

Shamanism and Tantra in the Himalayas



Claudia Müller-Ebeling • Christian Räscher • Surendra Bahadur Shahi

Thames & Hudson



SHAMANISM AND TANTRA IN THE HIMALAYAS

Claudia Müller-Ebeling

Christian Räscher

Surendra Bahadur Shahi

in collaboration with:

Mohan Rai

Shamanistic Studies & Research Centre, Kathmandu

and the Shamans:

Indra Doj Gurung

Maile Lama

Parvati Rai

Myingmar Sherpa

Danashing Tamang



Thames & Hudson

Translated from the German *Schamanismus und Tantra in Nepal* by Annabel Lee

Any copy of this book issued by the publisher as a paperback is sold subject to the condition that it shall not by way of trade or otherwise be lent, resold, hired out or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including these words being imposed on a subsequent purchaser.

First published in the United Kingdom in 2002 by Thames & Hudson Ltd, 181A High Holborn, London WC1V 7QX

© 2000 AT Verlag, Aarau, Schweiz

English translation © 2002 Inner Traditions International Photographs © 2000 Claudia Müller-Ebeling and Christian Rätsch, when not otherwise indicated.

Graphics and photomontages © 2002 Janine Warmbier, Hamburg; pages ii, 31, 60, 61.

All thangkas reproduced in this book belong to private collections © Christian Rätsch and Claudia Müller-Ebeling, Olaf Rippe, Shahi Workshops.

Thangka Photography

(The thangka numbers refer to the thangka index on pages 261–74.). Thangkas 1–9, 11–21, 23–30, 40 by Heiko Klisch, Hamburg. Thangkas 10, 22, 37, 43–46, 48–51 by the studios of Peter Schulte & Wolfgang Neeb. All remaining thangkas and all thangka detail photographs by Christian Rätsch and Claudia Müller-Ebeling.

All Rights Reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording or any other information storage and retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publisher.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 0-500-51108-X

Printed in China

Abbreviations

Bh.	Bhutanese
Ch.	Chinese
Gur.	Gurung
Hind.	Hindu
Kir.	Kirati
Nep.	Nepali
New.	Newari
Tam.	Tamang
Sh.	Sherpa
Skt.	Sanskrit
Tib.	Tibetan

CME	Claudia Müller-Ebeling, art historian and ethnologist
CR	Christian Rätsch, ethnopharmacologist
DT	Danashing Tamang, Tamang shaman
GS	Gautam Ratna Shakya, antique dealer
IG	Indra Doj Gurung, Gurung shaman
MG	Muktinath Ghimire, Brahman
ML	Maile Lama, Tamang shaman
MR	Mohan Rai, Kirati shaman and shamanism mediator
MS	Myingmar Sherpa, Sherpa shaman
PR	Parvati Rai, Kirati shaman
SBS	Surendra Bahadur Shahi, Newari thangka artist

About the Writing Style

Many terms in this work come from Sanskrit, Nepali, Kirati, and some of the other Himalayan languages that are of cultural significance to the shamanism of Nepal. For most of them—above all for primarily nonwritten languages, such as Kirati—there are no standard rules of transcription. To name just two examples, there are the differences between capitals and small letters and between V and B, which are interchangeable depending on the sound. There are also a variety of different transcriptions for Sanskrit. We chose to transcribe all Sanskrit words without diacritical signs. We have proceeded in the same way with the Tibetan words. The terms from the other languages of Nepal have been translated phonetically in the manner in which they were dictated to us by our informants. In this way, non-linguists will be also able to recognize the linguistic relationships.

Illustration on page ii:

This illustration depicts the shamanic universe of Nepal.

The *phurba* represents the shamans, the world axis, and tripartite space—in other words, the masculine principle. The surrounding circle (the outermost rim of the Kalachakra mandala) embodies the feminine energy, *shakti*, and the feminine concept of the cycle of time. According to Parvati

Rai, time is feminine and women are in the position to rule over time since they watch over their menstrual cycles, and over the length of their pregnancy, and they also know who planted the seeds of love. Women

fertilize nature. Men, on the other hand, govern space through their spiritual fertilization of culture.

(Design: Christian Rätsch; graphic rendering: Janine Warmbier.)

CONTENTS

PREFACE	VII	SHAKTI, THE SHAMANIC ENERGY	118
About the Procedure: Our Way	viii	THE ORIGINS OF DISEASES	124
PRAYER TO GANESHA, GUARDIAN OF THE THRESHOLD	1	Natural and Spiritual Diseases	128
THE KATHMANDU VALLEY—A FERTILE MELTING POT	4	OF GODS, BOKSHIS, AND DEMONS	131
Wondrous Nature	6	TECHNOLOGY: THE MATTER OF THE SHAMAN	136
PHURBA: THE ESSENCE OF SHAMANISM	10	<i>Dhup</i> : Incense for the Altar of Consciousness	136
VAJRA: THE ESSENCE OF TANTRA	16	Alcohol and <i>Amrita</i>	146
The “Thunderbolt Plant of Intoxication”	17	TRAVELING HERBS AND TRAVELING MUSHROOMS:	
Henbane as an Incense and Smoking Herb	18	SHIVA’S GARDEN	151
Henbane as a Beer Additive	18	The Most Important Teaching Plants	156
THE WAY OF THE SHAMANS	19	Mushrooms, Phalluses, and the Food of the Gods	168
Mundum—the Shamanism of the Kirati	20	Soma and the Magic Mushroom in the Himalayas	174
The Call to Become a Shaman	25	MANTRA: IN THE BEGINNING IS THE WORD	180
THE WAY OF THE GUBAJUS AND TANTRIKAS	29	YANTRA, TANTRA, MUDRA	182
THE ORIGINS OF SHAMANISM AND RELIGION	31	Number Symbolism	190
Shamanism, Hinduism, and Buddhism in Nepal	33	RITUAL INSTRUMENTS: THE TOOLS OF THE TRADE	193
SHAMANIC VISION, TRAVELING, AND FLYING	38	Divination and Oracle	229
SHAMANIC HEALING	42	SHAMANISM AND MEDITATION	231
Phytotherapy	49	SACRED NATURE, ALSO A MANDALA	233
Amulets and Talismans	51	Sacred Plants	233
TANTRIC HEALING	53	Sacred Animals	233
THE THREE WORLDS AND FOUR DIRECTIONS	57	Sacred Stones	241
The Eight Legs of the Spiritual Horse	59	Sacred Metals	242
Life in the Mandala	67	KALINCHOK: JOURNEY INTO THE HEART CHAKRA	
The South: Seat of the Shaman	67	OF SHAMANISM	245
The North: Garuda, the Ally	68	Weather-making and Weather-makers	253
The East: Shiva, Father of the Shamans	70	The Blood Sacrifice	254
The West: the Great Goddess	70	THE FUTURE OF SHAMANISM	256
THANGKAS, IMAGES FROM OTHER REALITIES	73	INDEX OF THE THANGKAS	261
The Thangka Art of Nepal	77	GLOSSARY	275
MAHAKALA—MAHAKALI	86	BIBLIOGRAPHY	278
MAÑJUSHRI AND THE VALLEY OF KATHMANDU	95	DISCOGRAPHY	293
AVALOKITESHVARA, THOUSAND-ARMED GOD OF FERTILITY	96	ABOUT THE AUTHORS	294
THE CYCLE OF TIME	102	ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	297
HANUMAN, YETI, AND BAN JHANKRI	105	INDEX	299
DRAGONS AND NAGAS	107		
THE CHAKRA TEACHINGS	115		

“One must love mankind in order to delve into the unique being of each individual; no one may seem too insignificant, no one too ugly—only then will one be able to understand them.”
GEORG BÜCHNER, *LENZ*



Shamans view the *phurba*, their most important ritual object, as Vajrakila, god of the “thunderbolt.” (No. 51)

PREFACE

We are aware of the fact that tantra and shamanism are merely two aspects of a far more multifaceted and complex Nepalese culture, and that we are only able to comprehend and portray these aspects from a very particular perspective. We do not wish to present an encyclopedia, but rather aspects of the technologies of consciousness that are new or have been previously overlooked, and that are all too often misunderstood. In the same fashion, *thangkas* have until now always been viewed from the tibetological Buddhist perspective. Their shamanic and prereligious dimensions have been fully ignored.

Shamanism has not just been scientifically disparaged, it also has been politically oppressed, suppressed, and forbidden by hierarchical systems throughout the world and in every known period. To this day, the sacred plants of shamans around the world are forbidden by international treaties and the drug laws that exist in virtually every country. In other words, due to the structure of the powers that be, shamanism is still illegal! The people who outlaw hemp do not just criminalize a part of human nature; they also negate a sacred part of nature to which they themselves belong.

Many people have enormous reservations about shamanism. They are afraid of coming into contact with the negative forces that the *jhankris* do not deny, ignore, or play down but instead honor as a vital component of the universe. Every cure signifies death as well: a doctor kills germs, viruses, and bacteria. A *jhankri* removes the source of disease from the body of the patient by “sending” it, for example, into a chicken that is subsequently killed. Many people have problems with this. They wear leather products and eat meat, but they don’t want to come to terms with the necessary prerequisites of such activities.

On the other hand, many people are fascinated with shamanism because in it they encounter archaic ideas and rituals that are still alive. Shamanism has an allure. By coming up with exhibition titles that contain the word “shaman,” the otherwise only poorly attended ethnological museums can fill up the till at their admission counter. Shamanism is also alluring to the media. In trendy and political magazines, in newspaper articles, and on television adventure shows, more or less sensationalized reports can be read and seen about “shamanic miracle-workers,” “faith healers,” or the other terms by which the heirs of the oldest culture of humanity are always defined.

These articles reveal the following basic pattern: sensational aspects are inflated into headlines; what is not understandable is made to look ridiculous, is doubted, or the panacea is offered that “it simply just has to be believed.” Things that for good reason ought to remain secret are dragged into the light of the public eye, in which the long-term research plans of the brave researcher are mentioned.¹ Finally, the mission of the journalists and scientists is emphasized: to protect dying cultures and enlighten the public. Then—after they have brought everything into question—they arrive at the conclusion that such phenomena still exist and that many people on whom doctors had given up were healed by a shaman. Such publications, which show little knowledge of facts and little sense of responsibility, only marginally succeed in fulfilling their “mission of enlightenment.”

Many journalists—apart from the laudable exceptions, of course—write about things that they don’t really understand and that they don’t believe in (in this case, *don’t believe in* is another expression for “don’t understand”). They are skeptical and critical to the degree of hair-splitting. Their professional credo is at fault for this. In contrast to people in other professions who remain silent when they don’t know something, journalists expound upon it.

When one is truly and authentically occupied with the consciousness-technology of shamanism, four² basic truths are immediately comprehended: one must believe the unbelievable, imagine the unimaginable, think the unthinkable, and expect the unexpected. Only then can one slowly begin to *understand*.

It is similar with regard to “tantra.” Only a small number of enlightened books are available on this subject (see “A Few Remarks about the Literature” page 278). Like shamanism, “tantra” has become a fashionable word, and similarly a new cultural flourishing has developed out of the West’s reception of this branch of Indian philosophy and religion (which had an influence on the Vajrayana Buddhism of Tibet and Nepal). In the meantime, “tantra” has stimulated Europe with a bustling cottage industry of course centers, weekend workshops, seminars, and continuing

“I’ve got no belief
I’ve only got my grief
oh, won’t this world
give me some relief”

SUBWAY TO SALLY,
MARRIAGE (1999, BMG)

¹ For example, Surendra Phuyal’s article “Faith Healers and Dhams, Jhankris” in *Wave*, issue 6, 1999, a trendy Nepalese magazine. The author refers to the publications of G. Maskarinec (1995, 1998), who allegedly snatched away the secret mantras via bribery.

² Four is a sacred number in shamanism, because it symbolizes the spatial coordinate cross of the four directions of the heavens.

education programs. These more or less erotically tinged excursions into a complex realm of consciousness have little to do with the original magical techniques, holistic philosophy, or the religion itself. Meanwhile, this neo-tantra, which is understood in a purely physical sense, even enters into a bizarre relationship with the model handed down in Asia. When *Dao*, a magazine from Hamburg, Germany, that was oriented toward the Far East, traced the Indian and Tibetan roots of tantra a few years ago, the editor received many letters full of indignant comments about how the article had nothing to do with “true tantra.” (In other words, the remake is questioning the original.)

When a person hears the word *tantra*, images come to mind of group sex, Kama Sutra positions, and a strained sense of shame—but not of the “fabric” (the meaning of the term in Sanskrit) of the universe, which includes eroticism, sensuality, femininity, and the power of destruction, rather than excludes them, as nearly all other religious orientations do. Against this background, tantra presents itself in the context of our research essentially as a magical technique that exerts an influence on the world of polarities.

This is not an ethnography about current conditions, nor is it a history of religion, and it is definitely not a tibetological study. The European scientific attempt to systematize, hypothesize, and ultimately theorize about everything has proven itself to be a relic of cultural history that has no value and no place in the postmodern age of the globalization of shamanism.³

We would like to emphasize at this point that neither of us is a shaman nor do either of us wish to be one. We are neither healers nor doctors. We don't drive out evil spirits and we don't decode channeled languages. We view our responsibility to be much more concerned with conveying authentic knowledge about shamanism as accurately as possible.

There is nothing nearly so beautiful as transforming one's own ignorance into wisdom via experience. It is a process that continues through, and enriches, one's entire life. We bow down before those people who are as high as the heavens and as deep as the ocean. *Dhanyabath Guruama, dhanyabath Guruji!*

ABOUT THE PROCEDURE: OUR WAY

Shamanism is a combination of natural science, psychotherapy, and theatrical comedy. We would like to

attempt to do justice to these scientific, practical, and entertaining aspects. For this reason, divergent approaches are liberally unified in this book. It contains experiential reports, original soundtracks, theoretical analyses, tables, recipes, and descriptions of pictures. Everyday language will be found alongside theoretical discussions. Although “sacred somberness” is often useful, frequently more can be achieved with a hearty laugh.

The portion on tantra might be considered thematically too short. However, our research has revealed that many goals of the tantrikas were already realized much earlier historically—and much more comprehensibly—by the shamans. On the basis of this historical succession—as well as on account of the fact that tantrikas and gubajus trained in tantrism only give out information very sparingly—information on tantrism in Nepal will be found in passages throughout the book.

The sciences maintain an illusion of objectivity. This arises from the need to comprehend bits of information and data in as universally valid a way as possible, and it arises from the fear that one could be seduced by a private conviction that, in the end, possesses no comparable empirical value.⁴ When, as a scientist, one deals with humans, it quickly becomes apparent that this paradigm of objectivity is of limited value. If the desire is to learn something about another way of thinking, about a foreign culture that can only gradually be “conquered” with knowledge and in which one is thrown back to the level of a child who has no command of language and has learned nothing about how to “behave,” then it is best that one takes the “path of the heart,” a path that seems to be currently outmoded.

Let us imagine for a moment that a person from a foreign culture comes into our American everyday life. Luckily we can all agree upon the English language and understand one another. Now let's say that this person is studying religious convictions or intimate customs. They have been around the world on a mission to collect data from the most divergent cultures for the past twenty years. He or she knows a lot, has learned a good many languages, and is well acquainted with the common rules of manners. Instinctively, however, we notice that at the bottom of their heart, this person's convictions are vastly different from ours. He or she is completely *objective* and uninvolved with respect to us. We give out informa-

³ When science is misused to create nuclear power plants and cruise missiles—which are perhaps not quite as high-tech as the politicians would have us believe—then it is high time to part company with these outmoded thought processes.

⁴ In a certain way this appears to be identical with the need for the “one true God” of the monotheistic religions. The conclusion suggests itself that science began as the inheritance of the monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

tion, but we omit what is truly “close to our hearts.” We share with them the most important basic concepts and stereotypes, but we guard against openly placing value on our personal convictions. After all, one does not wish to have to defend or justify them. Then along comes someone who “hits us square in the heart.” She or he asks questions that we can answer from “the bottom of our soul.” We feel that a spiritual relation is standing before us. We no longer have any reason to hide behind the wall what is truly dear and precious to us. This person is also a scientist. This person also collects data for a specific area of interest. In contrast to the first researcher, however, this person wants to exchange information with people about things they are really interested in. After just a single day, this person comes away with a treasure chest full of data that the outside observer can only dream about.

Our experience teaches us that human beings are not databanks that can dispense data to everyone. They are beings who are feeling, thinking, physically reacting, and capable of love, and—despite their alienation—they still react intuitively to those who take them seriously and who treat them with respect and empathy—in other words, who treat them totally subjectively. They allow these people a glance into the “bottom of their soul” and at their convictions. In this context, the scientific dogma of objectivity reveals itself to be an unsuitable instrument for research and inquiry into foreign cultures.

Because we really wanted to know about shamanism and tantra, and because we were interested in it

from “the bottom of our heart,” we were lucky (and so happy) to be able to bring to light many new things about shamanism and tantra in Nepal.

To everyone who helped us experience something new and as yet unpublished about these aspects and to be able to make them available to a broader public, we would like to express our deepest gratitude for revealing secrets of their ways of thought and life to us! We have learned a lot over the past eighteen years in Nepal. In the following pages, we hope to present something intelligible and accurate from all of the participating ethnic groups. We also hope that all of the encounters between Westerners and the shamans and tantrikas of Nepal that arise in the wake of this book shall be crowned by mutual respect.

As researchers, if we don’t get involved with shamanism, then we cannot understand it. It is not enough just to study the literature. That would be akin to looking at a map of Nepal and believing that we know the land as a result. In order to get an impression we must travel there, just as we must fly into the three worlds in a trance with the shaman in order to understand anything at all. Only the person who flies together with the shaman will understand anything. It is valuable to have a good travel guide, though. Thus, we offer this book as a “travel guide” to this amazing world.

CLAUDIA MÜLLER-EBELING, PH.D.
CHRISTIAN RÄTSCH, PH.D.
DURING THE MONSOON MONTHS
IN KATHMANDU, 1999

“The dragon is our most powerful ally. In very serious cases we call him to assist us. The end of his tail reaches the ground of *patal*, the underworld. With his head rising into the heavens, *akash*. Then we are as deep as the ocean and as high as the heaven.”
(PR)

“We are ambassadors bringing peace to the earth.”
(IG)

“Love life!”
PAUL RÄTSCH

THE EYE OF SHIVA

*Triunity of the space,
Inside the sacred maze.
Shiva in the cosmic dance,
The divine eye gaze.
Eye of Shiva, dance of the world!
Lightning flashes from your eye,
Destroy the illusion.
All destruction by a glance,
Set the world in trance.*



*Inside the sacred maze,
Shiva's cosmic dance
Bom bom Shiva bom Shankara
Bom bom Shiva bom Rudra
Bom bom Shiva Vama Chara
Kala Tattwa
Great eye of Shiva,
Thunderbolt Rudra, unveil Lady Maya.
Great eye of Shiva,
Dance the world into the cosmic maze of outer space.
Unveil Lady Maya.*

CHRISTOFER JOHNSON/THERION, VÖVIN
(NUCLEAR BLAST, 1998)

PRAYER TO GANESHA, GUARDIAN OF THE THRESHOLD

*"Jai Ganesha, Jai Ganesha, Jai Ganesha Deva
Mata Shrii Parvai, Pita Mahadeva*

*Jai Ganesha, Jai Ganesha, Jai Ganesha Deva
Ek danta, dua danta, char bhujā dhari
Kapal bhari raato sindoor musa ko sawari
Jai Ganesha, Jai Ganesha, Jai Ganesha Deva"*

*"We pray to you, Ganesha, Father of the Gods
Your mother is Lady Parvati, your father Mahadeva
We pray to you, Ganesha, Father of the Gods
You, the you who has two kinds of teeth and four strong
arms*

You have vermilion⁵ on your forehead

And you ride on a rat

We pray to you Ganesha, Father of the Gods."

(SUNG BY MAILE LAMA AND MOHAN RAI;
TRANSCRIBED BY SURAJ KUMA RAI)

It is obligatory for all Nepalese shamans—whether engaging in prayer, ritual, or ceremony—to first invoke the elephant-headed god, Ganesha,⁶ for he was the first shaman in the history of the world. He was the first being to experience death, but because of his rebirth, he was also able to master death and to overcome it. A person who wishes to understand something about shamanism must first of all experience their own death. This is an arduous task! But as Indra Gurung, a gurung shaman from Nepal, says, without the experience of death there is no shamanism. The person who has not already died once as a human being cannot understand anything about the nature of shamanism.

Shiva and Parvati, the Lord of the Universe and the Daughter of the Himalayas, conceived the first being to be created through sex and eroticism. Union in desire and love is the true origin of everything, and of every creature and every human. Without our parents, none of us would be here. "Our parents have invited us to be here" (SBS).

The following Nepalese myth explains why

⁵The Nepali word *sindoor* is related to *Zinnober*, the German word for vermilion. Vermillion red is a sacred color that was also at one time used in Europe. *Zaubern*, the German word meaning "to perform magic," has its origins in *Zinnober*. In Nepal and India, the red pigment (which is usually synthetically prepared) is smeared on sacred objects, and every believer receives a red *tika*.

⁶The Sherpas and other Tibetan peoples call Ganesha *bombe lamoh*, the "Lord of the Pitcher" so to speak, and Thangka painters identify him with the god Jambala.

Ganesha is the first shaman of history and the guardian of the threshold.

GANESHA—THE FIRST SHAMAN

Shiva spent eternal eons on the sacred mountain of Kailash, absorbed in himself and in the creation. His endless fire lingam, reaching to infinity, had shown his precedence and power to Vishnu and Brahma, his two divine colleagues who had been made flesh. When he became aware how lonely this life in the icy heights was, he became aware of as well the incomparably beautiful Parvati, daughter of the Himalayas. Deeply stirred by her grace and dignity, he devoted his full attention to this feminine goddess; he and his divine lingam always stood available for her. Parvati happily bestowed her favors upon him. For centuries they clasped themselves in a divine embrace, engrossed in nothing other than their own mutual pleasure.

After an enraptured Shiva had spent countless sunrises and sunsets in the arms of his wife, he felt an urge to explore the worlds that are touched by the rays of the sun Surya and the moon Chandra. Seized by a joyous desire to discover the unknown and to penetrate into new things with all of his divine powers, he left Parvati and roamed through the worlds.

After centuries of wandering, his path wended its way back to the place where he had experienced the greatest bliss—the home of his divine wife, Parvati. To Shiva's great astonishment, he encountered a splendid young man standing at the familiar entrance. The man's muscles gleamed in the setting sun and the grace of his limbs resembled Shiva's own divine tools. Enraged, he went up to the interloper and demanded to know who he was. The stranger responded to the omnipotent one standing before him. "This is my home. I am the guardian of the threshold. Who are you, unknown one, who steps onto my path in such an unfriendly manner?" With this, an overpowering fury seized Shiva Mahadev. Foaming with anger, he knocked the stranger's head off and entered the home that he had long neglected. "Who was that stranger at my door?" he asked his wife, still shaking from the encounter with the unexpected rival. "That was your own son," answered Parvati in a voice that quavered forebodingly. "I have just killed him," Shiva replied in monotone. Horrified and helpless, the creative couple from the beginnings of time and space fell into each other's arms. "How could I tell that was my own son?" stammered Shiva, and Parvati



One rarely finds true vermilion red among the *tika* colors, which are usually made from chemicals.

In the sixties, when many hippies and travelers to the east made pilgrimages to Nepal, they noticed how the ganja-smoking sadhus invoked Ganesha first. Because of this they believed, mistakenly, that the elephant-headed God is the "smoking god." Even though the first adoration is owed to Ganesha, the Lord of the Psychedelic Plants is Shiva. They are under his protection and flourish through his love and attention.

PRAYER TO GANESHA,
GUARDIAN OF THE
THRESHOLD

Ganesha thangka in the Newari style with tantric red body color and shamanic ritual instruments in his hands, for instance a *phurba* with a metal blade and three peacock feathers. (No. 2)



whispered: "How could I inform you that you have a son when you stayed away so long in far off worlds?"

Bewildered by the fact that he allowed his rage to lead him to commit such a heinous act, Shiva Pashupati, the Lord of the Animals, decided to go into the wilderness. In order to engender a second life for his son, he would sacrifice the first animal that crossed his path.

The first wild animal that he came across was an elephant. Shiva Mahadev bowed down before the King of the Steppes and Forests, cut off his head, thanked the four-legged creature for his sacrifice, and carried home the mighty head of the elephant. He placed the animal head on the lifeless carcass of their mutual son, and blew a new life into him. As Ganesha,

the son of Shiva and Parvati, opened his eyes to a new existence, Shiva, the Destroyer and Creator of the Universe, addressed his divine offspring with these words: "Please forgive me for my careless deed. Since you have now been reawakened to a new life, the first thanks and the first invocation from all living beings must be paid to you. Before people can pay their homage to me, for the rest of time they shall first offer their respect to you."

Ganesha, the elephant-headed, fat-bellied God of Benevolence, Happiness, and Wealth (of the heart, not of gold), came into the worlds as the fruit of the greatest bliss. He experienced great wrath, death, and rueful loving reanimation. He owes his life to these

contrasting emotional and existential energies. This is why he became the role model for the shamans indigenous to the Hindu realm, despite the fact that their existence reached back to prereligious times. Ganesha became the first shaman to be initiated.

All jhankris call upon Ganesha first, even before they invoke Shiva and Agni. To this end they intone the prayer that introduced this chapter (see page 1).

The radish (*Raphanus sativus* L.) known as *mula* (Nep.), is the sacred plant of the Elephant God. It can be seen on masks as well as in pictorial depictions. It actually has nothing at all to do with a radish, but instead with a wild plant called *ban mula* (Nep., "wild radish"), *daling*, *belu chare*, or *pangla bung* (Kir.). It tastes similar to radish and is eagerly eaten by the shamans because its consumption strengthens the *shakti*.

This plant is a symbol of Ganesha: it is half animal, half human. The wild radish is half root, half leafy crown—thus it is a symbol that is similar to the mandrake (*Mandragora*) in European history.

Shiva appointed Ganesha to be the guardian of thresholds, crossings, portals, and gateways for all

time and in all possible worlds. Projected onto the human body, Ganesha is also Protector of the Chakras. He guards the entrance to the sexual chakra, the source of shamanic healing power. This root chakra (*muladhara chakra*) is the source of all energy (*shakti*), without which no human being can live.

This is the difference between human beings and shamans. Humans who do not practice tantra or Kundalini yoga are not able to willfully channel this energy. Shamans, however, transform it into unconditional love and universal consciousness.

The Tamang shaman Maile Lama explained it to us: "Energy (*shakti*) arises in the sexual chakra. From there it ascends into the heart chakra, where it is transformed into love. It is the shamanic healing power. If the energy climbs higher, into the forehead chakra, the love-energy is transformed into awareness. One is only complete as a human being when all of the chakras are connected to one another by the flowing energy."

The origin of the world is psychoactivity. The origin of shamanism is Shiva. The origin of the psychoactive substances is *amrita*, the Elixir of Life. Shiva is Lord of the Intoxicating Plants and the God of Psychoactivity. The origin of creativity is psychoactivity. Only a spirit that is moved can move anything.

"The *Muladhara* chakra is situated at the basis of the spine, between the anus and the genitals. . . . In the centre of the bindu is the four-faced or four-armed Lord Ganesha, who is the presiding deity. In the centre of the lotus is the dakini Shakti."

L. R. CHAWDHRI (1992, 6)



The statue of Ganesha in the Surya Binayak temple near the old imperial city of Bhaktapur. A natural rock face, the form of which suggests a trunk, is worshiped as a representation of Ganesha. By the left foot lays an offering of flowers from the psychoactive plant *Cestrum nocturnum* (Night jasmine, Solanaceae family).



The wild radish or *ban mula*, collected on Kalinchok. The radish is a root similar to the mandrake. The roots of both are seen as a symbol of the human body in cultures of the East and West. Their "head" is the leafy crown, the elephant head, or the "right belief." Ganesha, who was beheaded, then received the head of an elephant. The heathen mandrake was crowned by the Christian belief.

PRAYER TO GANESHA,
GUARDIAN OF THE
THRESHOLD

THE KATHMANDU VALLEY— A FERTILE MELTING POT

“While the immigrating groups assimilated the language and culture of the Newari more and more, the Newari took on the Hindu religion over time and organized their social structure according to its principles. The Buddhism of the Newari indeed suffered a steady decline in popularity over the course of two thousand years of political rule by the Hindus . . . however, it kept an essential share in the complex religious convictions and practices of the people.”

ULRICH WIESNER

“Hinduism is more like a tree that grows slowly than a building erected by a great architect at a particular moment in time.”

K. M. SEN

“In the end, the castes are not important. We all come out of the same door. We arrive in the world with nothing in our hands, and leave again with empty hands, too. In the end it matters only to lead a good life and not harm anyone. We all live on the same earth. Only our arrival and departure times are different.”

