. Every year, during the festival, they are married to each other formally.

Maneswor, however, was to witness religious tensions between the Buddhists and the Vaisnavites very soon afterwards and whatever Buddhist development had taken place was erased. Some conflict apparently flared as early as the rule of Vasantadev, who followed Mandev in Mangnha. Anuparama, father of Bhaumagupta, who became very influential in later years, inscribed in stone a poetic composition in praise of Vyas and the Vedas and inserted a strong line against Buddhism and its followers. Obviously written with support from the ruling house, the inclusion of terms deriding Buddhism suggests that Maneswor must have already seen or was preparing to see a showdown between the followers of Hindu and Buddhist thoughts. The lack of Buddhist remains on the surface, contrasted with a proliferation of Buddhist religious objects of veneration in the
archaeological layers of the period, indicates that Buddhism was the loser. This loss was apparently completed with Narendradev’s temporary ouster from Maneswor in the second half of the seventh century.

As maha-pratihara, or commander, Bhau-magupta gained and consolidated his power in the Lichchavi royal house, and his Vaisnavite zeal led to the usurping of the existing land support for the Kirat temple of Bhuvaneswor Devkul at Maneswor. This anti-Kirat action eventually led to the eclipse of the temple, even though King Narendradev, did restore these lands to the temple later in 643 CE. Maneswor seemingly experienced campaigns against all Kirat, Shakta and Buddhist religious elements; all were eventually ousted from the cosmic image of the settlement by the end of the Lichchhavi Period.

Secular life, however, was well and thriving at Maneswor. Mandev’s grandson Bharavi, who was the son of his daughter Vijayavati, constructed and consecrated for public use the now famous Satyanarayan stone water conduit in the year 560 CE. That the thoroughfare linking Maneswor with Deupatan was quite active reinforces the possibility that the construction of Mangriha did not bring about a major change in the road patterns of Madhyama Rajkul.

With the coming to power of Mahasamanta Amshuverma around 594 CE, Saivism was to receive a great boost, but he still did not elevate Bhuvanesworo Devkul to the status of a state temple. Amshuverma, who originally lived at Yapringga near Tanadeval, moved his palace to Madhyama Rajkul since the Lichchhavi king Sivadev had been reduced to a mere figurehead. His palace, Kailashkut Bhavan, was soon to be so grand that it eclipsed Mangriha as well.

When Wang Huen Che came as an envoy to the court of King Narendradev in the seventh century, he was so impressed by the architecture of Kailashkut Bhavan, the palace built in 598 by Mahasamanta Amshuverma, that its grandeur was recorded and later compiled in the Tang Annals. Mangriha, which was well and active until Narendradev came to power, was not even mentioned. This should not be taken to mean that Mangriha was an obscure palace. We have to remember that the palaces of Mangriha and Kailashkut Bhavan as well as the central area of the town Maneswor had witnessed a power struggle between Narendradev and Vimarjunadev. By the time the Chinese traveller came to Kathmandu, Mangriha was already out of use and therefore would not have found a place in his accounts of Nepal. It might also have been destroyed in the warfare that ensued. Yet, for more than a hundred and fifty years, Lichchhavi kings did rule from this palace and it had become a symbol of the Lichchhavi state.

Notes
1 It possibly got the name Brihatnadi ('nadi' is 'river' in Nepali) because it bordered Brihatgram, the capital region, in the west. It was earlier called Andikhu.
2 The popularity of the Tilganga River as a holy river is related to the Lichchhavi Period, when the plateau east of Gorakhnath used to be a famous religious site of Sri Gung Daxesworo; it has since been lost.
3 Chronicles refer to Gokarna as the capital of the Kirat dynasty which ruled Nepal prior to the Lichchhavi, possibly till 78 CE.
4 It was only during the Sapta-kutubaja federated rule over Lalitpur that the Patan area was divided into several
principalities, including Manigal and Tanigal. The name Manigal derives from 'Naga Mani' and not from 'Mangriha'.

A Lichchhavi reminder closest to Mangalbazar is the plinth stone of Sri Vidhya mandir of Mulchowk.

As described in Harsacharita, a literary document.

Dated SLS 103 and very close to the period of the Narayanchaur inscription.

'Parikhasankramana', the phrase denoting the moat and its drawbridge at the end of Line 55 of the Narayanchaur inscription has been misread earlier. (D.R. Regmi reads 'jn' in 'pa'; D.B. Bajracharya read 'japti' in 'parikh'; Gnoli read 'japtikhu' in 'parikh' and Levi read 'japti 5 sakama'. D.R. Regmi is most correct: he misreads only one letter, 'pa'.)

Some palaces in the Jataka stories have the judgement hall (prekshena mandapi) located inside the raja-agana itself.

The embankment of the moat at the possible crossing point of Tamrakuttasala Marga was cut during the construction of the Telecommunication Exchange Building at Naxal, but this was not reported nor were any steps taken towards protecting it. The officers in the Archaeology Department still remember the hoard of artefacts found. Any digging around the area yields Lichchhavi pottery and crucibles in large quantities.

Referred to as 'Kacchham' in our inscription. Many people will remember the shallow ponds extending in chains from the east side of the current French Embassy in Vishalnagar to the east of Sita Bhavan up to the point marked by a Siva linga at the entry to the current Roads Department Repair Godown to the west of Sanogaucharan.

The Anantalingeswor inscription refers to the 'shringa' or peaked roof of Kailashkut Bhavan.

This possibility has been drawn from the Nilbarahi inscription issued by Amshuverma’s sister-in-law. Ref. DV-114. The location is hypothesised to be in the Tanadeval area on the basis of place names such as 'Yam', 'Yen' and 'Yambidula' used in medieval times for places in and around Tanadeval. Later, Gunakamdev probably reconstructed this palace and called it Gunapo. Still later, it was to house the Malla rulers of the city-state of Kathmandu in what is today known as Hanuman Dhoka palace. This palace should not be confused with Daxin Rajkul, which in early times commanded areas south of the Bagmati river.
Chapter 18

Kailashkut Bhavan of Amshuverma

After the death of Mandev, the Lichchhavi kings who followed him were not able to match his sagacity or strictness. Unlike Mandev, who ruled single-handedly, his heirs created the powerful state position of mahapratihara, or military commander, as well as of chief of administration. At first, the Gupta, presumably descendants of the bygone Gopala ruling house and also the group that did not rebel against Mandev’s parricide and religious vendetta, were appointed to these positions. The republican nature ingrained in the Lichchhavi from the past also led them to offer partial autonomy to principalities; these semi-autonomous districts were ruled through regents, called samanta; the central authority of coordinating these samanta was vested in a powerful position called mahasamanta, or supreme regent. The power of Mangriha, the official royal residence and the symbol of the Lichchhavi kingdom, was quickly eroded as these mahasamanta and mahapratihara began to exercise power beyond their authority. The growing power of the Gupta officials led King Ganadev to appoint as mahasamanta a Verma, belonging to a clan group that had for some reason been kept out of power for almost a century in the affairs of the state. One such Verma, possibly a descendant of a rebel group during Mandev’s crusade, Samanta Amshuverma, rose to become a sri samanta, respected by all the samanta by virtue of his own strength, even without being appointed to the position of mahasamanta. This important development took place about 595 CE, when King Sivadev I was ruling from Mangriha. Since the variety of favours granted upon the request of Amshuverma did not benefit the Lichchhavi and the Gupta one may well suspect that his power base was the Kirat and other rebel groups and clans.

Was he a Brahmung-turned-Verma, or Vermana, as inscriptions show him? If such was indeed the case, then Amshuverma could well have been a learned Kirat priest before he became a samanta. Chronicles tell us that he was a nephew of King Sivadev too. As a matter of fact, Sivadev was also the first king to take the title ‘Lichchhavi Kula Ketu’ (‘the Flag [or Flame] of the Lichchhavi Dynasty’) instead of the usual ‘Bappa-paduudhyato’ (‘Blessed to Power by the Feet of His Father’). Given the gap between the beginning of his rule and that of his predecessor, Ganadev, some political troubles appear to have been brewing in between and a new sub-lineage led by Sivadev seems to have come to power. But in contrast with his title, Sivadev proved to be a weakling and within four years, Amshuverma had appeared on the scene and reduced Sivadev to a mere figurehead. This situation, strangely, does not seem to have soured the relationship between the two; Amshuverma even started a new samvat, a calendar era which remained in effect for the next three hundred years; the year count of the new calendar apparently began
from the year King Sivadev was born.

King Sivadev became a puppet in Mangriha as more and more state power was exercised by Mahasamanta Amshuverma, who, however, never used the title 'king' himself. Although this looks like a theoretical gesture, we will see in the next chapter that Amshuverma may not have been paying mere lip service to the Lichchhavi royalty: he did, in fact, show a lot of respect to King Sivadev. For all practical purposes, however, his power and position totally eclipsed King Sivadev in Mangriha. He made this more than clear when he built his palace right next to Mangriha and on a much grander scale; it was, in his own words, to look like 'a vermilion mark on the face of the earth that people could hardly take their eyes off'. With its power and grandeur, Kailashkut Bhavan replaced Mangriha as the symbol of the Lichchhavi state. Handigaun had thus become the chosen site for the third, and the grandest, Lichchhavi palace.

Kailashkut Bhavan was the most illustrious of the palaces of early Nepal, yet its physical remains are still to be archaeologically unearthed. Chronological records state that the palace was built at Madhyalakhu, a medieval corruption of the name Madhyama Rajkul. A detailed analysis of the information available through inscriptions corroborates this and shows, without doubt, that the palace was located at Maneswor, the Lichchhavi capital (S.R. Tiwari, 2001).

The gates and security installations of Kailashkut Bhavan
Kailashkut Bhavan is the one palace in Lichchhavi building history about which the most information is available. The first reference to it is in the Bungamati stele of Amshuvarma dated 605. This was the year Amshuverma edged Sivadev totally out of power and also the year the new official calendar that he instated came into force. However, the palace had been inaugurated nine years earlier and in use since. One of his immediate reforms was to determine the salaries of the palace staff and the allowances for the running of important religious institutions and to make them public through steles placed near Dabali, Handigaun. As this spot must have been the central public space of the capital and close to Kailashkut Bhavan, the placing of these steles clearly indicates that Kailashkut Bhavan was located within Maneswor. A critical look at the sequence of the words of the first charter issued at Handigaun provides several interesting clues about the nature of the palace compound. Lines 16 through 18 of this stele read as follows ('purana' or 'pu' is a coin of a higher denomination than 'panas' or 'pas', sixteen of which made one 'pu'):

\[
\begin{align*}
pu & \, pa \, 1 \, to \, the \, south \, gate \\
pu & \, 1 \, pa \, 4 \, to \, (...)ta, \, [the \, first \, letter \, of \, the \, word \, is \, missing] \\
pu & \, 1 \, pa \, 4 \, to \, pratolyah \\
pu & \, 1 \, pa \, 4 \, to \, the \, west \, gate \\
pu & \, (...) \, pa \, 4 \, to \, a(...) \, [the \, second \, letter \, of \, the \, word \, is \, missing] \\
pu & \, 1 \, pa \, 4 \, to \, the \, Mangriha \, gate \\
pu & \, 1 \, pa \, 4 \, to \, the \, Madhyama \, gate \\
pu & \, 1 \, pa \, 4 \, to \, the \, north \, gate \\
\end{align*}
\]

This allocation of state grants clearly indicates that the status of the south gate was higher than that of the other gates; one can conclude that this was the main gate. The south and the west gates had one associated element performing the same function; this was called 'ata', a term applied to a security installation or a military check-point.1 Regarding the element 'pratolyah', some historians have interpreted this as a street outside the palace gate (G.M. Nepal, 2040 BS: p. 65). Such an interpretation can hardly be acceptable in the context of the inscription, whose purpose was solely to record grants
to temples, persons and sites within the Kailashkut Bhavan palace grounds. It also fails to respond to the fact that the plural form of 'pratoli' is used in the inscription. 'Tauli', 'taulika' and 'toli' are standard architectural terms used for a roof and 'pratoli' means a roof over a pavilion in a terrace. That the Sanskrit term 'pratoli' is used here to mean the watch tower of the gate complex can be gleaned from the classical literary usage of the term 'dvara-attla-kottha', which is applied to a gateway complex with a gate, a security room and a watch tower (A.K. Coomaraswamy, 1992: p. 7). Obviously, in the case of Kailashkut Bhavan, the ata and pratoli were separately controlled and the prefix 'pra' is used to indicate that the pratoli was located in front.

Likewise, Mangriha gate led to the now powerless palace of Mangriha. Similarly, the other gate called Madhyamadwar led to the still earlier palace of Madhyama Rajkul or its symbolic remains. As all Lichchhavi inscriptions followed the standard practice of presenting the perimeter elements defining an area in a clockwise sequence starting from the northeast corner, it follows that Kailashkut Bhavan had no east gate and that Mangriha was to the west of Kailashkut Bhavan. Since no security barriers are shown at the Mangriha gate, the Madhyama gate and the north gate, all three must have been used simply for in-house movement between the palaces. Kailashkut Bhavan had no gate to the east simply because a stream flowed there.

The pond and the stream beside the palace
Several indications substantiate the claim that a stream flowed between the western edge of Handigaun and Gahana Pokhari in ancient times. These are (a) the travelogue of Huien Tsang (S. Beal, 1981: p. ii, 81n) and the accounts of Wang Huen Che; (b) inscriptive evidence of intake constructions at Dharampur and the rituals at the beginning of the jatra of Satyanarayan; and (c) legends related to Maitidevi.

The travel accounts of Huien Tsang state that the Lichchhavi capital had a small stream and a lake to its southeast. What he records is an apparent reference to the palace of Madhyama Rajkul. As the sequence of naming the gates in the above inscriptions shows that Madhyama Rajkul was to the northwest of Kailashkut Bhavan, it follows that the lake would be to the north and the stream to the east of Kailashkut Bhavan.

In Chapter 15, the huge waterworks installed by King Dharmadev to bring water to the capital city of Handigaun has already been described. The inscriptive evidence in the area proves beyond a doubt that this waterworks was of special importance to Amshuverma. This must have been because the waterworks at his palace was fed by the Khahare River. Apart from the folklore associated with Maitidevi, there is also another surviving memory that the water from Budanilkantha was brought to Handigaun through Kwapukhu to its north. There are people still living in Handigaun who have participated in the annual reconstruction of the canal all the way to the source during the jatra of Tunaldevi, when Gahana Pokhari has to be filled up. The excess water was then routed down to Singha Durbar (the Central Secretariat now) and finally let out into the Sankhamul confluence area of the Bagmati River. The latter annual rite was supported by the state until the Rana Period. It is quite
obvious that such an arrangement was necessitated by the washing away of the embankment at Samadol area east of Chandol. Current ground contours along the northern end of Handigaun certainly reveal such a possibility as well as telltale signs of a diversion.

In Chapter 16, we have already seen that Mangriha was located between Sita Bhavan and Manamaneswori. Therefore, Kailashkut Bhavan must have been to the south of Gahana Pokhari and to the west of Maitidyochhe at Maligaun, or Magah. However, only the stamped and inscribed bricks of Amshuverma have been found from around Handigaun as a physical reminder of that fact.

Size and planning of Kailashkut Bhavan

Wang Huen Che, the Chinese ambassador to the court of King Narendradev, has described Kailashkut Bhavan (D.R. Regmi, 1983: Vol III, p. 253) thus:

In the capital of Nepal there is a construction in storeys which is more than 20 tch'en in height and 80 peu in circumference. Ten thousand men can find room in its upper part. It is divided into three terraces and each terrace is divided into seven storeys. In the four pavilions there are sculptures to make you marvel. Stones and pearls decorate them.

The king, Na-ling-ti-po (Narendradev) adorns himself with pearls...and a belt ornamented with the figure of Buddha. He seats himself on a seat of lions. In the middle of the hall are spread flowers and perfumes. The nobles and officers and all the court are seated to his right and left on the ground; at his sides are ranged hundreds of soldiers having arms.

In the middle of the palace there is a tower of seven storeys with copper tiles. Its balustrade, grills, columns, beams and everything therein are set with fine and even precious stones. From each of the four corners of the tower projects a water pipe of copper. At its base there are golden dragons which spout forth water. From the summit of the tower water is poured through tunnels which finds its way down below, streaming like a fountain from the mouth of the golden makara.

The height of the palace as reported is about 230 feet and its circumference 920 feet. It is apparent that the palace was divided into three courtyards and a comparison with classical texts clarifies that it used a tripura design. The courtyard's configuration also explains why there were three gates on the west side of the palace and only one each on the north and the south sides, as noted by the Handigaun inscription. For the three courtyard-configuration palace with the given circumference, each square court would have had a side of about 115 feet. This appears quite reasonable and is almost exactly the size of the current Gahana Pokhari.

Due to its central tower, the palace must have been quite tall and it must have been built with light materials to be able to attain such heights. This was probably what the 'prasada-ratha' mentioned in the Narayanchaur inscription refers to. Since the latter inscription also mentions two palace officers, respectively called sinduri dauvarika and vetra dauvarika, we can conclude that the ratha, or central temple, structure was constructed using vetra, or reeds, and appears to have had a kind of plastered wattle finish that had to be periodically whitewashed and coloured by the sinduri dauvarika, who could be seen as a painter-in-charge. This temple may have been similar in form to the tiered temples of today, but built of much lighter materials like reeds and by progressively reducing the size of the seven tiers of copper roofs.

The four pavilions with marvellous sculptures reported by the Chinese envoy probably had a kuta roof form, much like that of a single-roofed temple. Apparently the pratoli
form of the frontage had its architectural echo in the back as well.

The waterworks of Kailashkut Bhavan
The grandeur of the palace pictured by Che is indeed as dazzling as that described by Amshuverma himself. The simulation of Kailash by the design of the central tower must have given it the name Kailashkut. Che’s account leaves little doubt that flowing water formed an important aspect of the architecture of Kailashkut Bhavan. It appears that the architectural concept of the palace was derived to represent the river Mandakini, which flowed out of the tangled tresses of Lord Mahadev, the tutelary god of Mahasamanta Amshuverma. That the splendid use of water which so impressed the Chinese traveller was not just an aggrandised imagination is substantiated by the fact that a water mechanic held a position of importance in the court of Amshuvarma. The Tang Annals state that water was poured down tunnels from the top and that water flowed out continuously from the golden makara spouts located down below. To pour water from the top floor of this high a structure, and for golden makara to spew forth water at high pressure going through more than 200 feet of copper pipe stack, would have required a good deal of open space around the central tower. Therefore, it seems likely that the central courtyard had no building wing which served as living quarters.

How water was taken to the seventh floor so that such a continuous flow of water could be created is not clear from this statement or from other descriptions of the palace. Some technology for lifting water to the seventh floor was obviously available then. A system of collecting rainwater and feeding the copper pipe stacks, however, would not have assured a continuous supply. It is possible, though, that the diverted river and its pooling provided sufficient gravity pressure to send the water up several floors; a gravity-feeding technology was apparently well developed. The mention of araghatta, or water mills, near the palace to its southeast reinforces this likelihood. Looking at the current ground formations in the area and allowing for some lowering of the ditch levels to correct for the debris deposit over 1500 years, a gravity pressure difference of about 2-3 metres is possible in Handigaun. The stepped well in a private house to the west of Bhimnani deserves further study in that it could well be one of the surviving structures used to supply water to the water fountain. It is also seen from another inscription that pumping machines (Cf. salilotypadanayantra) were in use in public taps by the year 654 CE. It is most likely that Kailashkut Bhavan employed some pumping or hydraulic pressure system to feed the waterworks. The stream running along the east wall of the palace seems to have served as a drainage ditch for the massive waterworks of the palace. Thus we may conclude that the waterworks and pond as reported by Che and the stream to the east as reported by Hiuen Tsang are corroborated to a limited extent by the inscriptions available to us from the Lichchhavis themselves as well as by the Tang Annals.

In terms of physical evidence, only the ‘Amshuverma bricks’ are available. No remains or parts of this palace have been traced so far. It is possible that bricks were used only in the foundations and in the residential wings of the front and the back courtyards. The filler walls may have been of wattle construction, similar to the central tower. The Chinese records, however, show the use of columns, most probably wooden ones. The large volume of white earth needed for the annual whitewashing of the structure further proves that it had plastered and whitewashed wattle walls. As copper sheet and copper pipes were reportedly used in Kailashkut
Bhavan, unless they were scavenged in the past, it is probable that such materials remain in trace amounts in the womb of Handigaun. Archaeologists should keep their eyes open for pieces of copper in the subsurface soil of the area between Gahana Pokhari and Bal Mandir. Who knows, there may even be precious stones!

