

## The Iconography of the Buddhist Wood-carvings in a Newar Monastery in Kathmandu (Chuṣya-Bāhā)

Karel Rijk van Kooij

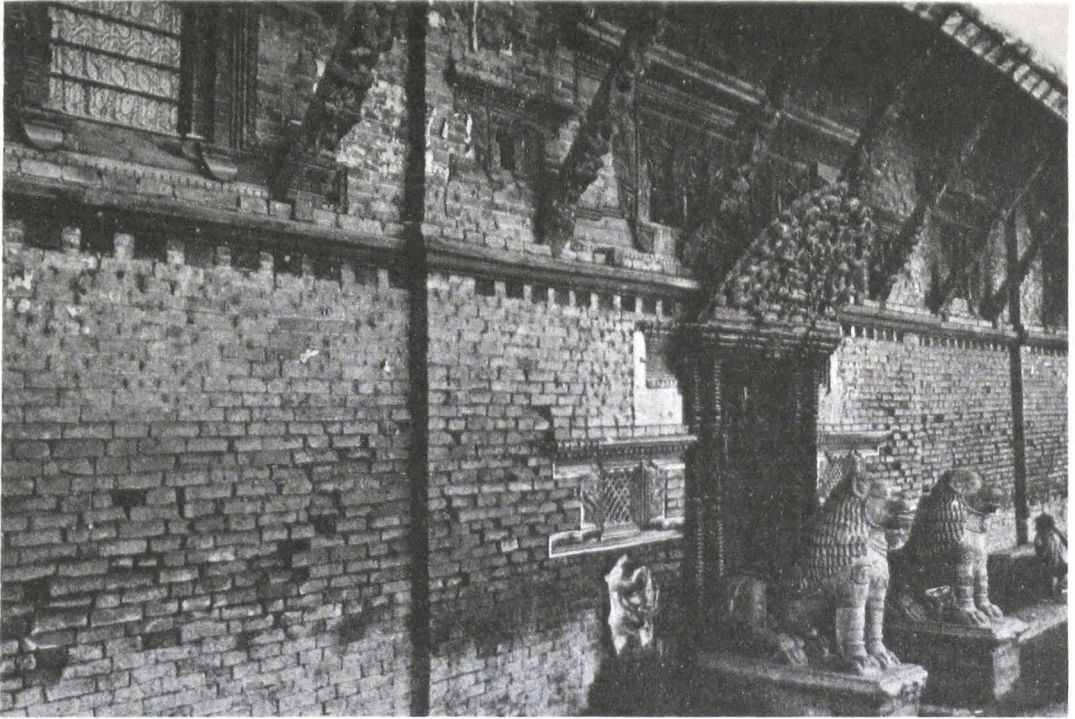
The wood-carvings of the Nepalese pagodas and monasteries are rightly admired because of the artistic skill with which many of them have been made. References to these wood-carvings can be found in several books on Nepalese art.<sup>1</sup> They were more in particular discussed in a monograph on Nepalese woodwork,<sup>2</sup> but not from the iconographical point of view.

In an article on the shrines and temples of Nepal, D. SNELGROVE<sup>3</sup> has drawn attention to the many representations of Buddhist deities carved in the wooden parts of temples and monasteries. As his article is a kind of survey of the material side of Newar culture, he could not make a more deeply going investigation of the iconographical aspects. He did, however, mention the most important monasteries where Buddhist wood-carvings can be found.<sup>4</sup> An iconographical study of the Buddhist deities represented in wood-carvings has some advantages over the better known stone sculptures, although these are older and sometimes more impressive. Unlike the sculptures in stone, the images in wood are for the most part still in their original places, and, more important, they are not isolated examples, but form complete series. This is due to the fact that building in wood and the art of wood-carving remained for a long time a living tradition. The wood-carvers constantly made new representations of the Buddhist deities on the beams and struts which had to be replaced, and they followed the same iconographical rules, as had been carried out by many generations before. By the very reason that the old iconographical pattern has been preserved, we are in a position to study iconography in its context, and not from isolated examples; and we may expect that the meaning of these images becomes much clearer to us, when they are studied as a whole.

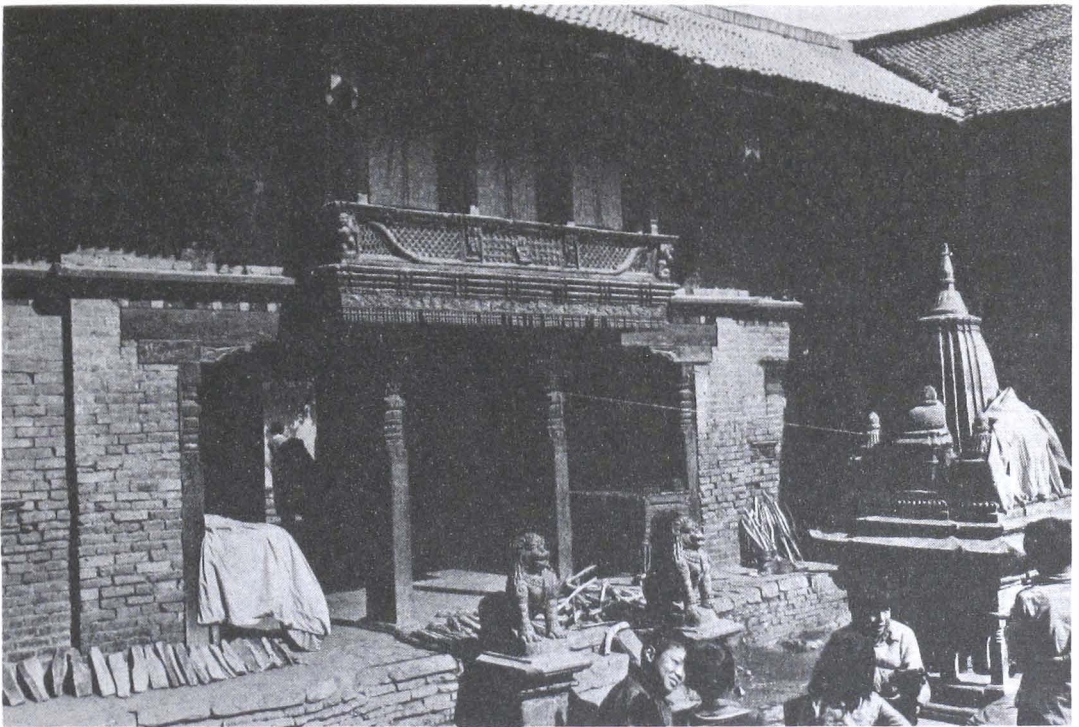
In order to retain the original iconographical pattern, I would like to give a picture of the groups of deities which have been carved in the wooden parts of

I thank Mrs. Dr. R. KLOPPENBORG for taking most of the photographs used in this article and for her useful remarks. I further wish to thank the FOUNDATION FOR SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH OF THE TROPICAL REGIONS for giving a grant for a journey to Nepal, and also the PRINS BERNHARD FOUNDATION for giving a subsidy for a second stay in Nepal.

1. See e. g. P. PAL, *The Arts of Nepal*, part I, *Sculpture*, Leiden 1974, p. 133. A. RAY, *Art of Nepal*, New Delhi 1973, p. 43-46.
2. S. B. DEO, *Glimpses of Nepal Woodwork*, *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art*. New Series III, Calcutta 1968-69.
3. D. SNELGROVE, *Shrines and Temples of Nepal*, *Arts Asiatiques* 8 (1961), p. 3ff., p. 93ff. See also M.B. JOSEPH, *The Viharas of the Kathmandu Valley*, *Oriental Art* XVII (1971), p. 121 ff.
4. An inventory of all the monuments of Nepal has recently been published by the Government of Nepal : *Kathmandu Valley, The Preservation of Physical Environment and Cultural Heritage. A Protective Inventory*, Vienna 1975.



*Fig. 1 Entrance*



*Fig. 2 Courtyard*

one monastery only. This monastery<sup>5</sup> is the Chusya-bāhā (Sanskrit name: Guṇākaramahāvihāra) in Kathmandu. Guṇākara seems to have been a famous Buddhist monk who was very much devoted to Mañjuśrī<sup>6</sup>, but whether his name has any connection with this monastery is not known. It is striking, however, that the original deity to whom the monastery was dedicated, has probably been Mañjuśrī Dharmadhātuvāgīśvara, as we shall see below<sup>7</sup>. The building itself seems to be not much older than the 14th century<sup>8</sup>. Parts of the monastery have been restored in course of time. The wooden struts which support the roofs, and on which most of the deities to be discussed are represented, are supposed to be of the 15th century. According to an inscription in the monastery itself, a renovation took place in the 17th century<sup>9</sup>.

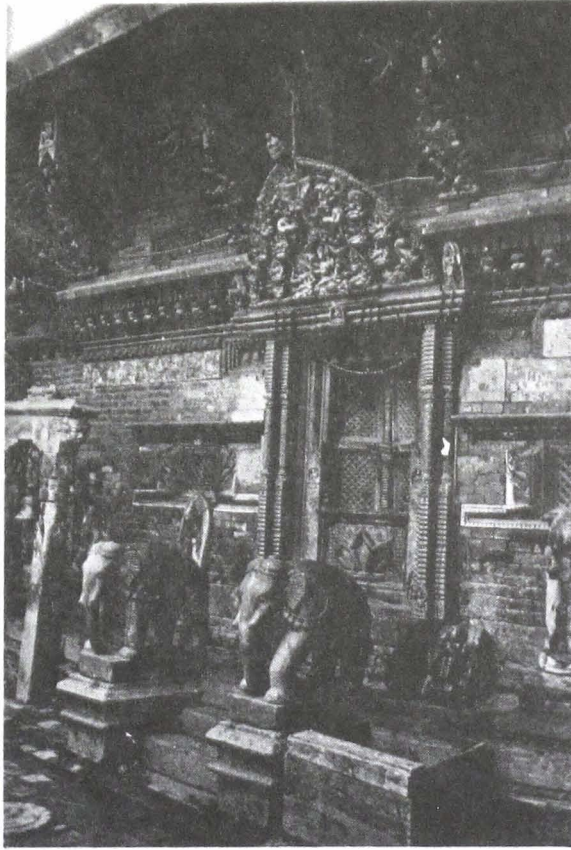
The ground-plan of the building is that of an ancient Buddhist *vihāra* on a provincial scale. The entrance is marked by two lions sculptured in stone on both sides of the low doorway (fig.1), and leads to a small porch serving as a lodging (Newari: *phalacā*)<sup>10</sup>. Behind this the courtyard is situated, which is surrounded by buildings on the four sides (fig. 2). They were the former residences of the monks, but at present they serve as houses for the Buddhist families, since the monks have married in course of time, and have founded families in order to maintain themselves among the Hindus, who formed the majority in the country<sup>11</sup>.

The side of the monastery which faces the entrance contains a shrine (fig. 3) with the image of the main deity. The position of the shrine is indicated by a pagoda-like structure on the roof.

The wood-carvings which form the object of this study have been made in the struts which support the overhanging roofs on the street-side and on the four inner sides of the building. There are twelve struts on the outside, and twenty-two in the courtyard. There are, moreover, three tympanons (*torana*), which are also provided with representations of Buddhist deities. One is placed over the entrance to the monastery itself, another over the door to the shrine, and the third is a smaller one placed over a side-entrance.

As D. SNELGROVE<sup>12</sup> already pointed out, the identification of the deities

5. The word monastery is used throughout this article for the sake of convenience, although the Nepalese *bāhāls* are not inhabited by monks, but by Buddhist families.
6. Cf. Ch. B. SHRESTHA, Buddhist Geography of Ancient Nepal, The Fourth World Buddhist Conference, Kathmandu, Nepal, p. 5.
7. See p. 80
8. S. B. DEO, *op. cit.*, p. 10.
9. See A Protective Inventory . . . . ., vol. 2, p. 15.
10. Cf. M. S. SLUSSER and GAUTAMAVAJRA VAJRACARYA, Two Medieval Nepalese Buildings, an Architectural and Cultural Study, *Artibus Asiae*, XXXVI (1974), p. 169 ff.
11. See D. SNELGROVE, Buddhist Himalaya, Oxford 1957, p. 108ff.
12. D. SNELGROVE, Shrines and Temples of Nepal, *Arts Asiatiques* 8 (1961), p. 110.



*Fig. 3 Entrance to the shrine*

on the struts is in this case not very difficult, owing to the fact that the name of each deity is given in an inscription underneath the figure. These wood-carvings therefore offer a nearly ideal opportunity to study Buddhist iconography. The reason why these names have been inscribed appears from the way they have been written, and from the grammatical forms that are used.