(GS)

In the Kathmandu Valley, the Mongolian Newari are the native people and the producers of culture at the same time. They can be classified neither as Hindus nor Buddhists, and have developed a syncretic religion and culture over time though the incorporation of various cultural streams. The Newari are sometimes described as being “Buddhistic Hindus” or “Hinduistic Buddhists” (Funke 1982, 37), but neither of these terms is really appropriate. The culture of the Newari is influenced by Stone Age elements (for example, the worship of stone idols) as well as the Vedic culture of the Aryans. In addition there are powerful influences from the ancient Tibetan shamanic Bon religion,⁷ as well as from early Hinduism and burgeoning Buddhism. Later Hinduism—characterized by the distinct position of Krishna—found practically no popularity in Nepal.

The most recent rise in the number of tribes includes sixty-one different linguistic and cultural groups.⁸ Only a few of them—Newari, Gurung, Kirati, Jarga-Magar, Tamang, Sherpa, and two Brahmans—have an opportunity to speak in this book.

The ethnic group of the Tamang emigrated at a relatively late date out of Tibet and now live throughout Nepal. To a large extent, they identify themselves as belonging to Buddhism, although their Vajrayana perspective is mixed with Bon and tantric Hinduism (Shaivism). The culture of the Sherpas quite strongly resembles that of the Tibetans. The culture of the Bhotyas is also very closely related to that of Tibetans.⁹ There is a multitude of peoples, tribes, and philosophies of life that fall under the term “Tibetan,” though. There are even Tibetan Muslims—which must come as shocking news to many Europeans.

In Nepalese society, the Newari do have a high status, but nevertheless the Nepalīs dominate politically. The Nepalīs speak the official national language, which is named after them and which is closely related to Hindi. They split up their tribes into countless castes based on the Hindu model. In the highest position are the Brahmīns (= Brahmans), followed by the Chettri (= *chhetri*, Skt.: “warrior”). Among these two castes there exists a multitude of further

⁷ The word *bon* probably originally meant “shaman.” In present-day Mongolia the shamans are still called *boö* (Hoppál 1994, 83).

⁸ This statement was orally confirmed by members of the six language groups that were primarily the subject of our investigation.

⁹ Today, the Tibetan shamanism is above all still alive in Ladakh (compare with Schenk 1994).

castes, of which hardly any natives, never mind western scientists, have a grasp (Bista 1987).

In addition, there are the Kirati, who are presently settled mostly in the eastern part of the country. The first king of Nepal was Kirati, and the Kirati built the first palaces, for example the Gokarneshvara Temple at Gokarna, which lies on the Bagmati ravine. Like most of the tribes, the Gurung live throughout the country, although their tribal area is mainly located in the west, near Pokhara. The Magar, whose shamanism also finds expression in this book, usually settle in the western part of the country as well.

No matter what all the different tribes are called, which religious convictions they adhere to, and which exceptional cultural features they have developed, they all add their special flavoring to the great melting pot that makes up Nepal and the Kathmandu Valley.

A great number of the tribes, such as the Kirati, still follow their traditional nature religions. For them, nature is their greatest teacher, and it is in nature that the shamans attend school. Others are more oriented toward Buddhism. These tribes make up about forty percent of the people. Only 3.5 percent are Muslims who immigrated to Nepal from Kashmir or India. A mere 1.5 percent of the populace hangs onto the very exotic and novel religion of Christianity. The rest of them are oriented toward Hinduism, such as the king and his predecessors, who repeatedly attempted—unsuccessfully—to make this into the state religion.

All of the different peoples and social strata tolerate the religious conceptions, customs, and habits of their neighbors. Ghettos have never formed in Nepal. Everyone lives and works side by side. We did see that the individual groups keep to themselves, though; as a rule marriages only take place between members of the same tribe or caste, and the tribes each maintain a distance relative to the beliefs of the other cultural groups. For example, a Newari would never seek out a *jhankri*; he simply is not a part of the other’s cultural structure. Instead, a Newari would go to a *gubaju*, who in return is available only for the Newari’s tribe. In the end, the castes also keep to themselves—even if individuals find the caste system in general to be superfluous.

I am sitting at the computer, gazing out at the cloud-draped Himalayas, listening to the CD Spiritual Dark Dimensions (1999) by the Norwegian black metal band

Dimmu Borgir. My gaze follows the crows, eagles, and vultures that circle and screech in front of our house. I don't know why, but memories well up in me about my encounter with the Jesuit "Father" Caspar Miller, a white-haired old man from some place like Ohio. He lived for many years in Kathmandu and was practically a fixture at the Jesuit schools between Kathmandu and Patan. He wrote a book about shamanism in Nepal, entitled *Faith Healers of the Himalayas* (Miller 1987 and 1997), that has been reprinted a number of times. Shamanism, however, has nothing to do with faith. Shamanism is experience. It is only religion that is faith, because it lacks experience. Ever since the publication of this book, the seductive and misleading term "Faith Healer" haunts the literature on the subject. Although "Cass" was a nice man, I asked him: What does a Jesuit have to do with shamanism? In response to my question I received a fantastic answer—he was given the assignment by his superiors to research shamanism with the goal that it could be more successfully penetrated and ultimately undone.

The Jesuits go out into the world to spread the "Good News." They do not do this in as superficial a manner as the Christian extremists, fundamentalists, and fanatics. They proceed more cleverly: first research, then destroy (by the way, this is also the method of the "Wycliff Bible Translators," a fundamentalist sect that camouflages itself as the "Summer Institute of Linguistics" in order to draw attention away from its missionary activities. See also footnote 279 on page 296). Since the good father has never been in a trance before, he could not have experienced anything of the shamanic world. He was not allowed to do so. His superiors had forbidden him to get involved with the shamanic reality; he was only supposed to research the surface in order to discover holes for the Catholic Jesuit mission to make use of.

When the good father explained that in principle there is no difference between shamanism and Catholicism because both of them battle "evil," I started to feel ill. I politely took leave of the Jesuit—and of the devil as well. . . . Luckily the Jesuits have had a tough time of it with the shamans of Nepal. In the meantime, they have extensively established their missionary activities. (CR)

Warning to the Christians

Priests of various Christian sects have recently been warning the world about shamanism, which they see as "stirring up trouble" in kindergarten classes, management seminars, and political parties: "All of the signs indicate that strong societal powers desire to spread shamanism into all spheres of social life and seek to systematically replace rationalism and Christianity with magic, witchcraft, and sorcery. This is

often hidden beneath a scientific guise," warned Prof. Reinhard Franzke, a representative of the Study Group for Religious Questions, in a document released in 1999 by Logos Publishers in Lage, Germany, entitled *Was ist Schamanismus: Wesen, Gefahren und Ausbreitung des Schamanismus in Schule und Gesellschaft* [What is Shamanism? The Nature, Dangers, and Spread of Shamanism in Schools and Society]. Like all monotheistic religions, Christianity tolerates "no foreign gods before it." To Franzke, the access of the individual to mysterious realms is as suspicious as fantasy, because through it individuals can become independent from the hierarchy of the church and from Christian dogma. Those who do not sit at the "bosom of Christianity" are not just different, but are sinful and evil: "Christian neighborly love could never accept a boundless tolerance of sins and evil. Everything that damages the body, spirit, and soul must either be forbidden or, at the least, openly criticized," said the sect representative. Wonderful—on the one hand we'll forbid everything that is alien to us and that opens doors to new and different worlds, while on the other hand we'll remain blind to the fact that it has been Christianity, along with other religious and political authorities, that has oppressed shamanism for centuries. Following this sort of religious and political ignorance, which generates the fundamental evil of hate, it is only in recent history that a judgment-free encounter with shamans and their world views could be made.

In this context, there are three exhibitions which should be mentioned that have approached the subject free from religious or even scientific intolerance. In 1998, Susanne Knödel from the Hamburg Museum of Ethnology worked together with a Korean shaman woman and documented in the exhibit *Shaman Women in Korea: Healing Rituals and Cell Phones* how lastingly Confucianism oppressed the practicing *mu-dangs* right up to recent times. In 1998, Alexandra Rosenbohm gracefully dedicated herself to the subject in the Amsterdam Museum of the Tropics with an exhibit titled *Wat bezielt de sjamaan: Genesing, Extase, Kunst* ["What is the goal of the Shaman? Pleasure, Ecstasy, Art"]. With the aid of a forest of steles on which black and white photos of shamans were pasted, the many victims who had been claimed by the communism of the former USSR were memorialized. In the Bremen Overseas Museum in the summer of 1999, Andreas Lüderwaldt presented the shamanism of the Mongolian Republic of Tuva in an exhibit titled *Im Banne des Schamanen* [Under the

KUMARI, THE LIVING GODDESS

On Indraajatra, a great festival in August and September honoring Indra, the king kneels down before Kumari, the virginal "Living Goddess," in order to receive a *tika*. This "divine" child, who will return to normal life again following her first menstruation, is drawn each time from the orthodox Buddhist Newari caste. When the Hindu king kneels before her, he symbolically asks the Buddhist community for legitimization of his Hindu role of leader.¹⁰



In the Imperial City of Patan, the founder Yoganarendramalla gazes at the Degutale Temple.

¹⁰ The complex cultural backdrops for this only example of a "Living Goddess" in the entire world are worked out by Allen (1996).

Spell of the Shaman]. It is only in the past decade or so that Tuva has been able to recover from the devastating consequences of communist oppression and destruction.

WONDROUS NATURE

Admittedly, a very polluted natural environment is likely to be encountered in the Kathmandu Valley. The Bagmati and the other rivers that traverse and circulate throughout the capital city carry their muddy waters into the valley along with plastic bottles and other non-biodegradable garbage of affluence. During many months—above all in the dry season—the air is so thick you could cut it with a knife; it is impregnated by the noxious fumes of old buses and the abysmal *tuktuks* from India that leave clouds of pestilence in their wake. Garbage piles up along the roadsides and a peculiarly unpleasant, sickly sweet stench permeates the air. Of all places, the picturesque ravine at Chobar becomes darkened by clouds that rise from the smokestacks of a cement factory. However, environmental awareness has also grown here over the years. Many river harbors have been cleaned up and mounds of garbage have been turned into parks. Electric buses are replacing outdated three-shift motors. On television, a mythically tinged public service message makes clear to people the gods' displeasure over the polluting of the water, the air, and the earth. Thanks to an international effort, the extremely romantic medieval city of Bhaktapur was repaved and equipped with an apparently functioning sewage system. The tourists pay an entry fee—those who re-

The hill of Svayambunath towers over Kathmandu with all-seeing eyes that are widely visible from afar—it is a symbol of tolerance and of peace: In this stupa, the Buddhists honor the flame of the Buddha's enlightenment. The Hindus honor the lingam, the creative energy of Shiva. The tantrikas see their most important ritual object in the giant *vajra*, and finally, the jhankris ask Hariti Mata for healing powers there.

member stinky Bhaktapur from the old days do so gladly—and, for once, they profit, for the money is well invested.

If you leave the three imperial cities behind and travel out of the valley, you will reach an increasingly undamaged world. The surrounding rice fields sparkle a bewitching, twinkling green. If you abandon the few automobile roads in favor of the endless “walking districts” of the rugged mountain regions, you will discover a truly wondrous realm of nature.¹¹ You will wander through forests of rhododendron where countless moss, ferns, and epiphytes proliferate on the branches and stems of the plants. Here is where the original plants grow from which stem countless colorful European azalea and rhododendron hybrids. The rhododendron is the national plant of Nepal. You walk along the edges of the rice terraces and millet fields, which are fed a supply of fresh water from carefully tended canals. Countless frogs croak here at night. In the morning, the white herons teeter through the crops on their tall legs. Herons are often depicted on thangkas as symbols of freedom and happiness.

Overhead soar the eagles and the vultures that find many animal carcasses in the remote loneliness and that cautiously withdraw at the light of day.

¹¹ The activities of tourists are also to thank on behalf of the mountains for increasing reforestation and ecological improvement. For instance, the German Ludmilla Tütting facilitated a change of awareness in natives and tourists over time in favor of preservation of this natural treasure with her publication. In the meantime, there are menus which offer tea or certain sorts of rice or fruit that come from ecologically principled cultivation.





You would not be surprised to encounter saurians and elves in many of the forests that are transformed into a misty realm by precipitation. The assets of the country lie not just in the rich culture, but in the natural environment as well—and this draws millions of tourists yearly who indulge their enthusiasm for nature or their athletic and alpine ambitions.

Humans, and above all shamans, are bound with nature on their most inner plane. Nature provides



them with the bamboo, woods, slate, daphne, and earth with which they build their houses and make the few daily utensils they require. Paper-making with daphne, which produces a material able to withstand even the most powerful monsoons, has been developed into a profitable business that secures a livelihood for many mountain people. Nature provides edible roots, fruits, and vegetables. The members of the approximately thirty-six tribes living in Nepal collect many healing and travelling herbs from nature that help them to maintain their health and that offer a glimpse into other realms. Those who speak with the country people will be baffled by the detailed plant knowledge of the native inhabitants. Nearly everyone knows countless plants by name and exactly how to use them.

A glance into the enchanting wooded and fairy-tale world of the mountain forests of Nepal.

“Shamanism is the original nature of the human being. Humans have no strength from which the jhankris draw their wisdom. The shamans draw their power from nature, from the forests, the water, and the earth.”

(MR)

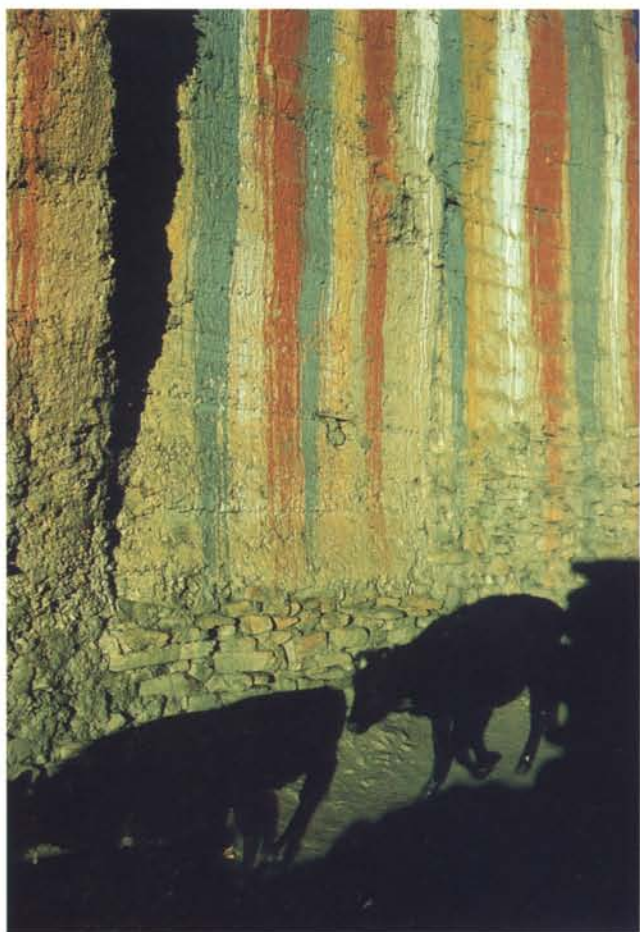
Below and following pages:
Atmospheric landscapes at
Kalinchok, West Nepal.







Ipomoea flower.



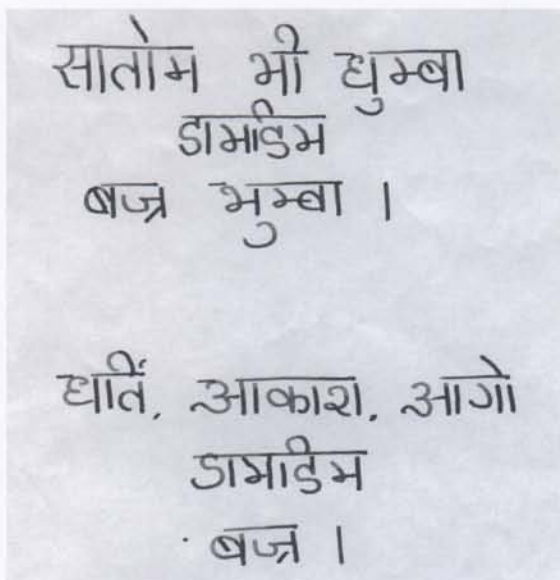
Herding cattle at Muktinath, East Nepal.

PHURBA: THE ESSENCE OF SHAMANISM

PRAYER TO THE PHURBA
 "Satom bhi dhumba
 Damdim bajradumbha"

"Earth, Sky, and
 Flames of Fire
 Indra's Thunder Ax"

(Facsimile of Devanagari Text,
 Gurung inscription IG)



The *phurba* is the center of the shamanic universe. In the sacred Kathmandu Valley¹²—the “Valley of the Gods,” and the bordering regions—the Magical Dagger is still in use today by shamans, magicians, tantrikas, and lamas of different ethnic backgrounds. Its use by the Tamang, Gurung, and Newari Tibeto-Burmese tribes is particularly intensive. It is also employed by the Tibetans native to Nepal (the Bhotyas), the Sherpas, and the Tibetans living in exile.

The anthropomorphized Magical Dagger of the divine *phurba*—a form of Bhairab/ Mahakala (= Shiva)—sticks the point of its blades into a demon shaped like a human. (Detail of a thangka, Shahi Workshops)



Opposite: The god of the Magical Dagger corresponds to the shamanic cosmology with three faces (= three worlds) and four arms (= the four points of the compass).

PHURBA: THE
 ESSENCE OF SHAMANISM

For the Nepalese shamans, the *phurba* corresponds to the world tree¹³ and to the world axis. It is the central ritual tool and all shamanic actions are inconceivable without it. The shamans therefore have an amused reaction when asked if they own a *phurba*. This symbol of the world axis is found on the altar of every shaman. It is stuck vertically, point down, into a basket filled with rice that sits in front of the shaman. Every jhankri visualizes the *phurba*. Without it, he cannot heal, nor is he able to make predictions (*jokhana*). “Without the *phurba* inside himself, the shaman has no consciousness,” is Mohan Rai’s curt and radical opinion. The shaman himself is the *phurba*; he assumes its form in order to fly into other worlds and realities.

An uninvolved observer can easily overlook the *phurba*’s central role because it is only rarely included in the ritual. Without being asked about it, no jhankri would provide information on the *phurba* for the simple reason that this ritual tool is of such self-evident importance it wouldn’t even occur to them to specifically point it out.¹⁴ (If a person is describing someone they are looking for, they don’t begin their description with: “He has a nose in the middle of his face.”)

Ultimately, everything that approximates a vertical form is a *phurba*. For example, upon further inquiry the shamans with whom we spoke declared that a rolled up banana leaf is a *phurba*, as is the crooked khukuri knife, the bamboo staff with seven chakras that plays a significant role on the Kirati altar (see page 194), the handle of the shaman’s drum, a crystal, the bouquet of peacock feathers and *amlisau* grass (Kir., *taya*) that is stuck into the *bumba*, the sacred altar vase—and even the vase itself.

All *phurbas* trace back to Shiva’s lingam—the generative organ of the Hindu god whom all shamans view as the primordial energy of the universe—regardless of whether they represent a culture influenced by Buddhism or Hinduism. The yoni/lingam

¹² It is “sacred” due to its fertility and its wealth of temples and cultic sites.

¹³ The tree plays no significant role as a “world tree” for most shamans, either in the imagination or in initiatory or ritual events. For them, the *phurba* is the important axis that binds the three worlds together. The Kham Magar of western Nepal are an exception (Oppitz 1981). The notion that the inverted *trishul* of Shiva is a symbol of the world tree (Storl 1988, 77) was met with ignorance when we inquired about it.

¹⁴ The term *phurba* does not even appear in the index of most books on Nepalese shamanism.





In this *phurba* made from iron, which is only 8 cm long, the three-part division into *akash*, *dharti*, and *patal* can be recognized like a fractal on every level.

Under the umbrella of Shiva, which is also the umbrella of a mushroom, there are three rows that make up a total of nine animal and human heads. In the uppermost row we see Garuda, *barahima* (one of the four Vajrayoginis), and *pandawa*, the sacred hunting dog that leads the hunters to their prey. In the middle *phewro* (Kir.), the wolf, *bandel* (Nep., wild pig), and *kirateshoa*—the king. On the bottom are Shiva, Brahma, and Vishnu.

These nine faces are reminiscent of the fractal headdress of Yamantaka (Nep.), the Lord of Death.



symbolism is also apparent in connection to the environment of the object—for example, the opening of the *bumba* that the *taya* sticks into, or the sheath of the khukuri knife. Humans are able to comprehend the endless variety of creation more easily with symbols that come from their own life and are themselves the fruits of a universal generative act which can be traced back to Shiva and Parvati at the beginning of time.

Handmade *phurbas* come in all materials and sizes. Although they may differ in appearance, they have certain unifying features. Each *phurba* is divided into three parts on both the vertical and the horizontal plane. This three-part division has tremendous symbolic complexity. It relates vertically, for example, to the body of man, to the central aspects of the Hindu and Buddhist beliefs, or to mythical worlds:

head/throat	Dharma	upper world (<i>akash</i>)
trunk	Karma	middle world (<i>dharti</i>)
lower body/legs	Shakti	underworld (<i>patal</i>)

On the horizontal plane, each *phurba* is divided into three surfaces on the lowest region at the point, and some are likewise divided in the upper half, but none are divided into three in the middle section. Symbolically, this three-part division coincides with divine and spiritual aspects, as well as with those that are spatial and geographical:

left	middle	right
West	center	East
left eye	third eye	right eye
Shakti	<i>bindu</i>	Shiva
Vishnu	Shiva	Brahma

Both lists could be expanded upon as desired. Most significantly, the horizontally arranged symbolic aspects show that the correspondences have a relative validity, rather than an absolute one. Shiva's position is not necessarily on the right side—it is on the

right in relation to Shakti and *bindu*; but in the context of a horizontal sequence, when he is referred to in the same breath as Vishnu and Brahma, the central god has a middle position.

In addition to the aspects mentioned above, the three blades that form the point symbolize the present, the past, and the future. All times flow together into the point at the moment when the causes of disease and other destructive forces are captive.

During a healing operation the *jhankri* strokes the patient on three sides. He begins at the patient's head, and always holds the *phurba* with the point facing down. When the tip reaches the floor he rams the evil forces, which his ritual "dagger" has absorbed like a magnet, into the ground with the point. Often the *makara* and sometimes Garuda are wrapped around the lowest zone of a *phurba*. On the three blades there are two opposing *nagas*, serpent deities, as well as the intertwined bodies of Nagaraja and Nagarani—the divine couple who rule the underwater world. It must be emphasized that Garuda and the *nagas* do not belong to enemy worlds. *Nagas* are only subdued by Garuda—the animal ridden by Vishnu—when they are revealed to be carriers of disease.

The function of the *phurba* includes absorbing negative energy and transforming it or diverting it from the patient. Demons, devils, witches (*bokshi*)—or whatever mythical vocabulary one might use to label the destructive energy that causes disease—cannot be killed or destroyed. The Asian way of thinking is cyclical and relative. What harms us today could be useful to us tomorrow. Evil is not conquered by good, as in western films and novels. It belongs to life as night belongs to day. "Devils do not fall from the sky—they escape from our thoughts, and we cannot kill our thoughts," we heard over and over again. For a Nepalese shaman, it is clear: We can merely redirect, politely usher away, scare off, or aggressively chase away what harms us—but we cannot destroy it. To a certain degree this attitude is incomprehensible to us, as the following example from everyday life illustrates: "A rat in the house harms us humans. It eats our food, pollutes our grain or rice, and gnaws at our clothing. However, at the same time, a rat is also the animal ridden by Ganesha. So first we politely ask it to leave our area at a ritual," Mohan Rai explained to us. He grins mischievously, and realistically adds: "Of course we will take care that the rat finds nothing more to eat. If none of this works, we will kill it—but only in an emergency."

The *phurba* is indigenous primarily to Nepal, a country that is home to Vajrayana Buddhism. With reference to the small, independent monarchy, this means there is a tantrically influenced mixture of

Hindu, Buddhist, and (not to be underestimated) shamanic elements.¹⁵ This is why the *vajra* is the centerpiece of every *phurba*.

Apart from the Buddhist orientation indicated by this, it also refers to the present age, for the Vajrayana is identical to the Kali Yuga, the era we currently find ourselves in.¹⁶ *Phurbas* are only found where the religious vehicle of Vajrayana Buddhism is present. If *phurbas* were found in areas where Mahayana Buddhism is indigenous, then the middle piece would be an OM symbol; in the areas of Hinayana (Theravada) Buddhism it would be a *kartika*—a ritual ax.

The greatest iconographic diversity can be found in the uppermost part of the *phurbas*. In principle, the ethnic group that produced the ritual tool can be discerned from this iconography. The following explanation should be taken as an idealized guideline. These ethnic classifications are not always rigid. In uncertain cases, the ethnic group can be recognized by means of stylistic features.

Kirati *phurbas* are usually crowned by bird figures, Tamang *phurbas* have three faces, Lama *phurbas* have a Buddhist *chorten* or a cap at the tip. Tibetan *phurbas* have depictions of animals, and Gurung ritual daggers have an animal—for example, a horse's head—or an umbrella in the uppermost zone.

Often grim heads or faces can be seen. They appear to be demons with their furious eyes, stretched open mouths, and bared or sharp teeth. This is a very mistaken assumption! As a rule, they relate to the divine trinity of Shiva, Vishnu, and Brahma. With regard to why they appear so frightening, we received the answer from a Kirati shaman that these forbidding faces caution us against thoughtless handling of this powerful instrument, and remind us that humans—who generally approach the gods only with wishes and needs, or to burden them with their fate—should ponder precisely what questions they are using to penetrate

¹⁵ On the other hand, it must be emphasized in this regard that shamanism is not a religion, but rather a spiritual technique based upon empiricism. Millennia before the advent of the major religions, this shamanistic technology was spread over the entire world. Today shamanism only exists in specific areas of Asia, for example in Siberia, Mongolia, Korea, and Nepal. Although the shamanism still practiced today has in each case been variously colored by the external culture, and comes cloaked in different religious trappings, at its core it is not religious.

¹⁶ In the Puranas, the beginning of the Kali Yuga is dated as Friday, 18 February (converted to the western calendar system). In the course of a complete cycle, or Maha Yuga, the original *dharma* recedes in quarters. As the *dharma* decreases, the length of the *yuga* also becomes shorter.

¹⁷ We did not come across this parallel between the three Buddhist vehicles and eras anywhere in the literature, but our informants in Nepal were in agreement with correspondences in the table.

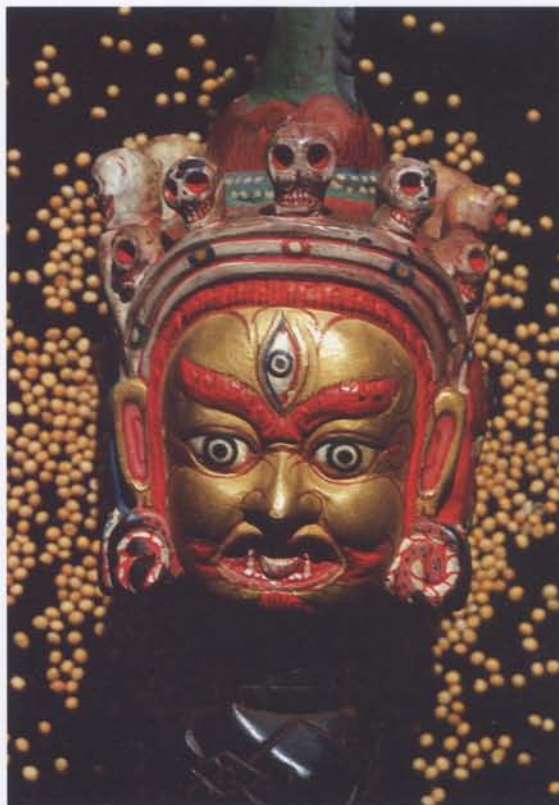
¹⁸ Mohan translated this graphically into English as the “shit of iron.”

Era	Duration	Buddhist Alignment	Symbol ¹⁷
Krita (gold)	1,728,000	Dharma	—
Treta (silver)	1,296,000	Mahayana	OM
Dvapara (bronze)	864,000	Hinayana (Theravada)	<i>kartika</i>
Kali (iron)	432,000	Vajrayana	<i>vajra</i>

otherworldly realms. In addition, a discernable function of the gods is to enter into conflict with demonic powers that are most effectively driven back to their boundaries with a frightening appearance.

Phurbas are made from wood, iron, metal compounds, quartz, and even from gold decorated with jewels.

Do the different materials signify anything? This seemingly straightforward question not only brought to light that the *jhankri* almost always use wooden *phurbas* (but occasionally ones made out of iron), and that the well-to-do lamas prefer the expensive materials. It also began to elicit explanations from our informants, the Tamang shaman Maile Lama and the Kirati shaman Mohan Rai, that were remarkable because they corresponded with the scientific understanding of pre- and early history: the first *phurbas* made by a human were fashioned from mud; these were of course only suitable for one ceremony. Subsequently some were fashioned from wood, then from flint, and finally from metals. According to the chronological sequence, iron came first, followed by copper, and then the metal compounds that the Tibetans call *thog lcaq*.¹⁸



The shaman, right, pulls negative energy out of the patient's body with the *phurba*.