Notes
1 The element ‘ā...’ located next to the west gate and ‘...ta’, the element located next to the south gate relate to similar installations, so the letters can be added up to form the word ‘āta’, meaning a security barrier. It can thereby be inferred that no such security barriers were used at the north, the Mangriha or the Madhyama gates.
2 See Chapter 15: ‘The Lichchhavi waterworks about the capital region’.
3 Popular folklore suggests that the image of Maitidevi was washed down by a flash flood from its original site at Magah and that the rituals of the festival of Maitidevi enact the event. A flash flood at Maitidyochhe is a possibility as popular memory also claims that the Khahare Khola was diverted through Handigaun in ancient times to feed the moat there. Even as late as the seventies, a series of inter-linked ponds could be seen stretching from Vishalnagar to Maligaun and could potentially substantiate that such was indeed the case. The embankment construction now exposed by the inundation of the banks of the Dhobi Khola, east of Satyanarayan of Handigaun, show that river training activities were common in Lichchhavi days.
4 Three types of stamps appear to have been used on these bricks. This can be seen from retrieved bricks that are with the Department of Archaeology as well as in my collection. As these bricks are found in a wall mixed with unstamped bricks of the same size (60mm x 2400mm x 3600mm) as well as with other later bricks, the discovery of these bricks does not mean the discovery of a structure built by Amshuverma. The inscriptions on the bricks are ‘srimhapsamnntnmsuuermnn’ and ‘mahasamnntnmsuuermnn’ and some have borders and some do not. The sharp edges of the letters indicate that metallic dies were used.
5 Vetra is a reed of the Calamus rotang or fisciculatus families.
6 Presumably to meet the need for materials for annual repairs of this kind, there was a reed garden located to the east of Maneswor (Cf. ‘Nadapata vatika’ in the same inscription) and an annual toll of 50 balls of white earth was collected from the residents of Kurppasi village (Ins. No. DRR-LXIII).
7 An allocation of Pu 2 Pa 2 is made to the water mechanic (paniyakarmantika) in the inscription DV-72.
8 The lack of brick mass remains and the presence of only a slight hump to the east of Manamaneswori reinforces the likelihood that wattle was used. Also, earth whitewashing is well suited to this type of construction.
Although Lichchhavi kings had been eclipsed by the power of their state officials in the past, with Mahasamanta Amshuverma, kingship took a different turn. Sivadev, the first Lichchhavi king to proudly take the title 'Lichchhavi Kula Ketu' or 'The Flame (or Flag) of the Lichchhavi Dynasty', was himself thrown out of power during his lifetime.

The very first inscription that identifies Amshuverma as a vassal of King Sivadev's shows him as one who had already superseded all other samantas. Amshuverma, who is reported in some chronicles to be a nephew of Sivadev's, seems to have become a virtual ruler very quickly. Within fourteen years, he was the sole ruler. The end of the nominal joint rule of Amshuverma and Sivadev, the construction of Kailashkut Bhavan, and Amshuverma's assumption of new titles all happened, for all practical purposes, at about the same time. The last of Sivadev's inscriptions is the one at Lele and is dated 604 CE. Ironically, it was a charter of grants for sadhu, or ascetics, a status Sivadev had also been pushed to by the chain of events.

Whereas, before this charter, all Lichchhavi charters were issued by the king himself or upon the request (Cf. vignyapitena) of officials, this inscription was issued by Amshuverma with a post facto approval (anumodana) granted by King Sivadev. It shows that Sivadev had already been made to retire from active royal duties although he was still living in Mangriha. The objective of issuing the charter is still more interesting: it had the twin purpose of maintaining for eternity the earlier land grants to ascetics and also for assuring uninterrupted kingship for his descendants. Inscriptions prove that, following the Lele inscription, Amshuverma took total control of the state and that Sivadev's line of descendants was actually interrupted. In the very next inscription, Amshuverma is seen to have added to his title the standard epithet 'bappa pada-nugrīhito' reserved for rulers inheriting the power to rule. Within eight months of the issue of the Lele inscription, Amshuverma was coronated. Why Sivadev wished to have an uninterrupted line of descent recorded at all is a riddle requiring deeper consideration here.

Chronicles say that Sivadev retired to a Buddhist monastery in the later years of his life and that the Lele inscription does not mark the death of Sivadev. The Rajavihar, which later came to be called the Sivadevvihar after him, is likely the monastery where the king retired. But it was not to be a long retirement. That Sivadev died soon after the Lele inscription is clarified by the fact that within eight months, the Handigaun inscription of Amshuverma, dated 606, was issued with the words 'Sivesvov'; clearly Sivadev had passed away.

Amshuverma keeps a promise
After the death of King Sivadev, Amshuverma claimed his right to rule was the
Mangriha loses power

blessing of Lord Pashupati. He started using the title ‘Bhagavat Pashupati Bhattarakapadanugrihito’ (‘Blessed by the Feet of Lord Pashupati’) in addition to the usual title used by the hereditary kings, ‘Bappa Padanudhyato’ (‘Meditating on the Feet of the Father’). In the process, Amshuverma, both socially and religiously, placed Mahadev Pashupati higher than heredity and invoked a new divine source for the power to rule. The invocation of heredity contained in his title ‘Bappa Pada-nudhyato’ is surprising as he was certainly not Sivadev’s son; his surname Verma clearly proves this point. A clarification is found in the inscription, DRR-LXIX, where his title is a little different but significant. Here, he calls himself ‘Bappa Pada-parigrihitah’. The way the word ‘parigrihitah’ is used in Sanskrit literature, it means either that Amshuverma had been adopted into the ruling family or that he had gained control over them. In a sense, both had happened; for on the tenth line of this very charter, DRR-LXIX, Amshuverma has allocated salaries for more than one king or prince (bhattaraka padanam pratekam), thus making it public that more than one heir was alive. More correctly, though, it must be said that he had not taken control of the throne by force, as the very first two lines of the inscription state that he was ‘habituated in doing good to others, and due to that a follower of the era created by Sivesvor’. True to his word, the year count of the new era was started from 29 years earlier, presumably the year Sivadev was born.

Two years later, however, Amshuverma appointed two royal representatives, one named Maharaja Vipra Verma and the other, Rajaputra Sthiti Verma. These appointments, particularly that of the latter with the title ‘Rajaputra’, makes one suspect that Amshuverma may have intended to establish his own lineage in Kailashkut Bhavan. Whether this was so or not is anybody’s guess, but if it were, he would have been under pressure to restore royal hereditary rights to the traditional heirs as Sivadev had wished. Within eight years of his taking command, Amshuverma took action to assure the society and the Lichchhavi royal house that the right to kingship remained with the Lichchhavi. He declared Udayadev crown prince. Amshuverma had kept his promise and Sivadev’s dying wish was brought to fruition. This is the first time a crown prince was declared in Lichchhavi history and henceforth it became standard practice.

Whether Udayadev is a son of Sivadev’s is not made explicitly clear by any inscription. Taking Amshuverma’s Lele promise of the continuity of the line of descendants to Sivadev together with the declaration of Udayadev as crown prince in 613, Udayadev can be seen as someone from Sivadev’s lineage. The fact that there was more than one ruler or heir to the throne as indicated by the salary charter must have meant Amshuverma himself, the adopted prince, and Udayadev, the hereditary prince. The delay in appointment suggests that Udayadev could have been a minor till then. Eight years after being declared crown prince and following the death of Amshuverma, Udayadev became king in 621 CE. His rule was a very short one, lasting at most three years. The death of Amshuverma and a weak Udayadev in Mangriha set the stage for a power tussle, in which Mahasamanta Jishnugupta not only
took over Kailashkut Bhavan but also placed Dhrubadev, possibly a distant brother of Udayadev’s, on the throne at Mangriha. The Abhira Gupta had come back to power again.

The power game played by the Gupta and the Verma to occupy the second position in the state, e.g. the posts of chief justice, commander, and grand usher, is a regular feature of Lichchhavi rule; indeed, the kings themselves appear to have played one clan against the other. The Gupta belonged to the powerful ‘cow-herd clan’ and it is possible that the Verma belonged to either the Saka or the Kirat clan. Since the three clans inter-married, it is more than likely that the Lichchhavi kings did not belong to one single line of descent and that, as in any other feudal set-up, the throne was always a bone of contention among brothers, cousins and nephews. In early years, the liberal religious order in the society allowed the kings to play the power game by switching affiliations between Vaisnav and Saiva faiths. The religious tussle between the followers of Vishnu and Siva had been an affair of state concern for some time. The coming to power of Amshuverma and his attachment to Saiva practices probably gave a higher socio-religious status to Saivites than Vaisnavites.

Almost fifty years before Amshuverma rise to power, Bhaumagupta, the powerful Abhira Mahapratihara of King Gandev, had tried to bring the two cults together by popularising Hari-Hara, a combination of Vishnu and Siva images in one. He also apparently tried to downplay the Kirat sect by removing the land grants given to their temple of Bhubaneswor Devkul, located at Maneswor in Handigaun. At that time, Vaisnav zealotry had the upper hand and the Saiva cosmology of Handigaun had been impaired. With Amshuverma and the new developments, the Saiva cult presence in Handigaun must have experienced a renaissance.

Amshuverma, despite his strong Saiva leanings, also actively supported the practices of other sects and religions. He repaired the temple of Matin (matrinams, or mother goddesses) and it is possible that the followers of the mother goddess cult and of the Uma-Maheswor cult received a boost under Amshuverma. It is obvious from several inscriptions, including the one at Tistung, that he encouraged diverse religious practices. In his palace, a place of honour was given to the mother goddess Sridevi. This goddess is most likely Uma, the consort of Siva. Although there are no inscriptions to this effect, this act of his must have brought about some sort of revival of the Kirat traditions in the capital city also.

Udayadev and Jishnugupta both continued to use the royal title designed by Amshuverma and the prominent place of Lord Pashupati was seemingly accepted by all. This is sufficient ground to conclude that the removal of Udayadev from the throne was not a matter resulting from religious differences at all. It must have been a plain and simple conflict among brothers, step-brothers and cousins. Jishnugupta schemed to get back into power by exploiting the division in the royal house of Mangriha and succeeded easily, at least for a while.

The power play at Mangriha, however, did not end at that. We learn from the inscription of Jayadev-II at Pashupatinath, dated 733 CE, that he was the great grandson of Udayadev and that his grandfather, Narendradev, and father, Sivadev-II, had both sat on the Lichchhavi throne. Inscriptions attest that Narendradev became king in or about 643, twenty years after Dhrubadev overthrew Udayadev and prove that both Dhrubadev and Bhimarjunadev, who nominally occupied the throne at Mangriha with the Gupta in power at Kailashkut Bhavan between the reigns of Udayadev and Narendradev, did not
belong to the lineage of Udayadev. The Jayaverma-II stele is an interesting historical record in several ways. One reason is its highly selective chronology of rulers. It does not mention Amshuverma and this must simply be because he was only a samanta and did not belong to the Lichchhavi house. As a matter of fact, Jayadev II seems to have chosen not to mention by name any Lichchhavi king who was dominated by his samanta or other administrators. He does, however, name King Udayadev, his great grandfather, a not-so-illustrious king according to inscriptions, presumably to establish the existence of three generations before him.

**Tibetan help is sought**

We have already learnt from chronicles that Sivadev I retired to a Buddhist monastery and I have proposed that this monastery must be Rajavihar, built by Amshuverma and located in the foothills to the north of Gokarna. Rajavihar had gained great popularity by 614 and monks from all four quarters (chaturdisanya vikshu sanga) of the world had taken up residence there. Tibetan monks were one of many foreign groups. It had become a centre of international learning and Vajrayan was gaining strength after a lapse of over a century. Udayadev apparently used his connections with Tibetan monks there and sought refuge in Tibet. The Tun Huang Annals of China record that Udayadev was ousted from the throne by his brother and that he, along with his son, Narendradev, sought asylum in Tibet. It further records that with the help of Tibet, Narendradev was restored to power. According to this very record, the battle for the restoration of the Lichchhavi throne to Narendradev ended in 641, when Vishnugupta, son of Jishnugupta, was killed in battle. Lichchhavi inscriptions corroborate this in that the last charter of Vishnugupta’s was issued in 640.

Narendradev ruled for about forty years and thus was one of the longest reigning monarchs of the period. This long reign, along with about twenty years of refuge in Tibet, would suggest that Narendradev lived to a ripe old age of almost seventy.

From no Lichchhavi inscription do we have information about what age princehood was conferred on the heir apparent. If we assume this to be twelve years of age, Udayadev would have been about twenty years old when he went into exile. Udayadev apparently did not live long enough to return to wage the war in 641. However, Udayadev seems to have lived long enough in exile to beget a daughter and raise her to a marriagable age. King Shrongchan Grompo (ca. 615-650) was ruling in Tibet during that time. Udayadev offered his daughter, Bhrikuti, in marriage to the Tibetan monarch. Queen Bhrikuti, who later attained divine status in the eyes of Buddhists in Nepal, must have played a most critical role in sending Tibetan armed help to reinstate her brother, Narendradev, upon the Lichchhavi throne in Nepal.

The first charter Narendradev issued after taking power in the Lichchhavi state was in 643 and is located at Keshav Narayan Chowk in Lalitpur Durbar (now Lalitpur Museum). It notes that his enemies had been reduced to nothing as their horses and elephants ran amok, scared and hurt by the piercing lances and spears of the spirited infantry attack by Narendradev. More than this, Narendradev did not think fit to write and from no inscription do we get corroboration of Tibetan assistance during the war. Some chronicles, such as Gopalaraja-vamsavali, however, also remember the coming of Tibetans into Nepal between the rule of Sivadev I and Narendradev. These seem to corroborate the fact that Tibetan military assistance was indeed given to reinstate Narendradev.
A new age begins
A famed courtier of King Narendradev’s, Vishnudev, constructed a stone water conduit with a contraption to make water flow continuously at Naxal Bhagabati and inscribed the date as ‘…Sambat 78 Kartik Sukla Navamyam Pra Yugadau’.

The starting date of the mythical Satya-yuga is believed to be Kartik Sukla Navami; even current lunar calendars post the date as such (with associated celebrations such as Kusmanda Navami). But in this inscription, the wording is ‘pra yugadau’ and not just ‘yugadau’. The literal translation of the prefix ‘pra’ is ‘alike’ or ‘similar’. This shows that the date is noted as ‘pra yugadau’ just to indicate that it is the anniversary of the golden rule of King Narendradev. This can be substantiated from the fact that the only other Lichchhavi inscription issued on the same date, Kartik Sukla Navami (of SLS 137), does not use either the phrase ‘yugadau’ or ‘pra yugadau’. Since this is a later inscription, we cannot argue that the importance of the date as the anniversary of Satyayuga was not known then. The only conclusion that may be drawn is that it had a special importance in the time of Narendradev alone and that it must have been the date when he came to power. It was this and not Satyayuga as such that his courtier was referring to. Furthermore, as yuga in a human’s cycle is used to indicate the passage of twelve years, it is very likely that the inscription was timed for the twelfth anniversary of Narendradev’s rule. This would mean that Narendradev came back to the Lichchhavi throne in 641. That this is true can also be proved from other inscriptions.

Vishnugupta’s last inscription was issued on Falguna Sukla Dwitiya of SLS 65 and Narendradev’s first charter is dated Poush Sukla Panchami of SLS 67. He obviously became king sometime in between. Since on Kartik Sukla Navami of the year SLS 65, Vishnugupta was still in power, we can conclude that Narendradev started his rule on the same tithi of either SLS 66 or 67. As we have to allow some time for Narendradev to settle before starting to issue charters, we can conclude that Narendradev took power on Kartik Sukla Navami of SLS 66 or about October/November 641.

Narendradev returns the Tibetan favour
Narendradev must have been very grateful to his sister, Queen Bhrikuti, and her husband, King Shrongchan Gompo. As chance would have it, he was able to pay back the official help from Tibet in a fitting way.

In the time of Narendradev, King Harsa ruled the Magadha empire (in present-day north India). King Harsa had struck diplomatic relations with China by sending gifts, as was the usual practice then. In return, the Chinese emperor sent Wang Huen Che as the leader of a Chinese delegation to the court of King Harsa in the year 646 (H.R. Joshi, 2030 BS: footnotes, p. 461). While the delegation was still in transit, King Harsa died and his empire disintegrated. The capital area fell under the control of Arunaswa, who attacked and disgraced Wang Huen Che and his company when they reached their destination. Che was, however, able to escape to Tibet and to mount a war of revenge. Chinese records state that one thousand Tibetan soldiers and seven thousand cavalrymen from Narendradev’s army took part in the raid and that they took Arunaswa prisoner. Narendradev thus appears to have returned the favour he had earlier received from the northern state. Wang Huen Che was later posted as the first Chinese ambassador in Nepal. His records about Nepal are found in the Tang Annals.

When he became king, Narendradev did not take up residence in Mangriha but instead occupied the throne at Kailashkut Bhavan. Mangriha was never to be used again. It could be that the palace was damaged in the war
as the battle must have been waged more for the control of Mangriha than for the control of Kailashkut Bhavan.

King Narendradev's ordeals probably did not end there and intrigues continued to plague him. Narendradev declared Skandadev crown prince when he came of age in 659. A fresh intrigue seems to have beset Kailashkut Bhavan, for we find that Skandadev was out of action by 665. By the time Narendradev's next legible inscription was issued in 671 he had moved to a new palace, Bhadradhivas Bhavan, and there was a new crown prince, Sauryadev. Skandadev was apparently dead too. We also find him turning towards Buddhism. His next two inscriptions, spaced just six days apart in May 679, authorise the Sivadev monastery to carry out repairs on a water conduit at Pashupatinath and endow it with an area enjoying tax and other rebates. The second inscription shows another new crown prince, Sivadev II, and Sauryadev dead. Sivadev, unlike the other two, did live to become king. In 683 CE, he went back to Kailashkut Bhavan and also to Vaisnav-Saiva practices.

The inscriptions are not clear on why so many crown princes were declared and where they vanished, why Narendradev left Kailshkut Bhavan in favour of Bhadradhivas Bhavan, why Narendradev leant towards Buddhism, or why and how Sivadev came back to Kailashkut Bhavan to exercise his rule. Until Chapter 22, 'Religious conflict causes a fire at Vishalnagar', these will remain questions to ponder as part of the great intrigues that were running deep in the Lichchhavi royal house.

Notes
1. The wording in the inscription is 'santanopachiyamana'. D.B. Bajracharya and H.R. Joshi have simply omitted the translation of this phrase in their books and D.R. Regmi translates it as qualifying Amshuverma. The syntax, however, shows that the phrase qualifies Sivadev and that it is he who wishes to have an uninterrupted line of descendants.
2. All the earlier readings of the inscription have omitted the first few letters of the second line. The DRR facsimile allows the following reading ‘...kritayuga Sivesvoranuknri’.
3. One inscription at Kevalpur just west of Kathmandu Valley shows that Jishnugupta and Dhrubadev were both grandsons of Bhaumagupta.
4. Uma-Maheswor is first mentioned directly in the Lichchhavi inscriptions only in 664 CE. A bowl-shaped stone at Taumadhi carries the line ‘Uma tejasalalit Mahesoraya’.
5. Amshuverma’s inscription is dated 614 and is located in Baluwa VDC north of Gokarna. The place-name given is Ahidumkottagram. The use of the root ‘durn’ or ‘dung’ indicates foothills in Kirat terminology. Cf. Kadung, Gandidung.
6. I suggest forty years as the Chikandeo inscription (DRR Ins. No. CXXX) was clearly not issued by Narendradev and is dated 683.
7. This assumption is made based on the facts that Sivadev I died in 604 and Udayadev was declared prince only in 613.
8. They record that Tibetans ruled over Nepal, but this is not substantiated by inscriptions. The gap between the kings in the inscriptions does not allow any space for such a rule.
9. D.R. Regmi translates the phrase as ‘on the anniversary of the beginning of the Satya Yuga’ and overlooks the prefix ‘pra’. D.B. Bajracharya also translates it as ‘satyayugadi’ in Nepali. Bajracharya considers ‘pra’ concretely in the explanation when he elaborates that the date of the statement indicates that the coming to power of Narendradev was like the return of satyayuga.
10. See the chapter on Kailashkut Bhavan.
The royal crisis of legitimacy and the jatra of Satyanarayan

Satyanarayan is venerated and worshipped by people, especially to be blessed with sons to preserve family lines. On Kartik Sukla Dwadasi, believers hold an overnight prayer and worship at the Satyanarayan temple in Handigaun in order to assure the continuity of their family lineage. The temple of Changunarayan, or Dolashikhar Swami of the Lichchhavi days, also conducts a festival on the same day (Akhandadeep Darshan). Anantalingeswor, or Hamsagriha Dev of the Lichchhavis, is another of the Narayans set up in each of the corners of the valley. For the worship of this Satyanarayan Vishnu (Lokapalaswami) located near Gundu, south of Bhaktapur, King Narendradev, when declaring Skandadev crown prince, bestowed a large land grant. The grant was made in perpetuity for worship on Kartik Sukla Dwadasi. Unfortunately, Narendradev’s desire to pass the throne down to Skandadev did not materialise. If King Sivadev, Narendradev’s grandfather, had been ruling, he would have undergone penance and performed a grand worship to Lord Satyanarayan to assure direct lineage instead of extracting a promise from his mahasamanta, Amshuverma, to that effect. The temple of Satyanarayan at Maneswor already existed during his time and he would have definitely prayed for divine intervention on behalf of his son Udayadev.