The names are so clearly and beautifully written (fig. 37) that it seems unlikely that they have been meant for the wood-carver in order to make sure that the right figures were carved in the right place. They must have been intended for those who wanted to worship the deities denoted by them, whether these worshippers could read or not. In the latter case the inscriptions could have been explained to them by others, e. g. by someone belonging to the monastery. But the grammatical forms of the names seem to suggest that there is another, more important, reason for the presence of the inscriptions on the struts. Not

in the Chuṣyabāhā, but in another monastery situated in Bhatgaon<sup>13</sup> the names of the deities have dative endings and are preceded by the syllable *om*, e. g. “*om lokanāthāya*”, *om* honour to Lokanātha (Avalokiteśvara). The inscription is meant here as a formula by which the god is invoked. In Buddhist (and Hindu) religion formulas or *mantras* are believed to be very powerful, whether they are pronounced, or written down on palm-leaf, birch-bark or paper, or worn as an amulet. The longer protective formulas, which are called *dhāraṇī*,<sup>14</sup> have been regarded as very effective against all kinds of dangers from early Buddhism onwards. The explanation of the inscriptions of the struts is probably that writing down the name or names of a deity is as much a means of invoking him as is his visual representation. The practice of giving the names of the deities right under their visual representation is a very ancient one, and brings us back to the Buddhist art of the first centuries B. C. in India. Some of the Yakṣas and Yakṣīs represented on the posts of the enclosure of the *stūpa* of Bharhut also have their names inscribed below, perhaps for the same reason.

In more respects the figures on the struts seem to continue the ancient Indian Yakṣas and Yakṣīs. Like their predecessors, the deities on the struts all stand in a particular posture, which is called *śālabhañjikā*, i. e. they stand with crossed legs under a tree, and grasp an overhanging branch with one raised arm. Although the term *śālabhañjikā* is generally explained as “a woman plucking flowers from the Sāl tree”<sup>15</sup>, the architectural function of these figures, in India as well as in Nepal, is rather that of a caryatid. The parts of the building or structure upon which they are represented always have a supporting function, and their posture with one arm raised suggests that they have been conceived as figures which were to bear the part of the building on top of them. In a monastery called the Woku-bāhā (Sanskrit: Rudravarṇamahāvihāra) in Patan<sup>16</sup> the female deities carved in the struts stand upon a crouching dwarf-like being, in exactly the same way as the Yakṣīs of Mathurā.<sup>16</sup> Accordingly, the deities on the Nepalese struts might be regarded as the direct successors of the Yakṣas and Yakṣīs of ancient India. Only the names have changed, and additional attributes have been put in their hands in order to determine their identity.

13. This is the Caturvarṇavihāra.

14. Cf. L. A. WADDELL, The “Dhāraṇī” Cult in Buddhism, its origin, deified Literature and Images. *Ostasiatische Zeitschrift* I (1912–1913) p. 155 ff. J. W. HAUER, Die Dhāraṇī im nördlichen Buddhismus, *Beiträge zur indischen Sprachwissenschaft und Religionsgeschichte*, Stuttgart 1927. Fr. BERNHARD, Zur Entstehung einer Dhāraṇī, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 117 (1967), p. 148 ff.

15. Cf. J. Ph. VOGEL, The Woman and Tree or *śālabhañjikā* in Indian Literature and Art, *Acta Orientalia* VII (1929), p. 201ff. See also: G. ROTH, The Woman and Tree Motif, *śālabhañjikā-ḍālamālikā* in Prakrit and Sanskrit Texts with special reference to the Śilpaśāstras including notes on Dohada, *Journal of the Asiatic Society, Letters and Science* XXIII, 1 (1975), p. 92ff.

16. Cf. P. PAL, *op. cit.* p.133.

The general characteristics of the iconography of the tympanons (fig. 38) (*torāṇa*) continue an Indian tradition of a much later time. They have the form of a hemi-cycle, or sometimes nearly a triangle, and are crowned with a small parasol or have a small image on top. The border is adorned with a motif consisting of the head of a monster (*kīrtimukha*) together with serpents (*nāga*) and fabulous animals (*makara*). The monstrous head is often a lion's head with two arms, or in other examples a fabulous bird (*garuḍa*). It holds two serpents squirming down along the outer rim to the corners, where the two *makaras* with their curling trunks are represented. The whole motif is that of the *makara-torāṇa*, which is very well-known in Indian art. In particular in the sculptures of the Pāla period it was carried out in very much the same way on the rounded stelae against which the images were placed.

Within the area that is enclosed by this motif the main deity of the monastery is usually depicted<sup>17</sup> together with attendant figures forming his entourage. As Mañjuśrī is one of the most popular deities in Nepal, we very frequently find him represented in the centre of the *torāṇa* in one of his iconographical forms. Next to him we find Vajrasattva, Vairocana, Śākyamuni, Akṣobhya, Avalokiteśvara, Prajñāpāramitā, and others.

To a great extent the Buddhist pantheon of Nepal reflects the stage that Buddhism had reached in the Pāla period in north-eastern India. It is known that the great Buddhist centres of Nālanda and Vikramaśīla deeply influenced Nepal and Tibet. One of the monasteries in Kathmandu is even called Vikramaśīlavihāra (Newari: Thām-bāhī), and the story of its foundation explicitly connects it with its Indian counterpart<sup>18</sup>.

We shall see that many elements of the iconography of the deities represented on the struts and the tympanons can be explained with the help of iconographical works which belong to this period of the Pāla dynasty. These are the Niṣpannayogāvalī and the Sādhanamālā.<sup>19</sup> The existence of several manuscripts of these works in Newari script<sup>20</sup> from different periods indicate that they were actually

17. Compare the ancient Indian custom to depict the main god of the temple on the lintel over the doorway, e. g. the Śiva temple at Bhumara, the Viṣṇu temple at Deogarh, etc.

18. Cf. S. LÉVI, *Le Népal*, vol. I, Paris 1905, p. 334.

19. Cf. Abhayākara Gupta, *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, ed. by B. BHATTACHARYYA, Gaekwad's Oriental Series 109, Baroda 1972. *Sādhanamālā*, ed. by B. BHATTACHARYYA, Gaekwad's Oriental Series 26, 41, Baroda 1968.

20. Cf. HARAPRASAD SASTRI, *A Catalogue of Palm-leaf and Selected Paper Manuscripts belonging to the Durbar Library, Nepal*, Calcutta 1905, p. 34 no. 113 (MS. of the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* in Newari script). C. BENDALL, *Catalogue of the Buddhist Sanskrit Manuscripts in the University Library of Cambridge*, Cambridge 1883, p. 40, Add. 1279 (MS. of the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* dated N. S. 995–A. D. 1875); p. 132, Add. 1593 (MS. of the *Sādhanamālā* dated N. S. 939=1819); p. 174, Add. 1686 (MS. of the *Sādhanamālā* dated N. S. 287–A. D. 1167).

used by successive generations of Buddhists in Nepal. Next to them the Dhāraṇīsaṃgrahas<sup>21</sup> should be mentioned. Although they contain very few iconographical descriptions, these works are nevertheless extremely important for our study of the deities of the wood-carvings, because the arrangement of these images will prove to be determined by the order of the formulas contained in these works. These formulas consist of the names of a particular deity and a series of sounds (*bīja*) without any definite meaning. They are used for the worship of practically all the gods of the Buddhist pantheon. The order in which these formulas are given corresponds to the order in which the groups of deities on the struts have been placed, as we shall see below<sup>22</sup>. If this is true, something can be said about the function of these images, viz. that they represent the Buddhist gods as Dhāraṇīs, which means that they are to be regarded as visual representations of protective formulas<sup>23</sup>. That they have been depicted in the same *śālabhañjikā* posture as the ancient Indian Yakṣas and Yakṣīs, who are equally protective deities, seems to underline that these images on the struts of the Buddhist monasteries represent divine powers with a protective function.

In the Chuṣya-bāhā, the monastery that is the main object of this study, there are two deities on each strut, a taller one standing upon a lotus flower or a mount (*vāhana*), and a smaller sitting figure, represented under the taller one. According to the inscriptions the standing figures represent the following groups: the ten Krodhas, flanked by Gaṇeśa and Mahākāla, the six so-called Cultgoddesses, the Pañcarakṣā, and a group of seven goddesses. The four standing figures on the side of the shrine do not have inscriptions but can be identified as the Buddhas of the four directions, on the basis of their iconographical features. Among the sitting figures we find the four Great Kings (Caturmahārāja), the group of twenty-seven Lunar Mansions (Nakṣatra) and three supernatural beings called Vidyādharas. After a more detailed discussion of the iconography of these figures, we will speak about the tympanons.

21. Dhāraṇīsaṃgrahas have not been published. MSS are mentioned in C. BENDALL, *op. cit.*; R. L. MITRA, *The Sanskrit Buddhist Literature of Nepal*, Calcutta 1882. The present author is thankful to the director of the National Archives (former Durbar Library) for having the opportunity to consult the many MSS. of Dhāraṇīsaṃgrahas being in the possession of the National Archives in Kathmandu, Nepal. I also wish to thank the librarian of the Cambridge University Library for sending me microfilms of their MSS.

22. See p. 48. 60. 61.

23. Dhāraṇīs came to be personified in course of time, and were worshipped as deities. In Indian Buddhism only particular deities are deified Dhāraṇīs, e. g. the Pañcarakṣā, Prajñāpāramitā, Uṣṇīṣavijaya, and others. In Nepal the Dhāraṇī-idea seems to have been extended over the whole Buddhist pantheon. The Dhāraṇīsaṃgrahas start with the formulas of the five Buddhas (Vairocanadhāraṇī, etc.) and continue with the sixteen Bodhi-sattvas, the Four Great Kings, etc.



Fig. 4 *Gaṇapati*

Fig. 5 *Uṣṇīṣacakravartin*

Fig. 6 *Yamāntaka*

The roof of the street-side is supported by a row of twelve struts, six on both sides of the entrance. The names given in the inscriptions underneath the figures are from left to right: Gaṇeśa, Uṣṇīṣacakravartin, Yamāntaka, Prajñāntaka, Padmāntaka, Vighnāntaka, Ṭakkirāja, Nīladaṇḍa, Mahābala, Kekara, Sumbhārāja and Mahākāla. Apart from the first and last mentioned, this group is known as the ten Krodhas, which are terrifying deities believed to protect the outside of a sacred area<sup>24</sup>. In the names of the inscriptions only Kekara is remarkable. This is mostly an epithet of Acala, indicating that he is squint-eyed.

24. M-Th. de MALLMANN, *Étude Iconographique sur Mañjuśrī*, Publications de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient, vol. LV, Paris 1964, p. 111ff.





*Fig. 7 Mahābala*



*Fig. 8 Kekara*

As a second name of Acala, Kekara also occurs in the *Sādhanamālā*.<sup>25</sup>

The figures have the usual demoniacal features belonging to terrifying deities, such as bulging eyes, a grinning mouth, a garland of severed heads and a brahmanical cord in the form of a serpent.

A crouching demon has been carved under their feet. All are represented in 'human' form, i. e. with one head and two arms, and they have a jewel in their left hands. In their right hands they hold the attributes characteristic for each of them, viz. in the order from left to right: disc, hammer with *vajra*, staff, lotus, *vajra*, elephants' goad, staff, trident, sword and again *vajra* respectively.

25. M-Th. de MALLMANN, *op. cit.* p. 129, note 11.

An iconographical description of the ten Krodhas in the first chapter of the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*<sup>26</sup> mentions forms with three heads and six arms, but in one of the left hands of each figure is a jewel, and one of the right hands carries the distinctive attribute, which is the same as that of the figures on the wood-carvings. The only difference is that *Vighnāntaka* has the double *vajra* (*viśvavajra*), and the staff of *Prajñāntaka* is marked with a *vajra*, according to the description in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*. The main difference already mentioned is that in this text the Krodhas have three heads and six arms, whereas on the struts they have a human form, which is exceptional. The sculptures of the ten Krodhas hitherto known mostly possess 'non-human' forms, which is in accordance with most of the descriptions in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* and the *Sādhanamālā*. A few cases of Krodhas in human form are known, but their attributes are different from the ones of the figures on the struts. It seems that the iconography of the ten Krodhas in these wood-carvings is but a simpler version of the tradition given in the first chapter of the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*. It is to be noticed that, apart from the four Buddhas, all the deities on the struts of the *Chuṣya-bāhā* have one head and two arms, also in cases where one expects more elaborate forms. The order in which the images have been arranged follows the *Dhāraṇīsaṃgrahas*, which give the formulas for their worship:

*oṃ namaḥ daśakrodhāya || oṃ yamāntaka | prajñāntaka | padmāntaka | vighnāntaka | acala | ṭakkirāja | nīladaṇḍa | mahābala | uṣṇīśacakra | śumbharāja | saparivāraṃ sapatnikebhyaḥ sarvasattvānāñ ca sarvavighnavināyakanāṃ kāyavākcitta kiraya 2 vidhvamsaya 2 sarvamārān mārakāyikān yakṣān rākṣasān maho (ra) gān bhūtān piśācān devān manuṣān asurān kinnarān kumbhāṇḍebhyaḥ sarvaśatrūnāṃ hana 2 daha 2 paca 2 matha 2 vighnavināyanam kuru 2 huṃ phaṭ svāhā || iti daśa-krodhānāṃ dhāraṇī parisamāptaḥ ||*<sup>27</sup>

“Oṃ honour to the ten Krodhas // Oṃ Yamāntaka, etc., honour to their consorts together with their attendants; scatter (bis) destroy (bis) deeds, words and thoughts of all beings who put obstacles in the way; kill (bis) burn (bis) roast (bis) pulverize (bis) all Māras, beings that have the bodies of Māras, Yakṣas, Rākṣasas, Mahoragas, Bhūtas, Piśācas, gods, human beings, Asuras, Kinnaras, i. e. destroy (bis) the obstacles put in the way by them, and by the Kumbhāṇḍas and of all enemies, *huṃ phaṭ svāhā* // The formula of the ten Krodhas is now finished.”