Twelve skulls crown the divine trinity on this painted wooden Tamang *phurba*. They refer to the twelve planets, houses, signs of the zodiac, months, and hours. Everything acquiesces to time. Every life is transitory.



Iron trident on the threshold of a door. "Only the earth gives us iron. With iron we protect the house from bad influences" (MR). The three corners stand for the three gods, the three eras, and the three stages of life. The pair represents husband and wife.



The first *phurbas* were made from clay; the examples shown here have been painted.

The American poet Dale Pendell—one of the last active beat poets—makes an intuitive connection between the *phurba* and psychoactive Diviner's Sage (*Salvia divinorum* Epling et Jativa-M.). For him, the Magical Dagger is an instrument of this Mexican plant, which assumes a unique place in the psychotropic universe due to its effectiveness. Personal experiences are extremely strange. Pendell relates

Tobacco (*Nicotiana tabacum* L.) to the *vajra/dorje* ("thunder bolt") in the "realm of the Buddha." (SEE PENDELL 1995, 35, 171)

PHURBA: THE ESSENCE OF SHAMANISM

During our many years of research around the world, we have repeatedly noticed that shamanism is a science based on empiricism. When someone goes into a shamanic trance, they gain a form of access to knowledge that is different from the access provided by our western science—and nevertheless the same facts are brought to light. This form of access to knowledge has been scorned by the West ever since the era of the Enlightenment, and in connection with a positivistic view of reality, it has been nearly entirely lost.

The same sequence of materials, used by man for the production of tools and items for daily life over the course of the earth's history can be verified in the literature of paleoanthropology and prehistory. When we asked where she had read all this, Maile Lama looked at us with amusement: "I am illiterate. Only my eleven-year-old son is now learning to read and write. In the Tamang village where I grew up, no one spoke about such things." Mohan, who speaks more than twelve languages, added, "We shamans learn when we enter into a trance. Then we are

connected with what is stored in the memory of all mankind." As a mountain guide and trekking expedition leader, Mohan is a thoroughly experienced traveler in the exterior worlds, too.

The very first *phurba*, however, would have been made from natural materials: from a plant that conserves its vertical growth over a long period of time, such as bamboo, or from the horn of a goat. When we showed the horn of a mountain goat (*ghoral*) to the Tamang shaman woman Maile Lama and the Kirati shaman woman Parvati Rai, both were of the same opinion: "This is the very first *phurba*. This horn has the exact form of a *phurba*. Before humans ever made *phurbas* themselves, this was their *phurba*. The natural design inspired our ancestors when they began to make *phurbas* themselves." The three-part division therefore appears to have a subordinate significance. "That came later, when the humans carved *phurbas*."

Woodcutters who produce *phurbas* are called *shikharuni* in Nepali (Tib. *khapa*) and have a name



Sarasvati is the Goddess of knowledge, which is fertilized by the arts. Like Leda, she rides on a swan through the air of the inspired spirit.

linguistically similar to the hunters, the *shikari*. Our informants were unanimously of the opinion that the *shikharuni* are not merely simple craftsmen, but educated people who orient their work by traditional models when they produce this ritual tool for certain clients. Occasionally, there are shamans who also work as artistic woodcarvers.

Although hardly any wooden tools from pre- and early history have been excavated,¹⁹ wood was the first material man used to produce and fashion things. The wooden *phurba* is the type that is most important for the shamans not only because this material is easy to work with, but also because it is affordable for the shamans of remote villages, who often take home nothing more than rice and a couple of rupees²⁰ for healing ceremonies that can last for hours. "Wood reminds us of nature. Metal less so, for it is not visible."

Who created the first *phurba*, and where did it originate? To these seemingly bold questions we received concurring answers: "The *phurba* emerged from the *trishul*," the trident of Shiva, which alludes to the three shamanic worlds (the upper, middle, and underworlds), the three historical ages, and the three Hindu gods. Shiva sat on Mount Kailash and meditated for a long time. He became intoxicated with ganja and other sacred plants, and ultimately crafted the *trishul* and then the *phurba*. The person who now takes this ritual tool in hand, and who spiritually creates a connection with the power from which the universe was created, can turn lifeless material into a powerful instrument. With the *phurba*, the shamans connect themselves to the central life force of the universe. They can travel through time and through the worlds. Only in this way are they able to heal.

¹⁹ This material decomposes easily and is able to withstand the sands of time only when preserved in a "deep freeze," or in the desert and dry areas of Peru, some of which are over 10,000 years old.

²⁰ Two rupees is equivalent to 0.025 cents.

The trident, the *trishul* of Shiva, plays a significant role in all cultures. One finds it among the Siberian shamans of Tuva, as well as in Europe: the Greek God of the Sea, Poseidon, and the subsequent Roman Neptune, holds a trident in his hands and rules with it over the three times. In the early modern era, witches were depicted with a three-pointed forked branch, as in this painting by Hans Baldung Grien.



Trishuls on Kalinchock, western Nepal.

VAJRA: THE ESSENCE OF TANTRA

Vajra is a Sanskrit word that means “thunderbolt.” In the Buddhist-oriented tibetological literature it is usually called *dorje* and is interpreted as meaning “diamond scepter.” The *vajra* is masculine and it is a symbol of the lingam or phallus. In Vajrayana, the *vajra* is the symbol of enlightenment.

In the Kathmandu Valley, the *vajra* or *dorje* is the central insignia of tantra; in Tibet, it is the insignia of the lama.

“There are two types of the *vajra*: the thunder ax (*vajra dhunga*) and the *dorje*,” explained Indra Doj Gurung, who is not only a famous shaman but is also a tantric lama. Shamans do not use *vajras* because they have Magical Daggers, into which most of the iconographic elements of the *vajra* have been integrated.

The earliest *vajras* were probably fashioned from eagle claws (*giddha*) and wood. They can be recognized depicted in this form on many mandala thangkas. Today they are usually made out of brass and more rarely from copper; they are also made out of gold or quartz.

There are essentially two basic types of *vajras*: those with four spokes (the original eagle claws) or eight spokes. The spokes correspond to the four or eight directions.

The “first thunderbolt” came from Indra, the Vedic thunder god. It is over one meter long and is

worshiped at the entrance to the shrine of Svayambunath, which rose up out of itself like a lingam to become the most important temple in the Kathmandu Valley.

“The rainbow is called Indrayani, the Path of Indra, or the Bridge of the Thunder God” (MR). Indra is the Vedic god of rain and governs over the weather. Indra is a guardian, he is Lord of the Five Elements (*pancha dhattu*). He has his own realm of heaven, Indralok, the realm where the shamanic as well as tantric weather-making takes place—using the *phurba*, the Magical Dagger, of course. For this reason the *phurba* is always decorated with strips of fabric in the (symbolic) colors of the rainbow tied to the upper end. The pieces of fabric are the rainbow, the way into the other reality. This can also be seen on thangkas.

Like the shamans, Indra is always intoxicated with soma. Soma is not a drug; it is the general term for “psychoactive” or intoxicating substances. Everything that intoxicates or “turns on” the person using it can be soma. Maybe the word means “a substance that brings one farther, or helps one attain enlightenment or knowledge.” When the Vedic and the post-Vedic literature is studied it becomes immediately clear that soma does not concern a plant, but rather a psychotropic drug. In addition, soma also relates to a



In this highly artistically developed Magical Dagger the crystal *vajra* radiates from the center. The central symbol of tantra can be grasped directly in the hand.

The *vajra* is always the center of the *phurba* or Magical Dagger, the earthly middle piece.

At the entrance of Svayambunath, the “original” *vajra* of the thunder god Indra has four spokes that correspond to the four directions.



deity, namely the moon, who—in contrast to our conception—is masculine: the moon is no one else but Shiva, which is why he wears a crescent moon in his hair knot. He is the Lord of Soma, the drink that later became known as *amrita* or ambrosia. The moon is only a vessel, a drinking bowl for Shiva, regardless of what drink is contained in it. In the end, Indra is also no one other than Shiva. As a god, one can assume any form or work in different shapes.

According to the legend of the Kathmandu Valley, Indra freed the land from the giants, titans, and demons with his *vajra*. Therefore, the *vajra* is considered to be a demon-fighting weapon, a tool of enlightenment and self-liberation, or a tool of ego-liberation.

Tantra (Skt.) means “book” or “teachings.” Tantra is magic, it is a form of spiritual ritual that borrowed its entire technology from shamanism. Tantrikas are people who follow a path that opens the door to the shamanic world but no longer offers the true experience of the other reality. While the shamans are there for others, the tantrikas usually only look after themselves. They meditate instead of traveling into the other worlds, though they are also healers and do help other people.

Viewed from the outside, tantrikas’ healing rituals look exactly like many forms of shamanic treatment, except that they do not travel into the other worlds. They also never use Magical Daggers during their healing ceremonies, although they do use the *vajras*, the thunderbolts, and the *ghantas*, the bells that go with them. For this reason, deities on tantric thangkas can frequently be seen holding the bell and thunderbolt in two of their often many hands.

THE “THUNDERBOLT PLANT OF INTOXICATION”

Henbane (*Hyoscyamus niger* L.), which is probably the most well-known plant related to witches, magic, and oracles in Europe, grows in the Himalayas as well. It has many names in Europe—for example Jupiter’s bean, prophet’s plant, Belinutia (Celtic for “plant of the sun and oracle god, Bel”), Appollinaris (Lat. “Apollo’s plant”)—that indicate its important role as a “plant of the gods,” and the same holds true for Nepal. One of its names that stems from Sanskrit is *vajrabhang*, “thunderbolt plant of intoxication.”²¹ For this reason, it can be assumed that henbane is one of the secret magical plants of the tantrikas—or at least this is what linguistic aspects suggest. Was henbane

²¹ Cf. Shrestha 1998, 134. It has been convincingly verified linguistically by Flattery and Schwartz (1989) as well as other authors (Gelpke 1967, Li 1974, Rosenthal 1971) that *bhang* (or *bhanga*, *bang*, *bangii*, *beng*, etc.) is not only the word for hemp leaves and the drinks and delicacies made with them, but originally meant “drug” in general.

the secret ingredient in the Tibetan Buddhist “beer of enlightenment”?²²

Henbane belongs to the plants of Shiva, just as all psychoactive plants do.²³ The name *vajrabhang* indicates that it also concerns a sacred plant of Indra, the god of lightning, thunder, and of the heavens. He is the Lord of the *Vajra*, the thunderbolt; he is the god who, according to Vedic tradition, is always intoxicated on soma. Could henbane be one of the soma plants? In other Indo-European mythologies henbane is consecrated to the lightning god Jupiter/Jupiter and the thunder god Donar/Thor. Psychoactive plants can fill the consciousness with lightning flashes and thunderclaps. It is for this reason that they are so often connected to the corresponding deity. In addition, it is usually the gods who hurl lightning, unleash thunderbolts, and destroy clouds who also represent the shamanic “demon killers” (Jupiter/Jupiter, Donar/Thor, Indra, Oxun, Kukulja). Furthermore, in many mythologies the genesis of psychoactive mushrooms is traced back to the strike of a bolt of lightning. At the spot where lightning or thunder fertilizes the earth, the mushrooms shoot up out of the ground almost “as fast as lightning” (Wasson 1986).

Lightning is the simile for enlightenment that shoots right through us like electricity. Incidentally, enlightenment does not trace back to “divine grace” but is a normal characteristic of our nervous system, very similar to the orgasm that most people become aware of through masturbation during puberty. Like masturbation, there are certain techniques that release enlightenment, which is an orgasmic experience of light; a diving into and a becoming one with the primordial soup; an oceanic liberation of the self; a profound understanding of life and death, of past, present, and future. Those people who have at one time experienced enlightenment will know what we are talking about here. Enlightened people are not gurus who walk on clouds, and they are definitely not meditation teachers who sell their students thirty years of meditation lessons—naturally along with the advice that one needs the guru for that long because only then could one possibly experience enlightenment. Those who follow this path will experience everything *but* enlightenment!²⁴

Because enlightenment can most easily be experienced with psychoactive plants or substances, this

²² Cf. in this regard Ardussi 1977; among the Germanics it was common at any rate to make beer with henbane in place of the hops (cf. Rättsch 1996).

²³ The fact that henbane has been used and enjoyed in Asia as a psychoactive substance since ancient times is revealed by the earliest Chinese herbals (cf. Li 1978).

²⁴ See in reference to this the refreshing book by Horn, 1997.



The tantric *vajras* or “thunder bolts” made out of the metal that is considered to be the “metal of the heavens” (*thog lcag*). The people of the Himalayas believe that these objects “fall from the heavens.” This is why they are particularly expensive in the antique shops of Kathmandu. They are usually purchased by Tibetan tourists. (At left is the *vajra* of Indra and the stupa of Svayambunath, in the middle is a single “thunderbolt,” on the right is a *vajra* ring.)



Henbane, a plant associated with thunder and intoxication on a medicine thangka. (Modern Nepalese design, detail)



Above: Henbane flowers. The plant is called *khursani ajavan*, “the hottest chili pepper;” in Nepalese. This name of course also plays on the psychoactive effects, which are extremely hallucinogenic but can also be pleasantly aphrodisiac. The connection of two Night-shade plants in folk-taxonomy is surprising.

Below: Henbane seeds (*Hyoscyamus niger* var. *chinensis* Makino). The Tibetan henbane on Mount Kailash, the mountain of Shiva, grows unusually tall and produces seeds that are nearly twice as large as the European ones. The seeds produce a potent hallucinogenic incense. In earlier times it was inhaled by the seeresses of the Germans, the Romans, the Greeks, and the people of Colchis. In Hindukush henbane is still smoked straight, or mixed with ganja.

technique was dismissed by some puritan Westerners as being “neo-Zen” or “instant satori.”²⁵ It should be asked, though, how someone can have the audacity to judge the enlightenment of someone else.

In addition, the spiritual path begins with enlightenment, for the goal is one and the same with the path. In just the same way, we can only step onto the path of shamanism when we have had our own, often enlightening, experience of being called to this work. It is precisely on account of their experiences of enlightenment that many hippies and ethnologists set off on their journey to the East for spiritual completeness, or began their scientific study of shamanism.

Henbane (genus *Hyoscyamus*) is in the nightshade family (Solanaceae). The genus is spread throughout Europe and broad parts of Asia. Black henbane (*Hyoscyamus niger* L.) can be found in the western Himalayas from Kashmir to Gaewhal, usually at elevations of 1,500 to 3,000 meters. In northern India, it is cultivated for pharmaceutical purposes since it contains 1 percent to 1.5 percent tropane alkaloids (Bhattacharjee 1998, 186). The alkaloids hyoscyamine and scopolamine have a centrally stimulating and peripherally dampening effect. Depending on the dosage, they can produce extreme hallucinations (“Hieronymus Bosch trips”) but also quite pleasant feelings and experiences of flying. The use of henbane should be left to the shamans, though.

HENBANE AS AN INCENSE AND SMOKING HERB

“This *solī bung* [= henbane] is used by the shamans as a kind of tobacco, but only in secret. Once a year, between March and May, it can be found and harvested. It is easiest to find it near streams. But it grows everywhere in Nepal. For this reason we do not use it that often. The herb is only smoked in very serious ceremonies—in other words, for very acute illnesses. Naturally, the entire plant is brought to Shiva as an offering” (MR). “Henbane is smoked in order to liberate oneself from mental depression” (IG).

For smoking, the dried henbane is mixed with tobacco. The seeds, which are especially potent (they contain the highest concentration of alkaloids), are

²⁵ There is a saying that “when a Japanese woman at the marketplace is suddenly gripped by Satori, it is good; when a hippie is enlightened by an LSD trip, it is bad and false.” This is the perspective of numerous authors, such as R. C. Zaehner (1974), but there are also those who advocate the reverse, such as the hippie philosopher Allan Watts (2000). Regardless of one’s perspective, one thing is clear: “Enlightenment doesn’t care how you came by it” (Golas 1979)—as long as you attain it at least once per lifetime.

also mixed with ganja (*Cannabis*). “Incense mixtures like this can make you happy or put you into a trance” (IG).

Incense with Henbane

1 part henbane seeds (*Hyoscyamus niger* or *H. spp.*)
2 parts sal resin (*Shorea robusta*)

Crush the resin with a mortar and pestle and mix with the seeds. Place on burning charcoal.

Warning: can be potentially psychoactive!

If sal resin (*salu dhup*) is not on hand any other resin can be used, though sal has the strongest intoxicating effects.

HENBANE AS A BEER ADDITIVE

The Kirati still use henbane to brew beer today—just as was done earlier by the ancient Germans. The Kirati call the plant *solī bung chhang*. According to Kirati tradition, beer is not allowed to be made without the addition of henbane seeds (a truly different form of *Reinheitsgebot* [“beer purity law”). In Germany, brewing with the addition of henbane is still illegal and entirely denied under the “beer purity laws,” which were the first German “drug laws.”²⁶ Unfortunately, no one really knows any more at what time and by what method the Germanic seeresses (*volvas*, *veledas*, *alrunas*) brewed the henbane beer, which was the true Pilsner. In any event, the Kirati only brew *solī bung chhang* on the nights of the full moon. For this beer, five or six seeds is the dosage per liter. Naturally, the Kirati beer is brewed by the women, the mothers of agriculture, as it is in all ancient cultures around the world.

For the Kirati, henbane is a type of centipede they call *laliwah*, and therefore the plant is also called *laliwah*. Because the structure of the henbane looks like a ladder to the heavens, the unmistakable plant of the shamans is associated with the three realms of heavens (*loks*). The plants can assist the shamans in traveling there. The centipede that is associated with the plants is also considered to be fatally poisonous,²⁷ and thus belongs among the zoological poisons of Shiva’s garden. All plants and poisonous animals that are capable of putting humans into a trance are sacred to Shiva, the god of the shamans.²⁸

²⁶ *Der Spiegel* 17/1999, p. 213.

²⁷ In scientific literature the centipede is only considered “painful,” not life-threatening (cf. Mishra and Jeffries 1991, 102).

²⁸ Unfortunately we do not yet know how to produce usable entheogens out of centipedes or millipedes.

THE WAY OF THE SHAMANS

"The way of the shamans is the way of love." Despite all of their ethnic differences, Parvati Rai, Mohan Rai, Maile Lama, and Indra Gurung are united in this belief. As healers, they act in accordance with the ideal of transforming hate into love, jealousy into generosity, and ignorance into humility. With these three fundamental evils, which manifest as gnawing diseases, the shamans' magic number of three is encountered once again. Keep in mind that these three steps of diagnosis, therapy, and cure are merely an idealized progression. Because they are so easy to say (or write) but so difficult to fulfill, the shamans will never become jobless; they must work their whole lives on themselves. They are only human. Jhankris become sick just like everyone else. They have burdens just as we do, and fall as happily and as easily into their own traps. When they are in a trance, however, they are connected to a source of power that is only available under extreme circumstances in normal life. "When I cross the street I am afraid that I might be run over. But if I had fear of the dangers lurking in wait for me, I could not go into a trance," said Maile Lama with a laugh.

The mission of bringing love, harmony, and peace to the hearts of patients who have been made sick by the gnawing poisons of hate, jealousy, or ignorance (regardless of whether it was generated in the breeding ground of the patient's own personality, or through poisoning by other people) cannot be fulfilled by someone who wears rose-colored glasses. This assignment is no easy task. It requires the critical examination of uncomfortable truths, and necessitates encounters with dangerous adversaries.

Many jhankris are not capable of rising to the task. They escape into alcoholism or become "chicken shamans," or "professionals" in order to make their lives easier and to earn more money. A person who bluffs his way through as a "chicken shaman"—using sensational fire-eating displays, fantastical costumes, unnecessary animal sacrifices, and huge tom-toms—is not a jhankri. Neither is the person who opens a practice with fixed office hours and a regular income. Again and again we heard from the jhankris, who can swiftly see behind the facade of their false colleagues, "Chicken shamans and 'professionals' are not shamans." This may seem odd to us. As members of western consumer societies, we might ask ourselves: Why shouldn't a jhankri make a profitable business from his abilities? Why shouldn't he or she open a regular practice, like a doctor, and earn money from it? The

stunningly simple answer to our question was, "Because we jhankris are not permitted to advertise ourselves. We are only *dhami* jhankris because others are healed by us, and not because we say that we can heal them."

Only the person who can heal is a jhankri. Every jhankri is a *dhami*, a healer, but not every *dhami* is a jhankri, because only a jhankri falls into trance; a *dhami*, on the other hand, is not able to do so.

No one in the Himalayas becomes a jhankri because they choose it as their profession. One is called upon to become a jhankri. Many go out of their way to avoid the calling because it will mean a difficult life of deprivation. Shamans are just ordinary humans. They are farmers, craftsmen, mothers, housewives, factory workers. They shamanize when someone comes to them who needs their help. Many patients leave nothing behind for them other than a few words of thanks. Others bring a small bag of rice or leave behind ten to fifteen rupees.²⁹

Whenever we saw "our" jhankris on the street, we always asked ourselves whether or not anybody realized that the plain woman wearing a traditional cotton sari and flip-flops, or the man with athletic pants, a shirt, and a baseball cap, was actually a powerful healer who battled demons at night and took on the nature and mannerisms of animal spirits.

Just as the forces of nature rage, so too do the jhankris in their *chintas* (healing ceremonies). They call authoritatively for their helping spirits, and then they send them away again when the trance is deep enough. The encounters with the forces beyond are reflected in their sweat-covered faces. They laugh or roll their eyes, roar or call out. No matter how deep the trance and how terrible the encounter, no matter how ecstatically they convulse or spin in front of their altar, the jhankris are always in the position to direct their journey through the three worlds and to control the trance. Often the diagnoses that they make while in the trance, bring back to the realm of normal consciousness, and announce to the patients are ruthless. We heard things such as, "There are hypocrites in your environment," or, "I have seen that you have often lied to your family." There is no trace of

²⁹ Ten rupees = 0.128 cents. In 1999, a kilo of rice cost between eighteen and twenty-seven rupees, depending on quality. The average consumption of rice per person is 500 grams. In an average family there are five to ten people. The classic three-person household that one finds in Europe is practically nonexistent. The jhankris we talked with provided a portrait of their family and life relationships.

*"A trip far beyond all pleasant dreams
A voyage through desolation sights"*

DIMMU BORGIR,
"ENTRANCE" (*ENTHRONE
DARKNESS TRIUMPHANT,
NUCLEAR BLAST*, 1997)

"We have only one way, it is merely the caste and the language that are different. Our responsibility is to heal the people, love the sick, and to bring peace; to return people to their place in the mandala of life."

(IG)

"We travel through all three worlds. You cannot duel with the negative forces when you have fear. When we travel in a trance, we have no fear. We leave our fears back on the altar. Then we pick them up again when we return."

(ML)

When one no longer has fear, one can love eternally.

"*Vajra* means purity, indestructibility, the void, and nothingness (*shunyata*). This is how Vajrayana defines the absolute or nirvana. All of this concerns the complete release of all phenomenal and existential fetters."

LYDIA ARIAN (1978, 58)

Indra Gurung writhes in a trance on the ground in his shaman costume. He acts out the developmental process of man from wriggling baby, to crawling toddler, to mature adult standing upright.



“gentle healing.” The jhankris take what their patients have carefully buried or repressed in their subconsciousness, and lay it all out on the table.

At the same time, only what concerns the patient’s current life is relevant to the diagnosis. For the person who has had a difficult childhood but is leading an overall happy life as an adult, the fears and anxieties do not resurface.

Depending on their ethnic origins, the ritual objects used and the symbols are different or are endowed with a different value. In principle, however, the path for every jhankri leads back to nature, because they come from nature! All of the shamans whom we met in Nepal are aware of this in every respect. Measured in terms of scholastic learning, the education of the shamans is poor. Measured in terms of life experience and in terms of an intimate understanding of nature (and the temporal sequences and courses of events that govern it), their education is particularly advanced. The testimonies and insights collected in this book bear witness to this.

Shamanism is known and practiced among all of the approximately thirty-six ethnic groups that live in Nepal, regardless of their convictions and the shape their shamanism may take. In eastern Nepal, female shamans are widespread. In western Nepal, however, there is only an occasional woman among every hundred jhankris. There the general opinion is that a woman who has the gift of shamanism is a *bokshi*.³⁰

Shamans stand at the origins of culture. They preserve it and they renew it—because in a certain sense they are Shiva himself. It is clear to the Nepali jhankris that the path of the shamans was brought into the world by Shiva. In Nepal, the shamanic path

³⁰ There are also shamans in India (called *ogha* in Hindi), although the western judgment that this consciousness technique is backward and superstitious behavior has taken hold. “If a woman shows the manners of a jhankri, she will be persecuted and even killed. Strong women make the Indian men afraid,” reported the Kirati shaman woman, Parvati Rai, from her own experiences. She had lived for one year in northeast India, and tangibly experienced this attitude in her surrounding environment. “The *oghas* knew that I am a shaman. I denied it, otherwise I wouldn’t have been able to live there.”

is the way of Shiva, and the shamans are under his protection. Thus this Hindu god is not only the Destroyer but also the Renewer, who is incorporated in both Brahma the Creator, as well as in Vishnu the Preserver.

MUNDUM —THE SHAMANISM OF THE KIRATI

“The roots of the tree of ‘shamanism’ reach far into the past—sixty thousand years or even farther. Nobody knows for certain how old this tree is, how many fruits it has produced, or how many it will still bear,” explained Mohan Rai, the Kirati shaman. He did not want to be a shaman, yet he has devoted his entire life to the understanding of shamanism. As a member of a tribe that ruled over the Kathmandu Valley for eight hundred years in the early history of Nepal, and whose members are some of the oldest inhabitants, it is obvious to him: “*Mundum* is the roots of the shamanic tree and we, the Kirati,³¹ are still bound to these roots!” Mohan Rai concludes this from the fact that to this day the Kirati are born into the world and are brought beyond the grave to *akash* with the help of the shamans—the *mangpa*, in Kirati. In all other ethnic groups it is gubajus, lamas, or other specialists who are responsible for the death ritual.

When a Kirati is born, the women of the village go to the parents five days after the birth of a daughter and six after the birth of a son to choose a name for the baby with them. A day later—on the name-day—the *mangpa* goes to the house, travels around the fire, and prophesies about the future based on the astrological alignments. (He only reports what the family can easily digest and leaves out what might worry them unnecessarily.) He makes the final choice for the child’s name. Because the *mangpa* is the only one who knows the astrologically relevant dates for the Kirati, he is the person responsible for all ritually important aspects of Kirati life. He also establishes the most auspicious day for an arranged marriage. (A marriage of love is consummated independently of astrological calculations.)

What is *mundum*? The best translation of this Kirati term is “the path or way of the shaman.” It includes invoking spirits, remembering one’s own roots in nature, and putting one’s actions to the service of good.

According to our observations, the symbolism of sacred numbers and yantras were of greater importance to the Kirati shaman Parvati Rai than for shamans of the other ethnic groups that we inter-

³¹ Mohan Rai explained the term “Kirati” etymologically as meaning “to make something good.” Could there be a linguistic connection to the Indo-European terms “to create” (German *kreieren*) or “creator”?

In mantras, the *vajra*, “thunderbolt,” is called *vajra guru*, “thunderbolt teacher.”



The underworld is not "hell," but a world of water and crystal. (Detail of thangka No. 20)



The shaman Danashing Tamang drums to honor the underworld at a waterfall on the pilgrim's path to Kalinchock.

viewed. Odd numbers are "good" for the Kirati shamans. For example, the number 17 purifies and the number 15 signifies peace and harmony.

Each Kirati shaman uses only three different rhythms to beat a brief path for himself through the three worlds. The shaman then hands the drum to the assistants and turns his attention to the ritual objects on the altar.

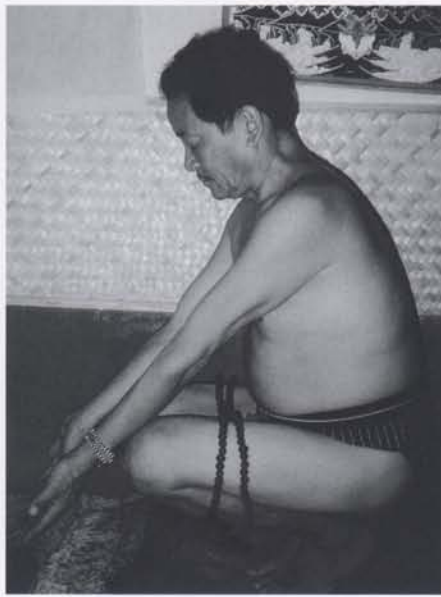
The calabash with the two stomach-like bulges is of particular importance on the altar because it signifies three worlds: the upper, smaller bulge is *akash*; the tapering of the neck is *dharti* (the middle world, which appears exclusively as gloomy to the Kirati shamans); while the lower, larger bulge is the underworld, *patal*, which according to all shamans is filled with crystalline colors.