Handigaun today celebrates an interesting and important festival called the jatra of Satyanarayan. This khat jatra is held on Aswin Sukla Purnima and is not part of the Kartik Sukla Dwadasi celebrations. As a matter of fact, the Narayan participating in the festival

Childbirth and Satyanarayan Jatra

In this festival, yellow flowers made of wax, representing the anthers of divine lotus flowers, are hung on branches of a pine tree and other twigs in a ring around the top of each chariot. At the end of the chariot run, the revellers rush to get some of these flowers. It is believed that keeping these flowers respectfully tucked in the roof rafters of a house eases difficult pregnancies in the house. Childbirth and Narayan appear connected in other traditions current at Handigaun, including the belief that the juice obtained from cloves soaked in ablations during the overnight worship at the temple of Satyanarayan on Haribodhini Ekadasi/Kartik Sukla Dwadasi also facilitates child birth.

Also, in the folklore recited here, twelve years should not be taken literally, because it is a ritual cycle. In the Bhatbhateni story, too, the pilgrimage of Suddhadev lasts twelve years. Every twelve years the chariot festival of Rato-Matsendranath starts from Bungamati instead of from Pulchowk in Lalitpur. The twelve-year cycle represents an eon in the life of man. This seems to reflect a life expectancy of forty-eight years and the belief that a life span is divided into four equal periods of different phases of development.
The royal crisis of legitimacy

is not the Satyanarayan of Handigaun, but Chokte Narayan, brought over for the festivities from Bansbari, a place mid-way to Budanikantha, the outer limit of the Lichchhavi capital as told by legends. The festival itself appears to have been designed to bring about harmony among the Hindu cult followers of the Brahma, Vishnu and Umamaheswor traditions. The only linkage we find to the tradition of Satyanarayan is through the use of yellow wax flowers in the decoration of the khats and the fact that these blessed flowers are supposed to have ‘offspring-giving qualities’ similar to the religious gains that could be obtained through the worship of Satyanarayan. Otherwise, the festival seems to be misnamed.

An obscure folklore
Local folklore about this festival is obscure and different people tell different versions. The most common version is very mundane and provides too simple a reason or explanation for such an elaborate festival. Anyway, the story goes as follows:

Once upon a time two young sisters of Handigaun were discussing their first pregnancies. One of them was concerned about the difficulties associated with the birth of her first child but thought that, with the grace of God, she would bear her child as normally as every other woman. The other belittled the thought that God’s grace was critical and opined that gods had nothing to do with births. She said that a birth was the same as answering nature’s call. Omnipresent Lord Narayan, who was apparently listening to this conversation, was disgusted by the atheistic attitude of the latter and he ordained that she be given a lesson in divine presence and interventions associated with human birth. The woman was destined to suffer enough to bring her back to religious faith. The Lord also decided to leave Handigaun as he did not wish to stay in an environment where atheism flourished.

The first woman gave birth normally. The pregnancy of the other woman, however, did not seem to mature and there was no sign of delivery. As nothing succeeded in inducing labour, the afflicted couple made an offer to Satyanarayan as was the tradition. They were told to do penance at Kailash in Manasarovar, the snowy abode of Lord Mahadev and that only his divine intervention could bring the pregnancy to fruition. The couple proceeded to Kailash and undertook a very difficult penance.

In the meanwhile, in the assembly of gods at Handigaun, it was discovered that Lord Chokte Narayan was missing. The remaining gods, with their divine sight, saw that he had gone to Kailash too. To call him back, the people of Handigaun blew conches, played the dhirnay and made a festive show of dhoja. But Narayan was not impressed and he refused to return.

Twelve years passed and finally God’s due had been paid by the couple. Lord Mahadev granted that the long pregnancy end with the birth of a boy. But the child was born fully grown up, with a moustache too. The couple was worried that the people back home might question this oddity and that they might not accept the fully grown boy as their legitimate child. To worsen matters, Lord Narayan was still displeased and had not come back to Handigaun.

Lord Mahadev then told them to go back to Handigaun and make a public show of the woman’s folly. They were to claim that the child was legitimate and that the grace of Mahadev had made the unusual birth possible. He told them that if the mother led the procession with auspicious wick lamps, if the father carried a chariot and played cymbals to attract attention, and if the child was made to watch all this while the whole village sneered at the woman, Lord Chokteswor would also come back to Handigaun. To prove the child’s
legitimacy, the other gods would also come to Handigaun and personally explain the incident to the people. This was a very kind gesture and the couple happily accepted it.

Lay people believe that it is in memory of this unnatural happening that the festival is held annually. The guthi committee, representing the blasphemous parents, visits Kailash (represented by the religious site at Bansbari) annually to bring Chokte Narayan back to Handigaun. In honour of this heavenly birth, the gods who made it possible come over and go round the village in their respective chariots as a mark of approval and proof.

The relation between this folktale and the festival appears obscure. The folktale only seems to address peripherally the potency of the yellow wax flowers which are used to decorate the chariots. Also possibly in memory of the penance at Kailash, the festival rituals require a group from Handigaun to go to Kailash every year to fetch the participating gods. The three chariots that take part in the festival carry Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheswor with his family, and all are ritually brought over from the so-called Kailash. The significance of the twelve-year-long pregnancy as well as the birth of the boy with a moustache is a mystery even to those who tell the story. The grandeur of the festival can hardly be accepted as a replay of the memory of the birth of an ordinary citizen. It must relate to some royal birth that happened somewhere in Kailash and the festival appears as a commemoration of the homecoming of the prince and of the people accepting his legitimacy with the authoritative presence of the Hindu trinity. We have to look to history for a similar incident in order to come close to the origins of the festival.

**Legitimacy ritual for Narendra Dev?**

The design of the chariots, or *khat*, and the way they are pulled, leave little doubt that the festival is very ancient. Since Vishnu is a participant in the festival, we can conclude that the festival could not have started prior to Lichchhavi rule. It is also equally necessary that the festival belong to a period following the construction of the water system of Handigaun as the festival rituals are directly connected with it. It must also belong to a time when the Umamaheswor cult was socially accepted enough to be assimilated into a festival belonging to the capital. All these conditions would require us to place the origin of the festival during or after the rule of Mahasamanta Amshuverma at the earliest as it was during his rule that the cult of Umamaheswor got implied state sanction. The historical turn of events at the end of the rule of Amshuverma are strikingly close to the folkloric theme: the country did face the problem of establishing the legitimacy of a prince born outside the palace and in a for-
The royal crisis of legitimacy

eign land, Tibet. And it is in Tibet that the Hindu pilgrimage site of Kailash and Mansarovar is located. The incident this festival replays could very well be the return of Prince Narendradev from Tibet. Since his return to claim the throne happened twenty years after his father, King Udayadev, went into exile following his ouster at the hands of his cousins, there might have been a real problem of recognition. Indeed, the very first inscription issued by Narendradev does claim descent from the Lichchhavi, born of Sagar, and states that the banner of power was unfurled down from the snowy mountains (cf. the phrase ‘himavat-shikhara-agradipte’ in his Patan Palace inscription).

The festival thus seems to be a replay of the return of Narendradev to the throne. From the preceding chapter, we see that Narendra-dev returned to power with armed support from Tibet. As foreign intervention to restore a prince to power was needed to be brought within the religious frame of mind of the people, the divine grace of the trinity of Hindu gods—Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswor—was apparently built into the festival. All three came from Kailash and were not resident in Handigaun. That Buddhist gods were not used to drive home the point shows the presence of a larger Hindu following among the people. As described in the poem composed by Jayadev II and quoted below, the veiled reference to Lokeshwar provides Buddhist blessings for the returning prince. As a matter of fact, one of the chariots is erected at a place known to have been a major Buddhist institution in Handigaun.

One can logically see that Narendradev did not really have to prove that he was legitimate. He had come with an army supported by Tibet and fought a battle to win back the throne. The death of Bhumigupta at his hands and the ouster of Bhimarjunadev would have given him sufficient legitimacy. In his very first charter, he makes his claim of heredity, along with the blessings of Lord Pashupati for the benefit of the traditional society, fairly plain. The public seemed to have reluctantly agreed that Narendradev’s right to the throne was hereditary. For these reasons, twelve years after his return to power, it still seemed to have been necessary to reiterate that he was legitimate, as is abundantly clear from the phrase in Inscription DRR-CXX, which states that his country came to him in dynastic succession, i.e., ‘vamsakrama bhyaatam’.

But Narendradev did lose one crown prince and one prince in quick succession, a fact suggesting that Lichchhavi princes were fighting amongst themselves to decide the successor to Narendradev, or even to remove Narendradev from power. The issue of succession was far from resolved and Narendradev himself was edged out of Kailashkut Bhavan towards the end of his rule. He seems to have lost control of Maneswor and moved to Lalitpur. The tussle finally ended with the second crown prince, Sivadev II, the son of Narendradev, taking over Kailashkut Bhavan, the Lichchhavi throne and Maneswor.

One worn-out inscription helps to re-inforce the point that succession and legitimacy were a problem for Sivadev as well. Inscription DRR-CXXX at Chikadeo includes the phrase ‘saptamyaambhattarakamaharaja(dhiraja)...devosya rajyam’. It is obvious from the context that the initial word stands for the succession number of the king and this could be conjecturally completed as ‘panchadasasaptamya’, or the fifty-seventh Bhattaraka king in the Lichchhavi hierarchy. That this is a reference to Sivadev II is corroborated by the Jayadev II stele. As the present inscription was not issued by King Sivadev II, but by one of his important citizens, it further underscores the possibility that heredity was a widely discussed issue.

It is King Jayadev II, the son of Sivadev, who finally put his lineage and claim to
Lichchhavi throne clearly and squarely in the famous Pashupati stele. I would suggest, therefore, that it was Jayadev who started the jatra of Satyanarayan to end for all time the controversy over the succession of Narendradev to the throne. By inference, he thereby established his own legitimacy and that of Sivadev II as well.

**Jayadev's description of the festival**

There are several aspects about the Jayadev II stele that support this argument. The inscription primarily records a special worship in which an eight-petalled silver lotus was offered to Lord Siva by his mother, Vatsadevi, so that her late husband, King Sivadev II, would ascend to heaven. By that time Sivadev II had been dead for twenty years, and the delay in seeking his passage to heaven is puzzling. More important for our study is the date of issue, which is Kartik Sukla Navami 157 SLS (733 CE). We showed in the last chapter that this is the tithi on which King Narendradev came back to power in 66 SLS. It is thus likely that the worship was timed for the anniversary of Narendradev's rule fifty years after his death.

The other interesting aspect of the inscription is that it is in the form of a poem, five of whose stanzas were composed by the king himself. Several stanzas of the composition sound like a description of scenes from the jatra of Satyanarayan. The relevant portions are presented here (as translated by Regmi):

Or is it the full blown lotus once held for play by the hand of Laxmi, who with the permission of Vishnu, enjoying his ease in Patala on the couch formed by the king of serpents,
Laxmi herself, hastening devoutly to worship the conqueror of Tripura?
Thus uttering various interesting arguments, the young wives of the Siddhas, now given to illogical thinking, who were highly enamoured of the lotus, a pleasant object of their guess, say, 'Who knows this?' (xxii)
...Forsooth this is not a hollow stalk of lotus composed of reeds; I am made of silver by the king.
How, oh men, can the two lotuses of Sri and of Brahma,
Which though possessing a fresh brilliance, look like me?
Or all over the broad earth not one (flower) like me is found,
Neither in the delighted hearts of men, nor in (lake) Manasa;
Neither the brilliant sun, nor the day nor the lake produces any difference in me. (xxiii)
...Thus the filament of lotus spoke laughing as if it were proud of its beauty, showing in derision its gold like shape, as red as vermilion and comparable to a row of bright teeth.
It looked as if one lotus was throwing a challenge with pride to another in this world.
of living beings (xxiv)

...Is this a lotus from Ganga’s stream,
Which was growing in the water on Sambhu’s head?
Or (is it) a lotus seated on the head of Sambhu,
With water lotus of the river Mandakini that
has been detached from the heaven and
desiring to see the new water, but obtained
the lotus?
Or is it a beautiful lovely row of air carriers of
the blessed gods?
Or is it the lotus descended from the hand of
compassionate Lokeswor? (xxix)

...This precious silver lotus, placed over Hara’s
linga, together with lotuses which on all
sides surround it to do it honour, has been
dedicated by illustrious Vatsadevi, the
mother of the king. (xxxi)

Three khat shaped like lotuses on long
stalks participate in the jatra of Satyanarayan.
The worship is offered on the stalk as a
representation of Mahadev, or Hara, as in
stanza xxxi of the poem. The festival can only
start when each of the stalks has been
worshipped by the dyobhaju from Deupatan;
only then are the khat erected. This shows
the link to worship at Pashupatinath. The
water for the worship must come from a
particular stepped well at Kotaltole. As the
well is the terminal element of the water
supply canal that started at Bansbari, or
Kailash, it can be likened to gangajal, or water
from the river Mandakini, as described in
stanza xxix. The lotus tops of the three khat
are continuously rotated as they are taken
around the village much like the row of air
carriers in the same stanza. The lotuses are
made with thirty-two petals and the yellow
wax flowers representing the filaments of
the flower tally with stanza xxiv. Although
Brahma and Vishnu participate in the festival,
the central role is that of the lotus of Uma-
maheswor and their family. This can be
observed from the sequences in the festival.

This is again like stanza xxxi.
That none of them belong to Maneswor,
or Handigaun, and that all came from
elsewhere is established by the midnight
ritual of offering a baby lamb (thuma or
mallah) to the tutelary god of Handigaun,
Bhuteswor Bhairav.

Just as Vatsadevi sought heavenly passage
for her husband through padmapuja, widows
today, particularly those who have lost
their husbands in the past one year, ritually
light a hundred and eight lamps to the khat
of Umamaheswor during Satyanarayan Jatra.
The sons of the deceased also accompany
their mothers in the rituals today, just as
Jayadev II accompanied Vatsadevi years ago.

Thus, the associated rituals and the jatra
of Satyanarayan are very similar to the
padmapuja of Jayadev and Vatsadevi. His
verses composed over a millennium ago
seem so much like what we see at Handigaun
today that we can conclude the festival
was started and popularised by King Jayadev
II. Folklore and historical events testify
that it had the additional purpose of
showing divine blessing for and bestowing
legitimacy on the coming to power of King
Narendradev.

If this is so, one still wonders why the jatra
of Satyanarayan is not held on Kartik Sukla
Navami but on Aswin Sukla Purnima almost
twenty-four days earlier. Are we observing a
case of socio-religious adaptation over time?
We know that following the Lichchhavi
Period, the Shakti cult dominated the
traditionally Saiva and Vaisnav followings.
The Saiva sect seems to have particularly
assimilated the new influences and, as a
result, chaturdasi and purnima became
important days of worship of Siva as well as
of Siva’s Shakti. It may be that this sort of
change reduced the importance of Kartik
Sukla Navami and led to the rescheduling of
the festival to the end of the durga or sukla
fortnight of Aswin. This is the most likely
reason for its current calendar location. Ritually, the initiation of the festivities begins with the start of rice beer-making on the Ghatasthapana day of the navaratra, Aswin Sukla Pareba. This takes about fourteen days and on Aswin Sukla Chaturdasi, the elders make the ritual trip to Bansbari to fetch the three gods in the kwocha with the rice beer. Jamara bisarjan is done during the festival on the same date as the Shaktas. As the last leg of the festivities, the chariot festival takes place on Aswin Sukla Purnima.

The above is only a possible explanation of the rescheduling. Until further research sheds more light, the discrepancy is not likely to disappear. For now, we will leave the issue here and proceed to observe the festival as it happens these days.

Notes
1 FLS stands for the first Lichchhavi Samvat, which started in 79 CE and SLS stands for the Second Lichchhavi Samvat, which started in 576 CE.
The Khat Jatra of Satyanarayan

Just as the seasons renew the earth, festivals renew places. In the scheme of time, it is necessary that a place, its people and its spiritual world be recharged periodically, and this revitalisation is usually accomplished through the performance of and participation in an annual festival. Only gods can perform a spiritual recharge of this nature and they know it is a regular chore of theirs to keep the spirit of the residents alive and moving. Called nyasa, such a ritual renaissance has the gods going around the town in their chariots to sanctify the whole place. The annual renewal festival of Handigaun is popularly called Satyanarayan Jatra. As Handigaun was a Lichchhavi capital and a place where the trinity of Hindu gods once lived—as we are reminded by Padmagiri Vamsavali—gods from the heavens, Kailash in particular, come and pay a graceful visit during this festival. They do their rounds in lotus-shaped khat. Contrary to its popular name, Satyanarayan, the resident Narayan in the main temple of Handigaun, does not participate in the festival.

The preparations

The preparation for the festival is a lengthy affair. It starts with the formal initiation of distilling kata-thwon in the guthi building at Kotaltole on Aswin Sukla Pareba, or Ghatasthapana as per the Shakta calendar. Kata-thwon is very strong rice beer and is prepared using beaten rice (chiura), rice and yeast (marcha). Kata-thwon takes about twelve days to gain the required strength. This beer is then poured into an auspicious kwocha, a large earthen jar with a wide neck. It is in this kwocha with the holy liquid of kata-thwon that the gods will be brought to Handigaun from Kailash for the festivities.

A separate group of people, or guthi, is responsible for making the necessary repairs to the khat, the air-carriers for the gods. A few days before the festival, this guthi takes out the components of the three khat from their storage pati to a small open space, Ganesh Chowk, east of Kotaltole. Repairs are ordained to be done here, under the direct supervision of the Ganesh there. (See map of festival routes.) Each khat consists of a cubic base frame; an upright lingo; two-stage bamboo-and-reed upturned domes; and a circular frame on a round pole, or yesti. The larger dome representing the thirty-two-petalled lotus has thirty-two firkas, or fins, held together by intricate ties of reed and choya. By the morning of Aswin Sukla Chaturdasi, the repairs are complete and the respective parts delivered to the three spots where the khat will be assembled and erected. The responsibility of assembling the pieces belongs to a different guthi.

The trip to Kailash

On Aswin Sukla Triyodasi, members of the Maharjan guthi Dhimaykhala who have the term of duty for that year fast to purify their
physical bodies. Early in the morning of Chaturdasi, the next day, in the house of the leader of the guthi, a ritual is performed to ensure unhindered passage on the mission they are to embark upon soon. The mission is to bring the spirits of the gods from Kailash in the Himalaya so that they can participate in the festivities to follow. One of the guthi will carry the kwocha with kata-thwon in one basket of the kharpan; in the other basket are
necessary materials for the worship and propitiation of Chokte Narayan. They also carry four pathi measures of lupsi, the fruit of Cor-
dia latifolia, with them. Accompanied by the traditional music of the dhimay and the gong, they proceed on their journey to Kailash.

The entourage leaves the Narayan guthi house for Bhimsenthan, from where they leave the town and follow the exact route of the rivulet Khahare. This takes them to Kwapukhu, then to the pith of Dwicha, or Dwimaju, at the eastern boundary of the palace of the Rana Prime Minister Padma Shumsher, and through Chandol to Palankhya. They continue to Nakipukhu and finally to Bansbari, always following the course of the Khahare. They finally arrive at the source of the river. This is Kailash for them, as if the rivulet Khahare were Mandakini River itself. Climbing up its steep bank, they reach the pith to the northeast of the Gangalal Heart Research Hospital, where the divine spirits are resident in several numinous stones. An ordinary single-roofed temple houses Chokte Narayan, but the Saraswoti mandal, similar to the star of David, and the Shakta nature of the numinous stones inside, may even confuse us into thinking that this is actually a temple of the mother goddesses. Mahadev, Bhairav and Ganesh are out in the open to the right.

The materials for worship that the group has brought form two sets: one for Chokte Narayan and the other for Mahadev, Ganesh and Bhairav. The first is a set for Vedic ritual worship and consists of vermilion and yellow saffron (kesar) powder, the usual offerings and panchamrit, the five auspicious liquids (milk, curd, ghee, honey and sakkhar). The second set has, instead of panchamrit, samayabaji (choyla or roasted pieces of meat, beaten rice, dry fried black soyabeans, ginger and sakkhar) and is for early Tantric ritual worship.