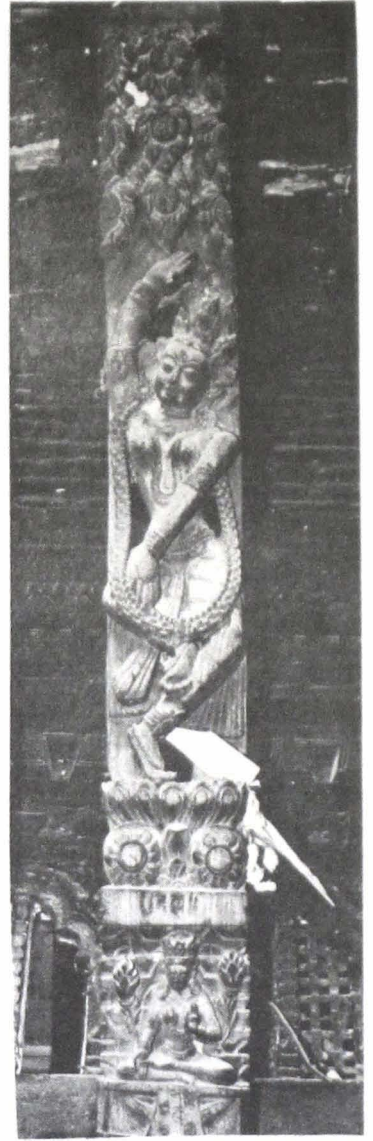
The language is far from grammatically correct, and for most people in Nepal the Sanskrit forms must have been mere sounds, which made the formulas all the more powerful.

The group of the Krodhas on the struts is flanked by the figures of Gaṇeśa and Mahākāla, who are often placed on both sides of a deity or a group of deities. They have the function of guardians, and their formulas also occur in the *Dhāraṇīsaṃgrahas*.<sup>28</sup> They are represented in 'human' form with their usual iconographical features.

26. Id. p. 111ff.

27. Text quoted from MS Add. 1326, Cambridge University Library, folio 150 b.

28. Id. folio 152 a.

Fig. 9 *Gītā*Fig. 10 *Murujā*Fig. 11 *Nṛtyā*

### CULTGODDESSES (fig. 9-14)

On the struts to the left side of the courtyard, and on the first strut on the side containing the shrine six goddesses have been carved, named *Gītā*, *Murujā*, *Nṛtyā*, *Vaṃśā*, *Mṛdaṅgā* and *Vīnā* respectively. They are known from descriptions in the *Sādhanamālā* and the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, and from representations in Tibetan pantheons, Javanese bronzes, and a painting of Tun Huang, but they do not occur very frequently<sup>29</sup>. The goddesses symbolize the acts that belong to the *pūjā*. They provide for the performance of music, singing and dancing as part of the cult. They are six in number, but in *maṇḍalas* they appear in groups of eight or four, and we find also others who represent the offering of a garland, flowers, incense, etc., and who are called *Mālyā*, *Puspā*, *Dhūpā*, respectively. Each goddess on the strut stands upon

29. M-Th. de MALLMANN, *op. cit.*, p. 162ff.



Fig. 12 *Vamśā*



Fig. 13 *Mṛdaṅgā*



Fig. 14 *Vīṇā*

a lotus under a tree, and wears a crown, a garland, and the usual ornaments. *Gītā*, who is the first of the series, plays the cymbals, *Muruḷā* holds the drum (equally called *murujā*), *Nṛtyā* displays the act of dancing and is pictured in the *ardhaparyāṅka* posture, whereas her arms make dance gestures, *Vamśā* holds a flute and *Mṛdaṅgā* plays another drum. The last is *Vīṇā*, who has a stringed instrument in her left hand, and plays it with a bow which she holds in her right. All of them have a placid appearance, and they represent the act of the cult which is indicated by the attributes they are holding, or, in the case of *Nṛtyā*, by her posture.

### THE FOUR BUDDHAS (fig. 15–22)

The figures on the struts on both sides of the entrance to the shrine do not have their names inscribed under them. They have the same appearance as the other deities, i. e. they stand with crossed legs upon a lotus under a tree, and wear flower-garlands, crowns and ornaments. They are the only ones in 'non-human' form, i. e. they have eight arms and four heads, three of which are visible. They can be recognized as the four Buddhas because of their attributes and their mounts (*vāhana*). From left to right we find consecutively Ratnasambhava, Akṣobhya, Amoghasiddhi and Amitābha.



Fig. 15 *Ratnasambhava*

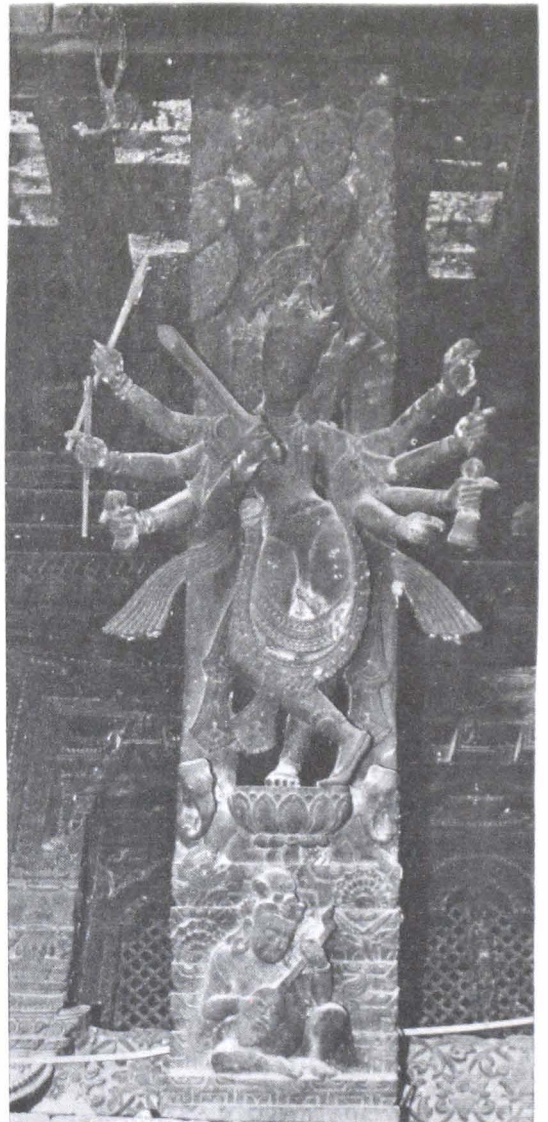


Fig. 17 *Akṣobhya*



*Fig. 16 Ratnasambhava, detail*

Ratnasambhava has two horses under his feet, and holds the following attributes:<sup>30</sup> (missing), sword, arrow, elephants' goad, noose, bow, bell (*ghaṅṭā*), and banner with a jewel on top (*cintāmaṇidhvaja*). Two elephants are visible under the feet of Akṣobhya, who holds: sword, *vajra*, arrow, elephants' goad, noose, bow (damaged), bell and a gesture called *tarjanīmudrā*. Amoghasiddhi has the same attributes in the same order, and is only distinguished from Akṣobhya by two small *garuḍas* at his feet. Amitābha, who is recognizable by the two peacocks serving as his mount (*vāhana*), holds *vajra*, arrow (damaged), sword (almost missing except for the hilt), elephants' goad, bell, (missing), bow (damaged) and a further lost attribute which should be a lotus.

30. The attributes are enumerated in the *pradakṣiṇa* order, i. e. beginning with the one in the lowermost right hand and ending with the attribute in the lowermost left hand.



Fig. 18 *Akṣobhya, detail*

Although some of the attributes are damaged or even lost, it is possible to recognize the scheme that has been followed. This corresponds to the description of the four Buddhas in the twenty-first chapter of the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* in which Mañjuśrī Dharmadhātuvāgīśvara is mentioned as the central deity of the *maṇḍala*<sup>31</sup>. Accordingly, we expected this Bodhisattva on the *torāṇa* in the role of the central Buddha. This is the case in the neighbouring Muṣya-bāhā (Sanskrit: Karuṇāpurīmahāvihāra), where the four Buddhas carved on the struts on both sides of the *torāṇa* occur in the same iconographical forms. As we shall see below<sup>32</sup>, the central deity on the *torāṇa* of the Chuṣya-bāhā is Vajrasattva, who, however, has special connections with Mañjuśrī.

When we try to understand the “language” of this arrangement of attributes, we find that the four Buddhas have five attributes in common with Mañjuśrī: sword, *vajra*, bell (*ghanta*), arrow and bow. In particular the raised sword is a distinc-

31. See also M-Th. de MALLMANN, *op. cit.*, p. 102ff.

32. See p.75

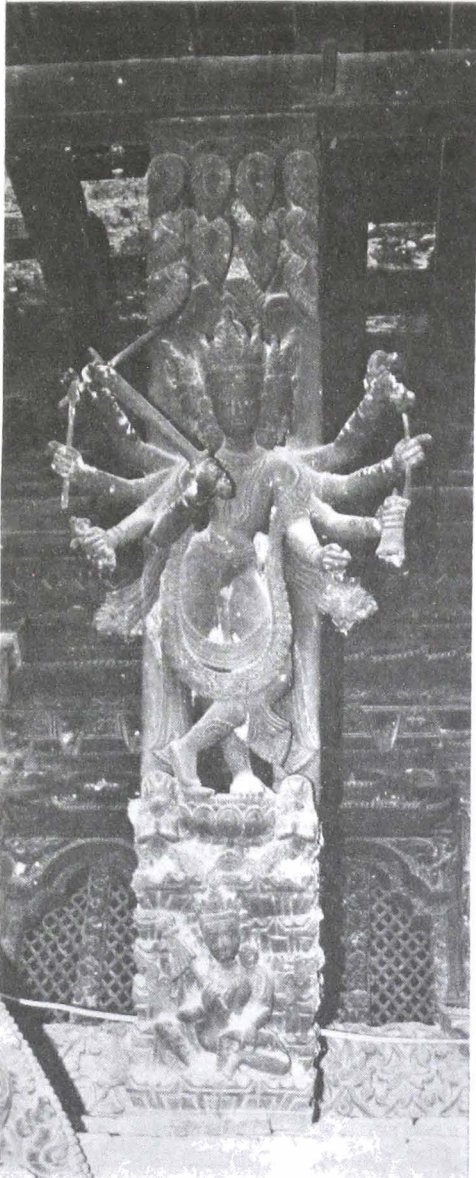


Fig. 19 *Amoghasiddhi*



Fig. 21 *Amitābha*

tive sign of Mañjuśrī. The attribute in the foremost left hand of each of the Buddhas is his characteristic symbol: the banner with a jewel (*cintāmaṇi*) belongs to Ratnasambhava, the lotus is Amitābha's symbol, and the *tarjanīmudrā* is used as the specific gesture of Akṣobhya and Amoghasiddhi.