Kirati Death Ritual

One afternoon the son of Parvati Rai showed up at her small, traditional house where we had been interviewing her. He stood before us, neatly dressed and with a motorcycle helmet under his arm. Our hostess joked that he had been invited over to see what sort of strange people his mother had been spending her afternoons with. There was a brief exchange of words and then a flurry of excitement. The real reason for his arrival was the death of someone in the Kirati community in a hospital in Kathmandu. Parvati was needed to put the dead person in the ground. She was responsible for such events. Without our asking, she nodded to us that we should come along. We could also photograph everything if we wished. The Kirati are very uncomplicated in this regard. Before we could blink an eye, we were in the car with Parvati in between us. She was wearing a



The Tamang shaman Maile demonstrates the burial posture of her trade.



After Mohan Rai posed for this photo (middle), the Kirati shaman Parvati Rai gave him a piece of ginger to chew—as a kind of “magic antidote” in order for him to retain his life energy.

Right: Kirati shamans (*mangpa*) are buried in a squatting position with the palms of their hands facing up. This expresses the idea that “I came with empty hands and I leave with empty hands. I have behaved in such a way that I can depart with good karma.” (Image from: Franz, *Das alte Indien*, Munich 1990)

T-shirt. Underneath it the knots with which she had tied her floor length lungi bulged around her hips. She had stuck a sickle in her waistband at her back, and she held a khukuri knife in her hand. If you were to see this small, inconspicuous woman on the streets, you would never come to the conclusion that she was a powerful shaman.

On the trip to Pashupatinath there was joking and laughter. When the driver wanted to take a shortcut at the famous Shiva shrine, Parvati agreed it was a swifter route but vetoed it, “No, for ritual reasons we must take the road from the South to the North.” No sooner said than done.

All the cremation sites on the Bagmati River were blazing with action. On the other side of the bridge separating the lower castes from the privileged dead of the Hindu upper class, there was even a fresh corpse lying on the pedestal of the steps near the shrine. It was wrapped in white cloth and covered in flowers. The kindling was easily ignited. There were natives standing all around, as interested in the events as the tourists, with their telephoto lenses, were.

Parvati guided us straight ahead, up the mountain beyond the river, and into a forest. Here lay the burial grounds that the Kirati community had fought the government for. The Kirati are not cremated, but are buried in a simple coffin in the earth.

The Souls of Humans

In accordance with the shamanic trinity, every person has three souls. Each of these can have a favorable or a negative effect, and are influenced by shamanic occurrences:

- the personal soul (which can be strong or weak)

- pieces of souls, which are around us (and which can help or harm us)
- the life and death souls (which make us healthy or sick).

The sixty-nine-year-old dead woman had traveled a long way with her grandson from her rural home to the city, but ended up sick in the hospital. The poor country woman could not afford the cost of care. In two hours she was dead. Now she was lying in a plain coffin that was about to be sunk directly into a human-sized grave. We were astonished at how swift and simple the path to the realm of the dead was for the Kirati. A lama needs an average of twelve hours per day in order to read the Bardo Thödol and guide the dead on the path past the lurking dangers in the middle realms.

Parvati cuts a branch and quickly carves nine notches into one side and seven in the other: seven steps leading into the underworld, to patal; there are eight directions plus the middle, totaling nine in the world of humans, dharti. She then takes the leaves from the branch, and with beseeching words purifies the grave that has been dug. A fire blazes beside the dirt that has come from the grave. The camphor burning in it is to purify the soul of the corpse. The loose casket lid is lifted. The corpse is examined and the cloths or binding strings that have been wrapped around it are loosened in order to make it easier for the soul of the dead to detach from its bodily shell. Finally, the closed coffin is carefully lowered into the depths. Parvati circles the grave. In her hand she holds a khukuri knife with a blade about 35 centimeters long. She heartily calls out “Haht!” three times. While doing so, she holds the knife with the curved blade pointing up. Her decisive, upward movement with the knife together with her calls mean: “Leave behind

the souls of your loved ones that you have taken with you into the grave, so that they may live on in the world. Do not take them with you into the realm of the dead!" Each time she calls out she falls into a brief trance, as if a button has been pushed. After this, all the members of the Kirati community hastily assembled for the occasion throw earth onto the casket with a counter-clockwise motion of the hand. The dead woman has completed the cycle of her life.

A Kirati calls for the life of the dead woman to be remembered and asks for three moments of silence. The grave is covered. The branch that sticks out of the pile of earth and hangs over the dead woman's head is there in order to make her journey to akash easier. Parvati pulls this heaven's ladder out of the earth and cuts it into three pieces, one for each of the worlds. Finally, flowers are laid on the grave mound, bundles of incense are lit, and the possessions of the dead woman are distributed: a last gift to the poor from the dead.

The ritual is over. It took barely an hour. Without



The man with paralyzed legs before (photo above, © Pascal Maitre, Cosmos) and afterwards (photo below, right).

any great ceremonial expenditure, the Kirati woman was guided from the between realms to akash in the realm of Yamalok. There she is liberated from all fears and pains.

Some of the people give the grandson of the woman a total of 2000 rupees (about \$27.00) so that he can pay for his stay in Kathmandu and his journey home. In two days there will be a ceremony of a ritual meal for the dead woman. Each of the guests will sprinkle mustard oil on the earth with their left ring finger. This gesture is made for the earth, not the gods. The gods receive the first symbolic drop of a drink sent to heaven by the right finger. In forty-five days the dead woman will receive her final accompaniment from the members at a meal for the dead in her village. This ceremony will also be led by a jhankri. (CME)

Mundum means to lead life from beginning to end without religion. For all shamans, and particularly for the Kirati, the worship of nature takes the place of a hierarchical organized religion. The way of the shaman is not a way of faith, it is a way of the heart. It is based on experience. This fundamental fact has been completely twisted by the term "faith healer"³² to mean just the opposite. This term is not only unjust to the actual nature of shamanic healing, but it is also insulting to the jhankris to be viewed as a type of "miracle worker."

Miracle Cures or Effective Medicine?

We have been able to observe the astonishing curative successes of shamans throughout the world. The following brief description of a Nepalese farmer in his mid-twenties is a particularly impressive account of how much energy is required to cure a seriously sick person, and how it has nothing to do with "faith."

In August 1989 we met a young man with gnarled legs that were completely lame. Relatives were carrying him through the mountains.³³ He had already spent his entire savings at clinics in Kathmandu. He had been lame from the hips down for six weeks. The doctors, including ones from the United States and Germany, could not make any headway. They told him to go to Kalinchok where the best shamans are supposed to be. In the evening a large chinta was performed by Yonjon and Danashing. With a petrified look on his face and a timid expression, the tormented man sat in front of the wildly drumming shamans who sang, shouted, and inhaled tons of smoke. For nearly two hours they traveled

³² This term was mainly cultivated by the Jesuit Father Caspar Miller (1987), see page 5.

³³ The beginning of this story was described in an article in *GEO* magazine (Büscher 1999).



The "path of the shaman" even became a comic book theme in the 1990s (Derib, *The Path of the Shaman I: Thunderstorm*, © Carlsen Verlag Hamburg, 1990)

For the Newari, it is the oldest son's responsibility to place meals out in front of his house on the anniversary of his dead father so that the roving soul is cared for but prevented from entering his former home. The youngest son places the meals on the threshold for the mother. The rest are given to the Bagmati River in the evening. If there are no sons at home, then the daughters assume this responsibility. Some also travel to the Ganges in order to sacrifice the dead souls of their parents; this offering then replaces the otherwise yearly ritual.

Depending on which edition of the Tibetan Book of the Dead is used and the degree of wealth of the dead Buddhist, a lama will need up to forty-eight days in order to carry the dead person over the dangerous cliffs and into the beyond according to all the rules of the art. Or he reads the book for fourteen to sixteen hours per day for seven days. The Sherpa lamas, who no longer have any knowledge of shamanic techniques, also read the Tibetan Book of the Dead.

(CF. DOWNS 1996)

“Only when a shaman dies and no lama is present, am I called upon as a Tamang jhankri to carry out the death ceremony.”

(ML)



The reed-like leaf of the *amlisau* plant shows a horizontal marking, as if from the bite of a *bokshi*.

“A witch arouses the trust of people and where she finds it, she destroys it.”

HERTEL (1996, 152)

“Men and women can equally be called to shamanism. Men as well as women can misuse their powers as witches.”

(MR)

throughout the worlds in order to find out what was wrong with the patient. They hurled chickens over his distressed body and used eggs to pull negative energy out of his flesh. When they returned, the tension mounted to a climax: What now? Can they do it or not?

Danashing was the first who was able to speak: “That poor guy is really messed up. Everything about him is totally twisted. But Yonjon and I can heal him. We learned this from the gods. It may take seven nights and may become extremely difficult, but we will succeed.” The house where the nightly ritual took place resounded with stones that fell from the hearts of the patient and his family.

One year later, back in Karthali, we were told that the lame man was working in the rice fields again, that he was doing well and he was leading a happy life. We were also told that he wanted to visit us. No sooner said than done. That evening, a strong lively man with bright eyes greeted us with a hug. Danashing said: “It only took us two nights. . . .” (CR)

Jhankris and Bokshis

As they have everywhere, the jhankris have a mixed reputation in Nepal. They are respected when their cures are successful, but in the case of failure they are looked upon with suspicion as being the source of the problem. As usual, the personal character of the individuals determines how shamans deal with their abilities. Of course there are jhankris whose services one could do without. There are show shamans and “chicken shamans,” jhankris with great abilities and some with paltry talents. There are shamans who are good at selling themselves (even when they have nothing to offer), and others who lead a very modest life, allowing their light to shine undisturbed by the outside world.

All jhankris must swear an oath to the guruji or guruma with whom they made their apprenticeship that they will only use their abilities for good. Those who use their power to harm others or to manipulate people against their will are called *bokshas* (warlocks) or a *bokshis* (witches). In everyday life both groups have to deal with each other once in a while. A jhankri heals people who have been poisoned through resentment, hate, or jealousy. An envious boksha can scheme against his successful colleagues.

Many Nepalese folktales tell of an historical competition between the two groups (cf. Winner and Rai 2000). It is based on the Hindu myth that Parvati, out of boredom, taught her knowledge to a group of women who then went into the world and became bokshis—a thousand years before the jhankris appeared. Once again, Shiva had not awakened from his ganja trance in order to have his wife comply with

his wishes. In general, the world drama in Hindu mythology is a macrocosmic depiction of the joys and sorrows of the divine Shiva and Parvati. From their marriage conflicts is derived the mythology of differences between man and woman, the clash of the sexes, and the development of certain plants, animals, or characteristics.

For a long, long time, jhankris, the healers, always lost out to the bokshis. They were beaten in every competition. Then a jhankri decided to pay Shiva a personal visit.³⁴ He complained of his woes: “Mahadev! Please help us! The people do not become healthy through our mantras and healing arts. They are wasting away because the power of the bokshis and bokshas is greater. They have already challenged us many times—or we have challenged them—and each time we are forced to acknowledge that they are stronger than us.”

Indeed, a long time ago, Shiva and Parvati had provided both groups—who had great powers at their disposal—with identical mantras in order to have an influence of good or evil on the health of the people. The witches and warlocks, however, had scammed an additional mantra from Parvati. Naturally the jhankris were defeated in every competition due to the great strength of their opponents. Shiva was understanding of this and provided two new mantras for the jhankri who had taken the long path to Mount Kailash by himself. The jhankri had only to give the bokshi an *amlisau* leaf and ask him to bite it in two halves. Should she be unable to do so, the fight would be decided on the side of the jhankris.

With newfound courage, the jhankris invited their adversaries to a renewed test of strength. The witches and warlocks, accustomed to their perpetual success, laughed at this attempt. As planned, they met the next morning at the meeting place and broke out in uncontrollable laughter when they realized how simple the challenge was. One after the other they bit into the *amlisau* leaf—but left nothing behind save

³⁴ Of course there are many versions of the story. For example: “A long time ago, Shiva Mahadev lived with his beautiful wife Parvati in peace and joy, until one day Shiva fell into a deep trance [from the enjoyment of ganja] that Parvati could not awaken him from. Bored, she looked around for something to do and decided to teach seven women a few of her skills. The women became witches. Unfortunately they went into the world and created nothing but chaos, disease, and death. When he awoke, Shiva saw what had happened. He created nine shamans in order to keep the witches in check, and to heal the diseases that they had caused. But the witches were too powerful. Shiva enticed Parvati to eat a magical plant, the grass *amlisau* [also known as *amrisa*, *amrisau*, *amliso*, *Thysanolaena maxima* (Roxb.) O. Kuntze syn. *T. agrostis* Nees. Gramineae], which lessened her power and that of the witches. Since then, shamans are in the position to hold out against their witchcraft. To this day there are still drawings of the magical *amlisau* plant on their altars as a symbol of their dominance over the witches.”



As Myingmar Sherpa began to drum, his twenty-month-old grandson sat down in front of him and put his hands together into the "Namaste" position. He did this for about forty minutes, until his Grandfather, from a deep trance, gave the diagnosis. A child such as this, or the boy in the photo on the right, is publicly demonstrating his predisposition to shamanism. This is the call to shamanism by family tradition.

an indented line. No matter what they did, they were not able to bite the leaf in two. But the jhankris were able to easily bite the leaf in half with the help of their two new, powerful healing mantras.

Humiliated, the witches and warlocks retreated. They no longer had any power and were condemned to eke out an existence isolated from other people. In the long run, their life in exile was too boring. Nobody came to ask for advice. They grew thinner and thinner until they were mere shadows of their former selves. The jhankris were also out of work. Nobody became sick. No one needed their help because there were no dangers to their health.

Then a bokshi took heart and went to see Parvati with the request that Parvati free them from their shadow life and supply them once more with bread and honor. Mahadevi went to Mahadev and told her husband about the situation of the humans in the world. They decided that both sides should have equal power so that all could live. With a magical spell Shiva freed the jhankris from being able to recall their extra mantra that had guaranteed their success over the bokshis.

Since then the bokshis and jhankris have lived side by side. They either use their power over humans, or they free them from the causes of diseases.

THE CALL TO BECOME A SHAMAN

In principle there are three types of calling to be a jhankri: the calling through the Ban Jhankri, the calling through visionary dreams, and the calling through family tradition. When there is a shaman in the family he or she will be able to recognize a child's gift for trance and develop it accordingly. The grandfather,

father, uncle, or corresponding female relatives can call a child for this task, becoming the guru or guruama of the developing jhankri.

The gift of being able to fall into a trance is the prerequisite for all types of the calling. Often the gift of shamanism is demonstrated very early in life. During this first phase of the initiation phenomena, the budding jhankri experiences himself or herself as an outsider. They feel "different from the other children." If they are officially initiated as shamans, the situation is entirely changed. They become assets and respected members of their community. They go from "outcast" to "incast," so to speak.

In many Asian regions, and above all Siberia and Korea, the call predominantly comes as a result of the so-called "shaman's sickness" or is based on a psychic crisis ("initiation sickness").

The following are three different but characteristic stories of calls to shamanism.

Maile Lama—Abduction by the Ban Jhankri

Maile is a Tamang shaman. From the time she was nine years old, she often felt a jolt go through her body and shake her. Although there are shamans in her family, these motor disturbances were never considered to be connected to the calling; instead it was thought that she was sick or had eaten something wrong. Even her interactions with the "hairy old man" didn't remind her of the Ban Jhankri stories because she had been in a hypnotic condition during the encounters.

"Throughout my whole childhood I was different from my brothers and sisters and the children of the neighborhood. I preferred to go with my father



Maile Lama with her son.

into the fields to herd the cattle. One day, when I was seven years old, my father said to me: 'Maile, I am going home to get some food. We didn't bring anything with us. Wait here for me—I will be right back.' It was cold and drizzling outside. I went into our summer cottage, where the livestock were also living, and stirred the fire. Then a little old man came in. I had never seen him before. He sat down by the fire without saying a word. I had no fear. I only thought the man was seeking warmth as I was. He made three little mounds from the hot ashes. He could easily touch and form them. Then I heard my father coughing outside. The old man heard this too and stood up, taking a bundle of bamboo that was hanging up high on the ceiling and scattering it across the floor. I was surprised, for he was really quite small but nevertheless he could reach the bamboo bundle that was hanging up high. Then he left without a word. 'Papa, a man was just here. He was bigger than me, but still very small, and he had a lot of hair.' Because it was light outside and my father hadn't seen anyone himself, he didn't believe me. The next morning he asked me where the bamboo bundle was and noticed the three piles of ashes. I reminded him about the old man who had taken the bundle from the ceiling and strewn it everywhere and that it was he who had made the piles of glowing ashes. Because I could not have done either of these things and no one else had been there, my father began to wonder.

"Over the course of time everyone forgot the story. Then I turned nine years old. Once again my mother, my father, and I were at the cottage in the meadow with the livestock. I went with my mother to cut grass. Then an enormous man appeared. He beckoned to me. My mother did not notice when I followed this man into a charming little cave on the other side of the river. I was completely under this man's spell, as if I were hypnotized. After two hours I went home and told about how I had been with the nice old man, but nobody believed me. My parents were disturbed and took me to see a jhankri in the village. I told him about everything I had seen in the cave: drums, brass pots, copper rice bowls, and other ritual objects. Everything was splendid, shiny and sparkly. The man had also given me food, but not the way normal people do. He served me everything on the back of his hand. The jhankri tested me with the *jokhana* and said, 'Your daughter will be a shaman.' When I was eleven years old, there was a great *chinta* in our house to protect it from evil influences. Many village people were there, along with a shaman woman. My family had assembled. There was drumming. Someone outside blew a shell trumpet. 'Who is playing that?' No one answered me, because no one

else heard it. Everyone went outside but no one could be seen blowing a trumpet. I was alone in the house. Someone whispered to me, 'Come here!' I was supposed to bring the *denguru* and follow him. Without any fear, I jumped out of the window and went away with the old man. He brought me back to the cave, 'You know this place already. You know that you will become a shaman. You will be my student. I will give you your mantras.' In a short time he gave me many powerful mantras. 'I am *shuna jhankri*.³⁵ I am not a god, but neither am I human. This is my forest and my house. I want to teach you many things. But you need a teacher in the human world. When you need me, then come. I always know where you are and will protect you. But you must make your apprenticeship with a jhankri, who will be your guru.' I spent five hours with the Ban Jhankri. When I returned, everyone was upset. They had looked everywhere for me. A jhankri reassured them though. 'Your daughter was definitely abducted by Ban Jhankri. Don't worry, she will return in good health. But I can't say when.' I had the same drum in my hand that I had left with.

"Then I entered into an apprenticeship with my uncle, who was a knowledgeable shaman, and with others who also taught me important things. No one can become a shaman without a guru. My uncle taught me all the mantras and everything that one needs to know for healing ceremonies and trance journeys.

"I was officially confirmed as a shaman when I was fourteen. Many people came to our village from far away to observe the ceremony. I was still rather young. All of the shamans had to help me get dressed, prepare the altar, and do everything that was necessary. My uncle asked me, 'Are you a shaman?' I answered, 'Yes.' 'Swear an oath to the gods Mahadev and Mahadevi, to your guru, to the Ban Jhankri, and to the people here: 'I will only use my abilities for positive purposes. I will only heal, and I will help all people who need my help. If I should deny help, then I will be punished.' I made my vows and listened to all of the punishments that would befall me if I broke my oath. My guruji said to me that I was now a shaman and that I must follow the ceremonies and rituals he had taught me that belonged to family tradition. I had to kill a chicken, prepare a jug of *rakshi* and *chhang*, and serve meat, food, and money to everybody who had come. I had to give a complete shaman costume to my guru as thanks to Shiva and the gods for the education I had received from him. I swore to my uncle that I would do everything that was required of a proper shaman. I was not allowed

³⁵ *Shuna* = Ban Jhankri, the primordial father of the shamans who lives in the forest without human contact.

to call him ‘uncle’ and instead I said, ‘Guruji, I am still young. Please support me and help me when I do something wrong. Please protect me from negative forces that would take revenge for my mistakes.’ Everyone was present and heard our oaths. As gifts from my guru I received a small *phurba*, porcupine quills, and other things that I needed.

“At the age of fourteen I was a shaman. People came from all over and soon I had to carry out healing ceremonies every night.”

Parvati Rai—Visions in Nature

Until she reached her eighth year, Parvati Rai’s life was normal. She was like all the other children. But shortly after her ninth birthday, she changed in an unusual and strange way. She was often lost in her thoughts. She went by herself into nature and bathed under a great waterfall near her remote village. She can no longer remember how many times she jumped out of the window or off the roof of her low Kirati house, danced with garlands of corn, wallowed in mud, hugged trees, and scratched her face. She thought she was going crazy. Her family and the people in the village became afraid of her and called her the “crazy Rai girl.” Many people thought she would become a witch. Sometimes she even thought so herself. She had recurring dreams and visions during the day in which she saw men or women in front of her, calling to her or begging her to follow them. But she was totally confused and didn’t know whom she should follow. She spent most of her time alone in isolated places in nature. There she was most able to calm herself. She kept meeting the old “teacher of the forest.” He was not Ban Jhankri but she trusted him. He taught her many things about nature.

For three years she was wild. She didn’t listen to anyone. No one could comfort her. Her parents were extremely disconcerted, “Will she become a killer or a healer? Is she a pleasant bird or is she made of poisonous meat?” Finally the villagers were able to put her into a “protective spiritual fence” and test her with the help of the resident shamans. At the time, she was thirteen years old. One person even had a khukuri knife with him—just in case. Everyone called out worriedly or angrily, “Are you a bokshi? Are you a negative person or are you a good person? Are you a shaman? Tell us!” A respected shaman of the area, Lal Bahadur Rai, was also brought in. He spoke in a very friendly manner to the unruly girl and was the only one who could connect with her and calm her down a bit. He learned from the *jokhana* that she would be a jhankri. “She will be my student. I will guide her on the path to *Mundum*. Don’t be frightened anymore, and stop saying she is crazy or a witch! She will be a

healer.” Then Parvati began to twitch. Her entire body trembled and in a trance she said, “You are not my mother, my mother is the river. You are not my father, my father is the forest.”

Parvati became the student of Lal Bahadur Rai for a while. According to the *thapana* (Kir.) law, every prospective shaman must have a guru. “I did not spend that much time with my teacher, but instead I returned regularly to nature and learned many things from the plants and animals.” (Parvati demonstrated this by doing a startlingly real imitation of a number of different birds, including their courtship displays and their special abilities, such as tracking the right plants, that are important for her responsibilities as a healer.)

When she was around sixteen years old, she was confirmed as a shaman. The initiation is called *cha amang* (Kir.) and is only done for those who demonstrate a highly developed gift. During the ceremony, the jhankri must inwardly recite all mantras of the way of *Mundum* and dance with khukuri knives, sickles, and drums. These ceremonies are connected to certain dietary taboos, eating regulations, and animal sacrifices.³⁶ Seven sacred flowers, seven sacred herbs, and seven sacred foods³⁷ are involved in the ritual. The initiate must demonstrate his or her mastery of all techniques.

Shortly after the ceremony, Parvati married a Ghurka soldier. (She still lives with this man and their ten children.) Until the age of twenty, on the full moon or new moon she was still plagued by moods that scared her husband. Another jhankri told him that this would subside and she would become a respected healer.

Parvati Rai, the Kirati shaman, discovered all the objects on her altar in visionary dreams.³⁸ She found the wood and animal skin for the drum one night when she was thirteen, as well as the gourd, porcupine quills, and so on. She saw her crystal in a dream when she was fourteen: an old man³⁹ appeared to her and said she should go to the river banks where she would find a small overhanging cliff. Underneath it she would find a small piece of quartz. It was destined

³⁶ For example, a wild boar less three years old and a chicken that has not yet molted for the first time must be sacrificed.

³⁷ The names are all in Kirati. Seven sacred flowers: *sunabung*, *sunakari*, *amlabung*, *mitsilibung*, *tarabung*, *bhobunb*, *chi bung*; seven sacred trees and plants: *kaulo*, *amlisau*, *gungurung*, *pathe khasuro*, *titepati*, *payung*, *subi yara*; seven sacred foods: *sampitcha* (millet), *arawua* (rice), *uwah* (wheat), *junelo*, *kokolakma* (corn), *bunku*, *geau jau* (barley).

³⁸ Visionary dreams are called *sapana* in Kirati.

³⁹ The old man sometimes appeared to her as her grandfather, and sometimes as a little old man who she said explicitly was not Ban Jhankri.

“Without a close connection with the trees, rivers, cliffs, and mountains we cannot travel to the three worlds. Our teacher is nature. She can teach us more than a thousand humans.”

(PR)



Parvati Rai.

to be hers: "I have kept it hidden there for many years. Later I will tell you how you can use it," said the old man. By the first light of dawn, he said, she should go there with the traditional offerings: rice, clean water, *dhup*, and a calabash. She found everything as it had appeared in her vision. When she was sixteen, she discovered in a dream how to ritually use the crystal. It was always a friendly, very old, small man who led to all of the objects in nature that are of ritual importance to the fifty-three-year-old woman.

Indra Gurung—Flight from Inheritance

The Gurung shaman Indra also described himself as being very different from other children during childhood. He liked to withdraw into solitary places and preferred tending the cows, sheep, and goats to playing games with children his own age.

One day when he was about thirteen or fourteen, he fell asleep on a sunny rock. He dreamed intensely about strange animals and interactions with people he had never seen before who were calling to him. When he awoke, all of the other shepherds and animals had disappeared. Back at home, he told his father the strange story. His father immediately said, "You will be a shaman. You will follow our path. Your great-grandfather, grandfather, and uncle are shamans. I am also a jhankri."

"I don't want to be a jhankri. Why should I do that?" answered Indra. Instead he learned from his father everything that a lama must know, for in the small village, his family followed the lamaist tradition. Among other things, he learned how to carry out *arghun*—the lamaist death ritual.

When he was sixteen he had many intense dreams and often talked in his sleep. His parents listened closely and noticed that he always spoke of the ritual instruments of his ancestors, saying things such as, "I need a *mala*. Where is my grandfather's drum?" and so on. That same year his father died at the age of seventy-two. His grandfather had been dead for a long time. His dreams intensified and once in a while

he also spoke in a confusing way during the day. He called out repeatedly, "Now everything of my father's belongs to me. Give me his clothing, give me his crown of peacock feathers!" His mother fetched his uncle, who was a farmer and a jhankri living in a distant village. The uncle organized everything that was needed for a divinatory ceremony and threw a *jokhana* for the boy. He confirmed that Indra would follow his father in becoming a shaman. While the uncle was in a trance, Indra fell into a trance too and became aware that all of his father's objects belonged to him. He counted all of the things that he had seen at his father's *chinta*—and even the ancestral objects of his grandfather, about which the family had forgotten.

In order to become a shaman, he had to have a guru. So he knelt in front of his uncle and named him as his guru: "Now you must teach me everything that is important to my spiritual path. Thank you very much for your help." Two years later he entered into an apprenticeship with his uncle. He decided to leave the village after his official initiation and the first difficult months of jhankri life and enter military life so that he could support his impoverished family with his salary. But word soon traveled about his abilities. During the day he took part in his military drills, while at night he carried out *chintas*. After eleven years, he left the service. When he was twenty-nine he became a guard in a hospital in order to feed his family with an income of 6,000 rupees per month.⁴⁰ Once again, the word got around that Indra was a healer, for when he saw anybody suffering he had to obey his oath and help them. In the clinic he has meanwhile found a more reasonable relationship between his work and his calling. For cases in which orthodox medicine fails, he is asked to serve as a jhankri. Then he stands by the sick bed with his regalia, falls into a trance, and calls to his helping spirits.

Indra no longer flees from his task. He must heal others. And he must do so even when the double duty of work and healing clearly threatens his powers.

⁴⁰ Approximately \$76.92.



Indra Doj Gurung.

THE WAY OF THE GUBAJUS AND TANTRIKAS

The gubajus are the priests, astrologers, and healers among the Newari people of the Kathmandu Valley. There are no gubajus in other ethnic groups. Only Newari people who are from the Vajracharya (pronounced *Bajracharya*) or the Buddhacharya castes can become a gubaju. “Anyone can learn our mantras, tantric techniques, yantras, and mudras—but they are not permitted to refer to themselves as gubajus even if they have mastered it all perfectly, and they will not be considered as gubajus,” said Asar Ratna Vajracharya, the highest gubaju in Patan (Lalitpur).

In contrast to the path of the jhankris, one can only become a gubaju—regardless of the degree of tantrism involved—through family tradition. “I am the only son of a gubaju. For me there was never any question that I would also become a gubaju. When I was eight, my father introduced me to this knowledge and these techniques,” explained Asar Ratna Vajracharya. “After this, I went to other temples and studied with other gubajus. At an initiation ceremony I was given full responsibility for all the important tasks of the gubaju, and I received the three essential ritual tools: the *vajra*, the *ghanta*, and the *katvanga*. Since then I have been officially recognized as a gubaju.” Only the youngest of his three sons shows any interest in this path. While his older brothers pursue other things, he is the only one who will be initiated by his father into the demanding knowledge of the gubajus.

In order to become a gubaju one need not have a vision, dream, or an initiatory illness. The decision can only be made by the family tradition.