For the water needed for the rituals at this place, they again go down to the source of the rivulet. A Dongol member collects water and brings it up to the pith; then the ritual worship begins. The Maharjan leader of the troupe makes the offerings. The Chokte Narayan inside the temple is worshipped first with the panchamrit set as he is a Vishnu and does not accept meat. As he is propitiated and pleased, some of the prasad, or blessings, consisting of flowers, liquid oblations and eatables, are put in the kwocha to be taken back home. Tantric worship is then offered to Mahadev and to the others outside. Since the ritual is not mediated by priests, it is a short process. Here, too, the prasad is partaken of and put in the same kwocha.

With the rituals performed, the gods are propitiated and are pleased enough to consent to go to Handigaun. They make their trip floating in the auspicious rice beer jar. The entourage is ready to start walking back for Handigaun by midday, and they trek back, retracing the route they had taken earlier. On the way back, their first stop is at Nakipukhu, about half a kilometre downstream. From its name, it is clear that at one time this was a dammed section of the rivulet and that Naki, the wife in the folklore of the festival, took her purifying baths here. As part of the festive rituals, two pathi measures of slesmantaka, or lupsi, the fruit of Cordia latifolia, are poured into the water. Proceeding another stretch of a similar distance downstream, they arrive at a place named Palankhya. Here, the remaining two pathi measures of lupsi are poured into the water. The entourage then climbs up towards the right to an open ground overlooking the river. This is their halfway stop and the group sits down to have their day’s meal, or samayabaji. The group’s action is true to the place name, as ‘palan’ stands for the first meal after a fast. The suffix ‘khya’ stands for a public open space outside the town. They have seemingly arrived at the settlement’s limits. It would appear to
be a boundary from very old times as it is further away from the limits traced by the Matachhoye festival, which itself probably reflects a memory from the late Malla Period.

After the meal, the procession retraces its route back to Dwichadyo, Kwapukhu and Bhimsenth. From Bhimsenth, it proceeds to the Narayan guthi ghar. It is already evening by the time they arrive. By now the groups assigned to prepare the khat in the three spots have finished and their needle beams have been securely tied. The dyobhaju, or priest from the temple of Bhubaneswori at Deupatan, will shortly arrive to stay overnight at Handigaun. The ritual recognises that Bhaurav has been the tutelary god of Handigaun since its pre-Lichchhavi days. Any religious activity in Handigaun needs his permission for success and his wrath would be beyond control if it were not sought. The worship that is performed here is continued and concluded of the gods brought over from Bansbari will be transferred to these images before they are placed on the khat and raised.

**Bhuteswor Bhairav gives permission**

After these preparations, on the night of the full moon of the lunar month of Aswin, Kojagrat Purnima, at an auspicious hour fixed by the dyobhaju priest from the Bhuvaranaswori temple in Deupatan, the spiritual world of Handigaun is ready for the festival. Just before midnight, a sacrifice of a baby lamb, thuma or mallah, is offered to Bhaurav at Thataltale. The ritual recognises that Bhaurav has been the tutelary god of Handigaun since its pre-Lichchhavi days. Any religious activity in Handigaun needs his permission for success and his wrath would be beyond control if it were not sought. The worship that is performed here is continued and concluded
(visarjan) at the three spots from where the gods will rise in their khat for the festival.

Before the visarjan worship at the three places, however, the ritual of transferring the godly spirits from the kwocha to their iconographic images has to be performed by Karmacharya priests. Having done so, the images are taken to their respective places. At Bhuteswor, Thataltole, the image representing Brahma, sometimes said to be Bhatbhateni, is mounted on its yesti frame. The exact place is the street space midway between Bhimsenthan and Krishna Mandir. The visarjan worship is done and the khat raised. A similar process follows at Nyalmaloh, where the khat of Chokte Narayan goes up. It is followed by the same ritual worship at Bhimnani, Kotaltole, where the khat of the Umamaheswor family of gods is raised. Visarjan worship is similar to the visarjan ritual of the Shakta Navaratra tradition.

Khat Jatra

The three khat, shaped like lotuses on high stalks, are now ready with their images erect. In days gone by, Khat Jatra started about midnight, as soon as the rituals connected with erecting them were completed. As a result, it was a festival that would end before dawn. These days, however, it is delayed till the next morning. This is for the convenience of the dyobhaju, who chooses to arrive only in the morning, and the electrical and telephone service technicians, who have to stand by to cut off overhead electrical and telephone lines and are not on hand at midnight. So, keeping in mind the comfort of the contractors appointed by the Guthi Sansthan and of the service technicians, the festival of moonlight has become a daytime affair.

Anyway, as the dyobhaju arrives with water drawn from a special stepped well located at Kotaltole, which would have been cleaned and made ready for him the previous day, the Bhuteswor khat is ready to move. The timber pole representing the stalk is given a ritual bath, making him wide awake and ‘present’ there. Worship is offered requesting his pleasure in participating in the festival. He will wait at this place for some time until the other gods are ready too. The next chariot to go up is that of Chokte Narayan at the small crossroads square of Nyalmaloh. Similar rituals are performed here and the god is left to wait for a while. The chariot for Umamaheswor is raised at Kotaltole, between Bhimnani and the Skanda-Karttikeya temple, the Sasthidevkul of the time of Amshuverma, and now mistakenly called the Garud-Bahini-Bhagabati temple. The priest calls for the presence of Maheswor, Uma, Ganesh and Karttikeya on the chariot. Even the guards of Maheswor—Nandi and Vringgi—go with them. This is the whole family of Siva, the sastha devkul, or six-member divine family.

By now everyone, old or young, knows what is going on and is eager to be a part of the celebration of the re-sanctification of the settlement. Colourfully dressed housewives and cheerful believers line up to make offerings at each of the khat before they start moving. Other spectators form crowds around the places where the khat are standing. Still others form small groups at all the places the khat will stop. The rest will simply watch the proceedings from their windows.

The first khat to move is the one at Bhuteswor with Brahma atop the lotus. A ‘ritually qualified’ person climbs the central pole and attaches himself adroitly a little below the lotus head made by weaving bamboo slats together and secured to the pole. As the chariot begins moving, his duty is to rotate the lotus head with the help of a short rope threaded through its base. Several crossbars of bamboo are tied to the timber needle beams so that twenty-four young and old men of Handigaun can literally lift and propel the khat along its route.
by balancing the crossbars on their shoulders. The Bhuteswor khat travels east to the Krishna Mandir crossroads and then south to Dabali square and thence west to Nyalmalon, where the Narayan khat is up and ready. A brief communication between the two makes clear the reason for the initiative and Narayan agrees to move as well. The entourage of the two gods then travels south, going over the long and large stone lying on the crossroad, believed to be the Matsya avatār of Bhairav. (Vishnu’s incarnation in the form of fish is a common mythological theme but here it is Bhairav who is a fish.) With the Narayan khat in the lead, the duo reaches the west end of Kotaltole, where the chariot of the Umamaheswor family is up, bedecked and ready. Narayan then tells the waiting couple and their family about the crisis of the mortals in Handigaun. The Chokte Narayan khat pays homage to Lord Mahadev by going round it once and takes the lead position some distance down the street. The Brahma khat pays homage to them by going around their khat also and takes up its position between Narayan and Umamaheswor. The trio of chariots then sets off on the nyasa procession through the village. The procession of heavenly visitors is, thus, for the first leg, led by Chokte Narayan. The Brahma follows and Umamaheswor trails them both. Amid fanfare and rejoicing they progress through the village. The route takes them east to Dabali square, to the crossing at Krisna Mandir and on to Bhimsenth at the northwest end of the village. At this place as they turn back, the order is changed. Now Umamaheswor is in the lead followed by Chokte Narayan and Brahma. The gods in their rotating lotuses retrace the route back to the spot at Kotaltole, from where they all started together.

Along the route, as the lotus head is continuously rotated, the khat stop in several spots, where believers make offerings. Groups of musical guthi, belonging to the Dongol and Prajapati clans, play their instruments at several of these stops. The main instruments are the dhimay and the ponga. The music of the ponga is supposed to be heavenly and the sojourn en route ends as the groups finish playing their characteristic tunes. At places, widows undergoing their year-long period of mourning, assisted by their male children, offer a hundred and eight lit lamps, praying for the safe passage to heaven of their departed husbands. A clean spot by the roadside, sanctified by smearing cow dung and red earth, is prepared for the offerings.

In days gone by, the three khat did their sanctification rounds of the town three times. But again, the lethargy and expediency of modern times has come into play, and the nyasa round is performed just once these days. The sanctification completed, the Umamaheswor khat is rested at its place of erection. The other two travel together up to Dabali, led by Chokte Narayan. From Dabali, the khat of Chokte Narayan goes west to its place. The first khat to start moving, the one with Brahma, arrives last in its place at Thataltole. They will be kept standing at their respective places for three more days. On the fourth day, all of them will be dismantled as the gods are ritually returned to their own places. The parts of each chariot will be stored in a shed nearby for the next year’s ritual reassembly.

Avalokiteswor for some, Brahma for others
From the perspective of religious history, the sequencing at the start of the festival is of particular interest. Brahma here rises from the middle of the street at a T-junction, a usual place for local chhwasa. The chhwasa tradition possibly goes back to Kirat days. The place is also the site of the erection of the ceremonial pole during Indra Jatra, another festival very popular with the Newar. It is also where, in days forgotten, a major Buddhist religious
spot was apparently located. Today, there is only a Buddhist inscription in a nearby pati and a chibaha. Buddhist ritual prayers are offered here during the Hadibodhini Ekadasi period by the Dongol resident to its west. We may guess that the lotus khat which goes up here is venerated by Buddhists as Lokeswor. A hint of this is also contained in the poem composed by Jayadev in his Pashupati inscription:

...Or is it a beautiful lovely row of air carriers of the blessed *gods?*  
Or is it the lotus descended from the hand of compassionate Lokeswor? (xxix)

In popular memory, the khat is seen as an overlapping memory of three differently perceived gods. The Dongol see it as the khat of Avalokiteswor, the Maharjan see it as that of Bhatbhateni and the Prajapatis as the khat of Brahma. All three gods have one thing in common: they are all creators; Avalokiteswor created the Tibetan Buddhist world, Bhatbhateni the world of Vishalnagar and Brahma the Aryan world. For the gods in the second and third khat there is no such overlap of association.

**Umamaheswor dominates**

From the ritual of homage at Kotaltole, one can see that the central place of veneration in this festival goes to Umamaheswor. The sequence of the khat in movement also shows the same order of veneration. The traditions of Brahma and Vishnu are older than that of Umamaheswor and because Vishnu was the state god in early Lichchhavi days, we have to place the festival in the late Lichchhavi Period. The Saiva nature of the rituals, however, is obvious even though it is called the jatra of Satyanarayan.

The tradition of Umamaheswor is particularly popular among Jyapus who claim Kirat descent. The earliest images of Umamaheswor in the valley are to be found at Changunarayan, Pashupati, and Kumbheswor and are dated by experts to the pre-Lichchhavi Period. No Umamaheswor image of such antiquity has been traced in Handigaun so far, although the festival certainly shows the dominant status of Umamaheswor. The Karttikeya temple space nearby has an image of Umamaheswor from around the sixteenth century. Similar images are also found in Dathutole area beside the chibaha and also at Krishna Mandir and Saraswoti Mandir.

The *sastha devkul* (the family of six) of Handigaun was apparently further popularised by Amshuverma. It seems their cult was resurrected in the Bhuvaneswor Devkul of even earlier times. Indeed, we find that the third khat is raised right next to the temples of Bhuvaneswor Devkul and Shasthi Devkul.

![The design of the khat](image-url)
The *khyak* of Taleju

Tradition has it that the lotus heads of the *khat* should not be rotated as they go past Dabali. It is believed that guardian spirits (*khyak*) of the goddess Taleju stop them there. The temple of Saraswoti, the consort of Bramha, is located at Dabali. This temple was relocated here only about fifteen years ago and before that a ruin of a so-called Taleju temple formed a mound at that site. Taleju is the clan goddess of the Mallas and a temple for her is built only within a palace. Since the tradition goes only as far back as the early fourteenth century and since from that time no Malla king has ruled out of Handigaun, the existence of a Taleju temple at Handigaun cannot be substantiated. Since even these days animal sacrifice is performed at the site on Aswin Sukla Maha-astami, the Shakta association of the site need not be doubted. More than being a Taleju site, it is probably a Duimaju site and the reference is to the guardians of Duimaju, who are also *khyak* (cf. Kangwaras of Bhat-jatra). This position is clarified by the *jatra* of Tunaldevi.

The *lotus khat*

Another interesting aspect of the festival is the design of the *khat* themselves. Shaped in the form of a lotus flower, they have no wheels. A wooden framework at the base is used so that the pole to carry the lotus can be held tightly. The *khat* is lifted off the ground and virtually walked through the main roads. A group of male volunteers carry it on their shoulders using bamboo crossbars and ropes thrown round timber needle beams. The lotus unit itself is pivoted so that it can be rotated as the *khat* is moved. This form of the *khat*, with a pivoted top in the shape of a lotus that can be rotated axially, is unique to Handigaun. Even as a design principle, the incorporation of the axial movement of a part and the directional movement of the whole is a unique engineering innovation for such a traditional contraption.

Notes

1. A *kwacha* filled with rice beer is used as the ritual vehicle for moving gods in many festivals of Kathmandu. Matsendranath is also brought in a similar way, as is Bhairav.
2. On Bhadra Sukla Dwadasi, the residents of Handigaun ritually go around their settlement as part of their Matachhoyeke festivities. But they do not come this far.
3. Note that in relation to the palace of Amshuverma, the Kailashkut Bhavan, this temple occupies the northeast position, the ordained location for the *isanadev*. 

Religious conflict causes a fire at Vishalnagar

Legends and chronicles, based on popular memory (anusruti) at the time of their writing, mention several incidences, which, for lack of written and exacting historical evidence, are regarded by academics as imaginary stories. But it is also a fact that those who composed them had no reason to make fiction out of history and certainly did not aim to misguide us, the people of the rational age. Several such ‘imaginary scenarios’ have been proved true by recent investigations. That the valley was a lake and that a massive landslide in northern Kathmandu Valley took place after it was dry and settled, just as it is told in legends, are already proved facts although the geology of Kathmandu has been a matter of scientific investigation only for the last two decades. Similarly, Bungamati and its persistent association with water-related legends can be understood by the fact that, being the deepest section of Lake Kathmandu, it would also have been the last to dry and thus the subject of water legends. The Matsendranath of Bungamati, a subject of both Hindu and Buddhist legends, is clearly the Kirat religious site of Bungayumi. That Kirat places of occupation were annexed by both the Hindus and the Buddhists can be seen from the Buddhist sites and the Narayan sites in the four corners of the valley. In sum, taking legends as points of departure for the study of historical incidence need not be thought of as heading towards the dead end of hearsay.

It is with just such a promise of tracing factual bases that the Pashupati Puran, which talks about Vishalnagar, is analysed here. Keeping in mind that the Puran was originally composed about the beginning of the Malla Period, it would be logical to suspect that its historical memories would be largely related to the Lichchhavi Period and to the possible upheavals of the Transitional Period. One such memory included in the Pashupati Puran is a passing reference to a devastating fire in Vishalnagar at the time of King Bhoj. The residents of Handigaun also share a popular memory of a great fire and believe that only the area of the present-day Handigaun was saved from the fire in the large Vishalnagar that had earlier extended from Budanilkantha to Sankhamul. This must certainly have had great consequences for the Lichchhavi capital town and deserves serious review.

The statement that King Bhoj, who was a legendary king of the classical period of a southern state (Bhojpur) prior to Mauryan rule, ruled from Kathmandu must be treated...
as an episode grafted on legends to create a long time frame for the occurrence of a great fire. It is as untrue as the purported rule in Nepal by Vikramaditya, who was a Satavahana ruler of the Godavari area in India in the first century BCE. But Nepali legends are known to use the royal name ‘Vikramaditya’ not as a proper noun, but as substitute for the real name of any king who started a new era or had a prosperous rule. Similarly, ‘Bhoj’ seems to have been applied to kings who reverted back to the rule of shruti dharma shastra in the socio-religious life of the nation or who had extraordinary qualities. Incidentally, the latter usage may have come about because of an actual Nepali king named Bhojdev and the literary treatise, Bhajdev Sangraha, composed in the early fourteenth century in memory of his deeds (D.R. Regmi, 1965). The treatise mentions the many virtues of the king.

About the time of the composition of the Pashupati Puran, the Vikram era had gained popularity; thus, new eras were linked to it as a matter of prestige. The term ‘Bhojdev’ also had come to represent a king with rare qualities. It is, therefore, not necessary to take either name literally; in fact, they are more likely to have been applied to other real kings.

The memory of the Puran legends is apparently a residual memory of reigns following the promulgation of a new era. Also, at that time a fire had destroyed the vast spread of Vishalnagar. From what we know of early Nepali history, new eras were started by King Bhumigupta (who started the Sakara Sambat, or the first LS), King Shankerdev (who started the Magha Varsa era but was discarded by Mandev), King Sivadev (who started the Yuga Siveswor, or the second LS) and King Raghavdev (who started the Pashupati Bhattarak Sambat, or the Nepal Sambat). All of these kings could have been dubbed a ‘Vikramaditya’ in the Puran; and they are, in one Puran or the other. Therefore, it makes sense, in our case, to look for a bhojdev as the third king following a vikramaditya. The corresponding list of bhojdevs vis-a-vis the four eras mentioned above consists of Jayadev I, Mandev, Narendradev and Shankerdev. Apart from Shankerdev of the Transitional Period, the other three were great kings of their times. Jayadev I could be likened to a bhojdev for his fame as reported by Jayadev II in the latter’s Pashupati stele. The legendary nature of Mandev and Narendradev, as we have already seen in the previous chapters, could well have earned them the status of a bhojdev. As Vishalnagar was just developing under the Lichchhavi in the period immedi-
ately following Bhumigupta, the incidence of a fire of such a great magnitude at that time should be ruled out; in any case, we do not have materials to imagine otherwise. We will have to look into the other periods to find clues to the nature of the legendary fire.

We can see from historical records that following the establishment of Nepal Samvat by Raghavdev and about a century later, in and following the rule of a king going by the name Bhojdev (c. 1024 CE), the state of Nepal was in disarray. One writer of a religious treatise composed in Bhadgaun in 1039, Hamsayamala, characterises the situation in the following words: 'Mahayuddha pravartamane kale dustara sansare nistaranarthena likhitam' (literally, 'As the great war is continuing, this treatise is written seeking the rule of faith in the evil world').

The reference is obviously to a religious conflict. It may not be sheer chance that Atish Dipankar Srijnyan, a famous Buddhist preacher, is said to have arrived in Kathmandu at about the same time. Inklings of continuing problems can be seen from other sources like Gopalarajavamsavali, wherein King Bhaskerdev is said to have turned against the image of his lineage deity (pitr malitavikritam) and destroyed Sri Maneswori Bhattarika. This incident can be placed at about 1045. Although this period appears to be a troubled time, it does not seem to be the time of the great fire reported in the Pashupati Puran. This inference is drawn because this period is so close to the time of writing that the chronicler could hardly have assigned just two kings to cover a period of over a hundred and fifty years.

At the time of Mandev, too, religious troubles must have taken place, but they appear to have been firmly put down as the shruti dharma was actively promoted. Mandev’s action was a great blow to Buddhism, so great that it took almost a century to make come-back when Sivadev and Amshuverma restored Buddhism back to state sponsorship. (See Chapters 16 and 17) The eclipse of Buddhism at this time was so total that Padmagiri Vamsavali tells that King Vrisdev decided to go to heaven with all his followers. The Swoyambhu Puran remembers Manjudev, a human incarnation of Manjushri, and who seems to be King Shankerdev (cf. Mana-ju-dev may be interpreted as Mandev’s grandfather). It even remembers that Manju-dev’s wife too took a samadhi and the Chabel inscription tells the actual fact that in the year Magha 2 Varse, the queen of Shankerdev performed a bichitradeha bidhana (literally translated as ‘a strange body ritual’) and made a chaitya over herself. For these very reasons, this chaitya seems to have been called Manjubahal in Chabel. The Puran elaborates that all the disciples of Manjudev also erected a chaitya over their burnt physical bodies and we are told that is the Manjushri Chaitya at Vajrakuta, Swoyambhu.

Larger trouble in the state was, however, seen during the reign of Narendradev, who was the third rightful king after the start of the second LS by Sivadev/Amshuverma, whom the composer of the Puran could have alluded to as Vikramaditya. In earlier chapters, we have discussed in detail the nature of the happenings in this period. It seems likely that the fire at Vishalnagar is a memory of a real historical incident at that time. The strong rule of Narendradev and the many gifts he made to religious communities apparently led to the Puran composer to liken him to King Bhoj. Here, at least one chronicle comes to the rescue and corroborates not only the fire but also clarifies the cause of the fire and the period in which it happened. According to this account, the reason for the fire was a civil war in town caused by the splitting of the population into two rival groups; this happened during the reign of King Narendradev (S. Amatya, 2053 BS: p. 16).