Through these iconographical means the idea is expressed that Mañjuśrī, who acts as the central figure, extends himself into the four directions, in each case retaining most of his attributes, but at the same time assuming the form of each of the Buddhas of the four directions by holding the characteristic attribute of each Buddha. Or one may say that the four Buddhas figure as manifestations



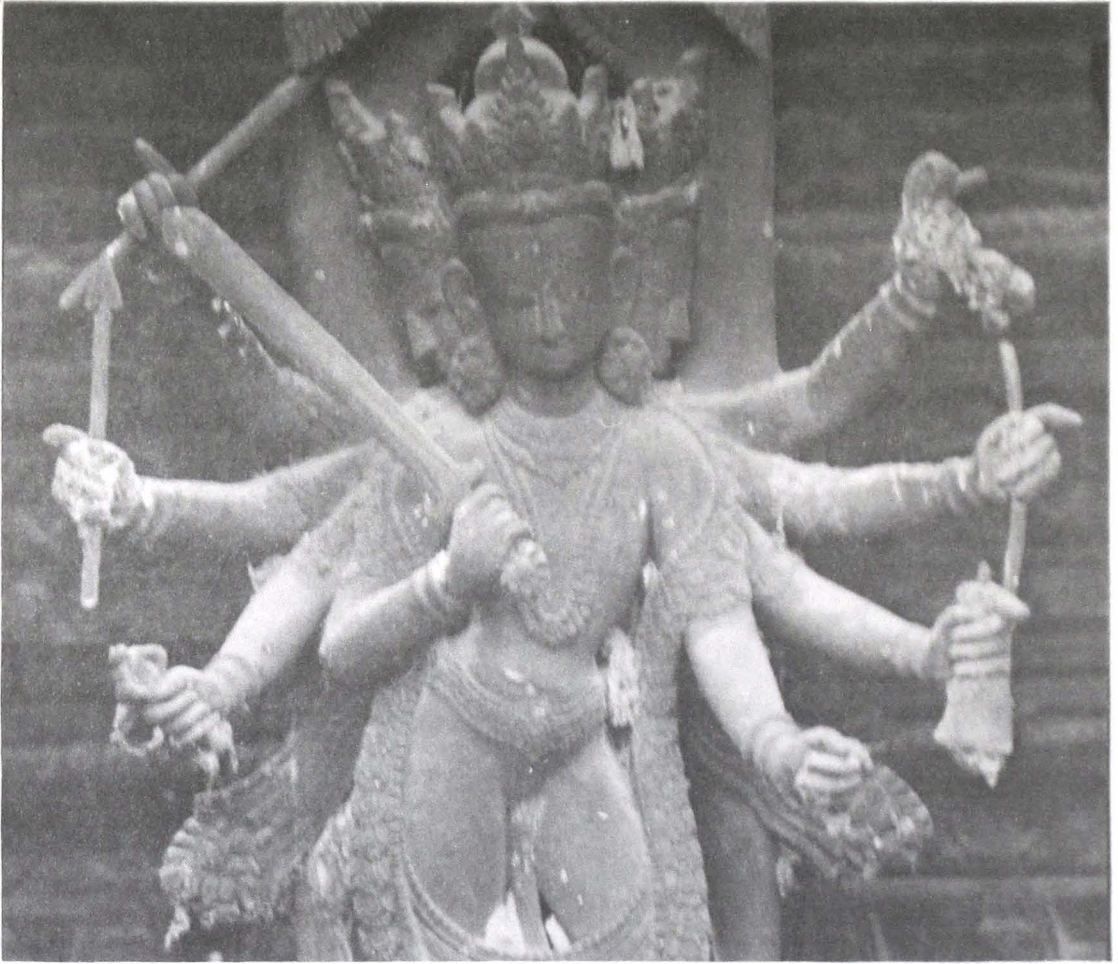


Fig. 20 *Amoghasiddhi, detail*

of the central Buddha, or that they are the Buddha himself in different aspects<sup>33</sup>.

Since representations of the four Buddhas according to the iconography of the twenty-first chapter of the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* are not known from elsewhere<sup>34</sup>, these Nepalese wood-carvings seem to be quite unique. The formulas with which the Buddhas are worshipped occur in special works with the title of *Pañcabuddhadhāraṇī*, but they are also inserted in the larger collections<sup>35</sup>. The text is very badly transmitted in the manuscripts, but it contains not much more than the name in dative ending, a few sounds and a protective formula. The fact that the Buddhas can be invoked like the other *Dhāraṇī* deities to give protection may have facilitated that the Newars consider the figures represented

33. Compare the remarks of D. SNELGROVE in *Buddhist Himalaya*, Oxford 1957, p. 58ff. about the conception of Buddhahood as represented by the five Buddhas.

34. Cp. M-Th. de MALLMANN, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

35. Cp. Ms 4-346, National Archives Kathmandu (*Pañcabuddhadhāraṇī*) and Ms Add 1326 folio 2 b, Cambridge University Library (*Dhāraṇī-saṃgraha*).



*Fig. 22 Amitābha, detail*

on the struts on both sides of the shrine as the Pañcarakṣā, the five protective goddesses, who are extremely popular in Nepal. In most of the monasteries these images are representations of the Buddhas, but there are cases that the Pañcarakṣā actually appear instead of the Buddhas. In a monastery in Kathmandu which is called Itum-bāhā (Sanskrit: Keśacandramahāvihāra) we came across six wooden images on the side of the shrine, only one of them being masculine, the remaining ones feminine<sup>36</sup>. The number of heads and arms, the colours, the mounts upon which they are standing, and their attributes, as far as they are left, correspond to the description of the Pañcarakṣā in the Sādhana-mālā (no. 206)<sup>37</sup>. The one masculine deity can be recognized as Akṣobhya. (fig. 23, 24)

In the Chuṣya-bāhā the Pañcarakṣā have been represented separately on the next row of struts.

36. D. SNELGROVE, *Shrines and Temples of Nepal*, Arts Asiatiques 8 (1961) p. 110 wrongly describes them as the six Buddhas.

37. We found the same iconography in the painted figures of the Pañcarakṣa in an illustrated Ms. no. 4-887, of the National Archives, Kathmandu.

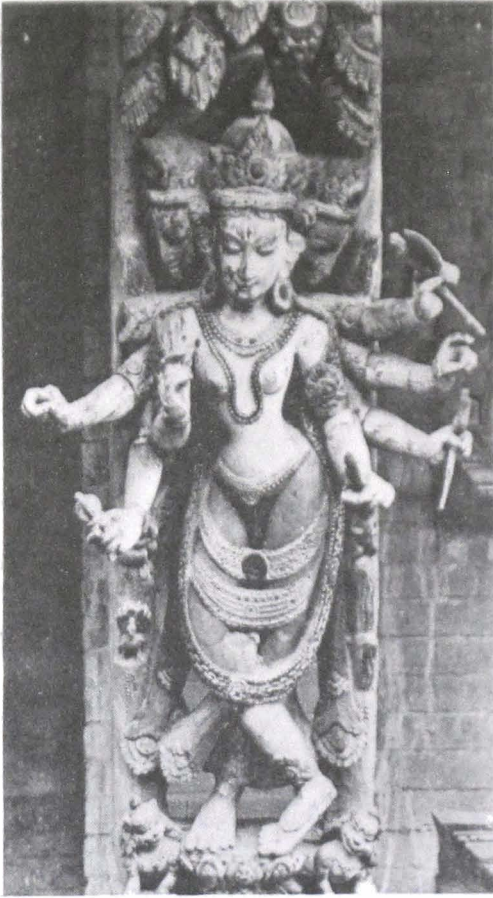


Fig. 23 *Pratisarā*, at *Itum-bāhā*



Fig. 24 *Akṣobhya*, at *Itum-bāhā*

#### THE FIVE PROTECTIVE GODDESSES (PANCARAKSA) (fig. 25-29)

#### THE FIVE PROTECTIVE GODDESSES (PAÑCARAKṢĀ) (fig. 25-29)

The inscriptions, which appear again, mention the names of *Pratisarā*, *Sāhasrapramardiṇī*, *Mantrāṅusaraṇī*, *Mahāmāyurī* and *Sītavati*. Those goddesses form the group of the *Pañcarakṣā*, who have come into being as personifications of particular formulas, and thus are original *Dhāraṇīs*. The oldest among them is *Mahāmāyurī*, whose formula already occurs in the Pali canon as a protection against snake-bites<sup>38</sup>. The four other goddesses are believed to avert the power of earthquakes, storms, wild animals, inauspicious signs, various diseases, etc. Representations of these goddesses in sculpture are known from the fifth century onwards, most of them in north-eastern India during the Pāla period<sup>39</sup>. Fur-

38. Cp. L. A. WADDELL, *op. cit.*, p. 163, 166.

39. Cp. N. K. BHATTASALI, *Iconography of Buddhist and Brahmanical Sculptures in the Dacca Museum*, Dacca 1929, p. 61 (*Mahāpratisarā*); D. C. BHATTACHARYYA, *The Five Protective Goddesses of Buddhism*, *Aspects of Indian Art*, ed. P. PAL, Leiden 1972, p. 85ff. and pl. XLVI. (*Mahāmāyurī*); L. A. WADDELL, *op. cit.*, p. 178.



Fig. 25 *Pratisarā*

Fig. 26 *Sāhasrapramardiṇī*

Fig. 27 *Mantrāṅusāriṇī*

thermore, there are numerous illustrations of this group in palm-leaf manuscripts. The examples hitherto known always have a 'non-human' form, i. e. more heads and many arms. The images in the *Chuṣya-bāhā* are worth mentioning because they appear in 'human' form. The attributes which they hold in their two hands correspond to the ones held in the two foremost hands of the 'non-human' forms: *Pratisarā*, who stands upon lions, has a wheel and a noose (*pāśa*); *Sāhasrapramardiṇī* holds a noose (*pāśa*) in the left hand and a *vajra* in the right. She has demoniacal features: a dancing posture called *ardha-paryāṅka*, bulging eyes and a garland of severed human heads. Two crouching demons are visible under her. The next is *Mantrāṅusāriṇī*, who has peacocks



Fig. 28 *Mahāmāyūrī*



Fig. 29 *Sītavatī*

*Left: Fig. 28a Mahāmāyūrī, detail*

for her mounts (*vāhana*), and forms the preaching gesture (*dharmacakramudrā*) with her hands. Mahāmāyūrī holds a jar with three peacock-feathers, and stands upon elephants. The last is Sītavatī, characterized by two *garuḍas* carved under her feet, and forming the gesture of protection (*abhayamudrā*) with her right hand, and holding the noose (*pāśa*) in her left.

The formulas of the Pañcarakṣā can be found in the numerous Pañcarakṣā manuscripts,<sup>40</sup> and also in the large Dhāraṇīsaṃgrahas.

## THE SEVEN GODDESSES (fig. 30–34)

A few manuscripts from the National Archives in Kathmandu<sup>41</sup> not only give the formulas of the Pancaraksa, but continue with another group of seven *dharanis*. This combination formed the solution of the next group of deities in the Chusya-baha, which consists of seven goddesses. In the inscriptions the following names appear: Vasudhara, Vajravidarani, Ganapati (sc. Ganapati-hrdaya), Usnisavijaya, Parnasabari, Marici and Grahamatrka. Individually most of them are sufficiently known from the Buddhist iconographical works, and from isolated sculptures and paintings<sup>42</sup>, but as a group they at first seemed not to show any coherency at all. There is no iconographical work that mentions them as belonging together. Only the Dharanisamgrahas contain the formulas of this group of goddesses. There are even texts with the formulas of these deities only. They bear different titles, such as Vasudharadisaptadharani (The seven *dharanis* consisting of Vasudhara, etc.), or Grahamatrkadharani (after the last goddess Grahamatrka), or Saptavara (seven weekdays). Manuscripts with these formulas are mentioned in several catalogues, in particular the ones of the Asiatic Society and of Cambridge University Library<sup>43</sup>. They all contain the same seven *dharanis* always in the same order, and it is in this order that their visual representations in the form of goddesses appear on the struts on the right side, and part of the entrance-side of the Chusya-baha. We found a similar group in another monastery in Kathmandu, the Chun-baha. It seems that the wood-carver has followed a Dharani text as mentioned above, or perhaps a manuscript in which the Pancaraksa has been combined with the Saptavara. Like the Pancaraksa he depicted them with one head and two arms, and standing under a tree in the role of Yaksis. Several of the Saptavara manuscripts have illustrations of these goddesses, but represent them in 'non-human' forms. They also contain the formulas with which they are to be worshipped, the results that can be obtained for the worshipper, and sometimes an iconographical description.

41. E. g. Ms no. 5–299 and no. 4–887, National Archives, Kathmandu.

42. Cp. A. GETTY, *The Gods of Northern Buddhism*, Tokyo 1962, p. 130, 132, 134f.; N. K. BHATTASALI, *op. cit.*, p. 43, 58; B. BHATTACHARYYA, *The Indian Buddhist Iconography*, Calcutta 1968, p. 291, fig. 187, 188 (Vasudhārā); p. 277, fig. 156 (Uṣṇīṣavijaya); p. 285, fig. 173, p. 286, fig. 174 (Parṇaśabarī); p. 275, fig. 152, p. 276, fig. 153, 154 (Mārīcī).

43. Cf. C. BENDALL, *op. cit.* Add. 1315, 1356; R. L. MITRA, *The Sanskrit Buddhist Literature of Nepal*, Calcutta 1971 (reprint), p. 289f.; B. H. HODGSON, *Essays on the Languages, Literature and Religion of Nepal and Tibet*, Benares 1971 (reprint), p. 19, 39 (no. 144); Mss. no. 3–589, 5–299, 4–1598, 3–782 (582), National Archives, Kathmandu.

In one Nepalese manuscript<sup>44</sup> the name of Saptavāra becomes somewhat clearer, and it seems that this denomination has secundarily been attached to the group. Each time when the *dhāraṇī* of a new goddess begins, the copyist wrote in the margin the name of a planet together with the word *-vāra*: *ādityavāra*, *somavāra*, *aṅgāravāra*, *budhavāra*, *brhaspativāra*, *sukravāra*, *śanaiśvaravāra*, i. e. the day of the sun, the moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus and Saturn. It is perhaps possible that the title of Saptavāra originally denoted the worship of the seven planets on the seven days of the week, but was later on extended to the group of seven goddesses when the latter became associated with the planets. It is significant that the same manuscript has a painting of Sūrya (the sun) instead of Vasudhārā on the first page.