The gubaju tradition is rooted in Vajrayana Buddhism. “We came into existence with Svayambunath. Gubajus built the *stupas* of Svayambunath and Shantipur when the hills rose out of the sea. They were the first to invoke the gods and to make *pujas* in their honor. All of this happened before the seventh century, I don’t know exactly when,” said the gubaju Asar Ratna Vajracharya, with self-awareness. The Vajracharya trace themselves back to Vajrasattva, one of the Bodhisattvas of Guru Rinpoche. Like the jhankris, the gubajus pray daily to their most important gods. Among them are Chakrasamvara, Vajrayogini, Vajrasattva, and Chandramaharosan. All four are the tantric deities of Vajrayana Buddhism. The name Vajracharya means “*vajra*” and “bell”—the two essential ritual tools of the Newari priest caste.

The gubajus use *phurbas* to fend off dangers and

to encircle the germs of disease. In addition they intone certain mantras.

Some families go to the gubaju when they are suffering from chronic disease; when the children cry inexplicably; when important rites of passage have to be dealt with, such as birth, marriage, and death; or when they are seeking advice for some of the general questions of life.

The seventy-six-year-old father of Surendra Bahadur Shahi finally went to see a gubaju after a series of visits to doctors and hospitals. For weeks he had been suffering from dangerously high blood pressure. The various medicines and numerous doctor visits did not offer any relief and instead left him fearful and depressed. The family gubaju consulted his natal horoscope. This horoscope is oriented to the lunar calendar; thus birthdays change yearly and many people do not know their exact birthday—some do not even know the year in which they were born. “You can have faith in your health. The time of the Grahas is over for you. The stars promise you better times.” This reassuring information brought willpower back to the head of the family. Since then, his health has remained stable and he has been able to return to his daily life. (CME)

Only sons of the two highest Newari castes can become gubajus: those of the Vajracharya and the Buddhacharya. Only Newari people who are oriented toward Buddhism can produce gubajus.

According to information from the second highest gubaju of Svayambunath, the Vajracharya are responsible for the death ritual, while the Buddhacharya, who have no tantric education, are not. Women can also be responsible for the death ritual, but they always remain assistants and as such are excluded from many other important rituals.

The daily rituals of a gubaju include reading the Buddha sutras from 5 A.M. to 7 A.M. every morning in order to ensure health and longevity. Those in dire need of these sutras can visit a gubaju with this request and pay a donation for it to be carried out.

Not all gubajus are tantrikas. Many gubajus are afraid to make use of tantric techniques, that are described as having magical effects and which can be misused by people less spiritually mature. If gubajus wish to learn the tantric path, they must seek out tantrikas or even shamans for their apprenticeship and retreat into solitude. Solitude plays an important



The *phurbas* of the gubajus are different from those of the jhankris. As a rule, they have only one head on which there is a double *vajra* as shown here. Gubajus focus on the head as a mirror image of themselves in order to meditatively connect with the power of the *phurba*. The three or more heads of the upper area of the *phurba* indicate the collection of energies that the jhankri use.

Like the jhankris, the gubajus differentiate between those who use their powers for good and those who use them for evil. For the jhankris, “killers” are *boskhis* and “healers” are *dhamis*.

Gubajus who use tantric techniques are descended solely from the Newari Buddhacharya caste and the doors to both paths—the shamanic and the tantric—are open to them. They are the only people capable of destroying negative energy by speaking the corresponding mantras.

We received three divergent answers to our inquiries from the gubajus: Gubajus never go to jhankris to receive instruction. Gubajus go to jhankris in order to be taught certain knowledge. Jhankris go to gubajus when they want to be taught tantric techniques.

role for the tantrikas in their quest to penetrate the cosmic laws of the dissolving polarities.

The gubajus—including the tantric gubajus—fulfill a responsibility within society. This is not necessarily the case for the tantrikas, for they can use their philosophy for personal fulfillment, and indulge in their own personal convictions. There are also female tantrikas. Their role in present-day Nepal is a very marginal one, as it was in the past.

Tantrikas are magicians and philosophers. Anyone who feels drawn toward this path or way of thinking can study tantrism; they can seek out teachers and role models and immerse themselves in this philosophical and religious path.⁴¹

Tantrikas exist in many ethnic groups and castes. Formerly they could be recognized by their bone aprons. But the progressive tantrikas of today free themselves from any affiliation to an ethnicity or caste, and instead allow the universal origins of existence, which are completely independent of social structure, to step decisively into the foreground.

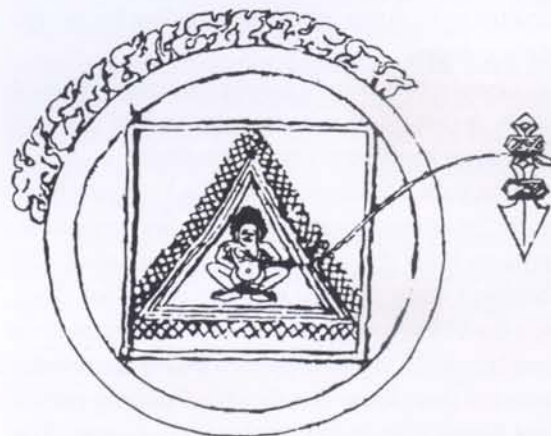
Tantrikas are often referred to as yogis or sadhus and many lead an ascetic and isolated way of life similar to that of the wandering ascetics still found in Nepal and India. For this reason the boundaries between tantrikas, dhamis, yogis, and sadhus are often fluid. The natives compound the difficulties of the ethnologists by not knowing exactly who they are themselves.⁴²

⁴¹ The best publications on this complex theme are by Ajit Mookerjee, Philip Rawson, and Giuseppe Tucci. The Indian scholar Mookerjee bequeathed a large collection of tantric art to the National Museum in Delhi. The English scholar Rawson and the Italian scholar Tucci have also dedicated themselves to artistic and meditative aspects.

⁴² This confusion comes particularly to the fore in the Tibetan Vajrayana cult of the Nyingmapa. They have long hair like the Bonpos and have mastered tantric and shamanic techniques like the tantrikas and jhankris. They are known as healers in the mountain villages and carry out oracles, and they are lama priests as well.



A Tamang lama demonstrates the use of the Magical Dagger for the annihilation of, or liberation from, demons that bring disease.



A *linga* with which the corresponding demon is bound by the Magical Dagger ritual. When the *linga* is stabbed with the *phurba*, the demon dies and can reincarnate itself. This *linga* shows the *phurba* and the location where the demon should be struck (paper illustration).

THE ORIGINS OF SHAMANISM AND RELIGION

As a rule, our personal knowledge about the past is lost beyond the generation of our grandparents. Not many people are fortunate enough to be able to speak with their great-grandparents about their experiences in an era that was so different from ours. We can only inform ourselves through texts about the political, social, religious, and economic circumstances of past centuries—texts that stem from the past itself, or ones that have been written about it. Only a few traditions remain unbroken over time. Only a few countries in the world have been able to preserve their traditions up through the present. Nepal is such a country. Many religious traditions exist parallel to one another and are nurtured in the midst of modern activity. Cults that come from the Stone Age still exist at the “gateway to the roof of the world.” In Nepal we can encounter people who speak of events in the distant past as if they had personally experienced them, and who are in command of a wisdom that reaches back into the depths of time.

One gets the impression, especially in discussion with jhankris, that their personal memory stretches back to the beginning, to the source of wisdom, or to the moment of a discovery of certain things or behaviors that have produced a lasting change for humans.⁴³ At no point did we ever encounter jhankris who provided responses such as “We don’t know why it’s like that. We do it because it was always done that way.” A question concerning the meaning of a symbol never went unanswered.⁴⁴

Thus a discussion with a number of shamans about a thangka (No. 21) that depicts a complicated genealogy brought to light an astonishingly consistent historical picture of the religion that took root in the Kathmandu Valley over time.

Guru Padmasambhava sits enthroned with his Tibetan wife, Yeshe Sogyal, above the guardians of the Nyingmapa teachings of Vajrayana Buddhism. The guardians are arranged circularly in groups beneath the couple—this is how the Newari artist Surendra Bahadur Shahi described the thangka to us. Over the course of many hours of discussion with three shamans, the painting was decoded in great detail. The Tamang shaman, Maile Lama, described it as a “depiction of the development of shamanism to

Buddhism via Hinduism.” In this family tree—at the roots of which are the jhankris—she saw an historical representation of the development of the Kathmandu Valley. In the lowest circle, the Bhairabs are depicted as wrathful manifestations of Shiva—they are the closest to shamanism. The yoginis that follow them spring from the shamanic directional deities. Next we have the tantric gods of the Kathmandu Valley, who can be seen in the *yab-yum* position, meaning they are in union with their feminine principles. On the upper left side and the upper right side, groups of Buddhist bodhisattvas are depicted. On the left side, the white, isolated figure of the Buddhist bodhisattva, Avalokiteshvara, represents Buddhism; on the right side, in the red Vajrayogini, we can see the Hindu influences in Nepalese Vajrayana Buddhism. Between these two figures—in the idealized architecture of a *gumpa* (a reference to the Potala in Lhasa)—Padmasambhava is depicted in tantric union with his *shakti*. He holds a skull cap bowl and a *vajra* in his hands, which as ritual objects symbolize the connection between the shamanic and tantric lines of tradition. The three feathers on his head attest to his shamanic nature.

“We shamans come from the Stone Age. We have no religion. Religion is for those who can no longer see.”

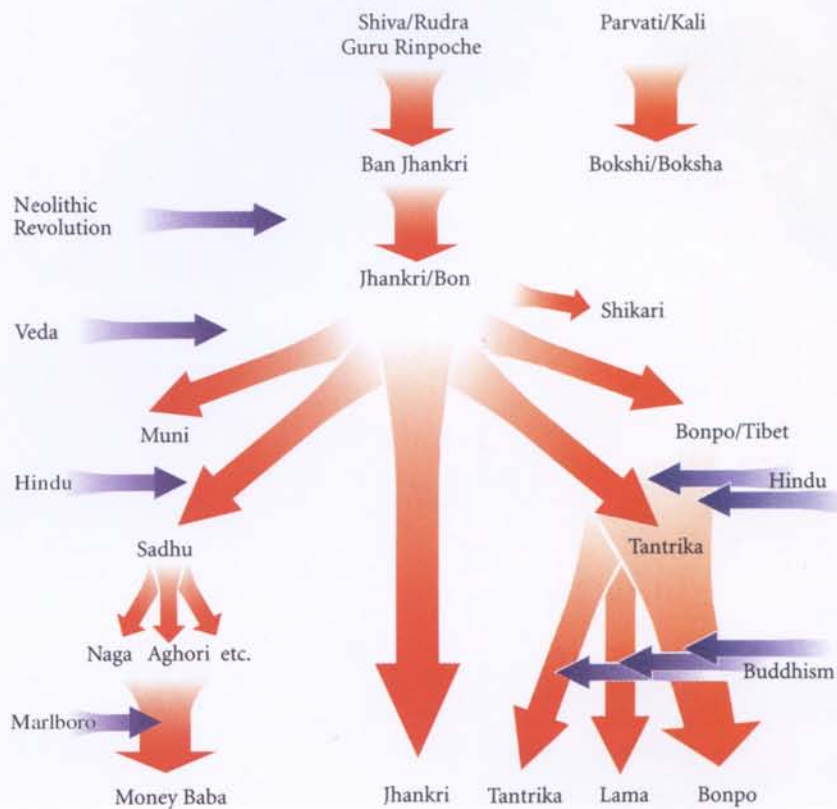
(IG)

“We are part of Shiva’s family. We have no religion. Religion was created yesterday. We were here much earlier. What is really important are the heart and the head, and the skill to combine them wisely.”

(PR)

The universe is an expression of the unification of the masculine and the feminine. Otherwise it would not exist.

The development of shamanism, tantra, and religion in Nepal



⁴³ By the term “personal memory” a lived experience is meant, as opposed to a theoretical wisdom.

⁴⁴ It is important to realize that each ornament and each specimen worldwide has a symbolic meaning, as does each ritual object—even if this was lost in the passage of time.



The family tree of Padmasambhava depicts the developmental history of shamanism via Hinduism to Buddhism. (No. 21)

Guru Rinpoche unites these important lines of tradition of the Kathmandu Valley extending from shamanism to Buddhist Lamaism. The Lamaist sects are depicted above him, flanked by Hindu Asuras. The jhankris, who are particularly sensitive to history, viewed the group of three Buddhas above the lowest row as a mistake. They should properly be in the place above Padmasambhava's head. At the far bottom on the left side, nature is depicted in the hermit who meditates in a cave; on the right side, culture is depicted in the form of a *mandir*, a temple. Surrounding the family tree in the center, altar objects are shown: gems, vessels, *mirga* horns. Around this the sea, the geological beginning of the Kathmandu Valley, can be seen.

We are presenting the perspective of the shamans themselves; it is their interpretation of the story and not ours. Who knows better about shamanism than the jhankris themselves?

According to their information, much of what is attributed to the tradition of the Vedas, the Brahmins, the Hindus, or the Buddhists is rooted in shamanism. Thus the ayurvedic healing arts more or less originate in shamanism. It was jhankris who discovered the curative effects and came up with dispensing the many plants that were integrated into the complex healing method of ayurveda. Even Sanskrit can be traced back to languages that are still spoken by ethnic groups in which shamanism is as alive as it was in the past. According to Parvati, many Sanskrit words were borrowed from Kirati.

The shamanic yantras—*sapta* and *nava graha rekhi*, among others—were adopted in the Vedic era. Kirati shamans used cymbals and *denguru* drums long before the Brahmins and the lamas took up their use. Tantric practices, on the other hand, are rooted in the shamanic primordial understanding that all cosmic processes descend from an interaction between opposing energies, which, in tantric terms, are the masculine and feminine.

Such statements should not be attributed to arrogance, but rather to the knowledge of historical developments. As is proved by cave drawings and the groups of hunter-gatherers that still exist today, shamanism was widespread across the world in pre- and early history. It has been preserved in a scarce number of places. In most areas it has been almost (or completely) wiped out. All religions developed long afterward. The shamans, who refer to nature, have an integrated and developmental spiritual perspective of history, whereas the followers of monotheistic religions are not historically oriented, but rather are ideologically oriented. Their god is the figure of most importance. He demands autocratic power and even

makes certain individuals his “chosen people”—paradigms that have allowed certain strips of land to become permanent warzones since the creation of these religions. An attitude of this sort is met with total incomprehension not only by jhankris, but by all Nepalese people. This was the case when an Austrian thangka collector wanted to commission Surendra Bahadur Shahi to paint a mandala that would show Jesus and Jehovah in the upper two corners and Buddha and Shiva in the lower two—in that order. “I was not in agreement,” said Surendra with indignation. “Even for a lot of money, I would have never been able to make such a thangka. It is not because I don't respect other religions—but it is historically false. Shiva must go at the top because he was the first. Then came Buddha. Jehovah and Jesus have nothing to do with either of them. If they go anywhere, they have to go at the bottom, and Jesus in the last place, for he was born a Jew.”

SHAMANISM, HINDUISM, AND BUDDHISM IN NEPAL

Nepal is a multicultural land. Every ethnic group, and even every individual, lives in its own universe. In contrast to the western world's dualistic and linear understanding of reality, this multicultural core is taken for granted by everyone in Nepal. However, there are realms of reality in which all multifaceted universes melt together into a unity, the foundation of which is understood by everyone. An important factor of this foundation is mutual respect and tolerance. Therefore, we again stress that the statements collected here are of equal value, but not of universal relevance for all the people of Nepal.

There are no incarnations of Shiva, only countless manifestations. “Like Vishnu, he has many names. In Nepal the most popular—besides Pashupati, Lord of the Animals—are Mahadeva, Mahesvara, Shankara, Jagannath, Yogesvar, and Bhairab. Regardless in which form or under which name he is represented, Shiva can be easily identified by his symbols: the trident (*trishul*) and his bull (*nandi*)” (Aran 1978, 78).

Many Nepalese shamans belong to Buddhist congregations. The Sherpas and some Tamang groups, for example, have a Buddhist orientation. Myingmar Sherpa said, “I have no religion. We shamans all have no religion. We are bound to nature and to the cosmos. For us, Shiva and Parvati are the ones who created everything. I am also a Buddhist, otherwise I would be exiled from my community.”

Depending on attitude and ethnic group, such statements sound different from those made by the jhankris. “We have no religion! Kirati shamans have no religion,” is how the Bhutanese Mohan Rai somewhat

“Lamaism was yesterday, Brahmins are a little bit older—but we shamans are the oldest.”

(PR)

TIBETAN MUSLIMS

In Nepal even the Tibetan Muslims are tolerant. It sounds paradoxical to make a connection between Tibet, this epicenter of Buddhism, and Islam. But the jewelry dealers in Thamel are, almost without exception, Muslims. “Our family has always been Muslim. In Lhasa there were many mosques. And also here in Kathmandu we meet every Friday to pray. We still honor the Dalai Lama. He is not really our religious leader, but rather our political leader, and he does much for religious tolerance.”

“Temples are there to provide a place for people. We are not gods and we are not all-knowing. This is why one bows reverently before that which is greater.”

(SBS)

“The world that was created by Shiva and Parvati split itself off into billions of emotions, appearances, and realities. But in the end all gods, goddesses, all beings and worlds are one. They fall back into the primordial knot of creation, into *bindu*.”

(MR)

“The four Vajrayoginis are the original Kirati shaman women (*barahi*), the four shaman mothers of the Kathmandu Valley. Hindus see them as wrathful aspects of the goddess Parvati/Kali. She is the mother of us all.”

(PR)



Vajrayoginis travel through the void and therefore are also called heaven's travelers. They are both peaceful as well as wrathful. With their red color, their bone necklaces, the curved daggers, and the skull cap bowl, they are manifestations of Rakta Kali—the bloodthirsty Kali who tramples the demons of hate on the path of love. (No. 16)



“We shamans in Nepal are all under Shiva’s protection, regardless of which ethnic group we come from. Without Shiva we would not be able to achieve anything.”

(IG)



Shiva Lingam Stupa near Durbar Square, behind the Mahandreshvara temple.

“It must . . . be emphasized that such hierarchical systems of organizing the gods using emanations, incarnations, and manifestations is the result of speculations by orthodox Brahmins in the sense of a standardization, whereas the actual reality of a god in the beliefs of the people or the king often has very little to do with that.”

ULRICH WIESNER

sharply expressed it. “Kirati are the only people who are accompanied from birth until death by shamans. Among the Kirati, shamans are responsible for all ceremonies including the death ceremony. But the Tamang have to go fetch the lama for their death-bed.” Mohan left his homeland thirty years ago because every ethnic group that does not submit to the state religion of Buddhism there is persecuted. Mohan does not describe himself as a Hindu or a Shaivite, although Shiva plays the primary role in his personal pantheon and he once had to flee his homeland as a so-called follower of Shiva. The Tamang female shaman Maile Lama has her last name because she is married to a Buddhist lama. Both husband and wife practice peacefully in their own way, side by side and with one another. The “Kirati shaman woman without religion” deferentially acknowledges Hindu or Buddhist sacred places when she drives past them.

Religious Tolerance

Gurung, after all, is simultaneously a lama and a jhankri. He explained to us how he came to these two roles:

“I became a lama because my family determined I should do so. Otherwise I would have never become a lama. There is no connection between these two directions for me. Lamaism is a tantric path. Shamanism is an open and direct form of access. When I am called into a house as a lama to carry out the death rites, I am a lama. Then I leave my shamanic ritual objects at home. When I work as a shaman, I completely forget everything I know about Lamaism and Buddhism. Then I leave the books at home. It would be totally ridiculous to speak the holy words of Lamaism if I am working as a shaman. When it has to do with ill-tempered demons, I’m requested as a shaman. Then I have to know how to soothe the demons and make them become positive again. Although I am a Mongolian Buddhist, as a shaman I must call on Shiva Mahadev and Parvati.”

The attitudes and combinations described here mirror the religious tolerance found throughout Nepal. Everyone lets the others have their own personal convictions, rituals, and ceremonies. In principle, everyone visits each sacred place and honors their personal divinity in the cult images. Thus at Svayambunath, the Buddhists see the *flame of enlightenment* in their stupa. The Hindus seek the mountain with the all-seeing eye because in it they worship the *lingam*.

For the Buddhist Newari, the Vajrayoginis are divine feminine manifestations of Buddha. They revealed themselves to the learned Mahasiddha Naropa (956–1040 C.E.) in a vision to help him avoid obstruc-

tions on his path to enlightenment. For the Hindu Newari, they are the goddesses of the highest yoga tantra who guard the Kathmandu Valley in its different temples, and at the same time they are manifestations of Kali. The Vajrayoginis (New. *Barahima*), together with the four gods of the directions, give shakti and inner vision to the shamans.⁴⁵ They are manifestations of Parvati. This is also the perspective of the Newari. Vajrayoginis are red because they drink blood⁴⁶ and only accept animal sacrifices, and they are naked because this indicates the naked origins of man. Their various animal heads⁴⁷ are reminiscent of the evolutionary connection. When we read in Buddhist-oriented iconographies that the four Vajrayoginis bestow the eight great forces (Skt. *asthasiddhi*) with their strength, the shamanic historical origins of the former are revealed as directional deities that are connected with the animal helpers. Parvati Rai said, “I don’t go to the temples of the Vajrayoginis. However, I invoke them depending on which direction I want to travel in.”

Because the perspectives on the gods are varied, their interpretation and nomenclature is also very different depending on whether the person is Newari (of Buddhist or Hindu type), Chettri, Brahmin, Tamang, Sherpa, Gurung, or Kirati. For the nonparticipating western observer who comes from an environment influenced by monotheistic religion—but who nevertheless makes an effort to differentiate the countless incarnations, manifestations, and forms of the polytheistic religions of Hinduism and Buddhism—the confusion is vastly multiplied to the point of complete incomprehensibility in the Kathmandu Valley; and this is without even considering the additional complexity of the shamanic interpretations.

Despite all of the religious freedom and openness it must be clearly stated that the coexistence of shamanism and Buddhism was not always governed by tolerance and peace (and in many regions it still is not). The Buddhist lamas viewed their forefathers, the jhankris, as competition and oppressed them in often brutal ways. In the end, the latter work with their trance techniques in the same way as do the former—who appeared much later on the scene, historically—with their spiritual-religious practice. And both ad-

⁴⁵ *Barahima* is also the skull chakra of a Kirati *phurba*. Their depiction is integrated into the upper area of the Magical Dagger, onto which the consecrated remnants of fabric are fastened.

⁴⁶ Tantrikas drink blood from sacrifices because by doing so they pay homage to the Vajrayogini. It is never the shamans who drink blood. “The others are always the ones who drink blood and eat people!”

⁴⁷ The Vajrayogini Simhavaktra has a lion’s head, Vajravarahi has the head of a pig, and Sardulmukha has a tiger head.



dress not only the spiritual and mental well being of the people, but their physical well being as well. When Buddhist texts and iconographical explanations are read with open eyes, the process of the demonization, oppression, or assimilation of the shamanic way of thinking can clearly be discerned.

Again and again we heard from the shamans: "That is originally shamanic. It was merely renamed or changed by the Buddhists."

The attempt by Lamaist institutions to oppress shamans is made clear in the following folk tale.⁴⁸

The Battle between the Lama and the Jhankri

As a lama from Nepal prepared to leave for India in order to study the sacred books there, he asked a local jhankri to take care of the spiritual needs of the villagers, who would have to make do for a long time without his presence. The jhankri readily agreed. When the lama finally returned and was just outside the village, he saw the jhankri in the distance, sitting next to a body. He seemed to be performing a death ceremony. Curious, the Buddhist dignitary asked his servant to take a closer look and report back to him.

⁴⁸ Fortunately it indeed remained only an attempt in the Himalayan region. Shamanism still enjoys a vital and unbroken tradition to the present day.

The servant did as he was told. He returned and stated that the jhankri was not using a book.

"How does the body look?" asked the Lama.

"The jhankri is getting him to dance, laugh, and eat," said the impressed secret ambassador.

"Really?" shouted the confused master, "Bring the jhankri to me!"

When the servant went back to the place of the ritual, he saw that the body was lying there lifelessly and the one who had revived it was very angry. When the servant spoke to him, the jhankri jumped up in a rage and threatened him with a knife. The servant appeased him and the jhankri agreed to go with him. The servant asked the wise Buddhist if he wanted to have a contest of strength. The lama agreed.

"All right," nodded the jhankri and stated the competition: "The one who can touch the sun when it comes up tomorrow morning wins the contest."

At sunrise the shaman donned his long dress. He put on his crescent necklace, his crown of peacock feathers, and grabbed his drum by its handle and beat on it with a drumstick made out of a plant named *kukur daino* (*Smilax* spp.). All the while he climbed higher and higher in the sky.

The lama, who was just opening his eyes, asked his servant, "Well, how high is my opponent now?"

Full of excitement, the man answered, "He's already in the clouds!"

Leisurely the lama prepared tea for himself and drank sip after sip without doing anything to follow after the rising sun. Finally he asked once more, "And how high is he now?"

"Already close to the sun," was the answer.

The lama asked that his servant bring him his incense burner. As the charcoal was lit and the incense fire started, a vertical column of smoke rose out of the window and straight into the sky. Finally it reached the jhankri—and caused him to sink back down to the earth. He landed ungracefully in a patch of nettles.

This is why jhankris do not eat nettles. The pointed drum stick and the crooked drum stick are symbolic reminders of the great rise and decline of the jhankri.

"For centuries the lamas were hostile to the shamans and their traditional worldview, rituals, and practices, yet nevertheless the Lamaist battle against shamanism was never crowned by success."

FURST (1998, 27)

"Praying to Buddha is the same as praying to Sheva [= Shiva]."

FUNKE (1982, 38)

"Buddha was nothing more than a Hindu yogi. In contrast to other forgotten *yogis* and *babas*, he was able to open his own club.

"The sky, the earth, and the underworlds are bound together under the mighty trunk of the Baobab tree; only the Shivaist ascetic *Gautama* attained enlightenment and experienced how the fire of karma (the chains of fate) can be escaped (*Nirvana* = extinguishing). In the Bahmanta Puranas Buddha becomes . . . explicitly honored as an appearance of Shiva."

WOLF-DIETER STORL (1988, 76, 79)

SHAMANIC VISION, TRAVELING, AND FLYING

TRANCE PHENOMENA are found in many cultures, but they are not the same everywhere.

Thus, in Africa or Bali mediums are possessed by certain deities or spirits and are completely surrendered over to them during the trance. After a while the mediums return to reality exhausted, without any recollection of what they experienced.

In Nepal the jhankris consciously immerse themselves in the worlds beyond. In a state of trance they mediate between both states of consciousness.

From the trance they communicate their newly acquired knowledge. And when they take on the behavior of animals, they are not possessed by the spirit of the animal but transform themselves in the corresponding world in such a manner that it inspires their animal spirits to share their wisdom. When they return to everyday reality, they can report exactly what they saw and what they experienced.

When we write about “vision” in the pages that follow, we don’t mean the perceptions that our eyes take in as sensory organs, but rather the perception of areas of our universe that are usually neither visible nor perceptible. And with the term “flying” we mean the consciously guided mode of traveling—on brooms, Magical Daggers, drums, or the like—into other realities.

The German ethnologist Hans Peter Duerr (not to be confused with the physicist of the same name) once wrote a provocative article called, “Can Witches Fly?”⁴⁹ The question is not only meaningless but completely absurd, for only those who are able to fly can be witches or shamans. Male and female shamans across the world were greatly amused by this question, because flying is already the definition of, or at the very least a crucial element of, being a witch or a shaman. Normal people are able to fly only in airplanes, but witches and shamans fly thanks to their spells or their traveling herbs and mushrooms. However, not every person who eats a few *Psilocybe* mushrooms is able to fly. Unfortunately, neither words nor drugs can make someone into a shaman or a flying witch.⁵⁰ And it is important to remember: Witches are killers, shamans are healers.

⁴⁹ He later expanded this article for his post-doctoral thesis, which appeared under the title *Traumzeit* [Dreamtime] (Duerr 1978).

⁵⁰ Unfortunately we don’t know if the author of the book *Menschenfrauen fliegen wieder* [Human Women Fly Again] (Schiran 1988) is herself a flying witch.

The Trance of the Shaman

The shamans glimpse behind the veil of *maya* on their journeys. *Maya* is the superficial appearance of the world concealing a reality that guides us but usually remains hidden. Jhankris leave this *maya* through the doors of the trance. The comment “Only those who can fall into a trance are shamans” emphasizes the jhankris of Nepal.

What is a trance? Everything (personal experience, observations, and scientific research) points to the fact that all people have the capacity for trance. But not all people are able to fall into a trance. The trance is a perception of a reality that lies in the depths of our own soul. In a trance state access to daily reality is minimized in favor of areas of consciousness that lead us to dreams, visions, and fantasies. In these realms the individual is connected with a collective experience and a store of wisdom that spans time. Here is where the threshold lies that determines who is able to fall into trance and who is not.