With at least one river in between and
stretches of agricultural fields in several sections, the complete gutting of the town of Vishalnagar as told in *Pashupati Puran* could not be the result of a natural spread of fire. Such a total gutting suggests the starting of fires in many places. It could have been caused by a civil war and widespread arson. It is established that Narendradev’s rule started in 641 CE and lasted about forty years. According to Tibetan records, Narendradev got back the throne after waging a war against Regent Vishnugupta and King Vimarjunadev with the assistance of Tibet. But since we do not find the Lichchhavi palace of Kailashkut Bhavan damaged in action, this war could not have been the cause of the fire. The more likely reason is a religious split in society, which led to a civil war later. Towards the end of his rule, Narendradev’s inscriptions are not issued from Kailashkut Bhavan located in Handigaun; his move can potentially pinpoint a period of civil strife. Narendradev’s temporary residence in a new palace and the complete absence of Buddhist edifices at Handigaun may be linked to suggest that civil war led to the expulsion of Narendradev, an ardent Buddhist, in his later days along with a removal of Buddhists from Handigaun. That the palace intrigues go further back in Narendradev’s rule is possibly attested to by the death of two of his eldest sons. Narendradev moved to Bhadradhivash Bhavan, possibly located in the unexplored ruins of Guita Don³ in Lalitpur. Guita of Lalitpur grew as Buddhist *bahal* from Handigaun got relocated here. This is plausible as facts prove that both the key Buddhist *bahal* of Guita are from the Transitional Period. As the Guita area is even now largely settled by Maharjans and Prajapatis (at Khapinchhe and Chyasal), one may add that civil strife, religious split and the fire also led to the relocation of ordinary citizens who sided with the exiled king from Handigaun to Guita. Incidentally, the Prajapati of Khapinchhe show a deep linkage to Buddhism and to Narendradev also.

Today, apart from those in Thimi, Bhadgaun and Handigaun, we find Prajapatis living in Lalitpur also. The main centres of Prajapati settlements in Lalitpur are Khapinche and Chyasal and their main traditional socio-religious trust building is Awah Guthi Chapa located at Bhimdyo Lachchhi near Chyasal. The head of the trust is a Prajapati named Dhan Lal Awale. At 94, he is still active. He and his group perform *dewali* and worship Harihar or Hari-Shankara, as do other Prajapati from Handigaun and Bhadgaun. But he is also an adept in *chariya* dance and reads *namasangiti* too. He is a Prajapati *thakur*. In his collection is a bagful of Tibetan silver coins, numbering over one hundred, from the time parallel to Narendradev’s. The Prajapatis of Chyasal follow a curious religious practice, a mix of Mahayan Buddhism and Saivism. Their practice has been so since time immemorial. Thus, the group appears to be a splinter group of the Handigaun Prajapati, who sided with Buddhism and Narendradev in the initial power struggle that established the latter as king. As he went into exile in Sankasya after the fire, these Prajapatis also must have accompanied him and settled near the new palace of Bhadradhivas Bhavan. The silver coins in the private collection of the leading Prajapatis of Khapinche and the curious mix of religions practised by Dhan Lal and his group are testimony to this. According to Dhan Lal, Guita Don is actually called Guru Don and is a parade ground of the army of yore, called Sarvananda’s army. Sarvananda is much likely to be a memory of Narendradev.
That the current Naxal, Handigaun, Bhatbhateni, Chandol and Vishalnagar formed the central section of the legendary Vishalnagar is highlighted by the fact that its creators, Bhat and Bhateni, are revered in a temple here. About a century after Narendradev, the Naxal Narayanchaur inscription (DRR-CXLII) was issued but in that we do not find Vishalnagar named in the general area under discussion. Instead, we see that the area around Handigaun had been reorganised into Maneswor, Tamrakutta-sala, Sambapur, etc. However, the area of present-day Chabel and Deupatan is called Brihatgram, which in Lichchhavi parlance, translates as 'large settlement'. It lay to the east of Dhobi Khola. That Brihatgram extended earlier up to Tukucha river is revealed by the fact that this rivulet was called Brihadnadi. Since Brihatgrama and Vishalnagar can be seen as synonymous, it might have been that only this section of Vishalnagar escaped reorganisation and renaming following the large-scale disturbance.

The residents of Handigaun believe Lord Siva saved the village. The Siva linga near Bhimsenthan is said to have stopped the fire as it reached Handigaun. We will see in Chapter 24 that this Siva linga also formed the boundary element of the town of Maneswor. And to this day, Siva is worshipped in memory of his role in stopping the fire. Stylistically the linga seems to belong to the Transitional Period (9th-12th century). The fire, therefore, seems to have occurred before this period and the belief in Siva probably simply shows the faith that won the civil strife. To this day Saivism dominates the faiths of current-day Handigaun residents.

Extensive finds of charcoal and small amounts of what look like lumps of molten copper are common in sub-agricultural soil in areas to the immediate north of Handigaun. This may be evidence enough that a big fire occurred some time in history.

It can be concluded from the above that Vishalnagar is a generic reference to a group of settlements in the centre of the valley. It was the Lichchhavi who carved out a capital town within it. Intrigues and disputes starting within the palace appear to have developed into a religious civil war, resulting in a great fire that destroyed it almost completely. The Lichchhavi capital, which appears to have shifted briefly with the construction of Bhadravina Bhavan at Sankasya (Sankas?th?) (S.R. Tiwari, 1998) to the south of Sankhamul, returned to Maneswor. The latter lost its status as the capital as the rulers of the Transitional Period moved over to Kathmandu. Everything else related to the ordinary people apparently survived in Handigaun.

The fire at Vishalnagar thus appears to be a fairly late historical incident that was put into the classical time frame using the names 'Vikramaditya' and 'Bhoj'. The fire, a result of civil strife caused by conflict among religious faiths, must have been a great lesson for the period following Narendradev. It is only after the Transitional Period that Kathmandu Valley seems to have understood the need for harmonious co-existence of Buddhism with Hinduism and of the Saiva, Vaisnav and Shakta cults within Hinduism itself.
Notes

1 Shankerdev had been taken from a most likely historical construct for the beginning of Transitional Period (D.R. Regmi, 1965: Part I, p. 111).

2 Colophons and inscriptions show that a king of the name of Bhojdev ruled at Yambukrama, thought to be a reference to Kathmandu, within the first quarter of the eleventh century. He appears to have shared power with Rudradev about 1012. In 1015, he is seen to have shared power in a triangular arrangement with Rudradev and Nirbhayadev. His direct rule appears towards the end of his career and he seems to have been alone in power up to 1024. (D.R. Regmi, 1965: Part I)

3 Buddhists popularly attribute Guita Don to the legendary king Sarvananda, who is reported to have shifted his palace to Sankashya as he got tired of ruling from Manjupattan. Sankashya was located on the banks of the river Sanko, which is today called Hanumante. Sarvananda simply appears to be an allusion to Narendradev.
Chapter 23

Lichchhavi antiques in Handigaun

The Handigaun area is a treasure house of Lichchhavi steles and images. The oldest known inscription of the valley, a full-size statue of Lichchhavi King Jayaverma, comes from thereabouts. Belonging to the second century, this statue was discovered in Maligaun in 1994 at a distance of about 25 metres from the digu-dyo, or ancestral worship site, belonging to the residents of Handigaun. The image is now on display at the National Museum. Yaksa, another image from Handigaun from the Lichchhavi Period, is also at the museum. Yaksa seems to be a case of mistaken identification; it is more likely a torso of a Lichchhavi king, which can be surmised from the similarity of the belt, mekhalā, used by the so-called Yaksa with that worn by the statue of King Jayaverma. The mekhalā seems to be the royal insignia of the Lichchhavi.

Amshuverma’s inscriptions

For a visitor to Handigaun interested in its Lichchhavi antiques, Dabali is a good starting point. Dabali is the nodal space formed by the intersection of the main north-south highway of Lichchhavi times with the main pathway linking Handigaun with Deupatan, also extant from the same time. These roads were respectively called Kampro-Yambi Marg and Vrijjikarathya. At the two southern corners of the Dabali platform are located two inscriptions of Mahasamanta Amshuverma. One of the characters fixes the amount of state grants to important Hindu temples and Buddhist monasteries of his time. At the top of the list is Lord Pashupatinath; the Vaisnav site of Changunarayan is given second place. Both get six puranas and two panas each. The next five are Buddhist monasteries led by Gung Vihar at Sankhu; they also get the same amount, six puranas and two panas each. The inscription testifies to the fact that during the early seventh century, the Lichchhavi state treated institutions related to either of the two big religions with equality. Amshuverma greatly enhanced the socio-religious position of Lord Pashupatinath as he himself subscribed to Saivism. The other charter, issued two years earlier, mentions the annual salaries of palace personnel. It may be of interest to know that the salary of princes (bhattaraka-padana) stood at 20 puranas, sixteen times more than the one purana and four panas fixed for sweeper women. In modern Nepal, this ratio is about 300. Obviously, Lichchhavi state and society presented a much better sense of social equity than prevalent in Nepal these days.

The reading of the inscription itself is a matter best left to experts of the Lichchhavi script and the Sanskrit language, but a closer look at the design of the inscription tablet can reveal a lot even to a lay person. Until we come to the period of Mahasamanta Amshuverma, we see the use of a standard design composition on the top part of steles:
it depicts a central *chakra*, or the discus, flanked by a *sankha*, or conch shell, on either side, with filler motifs of creepers and leaves. Since both the *sankha* and the *chakra* are implements of Lord Vishnu, the standard clearly indicates that Vaisnavism was the state religion. Amshuverma, with his own faith of Saivism and liberal attitude to other religions, discarded the earlier standard design in several cases. At the Handigaun Dabali, one inscription has a new design. The stele on the right hand side shows a vessel bearing a bunch of flowers, the *purna kalas*, flanked by a *sankha* on the right and a *chakra* on the left. Although the *sankha* and the *chakra* are accorded a place on the stele, the *chakra* has lost its central position to a new motif, the *purna kalas*. It is most likely that the designs indicate the predominant religious faith of the residents of that area. At Handigaun, two faiths predominated, the worship of Vishnu and the worship of the *purna kalas*. The latter is the faith of the non-Lichchhavi dwellers of the area and this should be none other than the cult of Valasokshi. The people of the latter faith were in the majority also in the lowlands north of Changu, around Budanilkantha and Tistung. The religious implications of the inscription at Tistung were discussed in Chapter 7.

**Dabali**

In the past, there were several *patis* and at least two temples at Dabali. A small open colonnaded temple, located to the south of the platform and housing a Siva *linga* and an image of Vishnu, was removed when the exist-
ing street was widened for a motorable road in the 1970s. The Siva linga can now be found under a tree inside a private residence to the west of Dabali. Today, there is a temple of Saraswoti to the east, where, until the early seventies, the ruins of a so-called Taleju temple formed a fifteen-foot-high mound. We have argued in the previous chapter that ‘Taleju’ seems to have been a misnomer for a temple originally set up by Amshuverma. Bricks with the stamped mark of Mahasamanta Amshuverma formed its retaining structure as is attested by the recovery of several bricks with such marks from this site some time ago. The festivals of Handigaun still remember the original goddess here as all the khat coming here have to be ‘danced’ for the pleasure of the goddess. This is also the site of the dance of Pachali Bhairav, an event that takes place every twelve years. In the jatra of Satyanarayan, the three khat with pivoted lotus-shaped tops, cannot ‘dance’ here, probably in recognition of the goddess’s disapproval of the Vishnu, Brahma and Siva cults. Local belief is that the guardians (khyak) of the site prevent the khat tops from rotating here.

In the seventies, the ruins were cleared without archaeological investigation and the current structure built to enshrine a Malla Period image of Saraswoti. The Saraswoti was originally located to the northeast of Satyanarayan temple about a hundred metres away further down the slope. There, Lichchhavi Period bricks had been used in the foundations of the original temple. The dabali at Dabali, as a place of primary activity during all festivals of Handigaun, is the main public space of the ancient town. The extant public sattal, Jalefale, to the west and to the northeast Dabali, which are used in the ancient jatra of Tunaldevi for the preparation and display of god images made of cooked rice, are the only physical reminders left today. The Jalefale on the west has been recently restored to its old glory.

Other artefacts around

Down the wide-stepped path to the east, is located a stone water conduit from the Lichchhavi Period. Built in 550 by King Mandev’s grandson, Bharavi, the water conduit still flows with water. Water is channelled to it from Gahana Pokhari, which is at a higher level on the western side of Handigaun, and is drained out to the Dhobi Khola river. This speaks volumes about the achievements of the Lichchhavi in water technology. To the south of the path on the other side of the conduit is a piece of land which looks like somebody’s kitchen garden. Here, Italian archaeological digs have exposed building remains from as early as the first and second centuries BCE. Only some sections of the foundation walls excavated are seen now; the rest have been covered up for protection. One of the complete foundations found is that of a square temple in brick.

Some distance away is the complex of the Satyanarayan temple. The image of Satyanarayan inside the temple is dated to the second or third century CE. In front of this ordinary-looking temple is a pillar with a sculpture of the mythical carrier of Lord Vishnu, Garuda. This Garuda is datable to the seventh century CE.

A closer look at the pillar reveals an in-
cription in early Lichchhavi script which places it in the sixth century. This is a composition in praise of Dvipayana, or Vyasa, who is believed by followers of Vishnu to be a divinity incarnated to teach 'the true religion and expound the Vedas'. Composed by Anuparama, father of Bhaumagupta, who later became a powerful chief minister, it was written with the objective of gaining heavenly merit for Anuparama's father. A section of the composition contains a direct criticism of Buddhism which shows official distaste for the growing popularity of Buddhism as well as the situation of religious conflict between Vedic Hinduism and Buddhism brewing at the time of the inscription. The inscription is one of the most extensive poetic compositions of the period available to us.

In the apsidal space to the south of the temple precinct, several fragmented and some complete sculptures of mother goddesses from the third century are strewn around. Another water conduit built in 749 possibly existed nearby in ancient times, but is no longer extant. The drinking water bowl belonging to this conduit is now displayed in Patan Museum.

Another interesting place is the temple of Dhanaganesh down the road leaving the northeastern end of Handigaun. Here, in addition to several polished stone sculptures, including two Siva linga, several basaha (bulls) and an image of Hayagriva stylistically datable to the middle Lichchhavi Period (fifth and sixth centuries), older sculptures dating to the early Lichchhavi Period (the second and third centuries) are found in the images of Vishnu and Durga Mahisamardini. The image of Hayagriva, a minor incarnation of Vishnu in the form of a man with a horse's head, is rare, but conforms to the general preponderance of the Vishnu cult in the Lichchhavi Period. In ancient Nepal, Hayagriva was also worshipped as Mahabhairav. The presence of Durga Mahisamardini so early in the Lichchhavi Period is, however, rare and must be a part of the Mahabhairav cult. The tradition of Saptamatrika worship may have its origins prior to the Lichchhavi and the style-based dating by Lain Singh Bangdel may have to be pushed further back in history.

In the northeastern corner of Handigaun, near Krishna Mandir, are strewn several sculptural fragments from the early Lichchhavi Period in the form of Sri-Laksmi, Siva, etc. In the northeast corner of the temple platform, one can see a Siva linga; the original temple is survived by just the plinth stones still seen around the linga. This form of temple has to be dated to the fourth or fifth century. Sculpture fragments from the Lichchhavi Period may also be observed at the so-called Sankata pith, a paved area across the road and south of the Bhimsenthan temple.

The Bhimnani and Karttikeya temple area in Kotaltole also contains remains from early historical eras. Although the Skanda-Karttikeya image is from the thirteenth century and the Umamaheswor from the sixteenth century, the presence of a mother goddess image from the second or third century CE near the stepped well in the back proves the antiquity of the site beyond a doubt. On the northern side of the Karttikeya temple one may still see the plinth of a Lichchhavi stone temple with a Siva linga. The inscribed stone from the late Lichchhavi Period at Bhimnani is now lost. It was the site of a very famous temple of the Kirat period, Bhuwaneswor Devkul.

The stepped well west of Bhimnani is now inside a private garden, but one may go there with permission. This type of well is very rare. Believed to carry holy water and said to be protected by the naga, it has a very important role in the jatra of Satyanarayan. Technically, it looks like the end element of the city water supply system of Handigaun of Lichchhavi times. Under a large tree in the garden are images of mother goddesses.
Gahana Pokhari
A little distance away to the west is the famous pond of Handigaun, Gahana Pokhari. Recently renovated, it was fed by bringing water all the way from Bansbari using both natural and artificial systems, and feeds water to many wells in the town as well as to the stone water conduit at Satyanarayan temple. It appears to have been dug by King Dharmadev, father of Mandev, as a reservoir for the stone water conduits in Handigaun. This pond is mentioned in several ancient documents, including the Chinese Tang Annals and Hiuen Tsang’s travel accounts. It can be inferred from these sources that the pond was already associated with religious festivities in the time of King Narendradev.

Manamaneswori
To the south of the pond and beside a narrow pedestrian lane midway towards Bal Mandir, is the Lichchhavi site of Manamaneswori. In 1968, an archaeological excavation (S.B. Deo, 1968) in the precincts of the Manamaneswori temple exposed several bricks bearing the name of Mahasamanta Amshuverma; in addition to other archeological finds, this discovery left no doubt that the site was active in the late Lichchhavi Period. The stone navagraha representing the planets of the solar system, a find from the excavations, is still visible in the forecourt. If you enter the main shrine, a large Siva linga with the typical Lichchhavi polish can be seen in the lobby itself. It is called Maneswor after King Mandev, who set it up. The site’s current name is associated with a secret tantric goddess from the Transitional Period, Manamaneswori. This goddess is in the locked room to the east. Only the priest of the temple can see her. If you are keen, you can see some fragments of bricks with Amshuverma’s markings in the plinth paving of the temple.

Maneswor: the larger Handigaun
The capital Maneswor extended outwards considerably from the boundaries of the current Handigaun. At least on one occasion, during the Matachhoyeke festival, the residents of Handigaun ritually circumambulate the ‘country’ of their past, lighting lamps at its boundary nodes. This circumambulatory pilgrimage starts from the temple of Dhanaganesh and takes them to Dharamthali, Satyanarayan, Maligaun Narayan, Maligaun, Manamaneswori, Nasal Bhagabati, Chardhunge, Lal Ganesh, Goma Ganesh, Baluwarat Mahadev, Tunaldevi, Balkumari, Bhairav (Bhyachadyo), Kamdev and Dwicha (Dwimaju) and back to Dhanaganesh. The boundary traced during this festival excludes the principality of Tamrakuttasala (from the current Bal Mandir up to Nasal Bhagabati), Sambapura (bounded by Goma Ganesh and Lalganesh in the east and extending to Tukucha River to the west), and seems to reflect the late Lichchhavi extent of Maneswor. Six gateway points are remembered—Satyanarayan Gate, Chardunge Gate, Simhadwar, Tukucha Gate (called Lunchowk in popular memory), Tunaldevi Gate and Samadole Gate (near Bhyachadyo). The map below shows the route and the locations of these gateways. A comparison with the map based on the Narayanchaur inscription shows that the Yadudwara Gate is not visited as it fell outside Maneswor in later demarcations. It will be observed in the next chapter that the boundary traced on the northern side extends much outside the possible limits of Maneswor. In this context, the three gates at Tukucha, Tunaldevi and Samadol are outside. Thus, only three gates out of the possible twelve associated with the ancient town are still within living memory.

Many Lichchhavi artefacts can be seen in the extended area. At Bhagabati Bahal, the stone water conduit to the east is from this period (654 CE) and the inscription
testifies that a pumping mechanism was installed then. The Chardhunge area has a Lichchhavi chaitya and a Narayan image. Further west, the stone water conduit of Nandikeswor Bahal has several sculptural remains from the period, including chaitya and a Chaturmukhi Vishnu. Behind Lal Ganesh are some sculptures from the period. At Gairidhara there is another inscribed stone water conduit. Similarly, at Tunaldevi, one can see an inscribed stone in the northeast corner of the plinth circumambulatory, a Lichchhavi chaitya to the east of the temple and images of mother goddesses from the early Lichchhavi Period inside the temple. The images of mother goddesses are housed in the wall on the southeastern corner of the sanctum pit.
Notes

1. Kampro Yambi Marg was the urban segment of the main trade route that crossed the valley entering it at Thankot and going towards Tibet via Sankhu. It moved eastwards from a little to the west of Jamal, to Hattisar (where the Xinhua office is located today), then to the south of Nandikeshwor Bahal, Chardhunge, Sanogaucharan-Narayan, northwards to the Dabali of Handigaun, north and eastwards to Dhumbarahi, across the river to Mahankal and finally eastwards via Kapan.