A parallel is presented by a work, called Pūjāvidhi, which is a priests' manual copied in 1573 A. D., and probably coming from Nepal<sup>45</sup>. In this Buddhist work the seven or eight Mātṛkās are connected with the planets: Vaiṣṇavī with the sun, Brahmāṇī with the moon, Maheśvarī with Mars, Kaumārī with Mercury, Vārāhī with Jupiter, Indrāṇī with Venus and Cāmuṇḍā with Saturn. It has been suggested that there "may have been a practice of associating the planets with the Mātṛkās"<sup>46</sup>. The whole group of seven goddesses called Saptavāra looks like a Buddhist counterpart of the Saptamātṛkā, which were originally Hindu goddesses, and it is probably on analogy of them that the seven Buddhist goddesses have been brought together into a group of seven in a period preceding the incorporation of the Hindu Saptamātṛkā into the Buddhist pantheon. The association of the seven Buddhist goddesses with the planets could have been caused by a similar process as with the Hindu seven Mātṛkās. The concept of Grahamātṛkā, the last of the Saptavāra, whose name means 'Mother of the planets' probably played a role in this process<sup>47</sup>.

Four goddesses of the group are well-known from the Buddhist iconographical works, viz. Vasudhārā, Uṣṇīsavijaya, Parṇaśabarī and Mārīcī. Images of them are known to have existed from the Pāla period onwards<sup>48</sup>. But the forms of Vajravidāraṇī, Gaṇapatihṛdayā and Grahamātṛkā are not so well documented, and do not appear in sculpture; representations are only known from illustrated Nepalese manuscripts<sup>49</sup>. They have been found, however, by WADDELL in

44. Ms 4-1482, National Archives, Kathmandu.

45. Cf. P. PAL and D. C. BHATTACHARYYA, *The Astral Divinities of Nepal*, Benares 1969, p. 39f.

46. Id. p. 42f.

47. A description of the Navagrahamaṇḍala precedes the *dhāraṇī* of Grahamātṛkā.

48. See note 42.

49. A. GETTY, *op. cit.* pl. LXI (Grahamātṛkā); B. BHATTACHARYYA, *op. cit.*, fig.

229 (Gaṇapatihṛdayā), fig. 150 (Vajravidāraṇī), fig. 165 (Grahamātṛkā).



*Fig. 30 Vasudhārā*



*Fig. 31 Vajravīdārāṇī*

some Tibetan *Sādhana* collections<sup>50</sup>. Accordingly, the wood-carvings of the *Chuṣya-bāhā* seem to be the first examples known in sculpture. We will now compare the group of the *Chuṣya-bāhā* with the illustrated *Saptavāra* manuscript mentioned above<sup>51</sup>.

50. L. A. WADDELL, *op. cit.*, p. 190. WADDELL gives a photograph of a masculine "White Vajravīdārāṇā" represented by a sculpture from Magadha belonging to the eighth or ninth century A. D. Its iconography is different from that of the Vajravīdārāṇī of the wood-carvings and the illustrations in the Nepalese Mss.

51. See note 44.



The first goddess, Vasudhārā, is represented on the strut in 'human' form. The right hand holds a fruit, the left a jar (*Pūrṇakalāṣa*). As Vasudhārā is associated with the richness of the earth, she is usually represented with a vase out of which ears of corn are growing up, or with a bundle of ears of corn. These are not visible on the image of the strut.

The illustration in the manuscript has a painting of Sūrya instead of Vasudhārā, as has been mentioned above<sup>52</sup>. Vajravidāraṇī is in the wood-carving represented with two arms. She holds a *vajra* in her right hand, and a noose (*pāśa*) in her raised left hand. The manuscript pictures a goddess in the *pratyālīḍha* posture, i. e. assuming the attitude of an archer; she has a red colour and a 'non-human' form with three visible faces and twenty arms. The next, Gaṇapatiḥḍayā, has been carved on the first strut of the entrance-wall. The name in the inscription is shortened to Gaṇapati. It is a representation like that of a dancing Gaṇeśa, with a tray of sweetmeat in the left hand, and another attribute, which is not recognizable, in the right. Two rats are depicted under her, as her mounts (*vāhana*). The manuscript has an illustration of a 'non-human' form with one head and six arms. She also stands upon a rat in a dancing posture, and has a red colour. The attributes shown in her right hands are a kind of bag, an axe and a rosary. In her left hands are a fruit, a noose (*pāśa*) and an elephant's goad (*aṅkuśa*).

The strut next to the entrance shows a representation of Uṣṇīṣavijaya with a fruit and a jar as her attributes. This jar is supposed to be an *amṛtakalāṣa*, i. e. a jar containing nectar, and has the same meaning as the spell used for worshipping this goddess, viz. a guarantee for a long life. Her 'non-human' form is found in the illustration of the manuscript, in which she has three heads and eight arms and the attributes usual for this form<sup>53</sup>. On the other side of the entrance we find Parṇaśabarī, who is provided with some demoniacal traits like a grinning laugh and a garland of severed human heads. She is furthermore distinguished by wearing an apron of leaves, which indicates her connection with tribal people, in particular the Śābaras<sup>54</sup>. These demoniacal features are also visible on the figure carved in the strut. She has one head and two arms. There are no attributes. In the manuscript Parṇaśabarī is substituted by Prajñāpāramitā, and the text is the Prājñāpāramitādharmaṇī. This substitution occurs in a few more manuscripts<sup>55</sup> of this group of seven goddesses. The examples of Parṇaśabarī in Indian sculpture show a somewhat different iconography.<sup>56</sup> There she has three faces and six arms, but the apron of leaves and

52. See p. 61

53. Instead of the second Buddha image, she can also hold an *amṛtakalāṣa*, cf. A. Getty, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

54. Cf. A. GRUNWEDEL, *Mythologie du Buddhisme au Tibet et en Mongolie*, Leipzig 1900, p. 152.

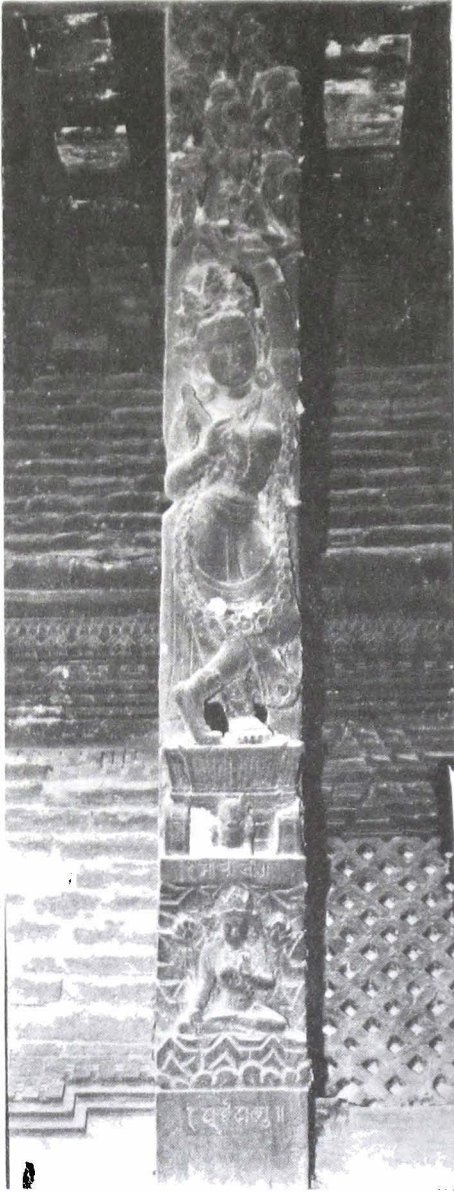
55. Cf. Ms no. 5-31, *Dhāraṇīsaṃgraha*, National Archives, Kathmandu.

56. Cf. N. K. BHATTASALI, *op. cit.*, pl. XXIII.

Fig. 32 *Gaṇapatihṛdayā*Fig. 34 *Parnaśabarī*Left: Fig. 33 *Uṣṇīṣavijayā*

some demoniacal traits are always present. The sixth goddess is Mārīcī, whose chariot is drawn by one instead of the usual seven pigs. She has one head and two arms, in which she holds a bow and an arrow. The painting in the manuscript has a form with three heads and six arms. Her main colour is yellow, but her right face is dark-blue and her left has the form of a pig and is also dark-blue. Her attributes are thread and needle, *vajra* and *aśoka* flower, and in her upper hands she holds arrow and bow<sup>57</sup>. This iconography is in accordance with her description in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, up to the blue jacket she is wearing.

57. Compare the images mentioned in note 42.

Fig. 35 *Mārīcī*Fig. 36 *Grahamātrkā*

The last goddess is *Grahamātrkā*, the “Mother of the planets”, who is again represented with one head and two arms. The hands form the preaching gesture (*dharmacakramudrā*), just like the main hands of the usually six-armed figure. In the illustration of the manuscript she has these three heads and six arms. Apart from the *dharmacakramudrā* she has in two other hands arrow and bow, and the upper hands hold a lotus and an attribute that looks like a bundle of flowers. Her colour is white, but her right face is yellow and her left is blue. It has to be noticed that the painting does not tally with the text in the same manuscript which mentions other attributes, viz. the *vyākhyānamudrā*, a lotus and a bunch of jewels (*ratnacchaṭā*), a spear and a noose (*pāśa*).

Grahamātrkā is not only the last goddess of the Saptavāra group, but she concludes the whole series of figures carved in the upper parts of the struts. In particular this last group of seven goddesses, the Saptavāra, points to the fact that a Dhāraṇīsaṃgraha must have determined the choice of the deities represented in the monastery. We do not find this group of seven in the Sādhanamālā or the Niṣpannayogāvalī. There are Dhāraṇīs mentioned in these works. Vasudhārā, Uṣṇīṣavijaya, Mārīcī and Parṇasabarī for instance occur in a group of twelve Dhāraṇī goddesses forming part of the *maṇḍala* of Dharmadhātu-vāgīśvara Mañjuśrī. In this *maṇḍala* we also find the ten Krodhas, the eight Cultgoddesses, the four Buddhas in the same iconographical form as on the struts in the monastery, and the series of Lunar Mansions (*nakṣatra*), which is represented on the lower parts of the struts; but not the Pañcarakṣā nor the Saptavāra. Moreover, the total number of deities in this *maṇḍala*, viz. 216, by far exceeds the number of the struts. We can possibly say that some general ideas of the construction of a *maṇḍala* have been followed in the arrangement of the figures on the struts. Just like in a *maṇḍala*, the outside is protected by ten terrifying deities called Krodhas, and the centre is formed by the four Buddhas of the directions, the central Buddha being represented on the tympanon. Near the centre six Cultgoddesses have found a place instead of four or eight as are always found in a *maṇḍala*, and twelve Dhāraṇīs, who are not the same, however, as the ones mentioned in the Niṣpannayogāvalī. There seems to be no *maṇḍala* with the same deities as have been represented on the struts. These deities do occur in the Dhāraṇīsaṃgrahas and this explains why they have been carved in the wooden struts.

### THE LUNAR MANSIONS (fig. 37)

Apart from the Four Great Kings (Caturmahārāja) who figure on the undermost parts of the four Buddha struts, and who do not show any particularities as to their iconography, we find on the lower parts of the remaining struts a series of twenty-seven Lunar Mansions (*nakṣatra*), represented in human form. They are present on the struts, because they too are believed to offer protection against possible dangers. All of them are sitting on various mounts or thrones in a posture called *sattvaparyāṅka*. They have the right hand in the gesture of giving boons (*varadamudrā*) and the left in a gesture of argumentation (*vitarkamudrā*). These hands moreover hold lotus stalks, the flowers of which have been represented at the height of the shoulders. The lotus-flowers indicate that the Lunar Mansions are associated with Candra (the moon), who has also two lotuses as his attributes, and who is called "Lord of the Lunar Mansions."

The representation of the Lunar Mansions is relatively rare in Buddhist art, and if they are depicted their iconography is not uniform. For instance the position of the hands may differ. The text of the twenty-first chapter of the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, which is the only work that contains short iconographical descriptions of the *nakṣatras* according to the present knowledge, mentions the gesture of greeting (*añjalimudrā*). Another series of *nakṣatras*, which has been identified with some hesitation by P. PAL<sup>58</sup> and has been painted on a cloth (*paṭa*), shows that they have one hand against the breast, and the other resting on the thigh. The colours of these *nakṣatras* do not correspond to the ones mentioned in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*. Only four of the twenty-eight are the same. In the *Chuṣya-bāhā* the colours have vanished, if they had been painted at all.

There seems to be more consistency in the mounts (*vāhana*) of the *nakṣatras*. Although these mounts are not mentioned in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, the ones of the *nakṣatras* in the *Chuṣya-bāhā* correspond to those painted on the

58. P. PAL, *Two Buddhist Paintings from Nepal*, Amsterdam 1967, p. 7.



Fig. 37a *Ardra*



Fig. 37b *Asleṣā*

*paṭa*. We see the following series: 1. Aśvinī - horse 2. Bharaṇī - corpse 3. Kṛttikā - throne 4. Rohiṇī - antelope 5. Mṛgaśīrā - deer 6. Ārdrā - serpent 7. Punarvasu - *pūrṇaghaṭa* 8. Puṣyā - lotus 9. Āśleṣa - goose 10. Māgha - calf 11. Pūrvaphalgunī - mountainous landscape 12. Uttaraphalgunī - rocks 13. Hastā - elephant 14. Citrā - peacock 15. Svātī - throne 16. Viśākhā - goat or ram 17. Anurādhā - goose 18. Jyeṣṭhā - tortoise 19. Mūlā - root 20. Pūrvāśādhā - cushion 21. Uttarāśādhā - cushion 22. Śravaṇā - corpse 23. Dhaniṣṭhā - throne 24. Śatabhiṣā - calf 25. Pūrvabhadrā - padā - throne 26. Uttarabhadrā - padā - throne 27. Revatī - landscape.