During the course of our process of acculturation, we are all taught—according to culture and personality—different ways to develop a skeptical mind. This (more or less) suppresses the intuitive dream world of our childhood. Knowledge and belief supplant the imagination, the will supplants the emotions, and control takes the place of intoxication. Critical self-reflection increasingly dominates our intuition. Those who are strongly oriented to the demands of society lose the gift of delving into their own personal inner space. Such people are not able to fall into a trance—even if they want to. The fears of losing control over themselves—and of losing the critical distance to phenomena that are not supposed to exist according to their linear, logical preconceptions—prevent them from being able to fall into trance.

The trance state exists in parallel to our wakeful, daily consciousness. People who have the gift of being able to fall into trance, and who have cultivated this gift over a long learning process, are able to steer both states of consciousness as if with a toggle switch. From one moment to the next, the jhankris fall into a trance and return back to normal consciousness. They swallow burning wicks in order to show, or to prove, the depth of their trance to the people around them. While in this state of trance they even direct their assistants to throw the flames into their gullet at a precise moment. Even when submerged in the deepest trance, the Nepali shaman is aware of the everyday



At the beginning of her trance, Maile Lama flies right out of her cross-legged position one meter into the air.

world. He can direct things in the mundane world from this state.

This trance state is best described with the help of an image from the modern world. When we put on the headphones of a walkman, we shut out the external noise and concentrate on the music in our head. If we move the earpiece aside, we are back in the normal world once more. We can make a conscious decision about which state we want to be in. The signals from the outside world are dampened by the loud music and we can decide, for example, whether or not we want to answer the telephone. This is nothing other than what the shamans do. They know which signals they want to receive from which world, and which signals will be useful to them for their journey through the three worlds. Thus it is possible for them to ask questions of their patient in the midst of their flight through the underworld in order to get important information that will help them to determine which of the seven tunnels they should take, or which helping spirit they should consult.

The shaman's art is to consciously bring about the state of trance and to steer it. The topography of the worlds beyond is provided down to the last detail in cultural artifacts. During the long process of learning—at the end of which is the shamanic initiation—one is given intimate knowledge of the world of the gods; of animal spirits and helping spirits; and of the qualities of the elements, the four directions, and the appearance of the three worlds—in other words: the shamanic cosmology.

When a Nepalese jhankri falls into his trance, he falls into an experiential landscape that is audible, visible, and three-dimensional. Shamans learn where the gods, goddesses, demons, and death spirits live, what they do, how they look, and how they can influence them either to disappear or to reveal their wisdom. Just as in the normal life, the jhankri takes the visionary world into selective consideration. He represses unwanted or irrelevant pictures and concentrates on what seems important to him, in order to detect the origins of disease and initiate the healing process. When we asked the shamans who were present—and who had observed the healing process with us—if they had seen what their colleagues had experienced, the answer was: "Although we could hear who they were invoking and what world they were traveling in, we could not see anything because we were not in the trance." However, when they took part in the same journey, they confirmed the descriptions of their colleagues down to the smallest detail. Although shamans delve into inner space when they travel, these are not private or personal places, but rather the collective primordial soul. They travel nei-

ther for self-fulfillment nor to retreat into their own world. They travel, fly, and see with the sole intention of helping other people. Their journey is a deeply-based state of consciousness that, like ground water, feeds all living beings—in health and in sickness. It is vital for every shaman to search out the influx of murky waters that bring confusion, poison, and disease and replace it with the clean spring water of clarity and health. In this ground water reside the mythical, primordial images of the soul, and at the deepest level they meet the gods and goddesses of the heavenly realms. If the water is clear and unspoiled, the individual is healthy. But if the water is disturbed by emotional thunderstorms which rain down on the person from the outside, or if it is polluted by negative aspects of the person's own character, fate, or environment, then the shaman is asked to go into a trance and—continuing with the same metaphor—bring on a good weather pattern.

One evening Indra Doj Gurung decided to "test" me. He wanted to know if he could trust me with shamanic secrets. He puts some ghanta malas or "bell chains" on me and gives me seven grains of rice, over which he quickly says his rice mantra. I then have to drink water, which tastes of mugwort, from out of a bumba. Luckily I have taken off my glasses and stowed them away safely.

Indra begins to sing his rice mantra and to drum. Inevitably and almost automatically I start to shake my body



In a state of trance, the shamans travel in the three other worlds, the other realities.

in rhythm. Without doing anything on my own, I enter into the state called *kampa*. I am shaken by Indra's power. My body vibrates more and more. I lose normal consciousness. Suddenly I glance into my body. There I see a shaken-up spinal column winding its way like a snake of exploding light. I am just able to think "This is like being on DMT," when my consciousness frees itself from my bones and races out of me. I see my own body. Fur springs up all over it. As I become aware of the pattern, I roar like a tiger. The shaman has turned me into a cat. I feel as though I am charged with energy. Overwhelmed, I collapse and sit down once more in the house of Mohan-dai, my "older brother." I gaze into extremely astounded, but also extremely happy faces. I have withstood the test. From now on, Indra treats me like a brother.

When I got home that night, exhausted from the trance experience, I went to see Surendra and his father. I pushed the door open and said, "Do you know what I experienced this evening?" Surendra responded almost laconically, "My father already told me. You transformed yourself into a tiger." Once again I was totally amazed—how did he know that?

For the next three days I had a painful muscle cramp in my neck. Indra laughed about it. "Of course, when you transform yourself into an animal, the transformation takes place right at the back of your neck." (CR)

When the shaman recites or sings his rice mantra, he burns the appropriate incense (primarily juniper [*Juniperus recurva*]), breathes in hyperventilating breaths, and beats his drum rhythmically; then he begins to shake (*kampa*). His body vibrates as if it were under attack from alien forces. He sits in a cross-legged position and flies quite high off the ground. Everything trembles and shakes. When his spinal column moves like a serpent, then his consciousness, his soul (or whatever you want to call the spiritual part of a person) liberates itself from his body. The spirit ascends the spinal column like the kundalini serpent. The spiritual body of the shaman transforms itself into a *phurba*, which shoots out of his body like a fighter jet. First he flies into the *bumba*, the jug on the altar. He dives into the liquid stored in it. It turns into a sea of *amrita*, the Elixir of Life. It is the primordial ocean from which all life springs.

In the shape of a Magical Dagger, the shaman plunges into the depths of the Elixir of Life. There he meets the 108 positive gods, who all shake his hand (this kind of humorous moment is found at the heart of all *jhankri* rituals). They give him the energy for the continuation of his flight. When the greeting ceremony is finished, the flying shaman charges out of the spout of the jug and lands in the three worlds. There he sees lights, which he uses to orient himself.

Over the course of our many encounters with the *jhankris*, we asked them how they can really tell if a colleague is to be taken seriously or not, for they know without a doubt what *jhankris* are doing, what they are speaking of—and above all, where they are traveling. On one evening we had the opportunity to glance behind the scenes.

As usual we sat in our small, whitewashed room north of Kathmandu. We heard that the son of the village policeman was going to come by in the evening to be tested by his colleagues. He belonged to the Jarga Magar group. We were excited about this meeting. We were familiar with the Kham Magar shamans from the film by Michael Oppitz, *Shamanen im Blinden Land* [*Shamans in a Blind Land*]. They are different from all the other *jhankris* of Nepal in the way they use the frame drum (Mag., re) and in their cosmology, which resembles that of their classical Siberian brothers and sisters more than the ethnic groups we normally dealt with in Nepal.

The twenty-three-year-old sat on the floor, somewhat intimidated by the presence of his role models. We learned that he would be traveling without any assignment as a healer and without a costume or crown. In addition, the gods and the helping spirits would be sleeping for a month. They were on "vacation" until the Naga festival (see the chapter "Dragons and Nagas," page 107). During this time no large *chintas* would be allowed to take place.

The young man dipped his finger into white and red pigment and painted an equilateral cross made up of dots on the stone floor: five points each on the horizontal and on the vertical, with the lines crossing at the third point in the middle. Above it he held the obligatory brass bowl with rice.

After he ignited his *dhupa* and sprinkled purified water on it, he called the available spirit helpers in a brief meditation with the help of his mala. His assistants stood at his side. Then he began to drum—it was the common Nepalese type with a handle in the form of a wooden *phurba*. It took a while, but eventually his body began to twitch. At first only shyly, then all who were present—his father, his brother, we strangers, and the *jhankris* with a good reputation, as well as the curious neighbors—offered him their respect. Mohan joked, "If he is not a good *jhankri* he'll get a kick in the pants. Come on, show us what you can do!" Even his father, a policeman with a cell phone, was visibly nervous. His family's reputation was at stake with the performance. Indra Gurung slid closer and closer to the young *jhankri*. Gurung had a trumpet made out of a human forearm bone bound together with the bone of a young predator (said to be a "baby tiger"). Of the three *jhankris* present,



Mugwort.

The water in the *bumba* is transformed into an ocean of *amrita* by a piece of mugwort, a panicle of *amlisau*, the brilliant red flowers of *rato phul*—a plant which represents the feminine on the altar—or the yellow panicle of night jasmine. The inside of a coconut holds the primordial water as well.

Those who bring a coconut to Parvati's shrine Banglamukhi will be cleansed by her and granted a wish. This temple of Parvati has a significant meaning for the *jhankris*. Like many other temples, Banglamukhi is visited on Saturdays, the day of Saturn, *shanibar* (Nep.).

Gurung, the Kirati shaman Parvati Rai, and the Tamang shaman Maile Lama, Gurung is the only one who uses such a trumpet. He increases his shakti power—his shamanic power—by conquering the fear of death and its transitory nature with its call.

Gurung's young colleague began to travel. In order to carry out a "presentation" in a shamanic way, he was asked to find out the condition of the house and yard. Gurung called to him encouragingly, and urged him to dare everything. "We are both on the same path. I know that you have a powerful strength!" The young Magar fell deeper and deeper into trance. Finally he swallowed a burning oil wick, which his assistants had stuffed into his open mouth in order to prove his immunity to pain. Stuttering, he said in broken words that a jealous dead spirit had been wreaking havoc on the house for a long time. He didn't neglect to say that he had, however, prepared an end for this ghost with a lavish shamanic ritual (see "Cutting the Threads of Fate" page 43).

When the young man returned to normal reality, his eyes met with visibly impressed expressions. "This young colleague is strong," said the "old rabbit" without envy. He had withstood the test. (CME)

Gurung's bone trumpet. In a trance, the Gurung shaman transforms into a wild animal that chews on human bones with pleasure.



"There is a world apart from what we know
There is a place the eyes will never show
We can be as one and will be further than the distance to the sun."

SPOKE'S BEARD

Blood is bound together with shamanism—although in the rituals of other groups it is used more bloodthirstily than in the *chintas*. Blood also signifies the rainbow and Kali. This wrathful appearance of Parvati is depicted on the thangkas with a red body, as are the Vajrayoginis. *Rato phul*, "the red flower," represents the feminine, and it represents these two goddesses in particular.

White is symbolic of Shiva, *amrita*, the full moon (*chandra ma*), milk, and crystal. The shamanic universe of gods and goddesses, masculine and feminine, is complete with the two colors of red and white.

Only a few shamans use bone trumpets. Through the sound, which comes from the remaining mortal shell of a human, they attain contact with the dead and with transitoriness, overcome their fear, and thereby strengthen their *shakti*. They only use trumpets made from animal or human forearm bones. Bone trumpets made from thighbones are used exclusively by lamas to scare off demons.



SHAMANIC VISION,
TRAVELING, AND FLYING

SHAMANIC HEALING

When someone visits a jhankri for healing, they do not explain what symptoms plague them, but give only a general description of the illness. By doing so they can check whether or not the jhankri is capable of recognizing the source of the disease.

Those who are recognized as shamans in their communities are obliged to help every person who asks to be cured of disease. But when jhankris become ill, they are reliant on the help of colleagues because they cannot heal themselves. The oath that the novice jhankri makes to his or her teacher, the guruji or guruma, to serve the health of his fellow humans is fulfilled responsibly, but it is nonetheless sometimes felt to be a curse.

Jhankris have occupations just as everyone else does. They are farmers, housewives, craftsmen, and so on. In addition to these jobs, they are available to everyone during the transitional times of daybreak and when darkness falls at sundown. The greater the reputation of their extraordinary abilities, the longer the daily line at the jhankri's door of those who seek their help.

In most cases, people seek consultation for very minor problems. When the tenth person with a cold or mild headache comes in and asks for a cure that is exhausting and time consuming—and that probably could be more easily achieved with a little patience or a tablet—it is possible that the jhankri might flee from his own house in order to save his energy for cases that really fall under his sphere of responsibility, such as states of confusion or depression, fever,

nausea, stomachaches and backaches, unexplained paralysis or coordination problems, and countless life situations that necessitate a glance into the past or the future with the help of rice or ginger oracles (*jokhana*).

“Five Minutes per Patient”

I visit Indra Gurung early one afternoon at his home. A line of patients are waiting for treatment. He explains to me he needs only a very little amount of energy in order to find out what is wrong with most of those seeking help. Many come just to pass the time. But some are truly in bad shape. These are the ones he asks to come back for an evening session. He treats the “normal” patients in a maximum of five minutes, and often less. I think about the fact that in our culture the patients are also only granted five minutes with the doctor. This issue has received much criticism. But patients can also be “vampires,” or spiritual vampires at any rate, and even the best shamans must protect themselves from them.

For Indra it is an easy task to be done with them. A few grains of rice, a little attention, a mantra—finished. The shamans, too, need only “five minutes per patient,” because patients can also make you sick. (CR)

As a rule, shamans relate to the spiritual, psychic, and emotional sides of an illness. For them these are the roots of the disease, which has consequences on the physical-material plane of the person. By reestablishing equilibrium, the jhankri strengthens the self-healing powers of the afflicted person.

Each and every one of us is bound together in a social network. The human environment has effects on us and we radiate back on it.

Every day, pregnant women come in to ask for protection for their babies against evil influences. The women are quickly helped, receiving fanning with clouds of *dhup* and sometimes with the hand broom made from *amlisau* grass. They also receive mantras, whose protection is conveyed in the form of rice kernels that they swallow. The mantras to protect taxi or rickshaw drivers from accidents are also quickly spoken. On the other hand, when someone is struck by great misfortune, it necessitates the complicated and time-consuming rituals of “cutting the threads of fate” (see page 43), in order to exert a positive influence on the patient's string of bad luck. Such *chintas* can only be carried out at night.

For serious cases the shamanic healing takes place at night. It is not only a therapeutic ritual, but also a social event better than any scary movie on television . . .



Children's Diseases

Among diseases and symptoms, there are certain types that are entirely unknown in Europe and that are also incomprehensible because their origins are to be found on a more spiritual plane. For example, with children under two years old, four causes for inexplicable crying or agitated conditions are differentiated:

Runchev lageko (Nep.) is present when the crying can be traced back to a contact the child had with either a pregnant woman or a woman who lost a child. If the treatment doesn't work and the child cries continually, this state, which is called *moch lageko* (Nep.), can be fought with the help of mantras or amulets. If a loss of weight accompanies the crying condition, then the disease is called *hawa lageko*. It is triggered by spirits—be they good or bad—who could have roamed through the house in the morning, afternoon, or evening and touched the child. Small children who are apathetic and who hang on their mother's sari skirts, who are unmotivated, and whose bowel movements smell exceptionally unpleasant, have suffered from a shock. "Children don't know their environment yet. A loud sound, an unfamiliar face, or an abrupt movement can be greatly irritating," explained the father of an eight-month-old son. This illness is called *sato lageko* and is treated by the shaman breathing mantras over the folded little hands of the child, over his feet, which are placed together, and over both ears and the forehead.

"Often people come who simply want to test if you're really a shaman," said the fifty-three-year-old Kirati shaman Parvati Rai mischievously. "They pretend to feel sick but are totally healthy. I quickly figure it out, though, by feeling their pulse or reading the ginger *jokhana*."

Ginger (Nep. *deshukpa*) has a central significance in the shamanic rituals of the Kirati. Without this aromatic root, which warms the body, clears the mind, and is incidentally the basis for every Nepalese spice mixture, a Kirati cannot shamanize. Throwing the ginger *jokhana* is the prerequisite for trance. The shaman cuts the root into little pieces with the horn handled sickle (see page 210) and determines—as with a coin oracle—what the signs mean. For example, when the cut surface lands face up, the person comes with honest intentions; when the cut surface lands face down, the person is only pretending to be sick.

For a Kirati shaman, the ginger *jokhana* is the prelude from which the ritual of "severing the threads of fate" develops. This ceremony is very important. It is not, however, part of shamanic daily work, and it only takes place a few times per year. When someone

is affected by great misfortunes and is hounded by bad luck, it is advisable to sever the threads of fate.

In this healing ritual it is often not only the patient who participates, but also other people who are present, including relatives or the immediate neighbors. Thus we also became witnesses to this ritual.

Cutting the Threads of Fate:

khadgo kumpa (Kir.)⁵¹

It was a rainy night during the monsoon season at the house of Mohan Rai, which he had built over thirty years ago, in Baluwatar, north of Kathmandu. The jokhana had shown a sign of "good luck" to most of those present. It was only for Mohan Rai that the ginger piece had fallen abruptly on the bad luck side. After he had recovered from this disturbing omen, it occurred to Mohan that he had indeed been plagued by misfortune for some time. As a result of unfortunate circumstances during a trip to the United States, he wound up in custody, although he was entirely innocent. It took months (!) until the sluggish, blind (though quite hostile, when it comes to Indians, blacks, and other ethnic minorities) American justice system finally realized its mistake and released him with a small fine. It was not only his family, but his businesses as well that suffered during the unexpectedly long absence of this businessman who is respected and honored throughout his homeland. In the past year his first wife was snatched away from the jaws of death during a four-hour-long operation dedicated to the Lord of Death, Yamaraj, also known as Yamantaka in Nepal and Yama in India. Recently new illnesses had repeatedly laid him up. It was high time to bring an end to this string of bad luck!

In the afternoon, three animals are brought into the foreground of the ritual: an elephant (Kir. *hati*) made from a banana bush, a sheep (Kir. *koshi*) made out of a pomelo fruit, and a goat (Kir. *lukh*) fashioned from an eggplant. An inhabitant of the house then strews white rice powder and red pigment (*tika*) on the brick floor of the courtyard, drawing the necessary diagram: the yantra *sapta graha rekhi* (= seven planet yantra). The white color represents the earth, the nurturing milk, the divine nectar *amrita*, peace, the transparent crystal that must never be absent from a shaman's altar, and ultimately, Shiva. The red color stands for the rainbow; blood, the juice of life; war; the black fossilized ammonites (*saligrams*) on the altar; and Parvati in her manifestation as Kali.

Slightly to the outside of the center, holes are made on the eight points surrounding the yantra. A small banana tree is placed on a nail in the center.

⁵¹ In Tamang this important healing ceremony is called *kharkothaba*, in Nepali *kharkokatni*.

THE THREADS OF FATE IN GERMANIC COSMOLOGY
In Germanic cosmology, the Norns spin the threads of fate. Urd is connected to the past, Verdandi spins the threads of the present, Skuld determines the future. Greek mythology knows them as the three Fates.

KOREAN DEATH RITUAL
In Korea, during an hour-long death ritual (*Seoul saenam kut*; cf. Knödel 1998), the shaman woman (*mu-dang*) severs the dead person's attachment to living family members in order to prevent the family from being pursued by restless or greedy dead souls. First, all of the family gods are invoked. During a collective drama, everyone with whom the dead person had a relationship remembers the good as well as the bad characteristics of the deceased. All "open accounts" are settled communally in order to neutralize any nagging guilt or hateful feelings. At the end of the ceremony, the *mu dang* walks through a tautly stretched piece of white silk cloth, ripping it apart lengthwise.

The banana plant in the middle represents the jhankri's spiritual white horse with which he can move in the four directions and the three worlds. According to the shamanic concept, the plant (which is related to grasses) transports the water of the ocean into the sky. Through the roots it absorbs it into the stem, and from there directly into the newly unfolding leaf, from which it evaporates into the air like a drop of sperm.



The seven planet yantra in the courtyard.

The middle belongs to Yama, the Lord of Death.⁵² He is represented by the banana, which absorbs negative energy. In a clockwise direction, plant bundles are placed in the holes. The sequence is as follows: mugwort or *titepati*⁵³ (*Artemisia vulgaris*); *kaulo* (*Persea gambleia*), the high altitude rhododendron; a kind of alpine rose called *sun pati* (*Rhododendron lepidotum*); saffron threads or *kum kum pati* (*Crocus sativus*); *bhairunga pati* (*Potentilla fruticosa*); *payung*

pati (*Prunus cerasoides*); *salu pati* (*Shorea robusta*); and *tulassi pati* (wild ginger) or *lalu pati* (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*). These eight plants represent the eight directions. Alternatively we could also use the seven seeds (from corn, rice, monkshood, millet, datura, wheat, and barley). Later Parvati Rai explained to us that the original ancestors of the Kirati shamans had found these plants in dreams. If the shamans forget one of the plants, they enter a trance in order to return to this "dreamtime"⁵⁴ and see the plants again.

The animals are placed at precisely defined intersections in the center of the yantra (see photo). For Mohan and his second wife, whose health has also been rather weak in the past, two chairs are placed on the south side, outside the yantra. All plants and animals are bound together with white cotton thread; a cosmic network is created.

In the meantime, in front of her altar in the center space Parvati Rai prepares herself for the forthcoming ritual. As usual she brings herself into a trance with her mantras, and beats the drum in the rhythm of the three worlds. Surrounding her, the Kirati beat on brass bowls—only they are authorized to do so—the rhythm of *dharti*, the middle world in which we humans live. It is only here that the life of the person for whom the ritual is being carried out can be realized. The jhankri's drum is placed with the point of the *phurba* handle on the floor. The person who holds it must use strength in order to stand firm while the drummers beat from both sides on the stretched skins made from the hide of the mirga musk ox. Parvati's wide white skirt swings in a circle. The hem follows her trance in wavelike movements. Again and again she reaches determinedly for one of the many objects on her altar: she sprays consecrated water or sacred wine (*rakshi*) from the gourd with the bamboo weaving. Two bamboo sticks,

Incense for the Ritual of Cutting the Threads of Fate (*khadgo kupma*) (according to Parvati Rai)

Equal parts:

<i>tite pati</i>	<i>Artemisia vulgaris</i> or <i>A. nilagirica</i>	herbage
<i>kaulo</i> *	<i>Persea gamblei</i> , <i>Persea odoratissima</i>	leaves
<i>sun pati</i> *	<i>Rhododendron lepidotum</i>	flowers
<i>kum kum pati</i> *	<i>Didymocarpus albicalyx</i>	entire plant
<i>bhairunga pati</i> *	<i>Potentilla fruticosa</i>	only the flowers and the cream-colored leaves
<i>payung pati</i> *	<i>Prunus cerasoides</i>	bark and leaves
<i>salu pati</i>	<i>Shorea robusta</i>	resin
<i>tulassi</i> ⁵⁵ <i>pati</i>	wild ginger, species unknown (= <i>deshukpa</i> , "ginger")	tuber

or:

<i>lalu pati</i>	<i>Euphorbia lacrissimum</i>	red and green euphorbia leaves ⁵⁶
------------------	------------------------------	--

*People preferred to use the roots and rhizome of these plants in earlier times. In order that the plants be preserved and not vanish from the earth, the shamans no longer use the roots, even though they are the best part of the plant in terms of scent and spirit. The intensive harvesting of "Tibetan" and "ayurvedic" medicinal plants in wild populations has already greatly threatened the flora of the Himalayas.

⁵² Yama, the Lord of Death, has his seat not only in *patal*, the underworld, but also in heaven, *akash*. The realms of Yamalok, Indralok, and Devalok are found there as a fractal reflection of the three worlds. Together with the one middle world, *darti*, and the one underworld, *patal*, they yield the three realms of *akash* with a total of five worlds. Five is one of the important numbers, and is represented by the shamanic and spacially coordinate cross of the four directions with the people or the shaman as the center point.

⁵³ All plant names here are in Nepalese.

⁵⁴ We borrowed this word from the Australian Aborigines. The Nepalese shamans do not know the concept of dreamtime. However, they did say that the collective dream of all animals is stronger than the collective dream of humans. Animals react more instinctively and sensitively than the thinking, acting, and reflecting human. Instinct and sensitivity are attributed to the dream world. Thus the dreams of all animals are more powerful.

⁵⁵ In this case the word *tulassi* does not mean *tulasi* or *tulsi* (*Ocimum sanctum* L.), but is a Kirati word for the ginger family (Zingiberaceae).

⁵⁶ These red tapered leaves are often considered "flowers," but they are "false flowers."



Mohan Rai and his second wife take their place in front of the yantra in the courtyard. When the threads are cut, they are not allowed to glance back (above left). The shaman circles the yantra (above right and far left) and is supported by an assistant as she falls into a trance (left).

BLOOD SACRIFICE

When outsiders witness a shamanic healing ritual, they could easily come to the conclusion that the blood sacrifice of an animal plays a primary role. But hens, roosters, or even goats are only sacrificed for serious cases.

For Parvati it was very important to convey to us that shamans treat the lives of the animals with great care.

“As a rule, we sacrifice rice and plants, and offer incenses, alcohol, or ritually purified water to the gods and spirits. I feel that people who eat the flesh of chickens every day are very thoughtless. Countless buffalo or goats must give up their lives during some Hindu ceremonies. The Newari slaughter 360 buffalo on *Dasain*, as an offering to Durga. We would never eat animals that are sacred to us.”

shikiphob (Kir.), serve as “spiritual binoculars.”⁵⁷ Again and again she takes in her hands these sticks, bushy on both ends from the frayed bark, in order to view events in the near and far past. Then, in Kirati, she invokes Ganesha, Shiva, and her personal protective spirits, plants, and animals. All the Kirati people who are present respond vocally to the invocations. Above all, the sisters comment, with grim or laughing faces, on the word games of the *jhankris*.

⁵⁷ These stems with bushy ends are remotely reminiscent of the cast or forged metal *vajras*.

With the call “Kulan!” the family gods are invited into the room. Mohan, who has been sitting concentrating with closed eyes, suddenly seems dazed. His face changes. (Mohan Rai later explained that he had encountered his father and had descended deep into his own family history.) Banana leaves with rice and fruit are quickly brought in. A bushel of kaulo branches (Persea gambleia) are hung in the window. With a powerful movement Parvati rips the greenery to shreds and wildly strews it around the room, grabs the “banana plate,” and runs out to the courtyard. The dead are

supposed to accept their final food, which they have received in this room, and then leave the place!

Back again, the Kirati shaman grabs her sickle and cuts a piece of a ginger root onto the ground in the direction of the married couple. The ginger oracle indicates the future of Mohan will not bring any more bad luck; for his wife, the usual ups and downs are to be expected. The consultation shows, however, that hungry spirits of the dead are still haunting the house and continue to suck on the life energy of the sixty-eight-year-old head of the household.

The married couple takes their place in the courtyard in front of the yantra. Mohan is connected with a thread to the banana tree. Starting at the couple, the shaman goes nine times around the yantra counterclockwise. With a sudden shout from Parvati Rai, a neighbor jumps up, grabs the khukuri knife, severs the thread to Mohan, and hacks the young banana tree in two halves. The animals and plants also “fall under the blade.” A chicken is beheaded. His blood is sprayed on the yantra. Finally, the exhausted shaman must be brought out of her deep trance by sprinkling sacred water from the calabash on the altar.

The shaman then calls out to the two main people in the ritual: “Go! Don’t look back!” All of the participants are carefully led into the house. The couple takes its place in front of the altar. Still in a trance, Parvati Rai thanks the family gods who helped her drive the hungry souls of the dead out of the house. She stands in front of the couple, then in front of the altar, turns

Parvati Rai tramples the coals to demonstrate the depths of her trance to the those who are present.



around three times in a circle, and picks up the objects on her altar by turns, in order to find the way back into our world. Another tremor goes through Mohan. His eyes roll back. His whole body is gripped by a trance like the one experienced by his father, who was a shaman at the royal court in Bhutan at the beginning of the century.

When Mohan comes to again, he feels “endlessly tired.” All twenty people in the room are visibly moved and pay their respects to the shaman and to Mohan, who has finally been released from his string of bad luck. (CME)

What took place that night? Which symbols were connected to the yantra? What roles did the animals and plants play? What did Mohan Rai experience in his trance? We returned to the site of the occurrences the next day with many questions.

During the healing rituals, the *chintas*, the shaman assumes control of the world and reestablishes an equilibrium between the forces when the center of gravity has shifted. With all of the theatricality of the healing ceremony, and with the help of yantras and symbols, the shaman is able to visually clarify the powers of destruction and renewal for the patient, his family, and his neighborhood.

The banana plant dies after it has brought forth its fruit. A new banana can only grow out of the root layer. In order to sever the patient’s connection to the previous life and to create new space, the banana plant is chopped in two. The thread between the master of the house and the banana is cut so that a new banana plant can bear fruit that can be spiritually and materially more nurturing.⁵⁸ The chicken had to die so that the hungry dead soul would chase after this sacrificed life and thus free the inhabitants of the house. In the shamanic universe everything takes place in a cycle. If one takes something from a soul—even if it is a dead soul, floating around—a compensation for it must be offered. The sacrificed plants and animals are not allowed to be eaten by those who took part in the ritual. The plants were left to the earth as fertilizer; a dog got the chicken.