2. Vrijjakarathya is so named as it was earlier the locality of the Vrijjis. The name continued to be used till the middle Malla Period as testified to in an inscription dated NS 534 located at Satyanarayan. (Cf. Vijayaratha)

3. One purana was worth sixteen panas.

4. That there should have been eight gateways, four in the cardinal directions and four in the cardinal corner directions is construed from a legendary description of Manjupattan city, which we have shown elsewhere to be the same as Vishalnagar. But as Maneswor followed the prastara planning pattern, there should be no central side gates. I have shown later in the next chapter that there is a strong possibility of the use of twelve gates around Maneswor.
The planning of Maneswor:

a Desya Mandala

After the reign of King Jayadev II, which ended 740 CE, Lichchhavi inscriptions become rarer and spaced too far apart to be sources of useful information on the state of Maneswor and the Lichchhavi nation. But the Lichchhavis are believed to have remained in power for another century and a half as one colophon reference records that in the year 301 of SLS (877) the ruler was Mandev II, a likely Lichchhavi. With the promulgation of the new era, Nepal Samvat, on 20 October, 879 CE, a new ruling house, that of King Raghavdev, seems to have taken control. His lineage is not clear, but since the role of Pashupatinath was apparently elevated to paramount status, he may have belonged to the Verma clan.

There is a total absence of authentic records for the two hundred years following 879 because of which leading historians have called it the Dark Period. Inscriptions of the Malla Period abound only from 500 NS onwards, making chronicles and colophons the main sources of information to ascertain the course of development of the valley’s towns for the intervening five centuries. In Handigaun area, too, a large number of inscriptions and religious images from the mid-Malla period are seen; the earliest one dates from 534 NS. These inscriptions document the increasing importance of the place as Manamaneswori became the tutelary god of the Mallas also.

It is historically known that the Mallas ruled from Bhadgaun as their capital from the middle of the twelfth century, when the Tripura Palace was constructed in the Tachapal area in the east. It is most unlikely that the shifting of the capital to Bhadgaun happened with the promulgation of the new era, as suggested by one chronicle, even as Khopringga had been important for almost two centuries by then. It may not be merely coincidental that the first references to Khopu (Bhadgaun, NS 125) and Lalitabrumah (Lalitpur, NS 40) are made in authentic records quite late. The first colophon mentioning the place Yambukrama (Kathmandu) is traced to around 135 NS, or 1015 CE. Whereas Khopu and Yambukrama can be traced to Lichchhavi places then called Khopringga and Yambi (cf. Jama-Yambi), respectively, coming down from Kirat times, Lalitabrumah has no similar antecedent. The key term ‘Lalita’ certainly must refer to an area settled only in late Lichchhavi times; it was obviously not applied to a place of Kirat times. We can see from inscriptive sources that Lichchhavi and Kirat places with such names as Kadalpringga (Kupondole), Gangula (Chysal), Thambu (Gabahal), Yupagrama (Taha Bahal), Tegwala (Tyagal) and Mulabatika (Mangalbazar) occupied the sections of Lalitpur corresponding to the present places mentioned within parantheses. These names definitely indicate that the western and southern areas of present-day Lalipur were under occupation from Kirat times and that only the
The planning of Maneswor

northeastern section had to be settled in a later period. We can thus conclude that Lalitabrumah is a reference to the Guita area. Similarly, the early references to Khopu or Yambukrama do not indicate that the national capital was located in either city. Thus, if Raghavdev had ruled from Lalitpur at all, it would have to have been from the Guita area. But several authors, including Petech, agree that the capital was not at Lalitpur. Even if we agree with the reports of the chronicles, only two capital cities are possible in the period and they are Handigaun of Vishalnagar and Guita of Lalitpur, one each on either side of the River Bagmati as it took a westward course from the confluence area of Sankhamul. In Chapter 21, we have shown that Narendradev could have resided in a palace at Guita for a brief period, but that his son Sivadev subsequently returned to Maneswor. On the basis of the seal found from the Satyanarayan archaeological site of Handigaun and colophon references, we have already seen in Chapter 3 that as late as the time of Rudradev (c. 135 NS), Handigaun was still a capital, although with a new name, Suprabhanagar. It is apparent that Handigaun’s role as capital must have been retained for quite some time after the Lichchhavi Period. However, it may have had a reduced area under its control because it would have been a truncated kingdom by then. Chronicles indicate that the country had split into two states during the late Dark (Transitional) Period.

Maneswor ceases to be a capital

One reference in Gopalarajavamsavali states that King Vaskerdev acted against the image of his lineage deity (pitr malitavikritam) and perpetrated indignities against the royal goddess of Maneswor, Sri Maneswori Bhattarika. This act of sacrilege against the reigning deity of Maneswor must have happened after Maneswor ceased to be the capital city. Other chronicles show this happened at the time of Gunakamadev, when the Gunapo palace was built in the Hanumandhoka area in Kathmandu (Yambukrama). Maneswor, thus, must have continued as the troubled capital of Nepal in the Transitional Period at least until a little before 1045. When the capital was moved to Kathmandu around this time, a splinter group, which continued to accord respect to Maneswor, apparently moved to the Panauti/Banepa area and ruled over that part of the nation. This new state was called Bhot. As Tibet was also referred to by the same name, some analysts of chronicles have, in confusion, inferred that Tibet exercised rule over the valley, whereas in reality it was the Banepa royal house that held sway for some time.

Limited physical interventions in the Malla Period

According to the Gopalarajavamsavali, immediately following Vaskerdev’s sacrilege, the next king, Balvantdev, created Haripur. Historians have read this as a possible reference to the reconstruction of Maneswor town. Authentic documents do show a King Baladev, whose full name the chronicler seems to have remembered, ruling for almost twelve years after Vaskerdev. The same chronicle also includes other references to activities in the general area, for example, the construction of Sankaeswor at Nandisala (Naxal) and Bhagabati Manohara by Sankerdev, the construction of Madanasara pond at Yoddham; by Mahendradev, and the construction of a large temple and college at Yoddham by Someswordev. All these places were to the west and south of the Maneswor area. Maneswor obviously continued to be an important town even after the capital had shifted to Kathmandu. Two hundred years later, it was still a rich town: the Gopalarajavamsavali states that Nandala, or Handigaun, was vandalised by Sri Jashimala
Poh, a reference to Jayasimha Malla of the Banepa royal house, in 1275. The attack apparently took place in reprisal of the decision of King Jayadev's to hold his coronation at Maneswor. Until this time, therefore, Handigaun seems to have remained a place of political importance and muscle-flexing. After this vandalism, other events of the later Malla Period do not indicate any major physical interference that may have changed the shape of the town.

It can be inferred, therefore, that Handigaun has retained its shape and extent from the Lichchhavi Period, except for whatever change the making of Haripur by King Balvantdev might have brought about. Since the latter act does not seem to have gone beyond the construction of Krishna Mandir at Bhuteswor of Handigaun, we can technically conclude that the shape of Maneswors at the time of Narendradev was unchanged till the end of the Malla Period. It would have, of course, faced some decay as it passed through more than five centuries of neglect during the later Malla Period. It was only in the first half of the twentieth century that the expansion activities of the Rana palaces reached Handigaun. This led to the erasure of the settlement patterns south of Maligaun, west of Gahana Pokhari and north of Bhimsenthan. Only those parts of Handigaun left out by Rana acquisition, thus, could continue to exhibit any ancient patterns of settlement.

A place of honour is restored to Maneswori

Maneswor, the ruling Siva linga of Handigaun, is a deity mentioned in only a few Lichchhavi inscriptions. The Gopalaraja-vamsavali mentions that Maneswori is a goddess established by Mandev, but Maneswori temple does not find a place in the state-supported list of religious institutions outlined by Amshuverma in Handigaun. In Amshuverma's inscription, two temples, Maneswor and Dhara Maneswor, are mentioned. Another inscription shows Pravardha Maneswor located in the northwest corner of the central court of Mangriha palace. More authentic historical reference to Maneswori comes only much later in the mid-Malla Period, and Maneswor has been altogether forgotten then. As Maneswori was not a state goddess of the Lichchhavi times, this development must be a manifestation of the later Shakta cult practice. The current temple of Mananameswori houses two images, a Lichchhavi Siva linga and the tantric goddess Mananameswori, who is a Maheswori (Shakti of Siva Maheswor). The name of the temple, Mananameswori, appears to be derived from the reference to the area as Manohar-Maneswori which starts appearing in inscriptions from the seventeenth century only.

The kings of Nepal used long titles, prasasti, to glorify themselves in their inscriptions and these often help identify the position occupied in the state by various gods and goddesses. Among the Mallas, the first to use the title ‘Sri Maneswori-varalavda prasadha (pratapa)’ is the illustrious Malla ruler, Jayasthiti. The title was first used for him in 1386 in a colophon record. A little earlier, the phrase ‘Sri Sri Maneswori varapratilavda’ was used for Mahamantri Jayasirnha Rama Verdhana of the ruling house of the Banepa, Nala and Panauti area, then called Bhot, and who had initially opposed Jayasthiti Malla’s rise to the throne. It is interesting to note that Jayasimha Rama Verdhana’s great-grandfather, Jaitra Rama, a Vaisya Kshatriya, has the title ‘Sri Kanti-varalabdha’ in a colophon while another colophon has ‘Srirnat Kanteswori paricharana’ for Jayasimha Rama himself. His brother Madansimha Rama has the title ‘Tripurasundari varalavda’. The current goddess at Mananameswori is worshipped as Tripurasundari, and one may conclude that all three names were applied to Maneswori at that time as well. The goddess
was venerated by the Simha Rama family of Bhot that was contemporaneous with Jayasthiti Malla’s rule from Bhadgaun. This reverence of Maneswori of Handigaun by the ruling house of Banepa can be linked to incidents in the time of Vaskaradev, when a splinter Lichchhavi began to rule there. The linkage of Banepa with Handigaun is also indicated by two Dongol digu-dyo piths of Handigaun (located near the River Rudramati) primarily used by those who had originally come from Banepa. Although separated by a long time, the memory and honour to Maneswori was apparently restored by the Banepa royal house. We can guess that the spirit of Maneswori became Shakta Maneswori about 1045 as the Bhot state was created, and it may be there that this christening took place. Maneswori may have retained its Saiva sanctity as late as 1275 when the coronation of Jayadev took place there. It is as likely that Jayasthiti put Maneswori in the temple of Maneswori because he himself wished to claim descent from the ancient Mangriha royal house. This act must have also brought an end to the Bhot country.

The town plan of Maneswori
An analysis of the dispersal of Lichchhavi sites and of the angular deviations in the alignment of its streets clearly show that the major street alignments of Handigaun are still

Orientation 18 degrees due south of east
The foundations of buildings exposed at Satyanarayan, the street lines connecting nodal points, and Nandikeswor Bahal, the largest historical building extant since the Transitional Period, all exhibit a common orientation of about 18 degrees (range: 16 to 18 degrees) due south of east. For a town planned with major streets laid out in a gridiron pattern, the angle must relate to some logic.

Hindu planning logic generally calls for exact cardinality, although, some cases such as Jaipur in India also exhibit orientation to the stellar position of the ruling rasi, which in the case of Jaipur was Leo. However, a lack of cardinality is observed in many old areas of Kathmandu Valley also. The planning axis of Lalitpur Durbar Square is due east of north by 14 degrees 1 minute. This appears calculated as it translates as tan⁻¹ (¼) and relates to a geometry of a square with four divisions. The temple of Pashupatinath is oriented off the cardinal axes by 36 degrees, apparently one-tenth of 360 degrees. Lord Pashupatinath is believed to have five faces and the division seems to reflect the ritual division of the quadrant into five parts; the result is 18 degrees as a planning direction. The Deupatan street orientation is related to the temple of Pashupati-nath, to which it points. An axial approach to a linga shrine is not ritually recommended, particularly for the direction of Siva’s carrier basaha. It can be observed that the original west gate to the temple was also set off axis accordingly. The planning axis of Deupatan is also off the cardinal axis at 18 degrees east of south and fits this ritual logic.

The street orientation of Handigaun possibly comes from its Kirat days as Andipringga. The line traced by the ancient piths of Andipringga is also off the cardinal axes by 18 degrees. It may, thus, also be that the street grids in the Kirat Period were also based on principles similar to that of the Lichchhavi.
quite close to those of its Maneswor days. That the basic alignment of the streets in the northeastern section may go further into the past can be observed when we compare the current situation with the dispersal of the determinants of Andipringga (see Chapter 7). It is apparent that the core area of Andipringga was extended west and south to form Maneswor in the early years of the Lichchhavi occupation of the town as their capital.

Deviations from cardinal directions: a pointed indicator
The agreement of these street directions with the alignment of excavated ruins to the west of Satyanarayan temple leaves no doubt that they are inter-related and reflect the planning traditions of that time. The temple foundations from the excavations are oriented off the cardinal directions by approximately 18 degrees, i.e., the design axis is 18 degrees south of east. The line joining the temple of Pashupatinath with the Siva linga at Dhobichaur, the site of the Vishnuvikrant image set up by King Mandev, is also seen to be similarly off the cardinal axis by 16 degrees. Among extant large buildings dating from the Transitional Period, the quadrangle of Nandikeswor Bahal shows a close alignment with these axes. The three main streets of Handigaun, (1) stretching north-south through Dabali and Bhuteswor Bhairav; (2) from Dabali to Satyanarayan temple; and (3) from Bhuteswor Bhairav to Bhimsenthан, are also oriented off the cardinal directions by about 18 degrees, as are the buildings from the early days. The same alignment is seen for the three small street segments surviving in Maligaun, a little to the south of Handigaun now but obviously a part of Maneswor in the past. The alignment parallel to Nandikeswor Bahal goes through the Chardhunge intersection and skirts the Narayan of Sanogaucharan. Inscriptional and sculptural remains there testify to their dating to around the same time as Maneswor. The two Narayans, those of Chardhunge and Sanogaucharan, seem to have formed a part of the capital set; the current images are apparently later replacements. Similarly, the street alignment through Chardhunge, Lal Ganesh, and the Gairidhara stone water conduit is also exactly parallel and aligned to 17 degrees east of north. It is very likely that these angles are based on Pashupatinath and its orientation, as may be observed from the box text and the drawings shown here.

The dispersal of water conduits
The Handigaun-Naxal area has four water conduits inscriptionally dated to the Lichchhavi Period. These are at Satyanarayan, Bhagabati Bahal, Nandikeswor Bahal and Gairidhara. A fifth water conduit located to the north of Bhatbhateni temple is paved with bricks from Lichchhavi times. It is logical to infer that a society used to a supply of water from the rivers on the outer edges of its settlement would build conduits at the periphery. This would have helped in the very important aspect of drainage; failure to drain such pits would have rendered them useless. It is also logical to suggest that these stone water conduits defined major exit or entry points and that they potentially corroborate the street pattern. With two other potential Lichchhavi sites, one located at Sanogaucharan and the other to the north of the Bhuteswor crossing of Handigaun, the seven water conduits define the outer boundary of Maneswor and also exhibit an angular deviation similar to that of the streets. The figure on page 202 shows a conjectural street alignment based on these locations. We can see that the town plan was based on the application of a regular geometric patterning of street alignments formed by the division of a master square equal to the size of the town itself.

As the Lichchhavi rulers were followers
of Hindu socio-religious dictates, it can be assumed that their town planning would also be based on Hindu thoughts. Brahmanical town planning ideas were already highly crystallised by the time the Lichchhavi were building their capital; indeed, the remains and indicators extant in Handigaun do conform to the same principles. Since the geometric division of a square and the pattern of streets and the location of temples or gods in a town are the major parameters of Hindu planning principles, and as the surviving remains are able to substantiate the use of these parameters, we are in a strong position to suggest the possible theoretical layout of the town using a comparative method.

Except for the image in the temple of Satyanarayan, no other god image in Handigaun is inscriptionally datable to the Lichchhavi Period in Handigaun. That Manamaneswori had been a Saiva pith since Lichchhavi times can be concluded from the polishing technique on the linga as well as from inscriptive references. Other spots such as Dhanaganesh, Krishna Mandir, Handigaun Dabali, Kartikkeya Mandir, Maligaun Mayati Dyochhe, Naxal Charghunge, Naxal Nandikeswor Bahal, Tangal Ganesh and Tunaldevi can be traced to the Lichchhavi Period through the presence of images and artefacts from that time. However, one cannot positively ascertain what the original god image was at the latter places. The orientation of Satyanarayan and Manamaneswori are as per Hindu dictates. The location of Siva and Shakti Maheswori close to Brahmasthana, the centre of the master square, for example, is difficult to accept in a Vaisnav capital and we would have to infer that the town plan that survives must have been reorganised after the consecration of the Maneswor linga. As the last apparent reorganisation was made after the resurgence of Kailashkut Bhavan, towards the end of the rule of Narendradev, the allocation of the central spot to the Maneswor linga appears all right and it is not logically necessary to divide the images into subsets of Vaisnav or Saiva affiliations from the point of view of assessing the plan. We have already discussed the religious imagery imposed by different cults over the area (Chapters 11 and 12) and we can see that they overlap the general geometric pattern as defined by the streets. A micro-geometry diagram has thus been projected, which includes all the major deities, some of which are even from the Malla Period. The images from the latter period cannot be disregarded as late phenomena as there are strong reasons to infer that they replaced older images in the same spots.

Essentially, eight different basic town shapes are recommended in ancient documents: dandaka, sarvatobhadra, nandyavarta, padmaka, swastika, prastara, karmuka and Chaturmukha. The dandaka, sarvatobhadra, nandyavarta and padmaka forms are said to be
A planning grid based on the location of stone water conduits

fit for towns with Brahmins, *swastika* and *prastara* are for Kshatriyas, *karmuka* for Vaisyas, and *chaturmukha* for Sudras. The town of Deupatan fits the *karmuka* pattern.

As Maneswor is a capital town, we need only examine if it uses the *swastika* or *prastara* patterns as recommended for towns with Kshatriyas, or rulers. It is to be remembered, too, that the town must have been originally laid out in relation to the Madhyama Rajkul palace and then later adjusted to the new palaces of Mangriha and Kailashkut Bhavan. In earlier chapters, we have shown that Mangriha was located to the south of Madhyama Rajkul.

We assume there was a square plan for both *swastika* and *prastara* designs, as was usual for capital cities based on Hindu planning dictates. Since Maneswor was an extended town and as an eastward extension was not possible due to the land forms of Handigaun, circumstances seem to have caused the extension southwards and westwards, directions which do not correspond to normal Hindu planning preferences for town expansion.

Taking stock of the records of Wang Huen Che and applying square overlays on extant nodal landmarks, it is seen that the town of Madhyama Rajkul was planned with Gahana Pokhari as its central element. Similarly, the eastern end of the planning axis of Madhyama Rajkul was marked by Valasokshi Devkul and the Satyanarayan temple with Dabali as an intermediate public space. Its *roga pada* (northwest corner) was defined by the temple of Bhatbhateni, its *isa pada* (northeast corner) by Nateswor and its *agni pada* (southeast corner) by Mayati Dyochhe. As most of the salient positions are occupied by
The planning of Maneswor

god images of non-classical Hindu gods, we have no examples or texts for comparison. The resident deity of pitri pada (southwest corner) is lost or was left vacant. The palace appears to have occupied the northwest section of the town as Hindu rules prescribed. The ancient funerary place was located a little outside the town to the north of the northeast square; this position meets doctrinal requirements.

Although the assignment of gods and goddesses as described above follows the Vastusasstra, one can dispute the positioning of the goddess Mayati, a Panchakumari, in the agni pada. Festival activities today do not show Mayatidevi's relation to Handigaun, but a folk tale does claim she was the deity of the Dyochhe, which is said to have been washed down by a flash flood in the past long gone. Also, although there are no inscriptional or sculptural remains from the Lichchhavi Period in the Dyochhe site; the wide-stepped path to its south is similar to the Satyanarayan street and could go back to the same period. This fits in with the conjectural geometry of the plan suggested above.

The suggested geometry takes the stone peg, stambhasila, at Tangal Ganesh as an entry marker from the west. The orientation of Ganesh and the location of Gairidhara, a later Lichchhavi water conduit, prove that this was the western exit point and led to a major street. The palace of Madhyama Rajkul thus appears to have occupied the northwestern section on the diagonal axis passing through Mayati Dyochhe and the Bhatbhateni temple. Gahana Pokhari, the central pond, is located to the southeast of the palace as described by the Chinese visitors.

The conjectural geometry based on the locations of landmarks and nodal points indicates that Madhyama Rajkul was planned using the paramasayika vastupurusha mandala, or a square with nine side divisions and eighty-one plots. It appears that Madhyama Rajkul was planned within a square with a side of about 600 metres, with actual site measurements ranging from 594 metres to 616 metres. This figure comes close to a 1000 units of madhyama-dhanurgraha of Hindu cubit measures, each equalling 27 madhyama-angulas (one madhyama-angula is seven-eighths of an inch). Compared to the recommendations of Manasara, an ancient architectural text, this size is quite small for a town but medium for a prastara village.