Fig. 37c Pūrvaphalgu[nī]

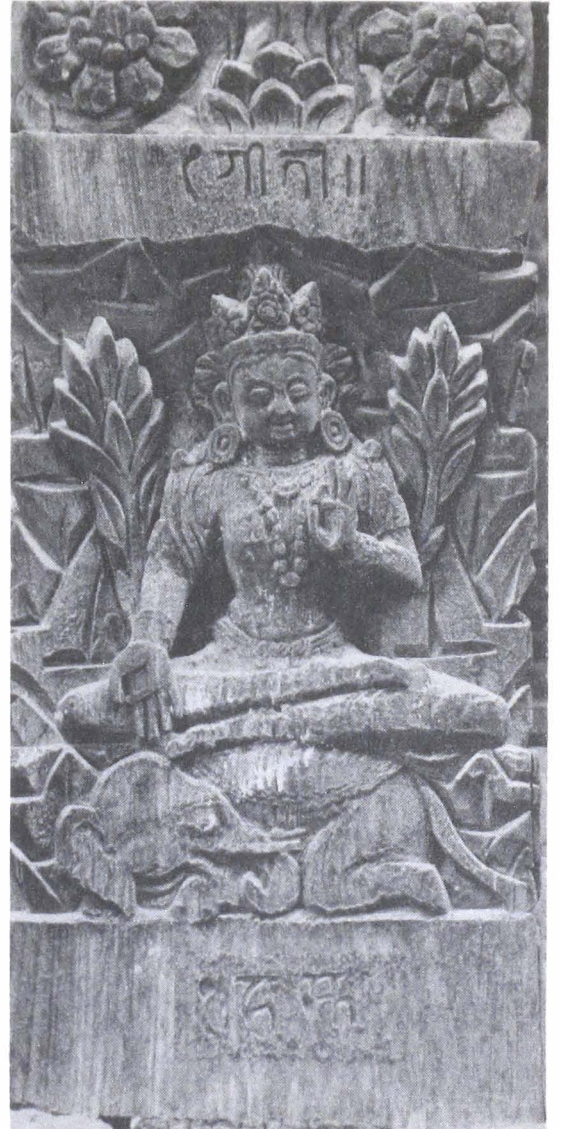


Fig. 37d Hastā



Fig. 37e Citrā



Fig. 37f Svātī

Apart from some minor exceptions<sup>60</sup> the mounts of the wood-carvings come so close to the ones on the *paṭa*<sup>60</sup> that both series probably go back to the same source, of which we have no knowledge. The question whether they reflect an ancient tradition or not is difficult to answer. We can only conclude that they are quite different from the ancient symbols for the *nakṣatras* mentioned in Hindu mythol-  
59. Compare the list of *vāhanas* given by P. PAL, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

60. The close correspondance between the *vāhanas* of the Nakṣatras of the wood-carvings and the ones of the figures on the *paṭa* makes it unnecessary to hesitate about the identity of the latter. We can follow the suggestion of P. PAL that they represent the Nakṣatras. The *paṭa* belongs to the Museum for Asiatic Art in Amsterdam and represents a Candramaṇḍala. In the lower corners a story has been depicted, which PAL was not able to identify. There are three episodes, in which a certain animal plays the main part. The first scene on the right side of the cloth pictures a hermit, who accepts offerings from three animals, a monkey, a jackal and an otter. The last

Fig. 37g *Viśākhā*Fig. 37h *Anurādhā*

ogy, in particular the tradition of the Purāṇas,<sup>61</sup> and also from the ones known to the Jains. It is likely that Buddhism had its own way of representing the

presents a fish. A fourth animal is sitting apart; it has apparently nothing to give. Trees are represented in order to indicate that the scene takes place in a wood. The second scene to the lower left side let us see the hermit again, who rescues an animal from the fire. The third episode is painted above the second. We see the animal taken by a god in a cloud, and brought to heaven. A sequence of events like this must indicate a famous Buddhist story, viz. the Śaśajātaka, the story of the hare, who has nothing to offer on the day of *uposatha* (the day of the full moon) and therefore presents itself as an offering by leaping into the fire. The ascetic, however, proves to be Indra, who rescues the hare and brings it to the moon, henceforth called *śaśin*, the one with the hare. The fourth animal, although clumsily painted, must be the hare who is the Bodhisattva. The story is quite appropriate in a painting with the moon as the main deity. For a discussion of the Śaśajātaka in the Ajaṇṇa paintings, see D. SCHLINGLOFF, *Das Śaśajātaka*, Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens, XV (1971), p. 57ff.

61. Cf. W. KIRFEL, *Die Kosmographie der Inder*, Leipzig 1920, p. 138f. H. HAAS, *Bilderatlas zur Religionsgeschichte*, 12. Lieferung, Leipzig 1928. *Die Religion der Jainas*, p. 19.



Fig. 37i *Mūlā*Fig. 37j *Śravaṇā*

*nakṣatras*. Some of the mounts have obviously been chosen because of the meaning of the name of the corresponding *nakṣatra*: *Aśvinī* (*aśva* - horse) has a horse; *Rohiṇī* ( antelope ) and *Mṛgaśīrā* ( head of a deer ) are seated upon forms of deer; *Hastā* has an elephant because of its association with the trunk of an elephant ( *hasta* ); *Citrā*, meaning the variegated one, is seated on a peacock; *Mūlā* (root) has a root for her seat. Others are seated on lotuses, cushions, thrones or rocks, which may be an indication that no definite mount had been found for them. The choice of the mounts of the remaining ten *nakṣatras* is not so easy to define. In some cases the mounts might have been taken from the protective deity of the *nakṣatra*. Although we cannot be sure it is possible that the iconography of the Lunar Mansions in Buddhism does not represent an ancient tradition, because of the lack of uniformity as far as the position of the hands and the colours are concerned, and also because most of the mounts cannot be connected with any ancient tradition.

We will now leave the struts and discuss the iconography of the three tympanons (*torana*).



*Fig. 37k Uttarabhadra*

**PRAJÑĀPĀRAMITĀ (fig. 38)**

The outer *torana* of the Chuṣya-bāhā is provided with a representation of a goddess who is seated in a posture called *vajraparyaṅka* upon a lotus-flower. She has been adorned with garments and ornaments, and she wears a kind of *jaṭāmukuṭā*, i. e. her hair is tied up forming a kind of crown. She has one head and four arms, two of which form the gesture of preaching (*dharmacakramudrā*) whereas the upper right hand holds a rosary and the upper left a lotus with a

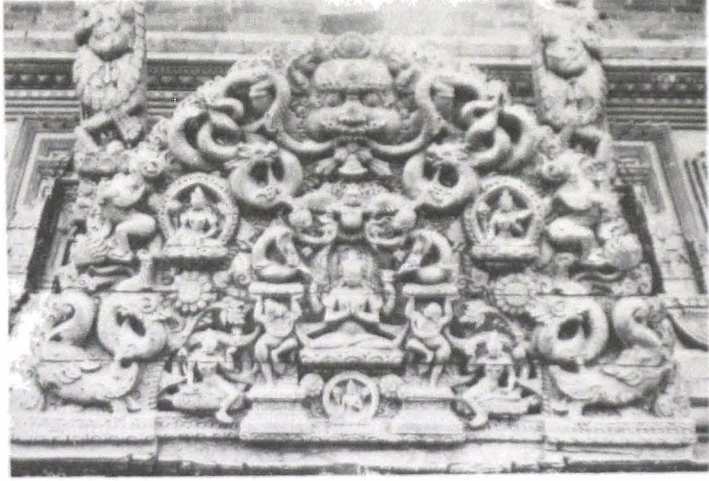


Fig. 38 *Prajñāpāramitā*

book on it. This is an iconographical form of *Prajñāpāramitā*, the goddess who represents the perfection of wisdom. As much of the material about this goddess has been collected by E. CONZE<sup>62</sup>, we need not discuss her iconographical forms here.

More uncertainty exists about the attendant goddesses of *Prajñāpāramitā*. According to CONZE<sup>63</sup> they appear to be mostly *Tārās*. In that case the attendants on the tympanon are an exception to the rule. We see five goddesses, two of whom are seated in a relaxed posture called *lalitāsana*, and three in the lotus-posture (*vajraparyāṅka*). All of them are sitting on lotuses and are adorned with a crown and the usual ornaments and garments. They have two arms and hold a stalk of a lotus-flower in one of them. In the other hand they carry various symbols: a disk (of the moon) on a lotus in the raised left hand of the figure to the left of *Prajñāpāramitā*; a bundle of ears of corn in the left hand of the goddess represented above her; something that seems to be a flowery disk in the left hand of the one on the upper right side of the *torāṇa*; the goddess to the right of the central figure holds a white lotus; the small figure underneath *Prajñāpāramitā* holds the stalk of a lotus. This iconography corresponds to what has been prescribed in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*<sup>64</sup> for the *Pāramitās*, viz. *Ratna-*, *Dāna-*, *Śīla-*, *Kṣānti-* and *Vīryapāramitā*. Groups of six or ten or twelve *Pāramitās* are represented in Buddhist art. The five attendant goddesses together with the central *Prajñāpāramitā* form such a group of six *Pāramitās*.

62. E. CONZE, *The Iconography of the Prajñāpāramitā*, *Oriental Art* II (1949), p. 47ff; III (1951), p. 104ff.

63. *Idem*, III (1951), p. 107.

64. Cf. M-Th. de MALLMANN, *op. cit.*, p. 170f.

The usual six Pāramitās, which also appear in the Dhāraṇīsaṃgrahas, are *dāna-*, *śīla-*, *kṣanti-*, *vīrya-*, *dhyāna-* and *prajñāpāramitā*. Our group starts with Ratna-pāramitā and omits Dhyāna. Another irregularity is that these Pāramitās should have a jewel instead of a lotus-stalk in their hands.

The reason why Prajñāpāramitā is represented as the central deity on the tympanon is not only that this goddess is one of the most ancient and most famous Dhāraṇīs of Buddhism; she is also the consort of the main deity present on the *toranas* inside the monastery, once in 'human' form, and another time in a form with three heads and six arms.

#### VAJRASATTVA (fig. 39–41)

The Ādibuddha Vajrasattva occupies the central position on the tympanons of several Nepalese monasteries. In 'human' form he is depicted sitting on a lotus, his right hand holding the *vajra* before his breast, and his left hand, carrying the bell (*ghanṭā*), placed on his hip. He usually wears royal garments and ornaments.

The small *torana* (fig. 39) placed over the side-entrance in the Chuṣya-bāhā presents this form. It is to be expected that the god on the main *torana* (fig. 40–41) over