The yantra painted on the floor contains a very intricate number symbolism connected to astrology,

⁵⁸ Pickles or curry are made out of the banana flowers, *naksi bonwa* (Kir.), but only on certain occasions as the bush will not bear fruit if the flower is harvested. This very rare and expensive food is prepared twice a year: in the seasons when the family moves to the North or the South. When it becomes too cold for them in the mountain regions they are invited “down” to *udhauri*, in the warm South. When it becomes too hot in the South, they are asked to come to *ubhauri* “above” in the North. These festivals are like harvest festivals when people give thanks for the protection of the gods and for the harvest of the fields.



The pair is in the South of the *Sapta-graha-rekhi* yantra. In the East and West, they are protected by the khukuri, moon, sickle, and sun. On field 13 is an elephant, on field 17 is a sheep, and on field 15 is a goat.

numerology, and (ceremonial) magic. Due to its complexity, the relationships cannot be further explained here. Beyond the number symbolism, the yantra is also a depiction of the shamanic altar.

The oil lamp in front of the couple is there to bring light into the lives of husband and wife, without which they might not be able to discern their next steps. In the North is Shiva's trident, which all shamans refer to as the central power. The *kalasha/bumba* in the East represents Ganesha—the guardian of the threshold whom each person and each shaman invokes first. At the same time it stands for the masculine part of the human race, while the incense bowl (*dhupauro*) in the West stands for the feminine part. On the right side, next to the masculine patient who is to be cut from his threads of fate, there is a sickle,⁵⁹ a hand tool that women use in their daily life. To the left of the female half of the couple is the khukuri, a masculine tool. In this way not only is the married couple a pair, but the tools are also united with the opposite gender to form a pair, and thus a harmony is established between being and doing.

The *trishul* in the North, the oil lamp in the South, the *dhupa* in the West, and the *bumba* in the East form the mandala of the altar and the cosmos that the Kirati shaman invokes to reorganize the lines

⁵⁹ For this reason the sickle plays such a large role on the altar of the Kirati shaman woman. If she were a man, a khukuri knife would be in its place.

of fate for the couple who is experiencing bad luck.

The elephant is the animal that is able to carry the greatest burden. For this reason he is placed in the middle of the yantra.⁶⁰ The sheep is an animal that provides warmth with its thick coat, resists dirt, is peaceful, and cleans its body.⁶¹ The goat gives milk. It is also a peaceful⁶² animal—and every part of it is used by the many cultures of Nepal. Along with the two other animals, the goat is for bringing relief, warmth, and nourishment to the head of the house, according to the yantra of the five planets that have bestowed Mohan with the lines of bad luck.

What did Mohan Rai experience in his trance?

“My father was my guru. I also became a shaman. In my younger years he taught me all of the necessary rituals and things that a jhankri has to know. But I have not practiced as a shaman for a long time. I see myself today more as a mediator. It is very dear to my heart that this tradition lives on and is cherished. This is why it has been a long time since I have fallen into a trance—even though I am involved with many shamans and rituals.

“When the thread between myself and the banana was cut, I did not allow myself to look around. Someone guided me inward. I felt possessed. I did not want to sit next to the altar any more, because I felt ‘strange’ there. That is why I sat next to my wife by the door. I do not know what Parvati did to me. From outside I heard her loud cry of ‘Hath!’ (= that’s it!).⁶³ Suddenly I felt very different. You told me that my whole body began to twitch. I found myself in the place where I grew up. I was in the ‘land of milk and butter’ in the middle of a herd of cows, calves, and steers. They had different colors and shadows. I once saw cows like this in Glasgow, Scotland. When they noticed me, they parted and let me go through the middle. Then I came to a forest of pines and oaks. This place conveyed peace and an overall vision to me. At one point I found myself on a narrow path.

⁶⁰ The elephant is on field number 13. This number helps toward finding the right path.

⁶¹ It is found on field number 17, the cleansing number. 7 is the number of the four directions plus the three worlds. 1 and 7 are primary numbers. In every direction the fields produce the number 5, the sacred number of the five elements: fire, water, earth, air, ether. According to the shamans, the gods visit the yantra in a counter-clockwise direction. All odd numbers are particularly favorable to the shamans. The three odd numbers 13, 15, and 17 form a closely related triplicity in a yantra, which through this ritual recovers the original power of the sacred number 3: Shiva, Shakti, Bindu.

⁶² The field 15 stands for peace and harmony.

⁶³ We noticed a number of forcefully exclaimed sounds like this that the jhankris uttered when their trance was at its peak: *zho!*, “that’s enough,” or, *phat!*, “down with you!” The animal spirits, gods, or demons that have been invoked are directed with these calls.



The chicken is destined for the hungry ancestral spirits. The sacred water brings one out of the trance.

The path was covered with slippery lichen.⁶⁴ As if I were on a roller coaster, I slid into the valley and ran onto a very well-paved street. There I saw a group of four or five women with their faces covered. They were crying and lamenting. I asked them: 'Why are you crying?' but they did not answer. So I had to cry too. Then I came back."

Mohan told this story to Parvati Rai the next day. She interpreted the experience in the following way: "The cows, the trees, and the well-paved street are good signs. Cows are related to Nandi, the steer of Shiva. One could not see anything better than this. The slippery path that you slid on is a bad sign. The crying women would also be bad, but in the context of the ritual they are good—the women are the dead spirits of your family. It is clear that they did not want to say why they were crying because they wanted to communicate to you the feeling that you must be sad, and they wanted to continue sucking your energy. Now we have sent them out of the house with the last meal and cut the threads of fate between you and them."

The Bite of the Snow Lion

The old people believe disease is carried by the wind; they are right. This is not based on superstition but on empirical natural science. When the wind sweeps across the polluted and dusty city, it collects countless pathogens and deposits them on the next mucous membrane that comes along. If one swallows enough germs, one is infected. It is no wonder that this beautiful city has the unfortunate but fitting nickname "Kathmandoodoo."

During a visit to Kathmandu it took exactly three days until my intestines went crazy. Usually I am a tough nut to crack, at least with regard to exotic foods and bacteria. But this time the deep breath I took upon my arrival in the kingdom knocked me right off my feet.

I awoke with horrible abdominal cramps, high fever, and an excruciating headache. I barely made it to the toilet and felt as if I were being turned inside out. Trembling, I grabbed what was supposedly the best diarrhea medication my doctor at home had recommended to me. I swallowed the shiny red pills—at some point I had taken the whole package—but the chemicals had no effect on the diarrhea or the cramps. I stayed sick for four weeks. Every day I got thinner and I meditated about how I would be able to dance ballet as a skeleton.

Diseases brought on by spirits or by the wind are best lifted away by shamans. After the medicine and antibiotics failed to help, I tried ayurvedic herbal preparations and Tibetan pills. Unfortunately they were just

as useless as the western chemicals. I only became thinner. Finally I traveled with my wife, brother, guide, cook, cooking assistants, and porters into the land of the shamans that extends around Kalinchok.

After three days of walking and many meters of toilet paper we were finally there. A jhankri—a shaman—awaited us in a small village. We put up our tents and looked toward the evening with excitement. The place in which the shamanic ritual was to take place turned out to be a sort of community hall. When we arrived, it was incredibly full. The whole village had gathered. With no television and no electric power, all forms of entertainment were more than welcome—and shamanism contains a healthy amount of entertainment value.

The shaman had an assistant who helped him build the altar and lay out the ritual objects. In the middle of the altar was a rock crystal, which was seen by the shamans as guru, as "teacher." In front of it was a bottle of schnapps. The smoke soon rose from the incense. The shaman smoked a cigarette. He sucked on it as if he wanted to fully extract all of the poisonous chemicals. (Shiva is the conqueror of poisons!) Between the deep inhalations, he began a song in which he invoked the gods. Soon he grabbed his drum and beat out a fast, hard, compelling rhythm. He breathed in synchronization with the drum beat; we would call it hyperventilation (it is supposed to work as well as a psychedelic does).

The shaman began to twitch convulsively; he sprung from a cross-legged position into the air, groaned, shouted, snorted, bellowed, hissed, and drummed as if he were insane. The tension in the room had grown visibly. Now questions regarding the state of my health were shouted out. He bellowed back some replies, which were translated by his assistant. Suddenly the twitching shaman turned and yelled as if he had been bitten by a tarantula, fell onto his knees, and made an incredible lunge at me. Bellowing and raging, he bit me in my abdomen—not physically, but psychically—and tore something out. I could clearly feel it, the cramps subsided. It was almost all too clear—something had left my body. Little by little, the jumping shaman calmed down. Once in a while there was an occasional shout and snort, and one last hiss—and then he returned to our world.

He related that he had transformed himself into a snow lion and had penetrated into me while he was in that shape. He had found evil magic in my intestine, and said that someone at the Kathmandu airport had put a spell on me out of jealousy.

The next morning I had my first normal bowel movement in four weeks. I had been healed overnight. Such is the effectiveness of shamanic therapy. (CR)

⁶⁴ Kir., Leyaw = lichen



Medicine Mandala with references to medicinal plants, life energy, and medicinal teachings. (No. 12)

PHYTOTHERAPY

All around the world shamans have discovered medicinal plants and other cures. “We have found and we continue to find the right medicinal plants in our dreams and visions,” said Parvati Rai. She was amused by the scientific hypothesis of trial and error. “Then we would all croak,” was her only comment in that regard. Nature reveals itself to the shamans, whereas it seems to conceal itself now and again from the scientists.

The statements about the plants in the following list are based on firsthand information from the shamans. The use of medicinal plants is very widespread in Nepal. They are used in household products in the urban areas, in folk medicine in the rural areas, in Muslim, ayurvedic, and Tibetan medicine—and in shamanism. There are overlaps and total contradictions in their areas of use. The phytotherapy of Nepal and of the Himalayan region is very well documented.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ There are numerous books about Tibetan and ayurvedic herbal medicine (i.e., Dash 1994, Rege et al. 1993) but relatively little written about Unani. There has also been much written about the folk and ethnomedicinal use of Nepal’s medicinal herbs (Suwal et al. 1993). There is even a Department for the study of Medicinal Plants in Nepal. It is administered under the auspices of the Ministry of Health and has brought out numerous publications.

For this reason we will only present a short list of plants used in particular by the shamans (see page 50).

Medicinal Marijuana

At one of our “inter-ethnic shaman conferences” at Mohan’s house there were Kirati, Tamang, Sherpa, and Gurung shamans present. Responding to the question of what aspect of marijuana is the most important in shamanism, they all answered in agreement, “as medicine for our patients.” They were all in full agreement about the areas of application:

- for happiness (lots of laughter accompanied this response, but one of the central responsibilities of the shamans is the encouragement of happiness or love of life);
- to alleviate “lowly thinking” or depression. (The psychiatrist Dr. Hans Georg Behr considers *Cannabis* the best anti-depressant; he administered it to his one-hundred-year-old mother, and she confessed her enthusiasm for the successful therapy on Austrian television while she sat laughing in the wheel chair with which they had rolled her out on stage.);

“The shamans learn the use of medicinal plants from the rhinoceros bird *dhanesha* (Nep.) or *garuda* (Kir.). He is their guide, he is their light. They receive ten percent of their wisdom in dreams, ninety percent in trance. They recite the *dhanesha* mantra so that the sacred bird will bring the medicinal herbs in their beaks to them. They are ambassadors from the other worlds.”

(MR)

Medicinal Plants in Nepal, Primarily Used by Shamans

BOTANICAL NAME	OTHER NAMES	USE
<i>Aconogonum molle</i> (D. Don) Hara	<i>thodne</i> (Nep.), <i>sariamilo</i> (Kir.)	herbage for stomach aches, heartaches, diarrhea, scratchy throat
<i>Allium sativum</i> L.	<i>lasun</i> (Nep.), <i>lawa</i> (New.), Garlic	freshly pressed cloves externally for skin infections
<i>Alstonia scholaris</i> (L.) R. Br. <i>chalamain</i> , dita, devil's tree	<i>chativan</i> (Nep.), <i>purbo</i> (Lepcha),	latex as wound dressing, root as aphrodisiac and fertility treatment
<i>Argemone mexicana</i> L.	<i>kanre phul</i> (Kir. "thorny flower"), <i>palanti kanta</i> (Nep.), <i>satyanasi</i> , <i>sungure kanda</i> , <i>thakal</i>	sleeping aid, ⁶⁶ pain medicine, for itching, for the bones
<i>Arisaema</i> spp.	Jack in the Pulpit, cobra plant	emetic
<i>Artemisia absinthium</i> L.	Wormwood	"for the correction of the spirit"
<i>Artemisia vulgaris</i> L.	Mugwort, <i>titepati</i>	cleansing agent, headache medicine, anti-depressant, sauna herb
<i>Arundinaria</i> sp.	<i>nigalo</i>	for strength (mixed with ginger)
<i>Begonia</i> spp.	<i>magar kasi</i>	wound medicine
<i>Cannabis sativa</i> Lam.	<i>bhang(a)</i> , <i>ganja</i>	anti-depressant, sleeping aid, appetite stimulant, aphrodisiac
<i>Ceiba pentandra</i> (L.) Gaertn.	<i>khote simal</i> (Nep.), kapok tree	latex for pimples
<i>Cestrum nocturnum</i> L.	<i>hasana</i>	tea for bronchitis
<i>Chenopodium ambrosioides</i> L.	<i>alimah</i> , <i>ratto late</i> (Nep.)	strong headaches, migraines, vermifuge, abortifacient
<i>Cordyceps sinensis</i> (Berk.) Sacc.	<i>kurki</i> , <i>takre chyau</i> (= "caterpillar mushroom")	febrifuge
<i>Datura</i> spp.	<i>dhaturo</i> (Skr.)	for insanity
<i>Elsholtzia strobilifera</i> Benth.	<i>chinike jhar</i>	leaves for loss of appetite
<i>Ephedra Gerardiana</i> Wall.	<i>somalata</i> (Skr., Nep.)	asthma, respiratory disease
<i>Ganoderma lucidum</i>	<i>kane chyau</i> , ⁶⁷ <i>denguru chyau</i>	pressed juice for ear problems, tonic
<i>Gonatanthus pumilus</i> (D. Don) Engler et Krause	<i>lepche bung</i> , <i>mane</i>	jaundice medicine, cough medicine, dew for eye diseases, traveling herb
<i>Hedychium spicatum</i> L.	<i>pankha phul</i> , <i>hutamo</i>	smoking herb for coughs and sinusitis
<i>Holarrhena pubescens</i> (Buch. – Ham) Wall. ex G. Don	<i>indrajow</i> , <i>kevat</i> , <i>kurci</i>	bark for dysentery
<i>Lycopodium clavatum</i> L.	<i>lahare jhyau</i> (= "vine mushroom"), <i>nagbeli</i> (Nep. "snake body"), <i>melam mendo</i> (Sherpa "welcome plant")	"witches' grain" ⁶⁸ as fever medicine
<i>Lyonia ovalifolia</i> (Wall) Drude	<i>angeri</i>	salve from the leaves for itching
<i>Mesembryanthemum crystallinum</i> L.	<i>tusare phul</i> (Nep.), ice plant	dew for itching, sinusitis, eye problems
<i>Paonia emodi</i> Wall. ex Royle	<i>ghulaf</i> (New.), <i>chandra</i> (Skr., Nep. "moon flower")	for "purification"
<i>Psidium guajava</i> L.	<i>latam</i> (Nep.)	diarrhea medicine
<i>Rhododendron arboreum</i> Smith	<i>laliguras</i>	flower tea for throat problems, scratchy throat
<i>Rumex crispus</i> L.	<i>hal hale</i> (Nep.), sorrel	joint medicine
<i>Sapindus mukorossi</i> Gaertn.	<i>rittha</i> , <i>ritha</i>	expectorant, jaundice medicine, liver medicine
<i>Shorea robusta</i> Gaertn.	<i>sal</i> , <i>salla</i> (Skr., Nep.)	wound medicine, particularly for monkey bites
<i>Strychnos nux-vomica</i> L.	<i>gante</i> , <i>kuchila</i> , <i>kajara</i>	oil pressed from it, sometimes mixed with ganja, is used as a massage oil
<i>Tinospora cordifolia</i> (Willd.) Miers	<i>gaduchi</i> (Skt.), "amrita"	tonic

⁶⁶ "Kanre phul is a species of opium" (PR).

⁶⁷ There are other species of mushrooms known under this name; the oyster mushroom (*Pleurotus ostreatus* [Jacq.] Quel.) and cloud ears (*Auricularia* spp.).

⁶⁸ The *lycopodium* or club moss, also called witches' herb or druid herb, is considered to be for protection against witches, just as it is in Europe (see Müller-Ebeling et al. 1998). Honored guests in Sherpa country are greeted with garlands made from it. In the Kathmandu Valley *lycopodium* is the sacred plant of Vishnu. The spores of the plant are the "witches' grain."

- to alleviate insomnia (first smoke a little ganja and then pleurably drift off to sleep);
- to alleviate loss of appetite (who hasn't experienced the "munchies," or that nearly relentless hunger for sweets and adventurous food combinations?);
- to alleviate forgetfulness. This sounds like a homeopathic paradox, for the western literature about marijuana repeatedly states that it ruins the memory and, with chronic or habitual use, even destroys short-term memory. The shamans laugh at this. Even the Brahmins and sadhus smoke ganja to increase their capacity for the memorization of sacred texts, primarily the Vedas. One can easily see by this example how the wisdom of millennia can be twisted overnight by science.
- to bring the libido back when it has been lost for any reason. (There was lots of giggling over this topic, which Nepalese women don't speak about openly.) Marijuana is perhaps the most effective and most used aphrodisiac around the world. Mohan Rai commented that without sex, life is unfulfilled and devoid of *shakti*. One should not confuse the subject of an effective aphrodisiac (there are no known deaths due to marijuana use) with a very dangerous medicine full of side-effects, such as Viagra (which is responsible for over two hundred deaths).

With the last statement, the uses of ganja come full circle: through good sex one receives happiness.

We then talked about dosages. All were in agreement that frequency and dosage must be decided according to the individual patient.

Time and Again Mugwort (*titepati*)

Mugwort (*Artemisia* spp.) is often found all over Nepal at almost all elevations. It has important functions in all areas of shamanism throughout Nepal: as a protection agent for the shamans, the patients, the drum, and the altar; as a traveling herb; as ritual incense (see below), and as a medicinal herb. The herb is considered generally protective, both spiritually and physically.

Some Medicinal Recipes

Titepati Tea

Harvest the tips of the herb, if possible when they are blooming or bearing seeds, roast them and put into water with some salt (the salt takes away the bitterness). The amount of herb used per person is as much as one can hold with three fingers. The "whole system is cleansed" with this tea.

Stalk or Pressed Juice

A piece of stalk about the length of a finger is picked and skinned. This is eaten or the juice is pressed from it. A tablespoon of the pressed juice is taken to treat headaches, fever, and vomiting.

Incense

The dried tips of the stalks are burned on wood charcoal so that people suffering from soul-loss can have new life breathed into them; in other words it is an active anti-depressant incense.

Sauna Brew

Either the fresh herb is put on the coals in the sauna or the pressed juice is sprinkled on the hot stones. The steam permeated with mugwort is good for colds of any kind.

When a patient has "skin color of kurkuma" (liver disease), the shamans prepare a bed of fresh *titepati* bushes. Then they pour boiling water over the bed of herbs and lay the patient down on this simply prepared steam bath.

AMULETS AND TALISMANS

The shamans as well as the gubajus give amulets and talismans to the *dio baju* (men) and *dio mesu* (women) of the Newari, but above all to the children, in order to protect them from bad influences. Such protective amulets are very important for small children, above all, because the incidence of child mortality is still very high in the rural areas of Nepal. Almost all children in Nepal have one of these fabric amulets, called *bhutis* (Nep.), around their necks. Often the amulet is only square braided yarn work with a mandala-like color pattern. Sometimes rice papers with mantras written on them, rice kernels, incense, bark, or other natural materials are sewn into the small fabric pouch in order to intensify the protection. Many modern people—above all the Chettri—belittle these amulets as being backward and superstitious.

The amulets (Tib. *srung-ba*) and protective chakras (literally "circle, disk," Tib. *srung-khor*) are written on rice paper or sometimes painted or printed with a wood block. The precise form and iconography for them is passed on traditionally (Heissig 1962). Amulets of this sort appear to have been developed and used plentifully by the Bon people in the pre-Buddhist period (Skorupski 1983). There are hundreds of forms of such amulets; structurally they are similar to *lingas*; the amulets are worn by the Newari and Tibetans in small pouches carried on strings called *gau* (also *ga'u*) (see Richtsfeld 1982). In Nepal the *gau* decorated with the Garuda are particularly popular.

There are special amulets against bad magic from mantras (*gtad*); these are written on paper with a miniature *phurba* made from acacia wood⁶⁹ (picture on page 74). In order to make this amulet effective, the following mantra must be spoken: “Protect the one who wears this from the harm caused by evil mantras. May the misfortunes precipitated by the concealed destructive mantras be quelled” (Skorupski 1983, 23).

In the Himalayas cowry shells are also used as amulets (Nep. *kaura*, Tib. *'gron-bu* = *mgron-bu*) for protection against disease (see Skorupski 1983, 120). A cowry shell, most often of the species *Cypraea annulus* or *C. moneta*, should be found on every shaman's drum. With the movement of the drum one can hear how the shell “beats” on the inside, against the skin. In this way the cowry actively protects the drum.

On certain holidays—for example the Janai Purnima festival that takes place during the month of *Saun* for the renewal of their Brahman-thread, during which shamans visit sacred places such as

⁶⁹ Probably *babul* [*Acacia nilotica* (L.) Willd. Ex del.; syn. *Acacia arabica* (Lam.) Willd.], a sacred tree in Nepal; better known as the source of gum arabic. It is said that in this tree lives a goddess who can bless infertile women with children when shown the proper respect. (Majapuria and Joshi 1988, 146).

Kalinchok or the Sea of Gosainkunda—adults receive amulets from jhankris, Brahmins, or gubajus, in order to strengthen their life energy (*shakti*). The bands and the ties, which are wound around the wrist eight times, are also supposed to protect the people from evil influences with a “magical circle.”

The Bat or “Medicine Bird”

In the Tamang language the bat is called *phanang*, “medicine bird.” In the Newari language it is called *chikan paapcha*, “oil butterfly,” in Nepali, *chamera*—from which derives our Indo-Aryan word *chimera*, the Etruscan-Roman hybrid creature which is very reminiscent of a *wasala* (New.) (Nep. *dunche*).

The shamans, and above all the Kirati, use the curved, khukuri-shaped teeth and bones of dead bats as talismans for themselves or their patients. Protection is received through these animal relics.

In China, Tibet, and Nepal bats are woven into the rugs as a sign of good luck. Bat dung that comes from the caves of the Himalayas and Altai is usually called *mumeo* and is used as a toning medicine. It is also sold around the world for this purpose. The Newari roast bats in oil and use the cooking oil as a hair oil for baldness (which is actually rare in Mongolian people).



The Batman comic hero created by Bob Kane was made into a shaman in the nineties. This episode is based on the idea of animal transformation by putting on a certain costume. Also Batman himself is a bat, thus a flying relative of the animals that are active at night and fight against all evil spirits, lending him shamanic traits and characteristics.

(Cover image, *Batman: The Shaman* by Dennis O'Neil, Edward Hannigan, and John Beatty, © Edition Comic Art/Carlsen Publishing, Hamburg 1991)

TANTRIC HEALING

There are others in Nepal besides the jhankris who possess the natural ability to fall into a trance. The lamas of the Mongolian Tamang occasionally fall into a trance, usually during death ceremonies; the gubajus of the Newari are also capable of it now and again. Both lamas and gubajus are—or are able to be—tantrikas. They are able to freely choose their work from independent elements without the prerequisite of having been summoned for the job, as is the case with the jhankris. Moreover, while they are in a trance they do not visualize places or situations where they learn the origins of the disease or gather details useful for information about the past or future.

The *dio baju* (men) and *dio mesu* (women) of the Newari also belong in this context. They do not use a drum, but instead—like the shamans—they utilize a kind of hand broom, the *kucho*, made from the sacred *amlisau* grass, with which they “sweep away” negative influences. As a rule they are not in a trance, but when this does occur they are so overwhelmed by the extraordinary state of consciousness that they are not able to willfully make use of it as the jhankris do. Nevertheless, they treasure this natural gift so much that in order to maintain it they follow various taboos—for example the dietary taboo against eating chicken. The *dio mesu* and *dio baju* are possessed by deities when they are in a trance; jhankris are not. This is a very important difference that previously has been misunderstood.

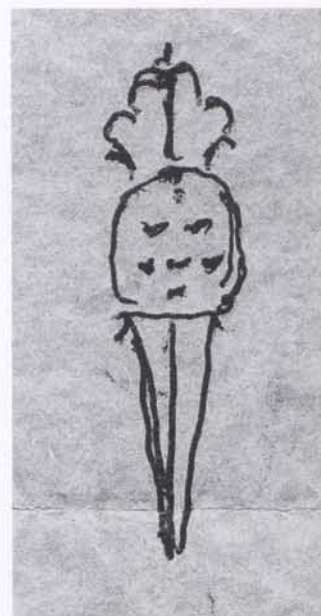
The goddesses (usually Durga or Kali) travel in the body of a woman, while the masculine deities

travel in the body of a man. *Dio mesu* and *dio baju* fall under the protection of the divine sisters Harati Mata and Dakshin Kali who are worshipped in principal shrines in Kathmandu. During these moments of reverie the people show their respect with a *puja* to the deities present: They bow before them, sprinkle water, strew rice, dab a *tika* with pigment on their foreheads, and finally throw flowers on the ground before them. Those people whose bodies are occasionally sought out by gods and goddesses are bestowed with sacred mantras (like the jhankris). The Tamang shaman Maile Lama thinks these mantras are sometimes so powerful that they trigger the trance. She is able to perform healing with the help of the mantras. The cure consists primarily in the reestablishment of the psychic harmony of the community. In cases of serious illness the Newaris go to the doctor.

The assistance of a person such as a *dio baju* or a *dio mesu* is sought if, for example, a small child cries and whines inexplicably—in other words, when it has nothing to do with colic, hunger, or thirst, and the child cries even though the mother or other beloved people are nearby. It is only the person who is happy and satisfied and who is not plagued by anything—not in the heart, spirit, or body—that is truly healthy. (The people of Nepal have far greater expectations for their health than do those in western cultures.) The *dio baju* or the *dio mesu* who are brought in to help in these circumstances might light sticks or cones of incense and whisper mantras that the others cannot understand.



The resident gubaju was called by a Newari family to cure a child's inexplicable crying.



A Bhairab *phurba*, an important healing tool of the tantric Newari gubajus. (Drawing by the gubaju Asha Rattna Bajrachharya, 1998)

This old wooden Newari figure represents a gubaju who holds in one hand the *kucho*, the broom for healing, and in the other he holds a *trishul* (unfortunately one of the three points is broken off). With this the gubaju clearly stands in the tradition of Shiva and the shamans. This portrayal depicts and illuminates a healing ritual in the same manner as it would also be performed by shamans. Below is a pair of gubajus, one in a position of prayer, the other holding *shanka* and *ghanta*.



In the early morning we visit a *dio mesu* in the neighborhood because of the incessant crying of little *Ajusma*, the eighteen-month-old daughter of the brother of our host and co-author *Surendra*. The *dio mesu* lives in a traditional Newari house and has her practice in a tiny room. We climb a steep staircase to the first floor. We deposit our sandals, belts, and other leather articles on the landing. Light streams into the low room through the open casements of the richly carved and decorated wooden window. We all take a seat on the bench, drawn to the spot by the window through which the typical Newari village architecture is visible across the small courtyard. It is immediately apparent that this was a bad idea, for we should not tower over the healer who is sitting in a cross-legged position on the floor. So we sit, as the pregnant women, mothers, and children do, on the reddish clay floor.

The woman through whom the gods are speaking is about sixty-five years old and is dressed entirely in red. Her wide skirt is reminiscent of the costumes of the shamans. She lights incense sticks in a clay bowl, and turns to one of the women who has pushed her two-year-old son directly in front of her on the mat. The child is in a good mood and attentively follows what happens—as does little *Ajusma*. Both children have been crying a disturbing amount and should therefore receive divine assistance. The *dio mesu* fans the incense in the direction of the small boy, shuts her eyes, mumbles her secret mantras, and with the aforementioned hand broom, sweeps all of the negative influences out of the boy. Breathing quickly, she sucks air in and pushes it out again—just as we have always seen it done by the shamans. For the finale, she sprinkles over the child purified water from a brass vase which resembles the *bumba*, and then pours a little of it in a bowl and asks the two-year-old to drink from it. Fearlessly and like a seasoned pro, he pours the water into his open mouth without touching the edge of the bowl to his lips. The mother hands the woman a five-rupee piece and leaves the room. The same procedure is repeated with *Ajusma*, who sits down trustingly. Her mother is asked to cease touching the child so that the contact between the child and the healer will not be disturbed. At the conclusion, she receives a small amulet that she is supposed to wear around her neck for the next few days. The mother is advised to come back for two further visits.