The extended Maneswor is contained by a square with a side of about 819 metres; actual site measurements range from 790 metres to 830 metres. A geometric relation with Madhyama Rajkul would require a size of 800 metres. Trial squares accommodating the dispersal of new nodal points, such as the Gairidhara water conduit, Naxal Chardunge, and Goma Ganesh (Masta of Lichchhavi times?) and the salient nodes from the earlier layout give the above dimensions. Such an extension would convert the paramasayika vastupurusha mandala into a desya mandala with 144 square plots.

Whereas the earlier town had Gahana Pokhari at its brahmasthana, or centre, the new extensions would have shifted the town centre diagonally to the southwest by one sixth. The central deity of Maneswor (and later his Shakti-consort Manamaneswori) was apparently located at the new brahmasthana. A new street leading west from the centre of the brahmasthana appears to have been created and closed by a Masta image at the Goma Ganesh area. The main highway, Kampro-Yambi Marga, skirted the south and east of the town, forming nodal spaces at Chardhunge Naxal, Bhagabati Bahal, Sanogaucharan, Handigaun Dabali and Handigaun Bhuteswor. Commercial activities were very important and were possibly controlled through the gates at Chardunge, Sanogaucharan and Bhuteswor.

The new palace of Mangriha occupied
the eastern part of the sixteen-square brahmasthana, called the mahapitha variety in classical literature. It had a moat on its west. Later, Kailashkut Bhavan was constructed to its east and was apparently sized and located so that Gahana Pokhari was just outside of its northern courtyard. A fourth court may have enclosed the pond itself. It is likely for this reason that Amshuverma preferred to call the festival of Andipi, or the jatra of Tunaldevi and Bhatbhateni, Dwarodghatan Kailash Yatra as it was approached through the north gate of his palace. It may be no coincidence that Amshuverma’s charter of Khopasi was issued on Chaitra Krishna Panchami, the day the guthi of Handigaun proceeds to get the lingo to start the jatra of Tunaldevi. It is otherwise almost a rule of Lichchhavi inscriptions that they be issued only on the fortnight of the bright moon (suklapakshya) and only some inscriptions are known to have been issued on the fortnight of the dark moon (krishnapakshya), with the latter relating to specific days of non-Vaisnav festivities only.

The river diversions must have been extended southwards to form the moat east of Kailashkut Bhavan. The new exit point housed a water mill (araghatta) for the principality of Bodda, the current Gyaneswor area. The water canalworks, which appears to have been in place at least a generation before Mandev, corresponds to existing land forms and to memories of a chain of ponds along the alignment.

The routes of the Khat Jatra and their directions of movement do not indicate the use of the swastika pattern of planning. The surviving pattern of streets also rules this out. It seems very likely that the desya mandal was used in the prastara patterning of streets. The key indicators of the prastara pattern are: (i) a wide perimeter road; (ii) two each of east-west and north-south roads, dividing the overall town into nine quarters with a free brahmasthana; (iii) in the eight blocks so formed around the centre, a similar layout is repeated with one or more zigzag streets to avoid through movement to other blocks; and (iv) the development of a perimeter street as a commercial belt with the working class on the outside and the Vaisya on the inside.

The Maneswor area did have an inner perimeter road which has largely survived. A town in the prastara pattern is said to have four (at the corners), eight (two on each side at the terminations of the main roads), or twelve gateways. At any rate, its gates should not be in the centre of its sides. The position of stone water conduits just outside Bhuteswor at Satyanarayan and Bhagabati Bahal, a little outside Nashal Chardhunga, at Gairidhara, and a little outside Bhatbhateni show the entry points. Inscriptions indicate the locations of gates at the southeast corner (yadudwara) and the southwest corner (pashchimadwara). Gateways at Handigaun Dagali and Gate Simhdwar (Shambadwar?) located between Goma Ganesh and Chardhunga survive in folk memory. Therefore, Maneswor seems to have followed the prastara plan with twelve gateways. Inscriptions suggest that Maneswor was not walled in.

Maneswor Siva and Maheswori Maneswori were in the centre of town. The town’s extended boundaries were marked by placing Narayans at the corner pada, and these survive at Chardhunga (now located behind a shop there, on the southwest corner) and Sanogaucharan (now on the southeast of the Nepal Electricity Authority godown). A memory of Kamalasan Narayan survives at Bhuteswor corner, although the current image is from the late Malla Period. Narayans—Satyanarayan and Narayanachaur Narayan—are located to the east and west of the imaginary central axis. Whatever marked the new northwest corner has been lost. The position of the water drains in the east at bhrisa and satya pada corresponds to Hindu dictates but the placement of the water inlet
to the town at bhujanga and aditi pada may be said to disagree with the rules. Thus the basic dispersal of Lichchhavi and pre-Lichchhavi images and power places in Maneswor shows a strong likeness to a prastara-planned place. The only Buddhist monastery in Maneswor, Jivaverma Vihar, was located just outside its southwest corner (dauvarika or prit pada) exactly as ordained in Manasara.ix.278.

As for the details and street patterns within the major sub-square plots of the prastara plan, the comparable characteristics need to be sought in corner plots. Unfortunately, the Rana Period interventions have obliterated any remains in the northeast and southeast corners of Maneswor and we can only examine the northwest and the south-
west corners. The access pattern in both these corners inside the perimeter street still show the zigzag road as accurately as one would expect.

From the above discussions, one can make a very forceful case that the classical prastara patterning was applied to the planning of Maneswor. As the same northeast corner overlapped with the conjectural plan of Madhyama Rajkul, its earlier plan also seems to have followed the same patterning albeit on a smaller scale. The conjectural patterns for both the overlapping towns are presented graphically on the next two pages.

A comparison with the Handigaun of Kirat days will show an entirely new set of gods and goddesses dispersed around
Maneswor to create the necessary cosmic image. The parallel surviving non-Lichchhavi sites and images were apparently not seen as disturbances to the cosmic image. It is a clear statement of the principle of peaceful co-existence of sects and cults in Handigaun that they were not obliterated during the course of the many religious and social changes over such a long period of time.

The last word
Thus closes the story of ancient Handigaun, the capital city of the Lichchhavi kingdom of Nepal. This is also the beginning of the story of Bhadgaun, where the capital shifted as the Mallas consolidated their power.

The shifting of the capital is symbolically portrayed in Handigaun as only one of the two lingo, the one raised on Chaitra Sukla Astami at Bhuteswor, has a halipata, a festoon that carries the memory of the Naga traditions of the Kirat. The other, at Dabali, is raised without a halipata because, as Handigaun residents say, the banner has flown away to Bhadgaun. It is during this period, on the first day of the month of Baisakh according to solar reckoning, that the Bisket Jatra of Bhadgaun is celebrated. The Shakti affiliation (the worship of the Duimaju) of the new kingdom was signified by the lingo at Dabali. This new political change meant that the halipata of the Duimaju of Handigaun would have to fly together with the Bisket lingo of Bhadgaun. The Duimaju
also found a new place alongside Taleju of Bhadgaun. Is it any wonder that the jatra of the Duimaju of Bhadgaun is also celebrated immediately after the Bisket Jatra? The transfer of the Duimaju from Handigaun to Bhadgaun also required the consecration of the Duimaju pond (Nag Pokhari of the Bhadgaun palace) there, for without it the ritual activities in commemoration of the ancient magic pond of the Lichchhavi kingdom could hardly have been performed. Through the Duimaju pond and its associated rituals, the power of the state, annually restored by the goddess of Andipringga through her festival at Gahana Pokhari, was also transferred to Bhadgaun.

Notes

1 This was apparently done by King Anandadev of the Lichchhavi dynasty in the same period that Raghavdev started his rule in Lalitpur (sic) (B.L. Pradhan, 2055 BS). This seems like a breakaway ruling house. Other chronologies suggest a three-way split, Bhadgaun and Panauti being the two new breakaway kingdoms.

2 It is known from Lichchhavi inscriptions that Khopring referred to eastern Bhadgaun and that the name was shortened to just Khopu. Likewise Yambi (Indrachowk) of Lichchhavi times has become Yambukrama, including Makhan Tole (as in the colophon of pingalamata, British Museum Or. 2279, dated 1193 CE, Sri Yambukramayas Makhantolaka...). Lalitabrumah is a new place and not 'Yupagrama' as we can see from other references (the colophon from a manuscript dated 1150 CE in Durbar Library contains a reference to it as 'Yupatola'). From other usages of the suffix 'brumah', it may be taken to mean a plateau and centre (cf. Khiprimbrum for Tachapal area in Bhadgaun). Thus Lalitbrumah can be concluded to be a reference to the Guita area.

3 The Lichchhavi name was Nilisala, or a place for keeping an ox. It later came to be called Nandisala. The current name Naxal is a shortened version of Nandikeswor-sala.

4 The place in the Lichchhavi days was Vodda District, which was to the south of Maneswor and to the east of Rudramati. The reference here is obviously to Gyaneswor, a name mimicking its ancient role as a place of learning (Daxin-vidhya-pith, or place of Daxinachar tantric learning).

5 Lichchhavis brought the riverbank settlement idea to Nepal from their past experience in the Vrijji republics. We have already seen that the Kirat tradition was to build towns in hillocks and over the ridges; all pringga were settled under this system.
Notes on festive times

The Calendars: The traditional calendar, whether Nepal Samvat (NS), First Lichchhavi Samvat (FLS) or Second Lichchhavi Samvat (SLS), is divided into months, days and tithi as per the panchanga system. The New Year's Day of NS and SLS, and possibly FSL as well, falls on Kartik Sukla Pareva, the first day of the bright fortnight of the month of Kartik, which runs from mid-October to mid-November of the Gregorian calendar. In 2000 CE, this day fell on 28 October. The following notes will explain why festive days based on the panchanga calendar fall on different dates of the Gregorian calendar in different years.

Panchanga (Sanskrit): The traditional calendar or almanac which incorporates five types of time: (1) the solar days (365 days plus a little more than one-fourth of a day make one solar year); (2) the lunar days (in which 29 days plus about a one-half of a day make a lunar month and 354 days make one lunar year); (3) days or time according to nakshetra (constellations); (4) yoga (27 festive divisions of time based on the joint motion in the longitude of the sun and the moon); (5) and karana (two of which make a lunar day; there are eleven altogether)

Ritu (Sanskrit): The year is divided into six ritu, which are festive periods characterised by the seasons of Vasanta (spring), Grishma (the hot season), Varsha (the rainy season), Sarad (autumn), Hemanta (winter) and Sisira (the cool season). The year is divided into twelve months: Baisakh (April-May), Jesth (May-June), Ashadh (June-July), Srawan (July-August), Bhadra (August-September), Aswin (September-October), Kartik (October-November), Marg (November-December), Poush (December-January), Magh (January-February), Falgun (February-March) and Chaitra (March-April). The solar year starts in Baisakh and the lunar year starts on the bright fortnight of the month of Kartik. Each month is divided into two fortnights. Each fortnight is divided into fifteen tithi.

Krishna Pakshya (Sanskrit): The half of the lunar month in which the moon is on the wane, the dark fortnight. Its last day is the new moon, or aunshi.

Sukla Pakshya (Sanskrit): The bright half of the lunar month in which the moon is on the increase, the bright fortnight. Its last day is the full moon, or purnima.

Tithi (Sanskrit): A lunar day in the panchanga calendar. The seasonal variation of time on earth is a function of solar play and festivals are timed to such seasons. The festive day, tithi, is more than a simple lunar day: it embodies the concept of festive time. The approximate difference of eleven days between
the sub-sets of the solar year and the lunar year is adjusted in the lunar calendar by adding one extra lunar month, called *adhikamasa*, after two and a half years and another *adhikamasa* in the fifth year, thereby bringing the two years to the same status vis-à-vis the time on earth. This brings the *tithi* in consonance with the solar seasons. For this reason, Nepali festive days shift vis-à-vis the Gregorian calendar. The *tithi* are named according to the phases of the moon.

**Pareva, Pratipada** (Sanskrit): The first day of the Krishna Paksha (dark fortnight) is called Pareva and the first day of the Sukla Paksha (bright fortnight) is Pareva or Pratipada. The second to fourteenth days in either fortnight are respectively named Dvitiya, Tritiya, Chaturthi, Panchami, Sasthi, Saptami, Astami, Navami, Dasami, Ekadasi, Dwadasi, Triyodasi and Chaturdasi. The names are simply the Sanskrit numbers 2 through 14. The new moon is Aushi and the full moon is named Purnima. A *tithi* is always named along with the month and its Paksha, e.g. Kartik Sukla Panchami, Srawan Krishna Chauthi, etc.

**Samvatsara** (Sanskrit): The period of five solar years, when both lunar and solar days again come back to the point of standard reference. Thus solar and lunar times renew themselves every *samvatsara*. This period is also called a *yug*.

**Adhisamvatsara** (Sanskrit): A wider ‘renewal point’ of time is reached when this system is extended to cover all the relative movement of the sun, the moon and the *nakshyatras* (constellations). This cosmic time period is called *adhisamvatsara*. An *adhisamvatsara* spans 25,920 earth-years according to solar time. The concept behind *Adhisamvatsara* is the same as the Pythagorean Great Year.

**Kaliyug** (Sanskrit): Just as the Solar year on earth has six seasons, or *ritus*, the *adhisamvatsara* may also be divided into six cosmic seasons, each spanning a period of 4320 solar years. The time spanned by one hundred of such cosmic *ritus* make a period called Kaliyug. In Kaliyug, people are most irreligious and material thoughts dominate. The world is going through a Kaliyug at present. The year 2000 CE was year 5055 of the current Kaliyug as per Hindu mythology.

**Satyayug** (Sanskrit): Also called Kreta Yug, the duration of Satyayug is equal to 400 units of the cosmic *ritu* periods or 1,728,000 solar years on earth. In Satyayug, life is believed to be totally guided by religious thoughts. Satyayug is followed by Treta Yug, where life is three quarters guided by religion and one quarter by material thoughts. It lasts for 300 cosmic seasons (1,296,000 solar years on earth). Between Treta Yug and Kaliyug is a period of 200 cosmic seasons lasting 864,000 solar earth years called Dwaper Yug, when life is half religious and half material.
The festive *tithi* of the Jyapu of Handigaun and of the Khas

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<td>Jesth S6</td>
<td>7 June</td>
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<td>Jesth Purnima</td>
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<td>Magh S1</td>
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<td>Sripanchami celebrations at Saraswoti temple at Dabali, Handigaun</td>
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<td>Magh Purnima</td>
<td>8 February</td>
<td>Sipunhi, Khas's Masto celebrations</td>
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<td>Falgun K14</td>
<td>21 February</td>
<td>Mahasivaratri, Shilachahre</td>
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<td>Chaitra K5</td>
<td>14 March</td>
<td>Felling of tree for lingo replacement rituals for Handigaun</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chaitra K14</td>
<td>23 March</td>
<td>Pashachahre, festival of Naxal Bhagabati, Maitidevi</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Worship of Ajima, Maharjan penance at Chyaguthi Chapa to mark end/beginning of the year at Kotaltole (Chaitra K14 to Aunshi)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chaitra S8</td>
<td>1 April</td>
<td>Raising of lingo at Bhuteswor and Dabali (Varsa Vardhana Puja), Jamayata</td>
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<td>Chaitra S12</td>
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<td>Bathing Tunaldevi with oil</td>
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<td>Chaitra S13</td>
<td>6 April</td>
<td>Buffalo sacrifice at Tunaldevi</td>
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<td>Chaitra S14</td>
<td>7 April</td>
<td>Bhatbhateni go to Tunaldevi, Mahalaxmi comes to Dabali</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chaitra Purnima</td>
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<td>Luthipunhi, worship at Tunaldevi for all mother goddesses</td>
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<td>All Sukla 14</td>
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<td>Hom at Tunaldevi, Khas's Malika Puja</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Glossary of terms

adhikaraṇa (Sans.): A magistracy, office, or tax collectorate.
aduwa (Nep.): Ginger
āgaṇ (Sans.): Room or building for Tantrik worship accessed only by adepts and not accessible to lay persons or room for esoteric gods
Ajimā (Newar): Grandmother; Bhairavi; also applied to mother goddesses more ancient than the Astamatrika
anusruti (Sans.): Folklore
Astamātrikā (Sans): The eight mother goddesses of the Shakti cult
āṭhpate rāri (Nep.): A blanket made by stitching together eight pieces; one of the items of export of ancient Nepal
āvarana (Sans.): A style of temple, square in its floorplan, with four stone columns in the corners and a single stone slab roof
avatār (Nep.): A reincarnation
bāhana (Sans.): The mythological carriers of gods e.g. the bull (of Siva), the garuda (of Vishnu), the peacock (of Saraswoti), the shrew (of Ganesh), etc
Bāhrabhai Masto (Nep.): The eleven Masto gods and the propitiator (literally, the twelve Masto brothers)
Baisākh (Nep.): The first month of the solar calendar of Nepal (April–May).
Baruna (Sans.): The god of water post-dating Indra; the westerly direction
Basāha (Sans.): Bull, the carrier of Siva
baumata (Newar): A long pole with lights used in Indra Jatra rituals as a naga. It may also represent a Bhairab.
bhā (Newar): A royal messenger or one who receives ritual grants on behalf of the dead.
bhāt deuta (Nep.): God images made out of cooked rice such as are made in the jāṭrā of Tunaldevi
bhūt (Nep.): A spirit of the dead that hovers around funeral areas
bhuiyār (Nep.): Bhūt or spirit of the dead in Khas usage in west Nepal.
bichāpujā (Newar): A ritual done at the conclusion of a religious ceremony aimed at seeking forgiveness from gods should ritual errors have happened through lack of knowledge. (cf. bichā in Newar with bisharjan in Sanskrit and bishe in Nepali)
bindu (Sans.): A point
brahmarshi (Sans.): A Brahmin ascetic
brahmasthana (Sans.): The point in the center of the Vastupurusha mandala square; also, the small square in the same diagram after the sides are divided into an odd number of equal segments.