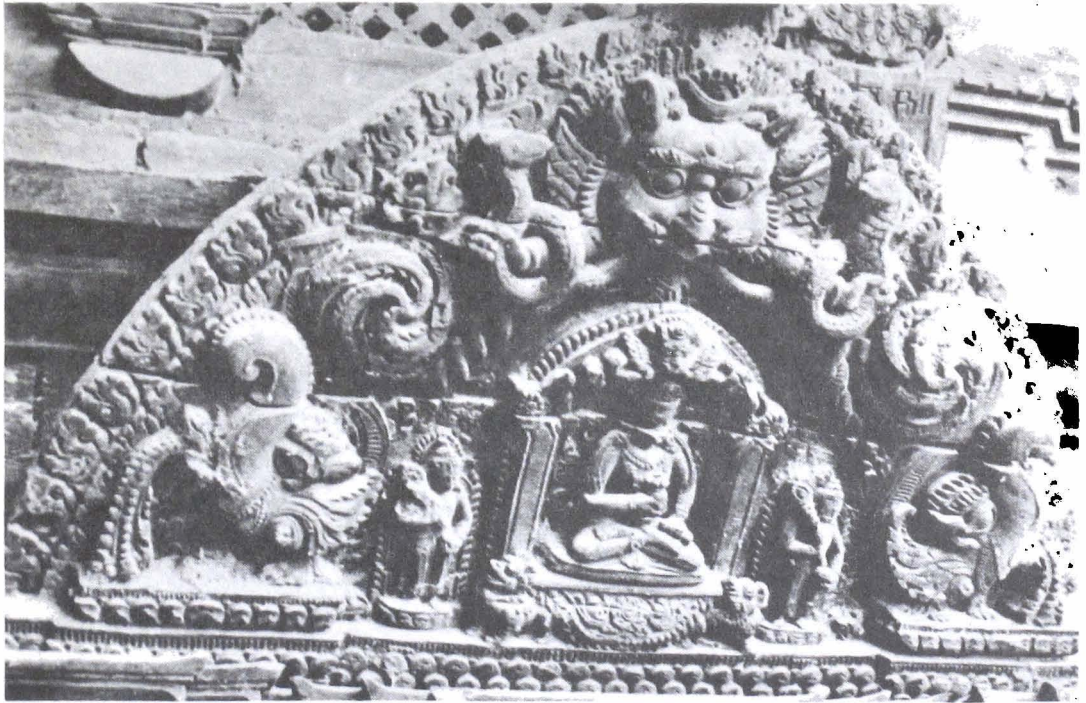


Fig. 39 Vajrasattva

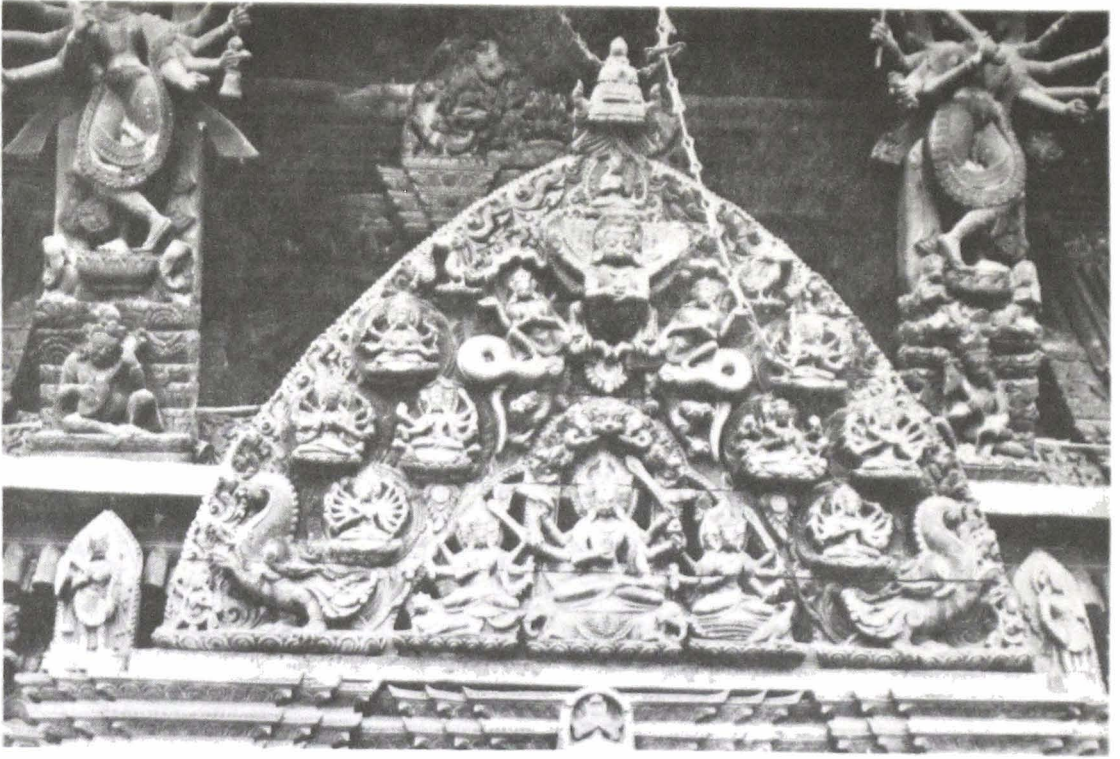


Fig. 40 *Toraṇa over the entrance to the shrine*

the entrance to the shrine is also Vajrasattva. This is confirmed by the Newars<sup>65</sup> themselves. On the other hand the iconography of the four Buddhas represented on the struts on both sides of the *toraṇa* makes us expect to find Mañjuśrī Dharmadhātuvāgīśvara as the central deity, as we have seen above<sup>66</sup> Before we go into a discussion of the relationship between Mañjuśrī and Vajrasattva, which makes them actually interchangeable, we would like to describe the deity and his attendant figures on the *toraṇa* as accurately as possible.

In the centre a deity with three heads and six arms is represented. His colour must have been blue, as traces of the blue paint are still visible. He sits in the lotus-posture (*vajraparyāṅka*) on a throne in which two elephants have been carved. He has the royal garments and ornaments and wears a crown. His two main hands hold *vajra* and bell (*ghaṇṭā*) in the same way as Vajrasattva. The remaining right hands have disk (*cakra*) and lotus (*padma*), the left hands jewel and sword. Considering the blue colour, the position of the hands and their attributes, the elephants carved in the throne, and the 'human' Vajrasattva on the small *toraṇa* over the side-entrance, this deity is likely to be Vajrasattva. M-Th. de MALLMANN<sup>67</sup> mentions three varieties— all of them mentioned in the Niṣ-

65. Cf. A Protective Inventory, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 15.

66. See p. 53

67. Cf. M-Th. de MALLMANN, Introduction à l'Iconographie du Tāntrisme Bouddhique, Paris 1975, p. 420.

pannayogāvalī— of figures of Vajrasattva with three heads and six arms. The iconography of the figure on the *torāṇa* is in perfect accordance with the second form, which is described in the second chapter of the Niṣpannayogāvalī. The only difference is that the figure on the *torāṇa* has no female partner. Another problem is that the deity in the text mentioned is named Akṣobhya, but at the end of the chapter the same iconographical form is called Vajrasattva. M-Th. de MALLMANN is probably right in listing this deity as Vajrasattva, which is confirmed by Newar tradition.

The central Vajrasattva/Akṣobhya is surrounded by the four Buddhas : Vairocana sitting on a lion-throne on his right side; behind him Ratnasambhava on a throne with horses, Amitābha on a peacock to the left of the central figure, and behind him Amoghasiddhi on a throne with *garuḍas*. All of them have three heads and six arms. The two main hands of each figure are in the same position as the ones of Vajrasattva but hold different attributes: Vairocana has a disk in his right hand and a jewel in his left; the middle pair of hands carry a *vajra* (to the right) and a bell (*ghantā*, to the left); and the right upper hand holds a severed head, the left a sword. Instead of the severed head (*munda*), which is a very unusual attribute for Vairocana, we expect a white lotus in the upper right hand, which is called *puṇḍarīka* in the text of the Niṣpannayogāvalī. We wonder if we might consider this *muṇḍa* as a sort of “corruption” or a misreading of the wood-carver. Ratnasambhava seems to have his main right hand in the gesture of argumentation (*vitarkamudrā*) without any further attribute, but it is possible that the attribute has got lost. His main left hand holds a jewel. The middle pair of hands are provided with a *vajra* (to the right) and a bell (*ghaṇṭā*) to the left; in the upper right hand we see a disk and in the left a sword. Amitābha holds lotus (*padma*) and jewel in his main hands, *vajra* and bell (*ghaṇṭā*) in the next pair of hands, and disk (not distinctly recognizable) and sword in his two upper hands. Amoghasiddhi’s main hands hold sword and bell (*ghantā*), his middle hands a double *vajra* (*viśvavajra*) and an unrecognizable attribute, his upper hands a *vajra* and a jewel.

Apart from a few deviations, which may be called ‘variants’ or even ‘corruptions’, the attributes of these Buddhas are in accordance with the text of the second chapter of the Niṣpannayogāvalī, where the four Buddhas surrounding the central Buddha are described<sup>68</sup>, and it seems that this text has been the iconographical source of the wood-carver.

68. The text gives a slightly different system; the four Buddhas hold the same attributes as the main figure Vajrasattva, viz. *vajra* and bell, disk and jewel, lotus and sword; each Buddha has a lotus of a different colour, white, yellow, red and green respectively, according to the colour of that Buddha. On the *torāṇa*, the order of the attributes changes each time. See Niṣpannayogāvalī, edited by B. BHATTACHARYYA, Baroda 1972, second chapter (Piṇḍīkramoktākṣobhyamandalam).

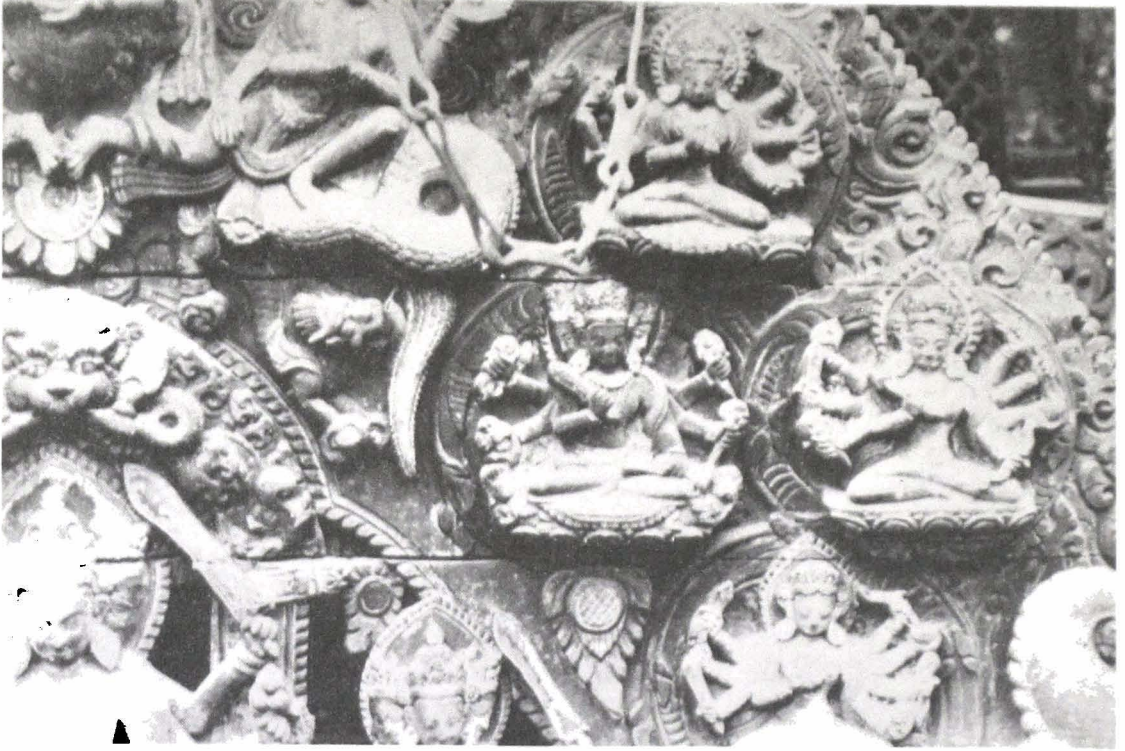


Fig. 41 Detail of the right side of fig. 40 fig. 41a Detail of the left side of Fig. 40

As we have said above, one does not expect Vajrasattva as the central figure on the main *torana*, but rather a representation of Mañjuśrī Dharmadhātuvāgīśvara. There is, however, reason to suppose that both are so closely related that they sometimes become interchangeable. M-Th. de MALLMANN<sup>69</sup> has noticed some cases of assimilation between the two deities. In the twentieth chapter of the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* the central Buddha is called Mañjuvajra, “who has the nature of Vairocana” and “who is adorned with Vajrasattva, being his reflection (*svābhā*)”. In the first chapter of the same work the central deity is Vajrasattva, “who has the form of Mañjuvajra”. In *Sādhanamālā* 67, Vajrasattva takes the central position in a *maṇḍala* of Siddhaikavīra Mañjuśrī.

In a later article<sup>70</sup> De MALLMANN agrees with a remark made by A. BAREAU, that in tantric Buddhism a kind of unification had taken place between the transcendent Buddhas and certain great Bodhisattvas, in this case between Vajrasattva/Vairocana and Mañjuśrī.

69. M-Th. de MALLMANN, *Étude Iconographique sur Mañjuśrī*, Paris 1964, p. 103.

70. Idem, “Dieux Polyvalents” du Tāntrisme Bouddhique, *Journal Asiatique* CCLII (1964), p. 365.



*Fig. 41a Detail of the left side of Fig. 40*



*Fig. 41b Detail of the right side of fig. 40*



The evidence of the Nepalese *toraṇas* seems to confirm this, and in order to show in what way the interrelationship between Vajrasattva and Mañjuśrī is expressed, we have to discuss a few *toraṇas* belonging to other monasteries in Kathmandu and Patan.

### MAÑJUŚRĪ DHARMADHĀTUVĀGĪŚVARA

Following M-Th. de MALLMANN<sup>71</sup> we only call one form of Mañjuśrī by this name, viz. when he has four heads and eight arms, forming the gesture of preaching (*dharmacakramudrā*) with his main hands, and holding *vajra* and bell (*ghaṇṭā*), arrow and bow, and sword and book in the second, third and upper pairs of hands respectively. He is seated on a lion-throne, he has a white colour and he is adorned with the royal garments and ornaments.