Brähmin, Brähman (Sans.): One of the four varna of the Hindu division of the society; a member of the priestly group
brata, bratya (Sans.): Those who do not wear sacred threads (janāi); also used to refer to Vaishyas or Sudra followers of Mahadev

Brātapati (Sans.): Mahadev
chahre (Newar): Tax on cloth as applied in the Lichchhavi period; the word 'chaila' appears to be of indigenous origin.
chaitiya (Sans.): A Buddhist hemispherical monument that does not contain the mortal remains of Buddha, such as Svayambhunath Chaitya.

chakra (Sans.): The titi of chaturdasi
chamar (Sans.): A fan made of the feathers of birds used in ceremonial or religious rituals; an export item of ancient Nepal
chariyā (Sans.): A classical religious dance associated with Bajrayana Buddhism
chhanda (Sans.): A standard of composition based on proportioning or rhythm and applied in artistic works such as poems, sculptures, or architecture.
chhwasa (Newar): A neighbourhood deity; a numinous stone that must be worshipped during the purificatory rites of birth and death rituals. The female spirit is called Chhwasa-Ajima. The male spirit is akin to Aju or Bhairava or even bhut.
chibā(h), chibā(ha) (Newar): A miniature chaitiya; also called masiri dega, a temple for Manjushri of Bajrayana Buddhism; it may be inferred that it is an approximate Buddhist equivalent of the Hindu linga in Kathmandu Valley culture.

chuka (Newar)/chowk (Nep.): A public square located at a street crossing; a node of streets or an intersection
choyā (Nep.): Thin strip of bamboo skin used as rope; wetted reed used for tying parts of chariots or khat
chhwaelā (Newar): Meat roasted over a fire of straw; smoked meat or boiled meat

chyaguthi (Newar): A religious trust committee composed of eight different branches of an ancient clan group
dabadaba (Newar): A small two-headed drum with strapped beads
dabū (Newar): A platform or stage at a street crossing used for performances such as dances or dramas
damāhā (Nep.): A kind of drum
damarū (Nep.): A small two-headed drum with strapped beads; dabadaba
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<th>Term</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tr>
<td>dāga (Newar):</td>
<td>A large drum with two heads</td>
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<tr>
<td>dāngorā:</td>
<td>One who assists and prepares a Dhami for communion with a Masto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dāsa, Dasyu (Sans.):</td>
<td>The aboriginal tribals met by Aryans as they pushed east of Karakoram into the Indus Valley; a derogatory Aryan reference to the Saka.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dasa Mahāvidhyā (Sans.):</td>
<td>The ten mother goddesses in their knowledge aspect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dauvārika (Sans.):</td>
<td>A guard, a gate keeper, or an officer in charge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deulā, dyāhlā (Newar):</td>
<td>A keeper of a temple of the Pode (sweeper) jaat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>devakhī, dyahkhi (Newar):</td>
<td>A lead musical instrument like a drum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>devakula (Sans.):</td>
<td>A temple of the aboriginal tribes; a Lichchhavi reference to such temples; a Kirata temple</td>
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<tr>
<td>devālaya (Sans.):</td>
<td>A Hindu temple; the Newar variation is degah, in Nepali deval or deul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dhāmi (Nep.):</td>
<td>A priest or shaman; spirits of gods are said to enter their bodies through their priestly powers. A Dhami is prepared for possession by a Dangora (in western Nepal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dhārā (Nep.):</td>
<td>A water conduit, water tap, or flowing water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dhimay, dhime (Newar):</td>
<td>A very large, two-headed drum used by the Jyapu in their musical group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dhoja, dhwoja (Nep.):</td>
<td>A flag or banner on a mast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dhunge dhārā (Nep.):</td>
<td>A stone water conduit; a conduit in a recessed pit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>digu-dyo (Newar):</td>
<td>An image for ancestral worship; a numinous stone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dipadāna (Sans.):</td>
<td>A gift of wick lamps usually offered to Lord Vishnu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dune (Newar):</td>
<td>Inside a town; inside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>duvā (Newar):</td>
<td>A guard, a gate keeper; a variation of dauvārika</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dyobhāju (Newar):</td>
<td>A Hindu priest (bhaju is a respectful way of addressing an elder brother)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dyochhē, dyochhe (Newar):</td>
<td>A house of god different from a degah/deul and with an architectural form similar to that of a traditional residence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dyo-nā-lapte (Newar):</td>
<td>A plate made of a broad leaf for offering repast to gods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ekādasa (Sans.):</td>
<td>Eleven. Cf. Ekadasa Rudra, the eleven Rudras</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ekādasa Rudra (Sans.):</td>
<td>The eleven Rudras</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gajur (Nep.):</td>
<td>The finial of a temple; gajuli in Newar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gāṇa (Sans.):</td>
<td>Army; group of followers. (Sivagana were the immediate followers of Siva, including Nandi, Vringgi etc. cf. Ganesha, Gana+Isha, the protector of Sivagana)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gathu (Newar):</td>
<td>The Malakar jaat of Newars; gardeners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gathu pyākhā (Newar):</td>
<td>A traditional masked dance performed by the Gathu. Cf. Gathu Pyakhan of Pachali Bhairava</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gha (Newar):</td>
<td>A purna kalasa, or ceremonial pitcher (ghata in Sanskrit, ghada in Nepali); brass water pot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ghaṭaka, ghaṭa (Sans.):</td>
<td>A purna kalasa, or ceremonial pitcher (gha in Newar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghaṭasthāpanā (Sans.):</td>
<td>The ritual consecration of an auspicious jar for worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ghaṭikā (Sans.):</td>
<td>A miniature purna kalasa or ghata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ghāṭ (Nep.)</td>
<td>A river bank; A river bank used for purification rituals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gotra (Sans.)</td>
<td>A clan indicator of Aryans that suggests descent from an ancient group of cow-herds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grāma (Sans.)</td>
<td>A settlement of the Lichchhavis; a village or town.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>guthī (Newar)</td>
<td>A trust committee or trust property organized for the operation and maintenance of religious or social institutions or functions (gosthi in Sanskrit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gwajā (Newar)</td>
<td>A cone-shaped ritual offering made of boiled rice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>halipata (Newar)</td>
<td>A flag an a high mast; (pata is a thin leaf)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>havana (Sans.)</td>
<td>A homa; yagya or a sacrifice on a fire altar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>homa (Sans.)</td>
<td>A ritual sacrificial worship on a fire altar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>īhī (Newar)</td>
<td>The ritual marriage of a young girl to a lump of gold or a bel (wood-apple) fruit which is believed to prevent widowhood; a Saiva Newar practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>isāna (Sans.)</td>
<td>The northeast; the direction in which Mahadeva is worshipped; also the corner square for naga and water elements in a Vastupurusha mandala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>īṣṭa devatā (Nep.)</td>
<td>The god most benevolent to a clan; the protector deity of a clan group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>itthaka (Pali)</td>
<td>Brick; istaka in Sanskrit; an itthaka-vaddhaki is a brick layer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jajamān (Nep.)</td>
<td>One who officiates as a priest and guides the performance of the rites and rituals of a family; (jaja is derived from yagya in Sanskrit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jaladroni (Sans.)</td>
<td>A water conduit; (jadhu in Newar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jamarā (Nep.)</td>
<td>Sprouts of barley seeds (yava in Sanskrit; jau in Nepali); used in the ritual worship of the mother goddess during Navaratri festivals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jamarā bisarjan (Nep.)</td>
<td>The ritual disposal of janara at the end of the Navaratri festival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>janai (Nep.)</td>
<td>Sacred thread worn as a ritual requirement in Brahmanical practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jāṛ (Nep.)</td>
<td>Rice beer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jāt (Nep.)</td>
<td>Family trade or profession; as such professions were hereditary, the word is also applied to imply a secular caste position. It is not associated with religion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaṭājuṭa (Sans.)</td>
<td>Siva; so called as tresses of matted hair are piled over his head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jāt karma (Sans.)</td>
<td>The ritual rites associated with a birth (jata) in a clan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jāṭrā (Nep.)</td>
<td>Festivals involving the movement of gods in chariots, khat, etc. (from the Sanskrit yatra)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jhākrī (Nep.)</td>
<td>A shaman who goes in a trance to the accompaniment of jingling sounds (from the Sanskrit jhankara, a jingling sound)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jhyālī (Nep.)</td>
<td>A pair of cymbals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jyāpu (Nep.)</td>
<td>One whose profession is farming; the farmer class of</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Glossary

kāhā (Newar): Kathmandu Valley
   A long trumpet without keys
kalasa (Sans.): A ceremonial pitcher usually full of auspicious liquids and
decorated with flowers and leaves (originally of the lotus)
   and thus named pūrna kalasa
karma (Sans.): Work that one is destined to do; the fate that one is des-
tined to face; also, ordained rituals for humans
Karmāchārya (Sans.): Newar priest adept in Hindu rituals, esp. those of the
   Tantric Shakti cult
karmuka (Sans.): A bow; a town planning pattern based on this form
karnāl (Nep.): A musical instrument similar to the kaha
Kasāi (Nep.): A Khadgi or Khattaki; the one, in the Newar community,
   who cuts the head off the animal offered in sacrifices
kasturī (Nep.): An animal of the deer family; a scented secretion from its
   navel used to be an export item in ancient Nepal
katāthwā (Newar): A very strong beer
kesar (Sans.): An yellow powder used in ritual worship; saffron pow-
   der; also the yellow pollen (parag) from the anthers of flow-
   ers, particularly those of the lotus
keyura (Sans.): A spiral ring ornament tied around the upper arm, worn
   in ancient times
khadga (Sans.): A short, curved sword; a scimitar
khadgī (Nep.): Armed with a sword. See Kasai
kharpan (Nep.): A pair of baskets balanced at each end of a pole and car-
   ried over the shoulder; (kahpa in Newar)
Khas (Nep.): The country or language of the Khas tribes of western
   Nepal.
khāṭ (Nep.): A chariot for carrying around images of gods during fest-
   ivities; the term is applied when the cart is small; bigger
   ones, and those with wheels, are termed ratha
khāṭaka (Sans.): A ditch or pond
khyāk (Nep.): A goblin or ghost; (khyaḥ in Newar)
Kirāt (Nep.): The indigenous people and ruling house of Nepal before
   the Lichchhavi takeover.
kotā (Newar): A barrel-shaped drum with four faces for striking; a spe-
   cial musical instrument used by religious adepts
koṭṭa (Sans.): A reserve; a region or district with fortification; a strong-
   hold
Kshatriya (Sans.): The warrior class; the ruling class in the Hindu varna sys-
   tem.
kshyamāpujā (Nep.): A ritual worship seeking divine pardon for ritual depar-
   tures unknowingly made during festivities; usually offered
to Ajima or other mother goddesses.
kuldevatā (Nep.): Family deity; the god of a clan
Kumā (Newar): A potter (kumāhle or kumale in Nepali; kumālaka in Sanskrit
The Brick and the Bull

kupa (Sans.): A well
kurmâsana (Sans.): An ascetic posture that is like that of a tortoise.
Kusa (Newar)/Kusle (Nep.): A 'low caste' Newar who plays ritual music during birth and death rituals; usually plays the kahâ
kûsâmâna navâmi: Kartik Sukla Navami; the first day of Satya Yuga.
kûta (Sans.): A peak; a roof shaped like a peak; a hipped roof.
kwâchâkhî (Newar): A one-headed drum with a body shaped like a konchâ
kwâtha (Newar): A fortified place
kwâchâ (Newar): An earthen vessel
laďdû (Nep.): A sweet shaped into a ball.
lâkåsi-lwałâ (Newar): A stone plate used as a base for a timber post.
lakshyâna (Sans.): Characteristic signs, marks or style; classical dictates of such characteristics.
lâlepâ (Newar): Round earthen receptacles for images made of boiled rice
lapsi (Nep.): The fruit of the Cordia latifolia tree (sleshmantaka in Sanskrit)
lasakusa (Newar): A ceremonial welcome
lûsîgâwâkâh (Newar): A stone plate used as a base for a timber post; it has a hole for housing the dowel
linga (Sans.): A phallic symbol of Siva (Siva linga)
lingo (Nep.): A dressed slender tree with its top shoot intact; a ceremonial mast or pole
machâjanko (Newar): A ceremony in which rice is given to an infant for the first time (usually held in the seventh month for girls and the sixth month for boys.)
maga khî (Newar): A two-sided drum, named after the ethnic community of Magars, who use it; (inadal in Nepali)
mahâpratihâra (Sans.): Chief chamberlain
mahâsâmanta (Sans.): Chief feudal prince
mahâtu (Nep.): A priest of the Tharu
mahâyâna (Sans.): A congregational form of Buddhism incorporating image worship
makâra (Sans.): The (five) essentials of the left-handed Tantra ritual, all of which start with the letter m, viz. madyâ (wine), mansa (meat), matsya (fish), mudra (intertwining of the fingers), and maithuna (sexual union)
mallâh (Sans.): A fluffy lamb (for sacrifice)
mânânka (Nep.): A copper coin named after King Manadeva
mandala (Sans.): A group of elements around a central element; a diagram for meditation, design or decoration
mandapa (Sans.): A pavilion; a square building with four columns in the corners; larger mandapa may have a nine-square plan form with four columns around the central square and twelve in the perimeter.
Mangsir Purânmâ (Nep.): The full moon day of Margasirsa, the festive day for
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>masān (Nep.)</td>
<td>Funeral ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mātrikā (Sans.)</td>
<td>Mother goddess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mekhalā (Nep.)</td>
<td>A belt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>muhurta (Sans.)</td>
<td>A period of about 48 minutes, or one-thirtieth of a day; an auspicious length of time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mukūṭ (Nep.)</td>
<td>A mask of a god</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>na de khī (Newar)</td>
<td>A lead drum that provides the rhythm of a musical piece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nāga (Nep.)</td>
<td>A serpent god; a tribe with the nāga as its totem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nāni (Newar)</td>
<td>A secondary courtyard approached by going under a building facing the street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>narkāṭ (Nep.)</td>
<td>A type local reed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>navakundā (Sans.)</td>
<td>A nine pit pattern formed in the sanctum floor of a temple through crossing foundation walls; the temple is sanctified by worshipping the nine planets in the pits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>navarātra (Sans.)</td>
<td>The nine nights of reverence of the mother goddess, Durga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nirākār (Nep.)</td>
<td>Unshaped natural stone of veneration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nyāsa (Sans.)</td>
<td>An arrangement or appropriation of godly blessings on earth received with reverence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pada (Sans.)</td>
<td>Small squares in a Vastupurusha mandala division. The thirty-two squares on the outside of the mandala are occupied by the gods of the stars and cardinal directions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pālā (Nep.)</td>
<td>A small earthen lamp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>palli:</td>
<td>A settlement of the Lichchhavis, e.g., Jayapallikagrama, Khatampalli, Chaupalli etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pānā:</td>
<td>A Lichchhavi coin, sixteen panas making a purana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>panchabali (Nep.)</td>
<td>Sacrifice of five different animals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>panchāmrit (Sans.)</td>
<td>The five kinds of divine food: milk, sour milk, butter, honey and sugar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>panchamukhi (Sans.)</td>
<td>Five-faced (usually such a Siva linga)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pāṭī (Nep.)</td>
<td>A wayside resting pavilion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>persāune (Nep.)</td>
<td>A ritual in which a sacrificial animal is made to shrug off auspicious water sprinkled over its head before it is sacrificed, thereby making it ritually pure for sacrifice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pertune deutā (Nep.)</td>
<td>A god whose spirit acts through a Dhami</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pētā (Newar)</td>
<td>A long trumpet used for ritual or religious processions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phaṣa (Newar)</td>
<td>A rest house or pati at the entrance or exit of a town; an anteroom of a large building; a bench on the side of an anteroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phirkā (Nep.)</td>
<td>A frame made of bamboo arranged in a fan pattern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pigā (Newar)</td>
<td>A set of numinous stones of veneration located outside a town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pikhālakhu (Newar)</td>
<td>A venerated stone placed on the street in front of the main door of a Newar house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pine (Newar)</td>
<td>Outside a town; outside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pipal (Nep.)</td>
<td>The sacred fig tree, <em>Ficus religiosa</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pishāch (Sans.)</td>
<td>A malevolent spirit of the same class as <em>asura</em> and <em>rakshyasā</em>; demonic spirits that are believed to devour flesh of humans at funeral sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pith (Sans.)</td>
<td>A potent religious site (cf. the 51 spots where the limbs of Parvati fell after she had been cut to pieces by the discus of Vishnu in <em>Svasthāni Purāṇ</em>); a <em>pingam</em> site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pitri-deutā (Nep.)</td>
<td>Dead ancestors treated as gods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pitta</td>
<td>A <em>preta</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pongā (Newar)</td>
<td>A long trumpet (<em>lamcho turahi</em> in Nepali)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prakāta (Sans.)</td>
<td>A manifestation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prakrit (Sans.)</td>
<td>Made by cutting a material, creating by cutting viz. all crafts except pottery; also, <em>prakīta</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pranālī (Sans.)</td>
<td>A water canal and its associated system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prāśāda (Sans.)</td>
<td>A building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prasāda (Sans.)</td>
<td>A food blessed by a god to be shared among the believers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prasasti (Nep.)</td>
<td>An extended statement made in praise of someone, usually a king; royal epithets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prastara (Sans.)</td>
<td>A sanctified flat area; a prescribed Hindu town planning pattern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preta (Sans.)</td>
<td>A spirit of a dead person (esp. before obsequial rites are performed); a ghost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pringga (Kirata?)</td>
<td>A town sited on a ridge or hillock; a town of the Kirata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>purāṇa</td>
<td>A Lichchhavi coin equal to 16 <em>pauṇa</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>purnīmā (Sans.)</td>
<td>A full moon day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pwa (Newar)/Pore (Nep.)</td>
<td>The sweeper class; keeper of temples of mother goddesses at funeral sites; also, Po or Pore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rājakula (Sans.)</td>
<td>A royal palace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rāj kulo (Nep.)</td>
<td>A water canal to a capital city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rājopādhyāya (Newar)</td>
<td>A priest of the Malla kings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rath (Sans.)</td>
<td>A chariot of a god; a large <em>khat</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rig Veda (Sans.)</td>
<td>The most ancient body of sacred knowledge of the Aryans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sādhū (Nep.)</td>
<td>An ascetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sahanāi (Nep.)</td>
<td>A horn; a trumpet without keys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sakkhar (Nep.)</td>
<td>Cane jaggary; raw sugar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>salichā (Newar)</td>
<td>A small wide-mouthed bowl of clay used for drinking alcohol (<em>aelā</em>), etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sāmanta (Sans.)</td>
<td>A vassal; a feudal prince</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>samaya (Newar)</td>
<td>Food received as a blessing after a ritual worship (<em>samaya-baji</em>, <em>samaya</em> and beaten rice, is different from the <em>kaula-baji</em> of a <em>makara</em> Tantrik worship)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>samvat (Nep.)</td>
<td>A calendar era</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sankha (Sans.)</td>
<td>A conch cell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saptamātrikā (Sans.)</td>
<td>The seven mother goddesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sarsing (Nep.)</td>
<td>A musical wind instrument of western Nepal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sati (Nep.)</td>
<td>The (banned) practice of immolation of a wife along with her dead husband on the same funeral pyre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>śatkoṇa (Sans.)</td>
<td>A mandala like the star of David used to represent Saraswoti, the goddess of learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sattal (Nep.)</td>
<td>A wayside rest house in a Newar settlement used for religious functions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakti (Sans.)</td>
<td>The Hindu cult of the mother goddesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shruti śāstra (Sans.)</td>
<td>A body of knowledge received through listening to recitations; a body of knowledge from before the currency of writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>silāstambha (Sans.)</td>
<td>A stone post or pole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>siplikān (Nep.)</td>
<td>A sacred tree (<em>Crataeva religiosa</em> of Nurvala)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sithinakha (Newar)</td>
<td>A feast served with lentil patties after the Sithi festival.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stupa (Sans.)</td>
<td>A Buddhist monument of hemispherical design said to contain the mortal remains of Lord Buddha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudra (Sans.)</td>
<td>The lowest of the four varna of the Hindu social hierarchy; the class assigned to menial jobs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tantra (Sans.)</td>
<td>Mystical Saiva cult ritual knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tepe (Newar)</td>
<td>A sub-group of the Jyapu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ṭhākura (Newar)</td>
<td>A leader of a <em>jaut</em>; a Newar who has lived to celebrate two old-age <em>janko</em> rituals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thwā (Newar)</td>
<td>Rice beer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thumā (Newar)</td>
<td>A lamb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thyāsaphu (Newar)</td>
<td>A private diary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>toraṇa (Sans.)</td>
<td>An archway over the entrance door, esp. in temples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tripura (Sans.)</td>
<td>A three-square plan of a town or palace in Saiva practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>twā (Newar)/tōle (Nep.)</td>
<td>A sector or ward of town, often with a single profession viz. Kumah-tōle, a block of <em>Kumah</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anti (Newar)</td>
<td>A long-spouted jar for dispensing liquor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaikuṇṭha (Sans.)</td>
<td>A heaven of Vishnu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaisya (Sans.)</td>
<td>One of the varna of the Hindu social division; the merchant class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vajrayāna (Sans.)</td>
<td>A tantric form of Buddhism particular to Kathmandu Valley (so named because the adept uses a <em>vajra</em> as a main artefact in rituals); also Bajrayana.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vamsāvali (Nep.)</td>
<td>A chronicle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>varṇa (Sans.)</td>
<td>A Hindu social division with the four varna: Brahmana, Kshetriya, Vaisya and Sudra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>varsavardhana puja (Sans.)</td>
<td>A birthday ritual worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vāstu-purusha-māṇḍala (Sans.)</td>
<td>The science of architecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vāstuśāstra (Sans.)</td>
<td>A platform for worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vedi (Sans.)</td>
<td>A Buddhist monastery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vihāra (Sans.)</td>
<td>The republic of the Lichchhavi in the Gangetic plains; the people of the republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term (Sans.)</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>yagya (Sans.)</td>
<td>Worship, devotion, prayer, oblation, or sacrifice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yajur Veda (Sans.)</td>
<td>An ancient body of sacred knowledge about the sacrifices of early Hinduism; one of the three Vedas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yaksa (Sans.)</td>
<td>A living supernatural being; a ghost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yasti (Sans.)</td>
<td>A sacrificial post (yashī in Newar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yoga (Sans.)</td>
<td>Meditation; ritual abstraction; a particular ritual system</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Handigaun is the earliest known urban settlement of Kathmandu Valley. As the site of the great palaces of the Kirat and Lichchhavi kings such as Mangriha and Kailashkut Bhavan, it served as the capital of the valley for more than a millennium. The advent of the Malla era saw the rise of Bhaktapur, but the preceding era belonged to Handigaun. This colourful past of Handigaun remains extant in the customs and practices of the residents of the place. The writer draws upon these cultural artefacts and relates them to archaeological finds and inscriptions to draw a picture of this ancient city. It is a fascinating story he tells—of Handigaun’s origins, its legendary figures, the palace intrigues and other historical events—on the basis of his study of Handigaun’s ancient festivities and arcane rituals and their interconnectedness to the power places and public spaces still in use today.

 Architects-cum-cultural historian Sudarshan Raj Tiwari earned degrees in architecture from the University of Delhi and the University of Hawaii. He has served in the faculty of Tribhuvan University’s Institute of Engineering for more than 25 years, and was Dean of the Institute between 1988 and 1992. His own interest drew him to the study of Nepali historical architecture, urbanism and conservation, which led to a PhD from Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, for his work on the ancient settlements of the Kathmandu Valley. Prof Tiwari has worked at several world heritage sites such as Lumbini, Swoyambhu, Changunarayan and Patan Durbar Square. His previous publications include Tiered Temples of Nepal (1988) and The Ancient Settlements of the Kathmandu Valley (2001).