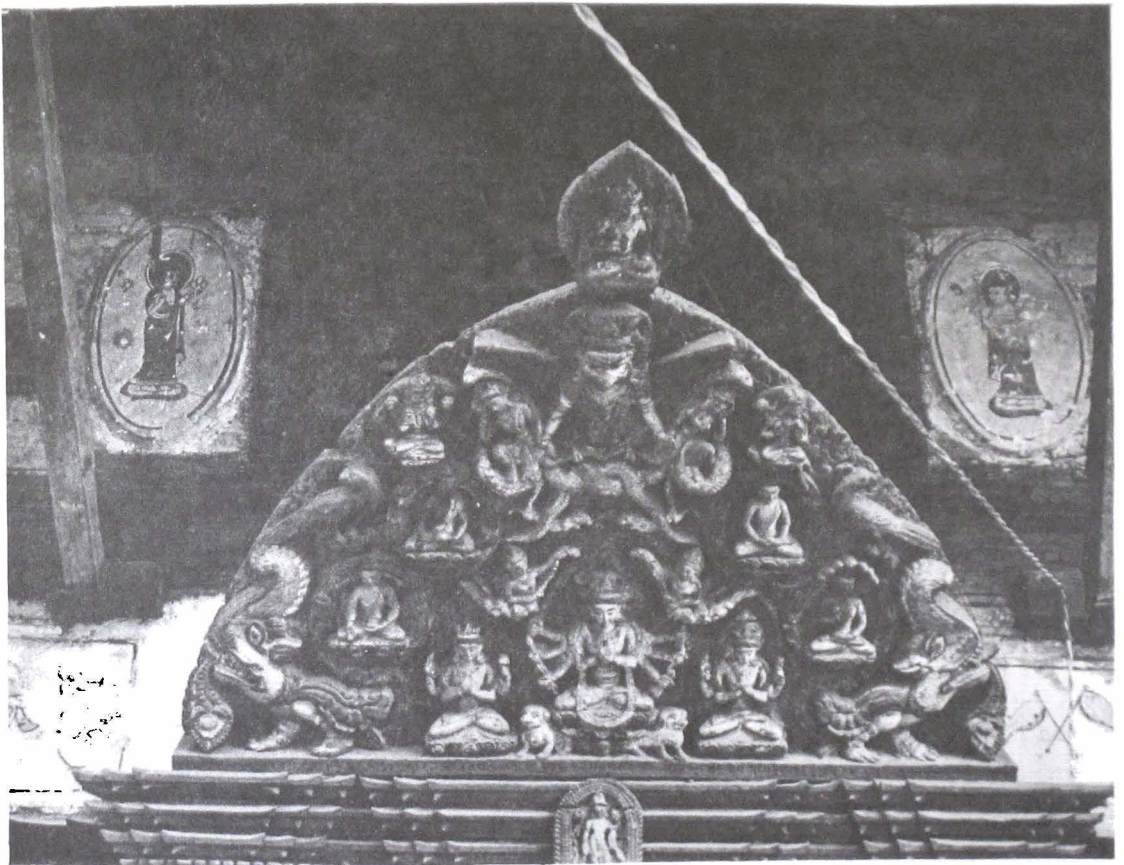
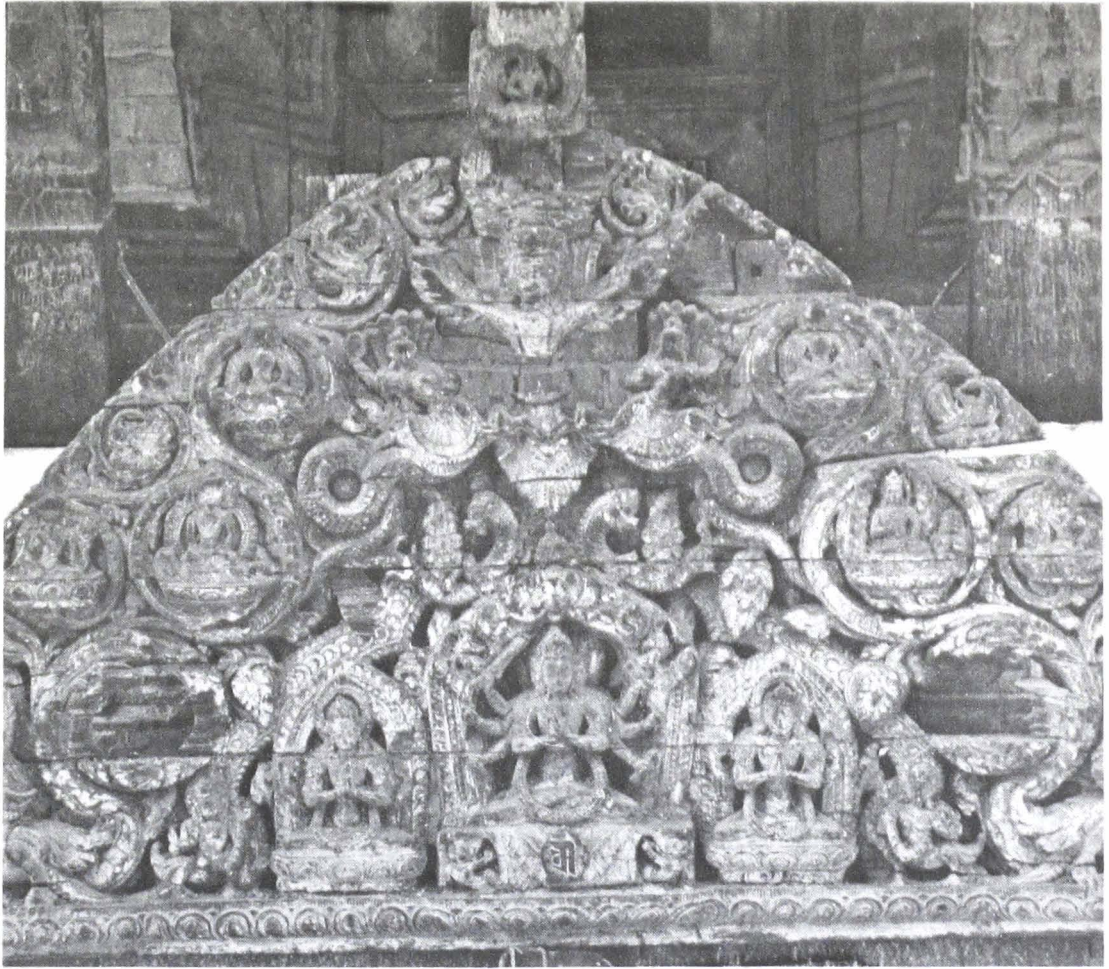


Fig. 42 Tympanon with a representation of Mañjuśrī Dharmadhātuvāgīśvara, Tham-bahi, Kathmandu

71. M-Th. de MALLMANN, *Étude Iconographique sur Mañjuśrī*, Paris 1964, p. 61.



**Fig. 43** *Tympanon at Bimche-bāhā, Patan*

This iconographical form of Mañjuśrī can frequently be found on tympanons of Nepalese monasteries. In the Thām-bāhī (Sanskrit : Vikramaśīlamahāvihāra) we see Mañjuśrī Dharmadhātuvāgīśvara (fig. 42) accompanied by Avalokiteśvara Śaḍakṣarī and Prajñāpāramitā, forming the triad Buddha (Mañjuśrī), Dharma (Prajñāpāramitā) and Saṅgha (Avalokiteśvara). The central Mañjuśrī is furthermore surrounded by the four Buddhas in 'human' form recognizable by their colours and gestures (*mudrās*). On the outer rim we see two more attendant deities, and on top is the image of Vajrasattva as Ādibuddha. He is represented in 'human' form holding the *vajra*, which is painted blue, in his right hand before his breast, and the bell (*ghaṇṭā*), painted yellow, in his left hand on his hip.

The same pattern is found on the tympanon of the Bhiṃche-baha (Sanskrit: Mayūravarnamahāvihāra) in Patan, where even the syllable *aḥ*, which is the particular sound (*bīja*) of Mañjuśrī Dharmadhātuvāgīśvara, has been painted on the cloth hanging down from his throne. Here we also see Vajrasattva sitting on top of the *toraṇa* (fig. 43).

A representation of Vajrasattva in 'non-human' form, likewise on top of a *torāṇa*, with Mañjuśrī Dharmadhātuvāgīśvara as the central deity, can be found in the Haka-bāhā (Sanskrit: Ratnākaramahāvihāra) in Patan. He has four heads and eight arms. The first pair of arms is held in the position which is characteristic for Vajrasattva, and carry *vajra* and bell (*ghaṇṭā*). The raised sword, which is the distinctive symbol of Mañjuśrī, is in his upper right hand. The other attributes are difficult to recognize because of the damaged condition of the *torāṇa*.

This 'non-human' form of Vajrasattva, which is not known from elsewhere, seems to have been influenced by the iconographical form of the central Mañjuśrī Dharmadhātuvāgīśvara, from whom he has taken over the four heads and the eight arms and the raised sword in his upper right hand. In the same way the iconography of the four Buddhas of the directions, when they are represented with four heads and eight arms, has been assimilated to that of the central figure of Mañjuśrī, as we have seen. Better than calling this "a kind of unification between the transcendent Buddhas and certain great Bodhisattvas", it is to bear in mind that Mañjuśrī Dharmadhātuvāgīśvara has not the function of a Bodhisattva in this iconographical context, but represents the central Buddha Vairocana and is called a Buddha himself. And as such he extends himself into the four directions as the four Buddhas, who can assume the same 'non-human' forms as the central Buddha, and into the uppermost direction as the Ādibuddha Vajrasattva, who too takes the appearance of the central 'Buddha'. In this way these iconographical assimilations express the idea that there is fundamentally one Buddha. Vajrasattva is, in this context, an aspect of the 'Buddha' Mañjuśrī Dharmadhātuvāgīśvara, and he takes the same iconographical form, with the only difference that the Vajrasattva aspect has a *vajra* in his first right hand, and a bell (*ghaṇṭā*) in his first left hand, whereas Mañjuśrī forms the *dharmacakramudrā* with his two main hands. On another *torāṇa* in the same Haka-bāhā we found that Vajrasattva in this form and Mañjuśrī had changed positions, the former appearing in the centre, and the latter on top. The two forms apparently became interchangeable. It is to be noticed that this Vajrasattva is accompanied by another form of Mañjuśrī called Mañjuvajra<sup>72</sup>. The interchangeability of Vajrasattva and Mañjuśrī Dharmadhātuvāgīśvara might be the reason why we find Vajrasattva as the central deity on the *torāṇa* of the Chuṣya-bāhā, and not the expected Mañjuśrī Dharmadhātuvāgīśvara. It remains still enigmatic why the Vajrasattva of the Chuṣya-bāhā has not the iconographical aspects of Mañjuśrī Dharmadhātuvāgīśvara like the ones mentioned above, but is iconographically related to Akṣobhya. The possibility has to be considered that this *torāṇa* has replaced an older one, which had the correct iconography.

72. The deity has three heads and six arms. The attributes and gestures are in *pradakṣiṇā* : *varadamudrā*, arrow, sword, blue lotus, bow and book. He sits in the lotus posture upon a lotus. This iconography corresponds to the description of Mañjuvajra in the *Sādhanamālā* (no. 76) and the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* (20th chapter).

On the other hand it is important to notice that Vajrasattva is frequently invoked at the very beginning of several Dhāraṇīsaṃgrahas. The Vajrasattva figure of the present *torāṇa* might have been chosen because of the many Dhāraṇīs depicted on the struts.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

By studying the complete iconography of one sacred building, in this case of a Newar monastery in Kathmandu, it is possible to obtain a better understanding of the meaning of the series of images represented in the wood-carvings of the struts and the tympanons. The iconography of the Chuṣya-bāhā seems to have been determined by some Dhāraṇīsaṃgraha, at the beginning of which Vajrasattva is invoked. He is depicted on the main *torāṇa* over the entrance to the shrine. His consort is Prajñāpāramitā, who is represented on the outer *torāṇa* over the entrance to the monastery itself. Then follow the Dhāraṇīs of the four Buddhas, who are to be seen on the struts on both sides of the entrance to the shrine; after these we find the Pañcarakṣā and the Saptavāra, who are Dhāraṇī-goddesses *par excellence*, and on the struts on both sides of the outer entrance are the ten Krodhas flanked by Gaṇeśa and Mahākāla, whose formulas also appear in the Dhāraṇīsaṃgrahas. At last the Four Great Kings and the twenty-seven Nakṣatras have been represented on the lowermost parts of the struts, in the same role of protective deities.

Pronouncing their names, which have in most cases been inscribed under the visual representations of these deities, and presenting offerings is a means of protection against all kind of disasters like loss of health, damage caused by earthquakes, storms, drought, etc. Going about the sides of the residences around the courtyard, and worshipping the deities depicted on the struts supporting the roofs, must have had the same value as reading a Dhāraṇīsaṃgraha, viz. a kind of insurance against the vicissitudes of life.

We have also seen that the iconographical forms of the deities represented have been taken from works like the Sāadhanamālā and the Niṣpannayogāvalī, sometimes in simplified versions. The images, however, have not been arranged in the form of a *maṇḍala*, in contrast to the system used in the Niṣpannayogāvalī. The Newar Buddhists are no tantric adepts who wanted to become one with the supreme deity. The deities on the wood-carvings are there for protection and in order to assure a reasonable measure of safety to the people living in this monastery.