Now it is our turn. We ask for general protection from disease, for while we have not been stricken with the diarrhea or respiratory diseases so common to Kathmandu, our intestines are somewhat weak after a month of traveling in India. For our treatment the incense, the *amlisau* broom, and the purified water play the central role, although the *dio mesu* also strokes us over our bare stomachs with her hands, which feels very curative. As

I swallow the water I can't help but think that although magical words have been spoken over it, the water is neither boiled nor otherwise purified. Whether it is just luck, coincidence, or the belief in the healing power of the dio mesu—I am able to retain my healthy bowel movements. (CME)

The Phurba As a Tantric Tool

The tantric use of the *phurba* encompasses the curing of disease, exorcism, killing demons, meditation, consecrations (*puja*), and weather-making. The blade of the *phurba* is for the destruction of demonic powers.⁷⁰ The top end of the *phurba* is used by the *tantrikas* for blessings.

Tantric priests (*guruju*) use *Bhairab phurbas* for the curing of disease and especially for curing children's diseases. For these cases the point of the *phurba* blade is dipped into a glass or a bowl of water, turned, and stirred. The sick child is then given the magically charged water as medicine to drink.

The magic of the Magical Dagger comes from the effect that the material object has on the realm of the spirit. The art of tantric magicians or lamas lies

in their visionary ability to comprehend the spiritual energy of the material object and to willfully focus it in a determined direction.

During *bokshi* possession, the tantric priest utilizes the same methods as the shamans do except for the significant difference that the tantric priest does not go into a trance, but instead struggles directly with the *bokshi*. The *gubaju* uses the Magical Dagger to kill the *bokshi*. The *phurbas* are basically protection against the *bokshi* and against common witchcraft. Battling against witches is also one of the most important jobs of the Tamang shamans and lamas.

Tantric Medicine

The excrement of the Dalai Lama is allegedly the most potent material of tantric medicine. This is collected every morning by his personal physician, carefully dried, and stored. It is the central material substance of the Tibetan-tantric pharmacopia (Laufer 1991)—a concept that is scarcely imaginable for Westerners. A realm of “scatological medicine,” however, also exists in our own pharmacological history. There are numerous books that exclusively report on excrement and its wonderful medicinal effects. Psychedelic people know why the excrement of pigs is valuable: upon it grow the sacred mushrooms that bring enlightenment and illumination. The importance of excrement is also a fundamental principle of alchemy. The cosmic umbrella begins in your own intestines.

⁷⁰ In Tibetan medicine there are 101 physical and mental diseases which can be traced back to demonic influences. These 101 diseases are identified by taking the pulse and examining the urine, and can only be treated by lamas and Bonpos with rituals, primarily utilizing the Magical Dagger (Baker and Shrestha 1997, 86).



Yamantaka, the buffalo-headed Lord of Death, embodies the power of the end of all things. (No. 45)

THE THREE WORLDS AND FOUR DIRECTIONS

In normal life we only deal with one world. Rarely do the other two worlds make an appearance in our daily consciousness. We live in this world and know that at some point we will be buried in the earth, where we will be “pushing up daisies.” On clear, starry nights we gaze dreamily at the sky or watch the clouds or airplanes flying over. At best, the “third world” makes an appearance in our everyday language. With this term we mean underdeveloped countries. We are rarely conscious of the fact that it is exactly in these places where the three worlds have a significant meaning.

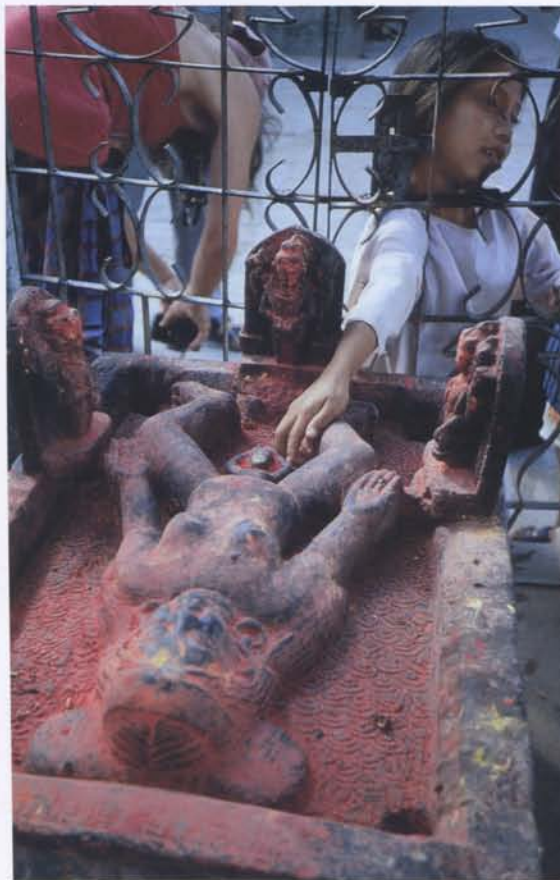
For the shamans of Nepal, however, the three worlds are as self-evident as the daily route to work or brushing one’s teeth might be to us.

As a rule, the shamans travel in the middle world, *dharti*, since they receive assignments from people, and the animals and plants help them toward the solution of their respective problems. When the shamans travel in the middle worlds they do so in their mission as healers. “If I am a person and not a shaman, I experience the world I live in as a beautiful place. I enjoy the flowers and the animals, and take pleasure in friendship and the love of friends and of my family. When I travel in the Middle World as a shaman, then I am on the road as a healer. This is why when I am in a trance in *dharti* I see suffering and dying people, and their deeds appear to me as a bloody sea, a sea filled with hatred, jealousy, and ignorance. When I am called to be a lama, I see nothing at all. Then I recite the texts in the books.”

The Kirati shaman Parvati Rai sees the world as being like a crab, a boat that is carried by birds, or a fingerprint viewed from above. “We swim on the water like a leaf in the wind, which is much stronger than the earth. Wherever I am, I am always in the center of the universe. National borders are made by humans. No animal spirit and no other helping spirit asks me where I come from” (PR).

Often it is necessary to travel in the underworld, *patal*, in order to discover the origins of disease or to snatch away the stolen parts of the soul from the creatures that are living there.

It is seldom that a trip into the upper world, *akash*, is necessary. There are three realms in *akash*. The first is Yamalok, the region ruled by Yamaraj (also Yamantaka in Nepal and Yama in India) and his consort Yamarani. Both were ordered by Shiva to keep watch over the death of humans. Like bookkeepers, they note down their lives and transport the dead to



Darti Mata, The earth goddess, is also honored by children in Kirtipur.

A COORDINATE SYSTEM
The four (or eight) directions and the three worlds play a decisive role for the shamans of Nepal. According to these directions and locations, the altar and the inner alignment is a coordinate system in which the shamans become spatially aware of themselves. Only then are they able to travel.

“Walk with me!
there are worlds to see . . .”

PAIN OF SALVATION,
ENTROPIA (1999)

“Life in the cycle of countless rebirths is like a vision in a dream. The gods on high, the mute trees and the stones, are alike apparitions in this phantasy. But Death administers the law of time. Ordained by time, Death is the master of all. Perishable as bubbles are the good and the evil of the beings of the dream. In unending cycles the good and evil alternate. Hence, the wise are attached to neither, neither the evil nor the good. The wise are not attached to anything at all.”

HEINRICH ZIMMER (1992, 8)

Yamalok.⁷¹ If the dead person has led a good life, the soul is carried into the upper world with the aid of the helping spirits, while the body that has expired is buried in *dharti*. But in the case of a bad lifestyle or a violent death, the soul remains on the earth as *bhuta*, a dead soul. Kalas mediate between the *jhankris* and Yamaraj, who is a manifestation of Shiva.

The second realm of *akash* is Indralok. This is where the forces of nature reign and where the elemental gods reside who govern the five elements. This is also where the kettle of the moon is found, which releases soma into the earthly waters at specific times. In addition to the elements that are known to us—fire, water, earth, and air—the people of Asia know also the ether, a fine aura that is identical with the highest regions of heaven and with spiritual spheres. The shamans duel with the forces of nature in Indralok. If they are successful, they are able to invoke rain or sun.

Devalok is the third and most distant region of

⁷¹ At his side stands Chitragupta, a sort of “minister” who keeps notes about the deeds of the person. He is the one who ends the physical life.

A bottle gourd, together with a *phurba*, represents the *axis mundi*, the World Axis.



THE BOTTLE GOURD (KALASHA)

The bottle gourd represents the three worlds. The smaller, upper belly is *akash*, heaven, with its three realms—Yamalok, Indralok, and Devalok.

The tapered neck is *dharti*—the human world of plants, animals, the five elements, and the four directions. The larger, lower belly represents the underworld—*patal*.

This kind of gourd is indispensable to the altar of the Kirati shamans. It holds the primordial sea or *amrita*. In the context of *chintas*, the jhankri sprinkles the purified water (alcohol on rare occasions) it contains around the area.

akash. The gods and goddesses live there. The jhankris are ambassadors between the people and the gods. It is their assignment to bring freedom and peace from this realm to the middle world. Only seldom is it necessary for the shamans to fly to the gods, in order to deal directly with them for difficult cases. For example, a trip into the heavenly realm is necessary for the ritual of severing the threads of fate, or when a person becomes crippled in mysterious circumstances, or if a person becomes deathly ill. Then the jhankri “lodges a complaint” with Shiva, Parvati, and Ganesha in order to negotiate with them about the years of the patient’s life that will have to be subtracted from the life of an animal. In some cases they make a request to the supreme divine family of Yamaraj and Yamarani to leave the people in *dharti* and wait until later to fetch them. Occasionally the other gods are witnesses to these negotiations.⁷² The shamans do not communicate with them and they communicate just as little with Yamaraj. The *bhutas* and animal spirits are ambassadors with whose help the jhankris are able to mediate between the humans and gods.

If they fly through the two lower realms of *akash*, the shamans must inform and convince the rulers of the realm of the dead (Yamantaka, Kalas), the elemental forces, that they are just “passing through.” With the call of “*Om phat shohar!*” they say to the gods: “OM here I come!”

The Tamang shaman Maile Lama and the Gurung shaman Indra Gurung told us what it looks like in the lower and the upper worlds:

Like an umbrella and similar to the image of the cosmic mushroom, the tripartite upper world, *akash*, stretches over the middle world. The entire arch of the heavens is surrounded by cliffs that are decorated with finely engraved designs. After the shamans cross through the air-realm of the birds and eagles, their spiraling flight finally lands them in the dark, black world of Yamalok. Indralok appears to them in red

⁷² According to statements made by the Kirati shaman Parvati Rai, these gods, who are subordinate to Shiva and Parvati, appear as motionless statues.

and blue colors. Above it is the curved, rainbow-colored realm of the gods. It is infinite. Rarely has a shaman attained the vertex of this neverending and distant celestial realm.⁷³

Beneath the “umbrella of Shiva and Parvati”⁷⁴—beneath the world populated by the animals of the air—spreads the world of the creatures that live on the earth. Seen from above, the middle world, *dharti*, appears as a plate surrounded by endless waters. The realm of the humans is set in a barely perceptible circular movement by these waters—or, better stated, by the four animals that live in the water. These are the crocodile (Kir. *maggar*), the shark (Kir. *jalahathi*), the snake (Skr. *naga*, Kir. *puchhap*), and the turtle (Kir. and Nep. *kachhuwa*). Although they are pillars of the middle world, they are also moving supports that rotate counterclockwise.

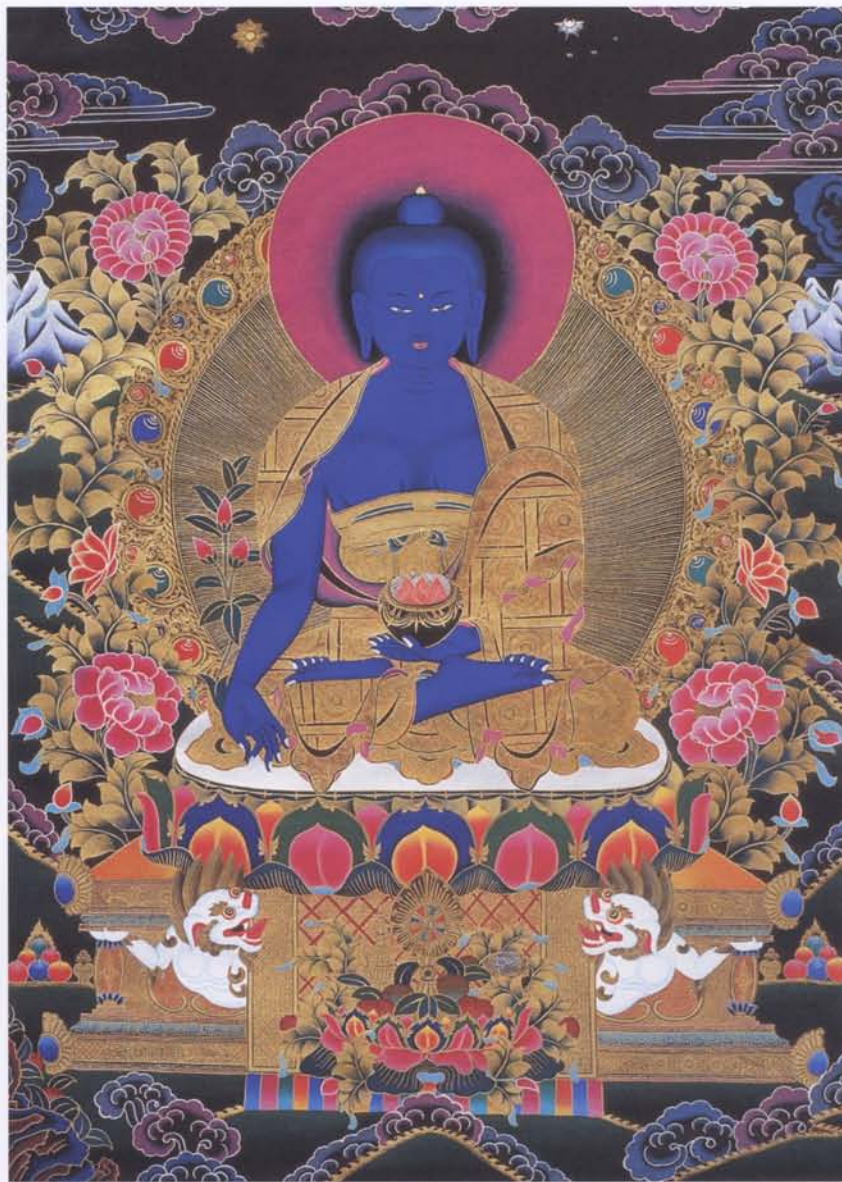
In cases of serious illness, the jhankris travel to *patal*. Our gloomy idea of the underworld, which is conceived by Christians, Jews, and Muslims as being identical to a sort of hell, bears absolutely no relation to the shamanic concept of the underworld. Quite to the contrary, the underworld spreads out under the surface of the oceans, and like the underwater world, it is a beguiling, sparkling, crystalline color. This is where Yamaraj and Yamarani again rule, as well as Nagaraja and Nagarani—the divine couple in the form of snakes from primeval times who once helped the Hindu gods and the Rakshasas stir the primordial ocean.⁷⁵ Aquatic animals such as frogs or snakes are the ambassadors used by the jhankri in order to communicate with them. The jhankris, who are not able to breathe well in this underworld, are dependent upon the help of the *nagas*. With their powerful mantras they invoke the water snake.

The underworld is deep blue—like the faraway heavens. At the bottom of the ocean the jhankris encounter *akash* once more. Although no shaman whom we spoke with in the Himalayas had ever seen the ocean (and slide shows or films about the underwater world were just as remote), they were all in agreement that more animals live in the under(water)world than on the earth. They describe plants that are like animals, and animals that look like plants, as well as

⁷³ The gurung shaman Indra Doj Gurung informed us that in especially difficult cases he has pressed forth to the zenith of Devalok. It is shadowed. In order to orient himself, he needed the shadows that had accompanied the dying man in his life to act as an ambassador.

⁷⁴ This is identical with the cosmic mushroom; see the chapter “Traveling Herbs and Traveling Mushrooms,” page 151.

⁷⁵ In Vedic and Hindu myths the feminine side is mostly suppressed. For shamans, however, the entire cosmos is created out of the interaction between masculine and feminine.



The blue medicine Buddha is depicted on many healing thangkas. (No. 40)



Nagas and naginis rule the watery, crystalline underworld.

fluorescent colors and dazzling gardens. The underworld appears as an exact mirror of the upper world. Although it is more aggressive there than in the peaceful upper world, it is also more beautiful:

“We like traveling in the underworld best because it is so beautiful there. The crystal (Nep. *shiladhunga*) on our altar shows us where we have to go. First Ganesha helps us to cross the threshold. Then we call to the three worlds and to their rulers: Mahadeva and Mahadevi for *akash*, the *bhutas* and animal spirits for *dharti*, and Nagaraja and Nagarani⁷⁶ for *patal*. The direction we must take is indicated by a green light. The spirit of the *nagas* and our crystal are signposts through the crystalline underwater world. The light

⁷⁶ Although Parvati Rai told us that Yama was also the commander of the underworld. He and his wife Yamarani are subordinate to Shiva and Parvati; nevertheless the pair of gods of the dead would rule the middle world and the underworld as well as Yamalok in the upper world.

of *shiladhunga* shows us in which tunnel lie hidden the origins of the disease.”

THE EIGHT LEGS OF THE SPIRITUAL HORSE

The eight directions are of central importance in every respect. The shamans of Nepal are aware of eight-hoofed white horses, *baipankhi* (Kir.), that play a significant role in the spiritual worlds. They are found in the center, the *bindu* of the spiritual world, on crossways, in the focal point of yantras, and on magical diagrams. White horses can move in eight directions. Each hoof embodies a different animal, depending on the “species” of the spiritual white horse. Each one of these animals and white horses is vitalized by a mantra without which the yantra does not have an effect. Equipped with the same bell necklaces that humans put around their horses, these

In each of the three worlds there is Yamalok. The fact that everything that lives on this plane is transitory—even the goddesses and gods—is expressed in this.

The eight “legs” of the spiritual horse.



spiritual animals are used by the shamans in order to move around in the invisible world. The jhankris gallop in trance in rhythm with the bells.

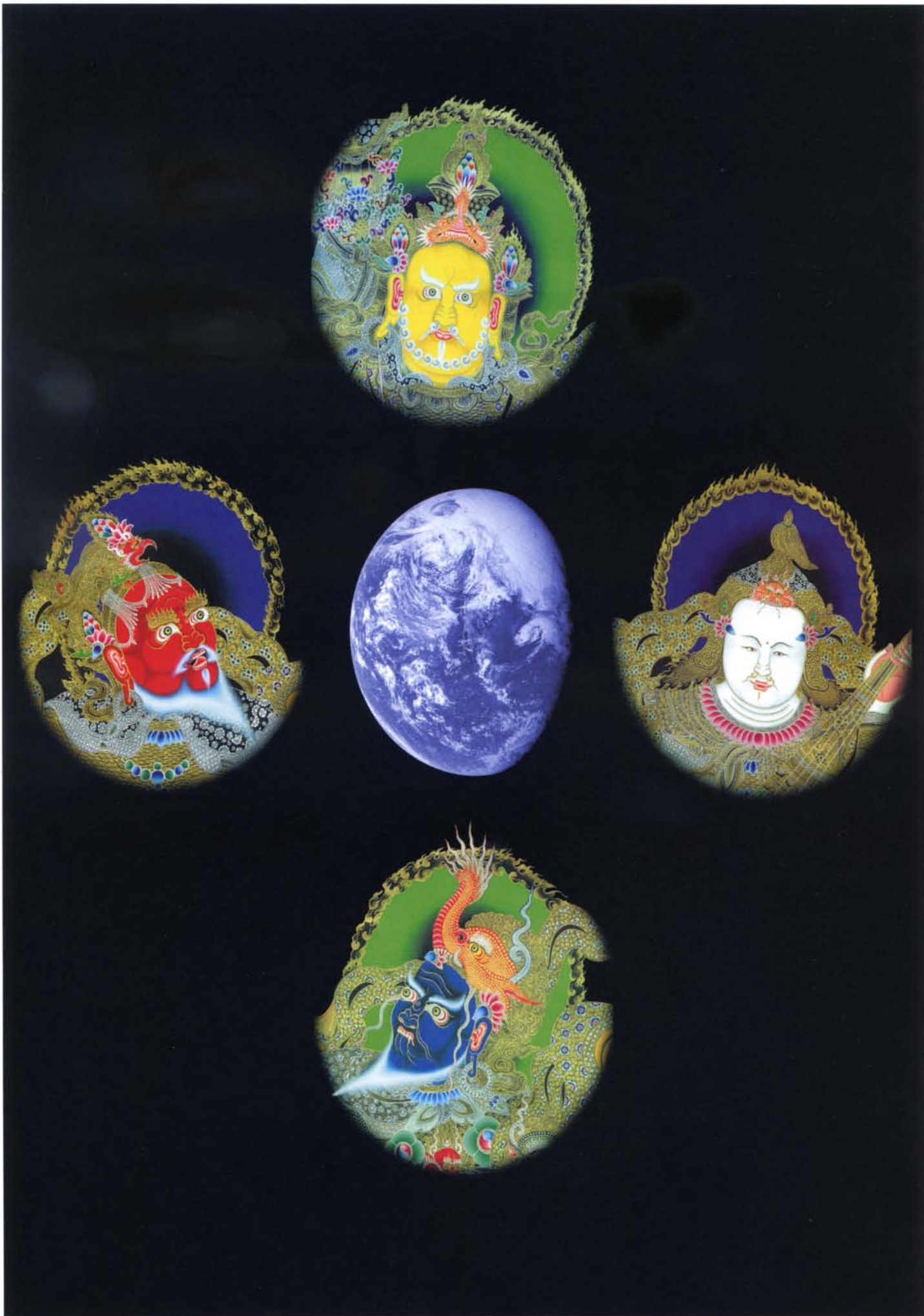
For example, if they must deal with a particularly powerful opponent in one of the three worlds and they lack the energy for the confrontation, then they invoke the wild boar. The boar gives the jhankris a snarling ferocity and physical strength. If it is necessary to envision the journey that the soul part of the sick person has made, then they ask for the visionary powers of the *danphe*—a pheasant-like bird called Tragopan. Ultimately it is the musk ox that guides the shamans to their goal.

Depending on which energies the assignment requires, a different horse stands ready for action in the stud farm of the visionary worlds.

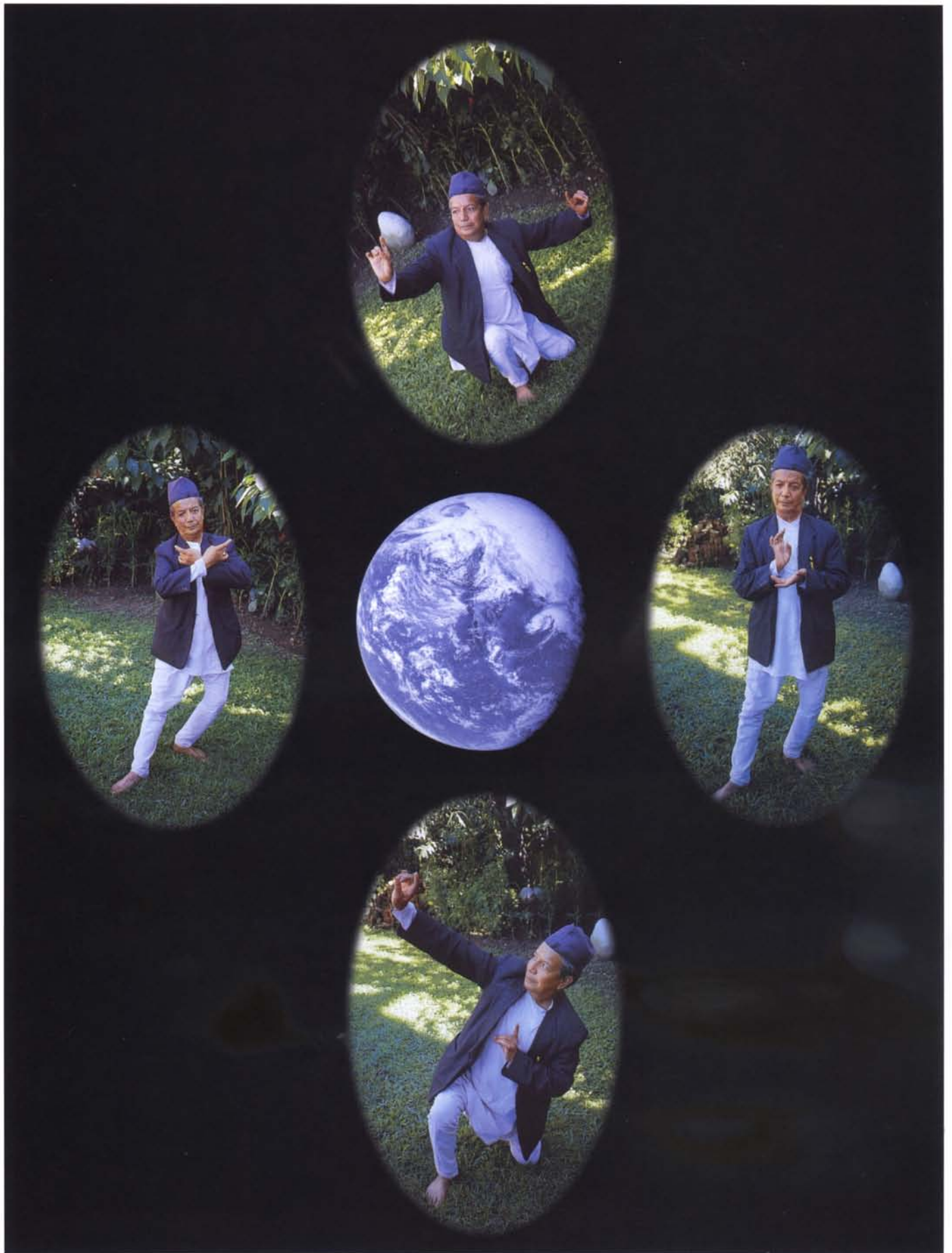
The four cardinal directions strengthen the jhankris with protection, wisdom, cosmic light, and nourishment. The shamans are surrounded with the helping powers in all directions: in the South a firewall makes them unreachable; in the North, Garuda, Lord of the Airs, guards them from aggressors; in the West, Kali, the menacing emanation of Shiva’s wife Parvati, protects them; in the East it is Shiva, again in his ominous manifestation as Bhairab.



The four directions. In the South, behind the shaman’s back, there is a flame wall that shields from dangers and devours the past. Garuda is in the North, Shiva/Bhairab in the East, and Parvati/Kali in the West.



The humans and the world they live in are found in the center of the shamanic universe—here they are surrounded by Buddhist guardians of the directions. (Details from No. 34 a-d)



The gubaju Asar Ratna Vajracharya demonstrates the mudras of the four cardinal directions. Opposite: The white Dhritarastra, Guardian of the East. (No. 37a)





The blue Virudhaka, Guardian of the South. (No. 37b)



The red Virupaksha, Guardian of the West. (No. 37c)



LIFE IN THE MANDALA

From a geographical perspective, the narrow band of the current national territory of Nepal stretches in a gentle curve that descends from the northwest to the southeast. In the north the small kingdom of Nepal borders Tibet, annexed by China; Bhutan and Sikkim lie to the northeast; in the western and southern directions it is surrounded by the enormous subcontinent of India.

In Nepal humanity always finds itself at the center of an imagined mandala that is essentially determined by the eight directions and the five elements (fire, water, earth, air, and ether). For the Nepali, we are always bound up in the eternal cycle of the living. During the day we read our own life in the solar course that we see burgeoning in the rising sun, climbing to the zenith of mid-day, and disappearing past the horizon every evening. We dedicate the course of the day to social life, our duties and deeds. But the night belongs to our dreams; it belongs to our own individual desires and fears.

shanti (peace)

pyar (love)



daya (sympathy)

kushi (well being)

THE SOUTH: THE SEAT OF THE SHAMAN

When shamans and jhankris make contact with the gods, goddesses, and spirits of the three worlds in order to fall into a trance and heal people, they sit with their back facing south. With the first magical working, the shamans invoke the fire god Agni, or Agni Deva, who protects them from behind with a



Left: the yellow Vaisravana, Guardian of the North. (No. 37d)



In the Kathmandu Valley, the double *dorje* (or double *vajra*) is the sign of the tantric path and simultaneously the sign of the four cardinal directions: *charmukhi dorje*.

The powerful manifestation of Rahula, the God of the South, rides on blood red waves with the crystalline kingdom of the underworld beneath him. (No. 15)

THE THREE WORLDS AND
FOUR DIRECTIONS

It is characteristic that the elemental god Agni Deva holds a *bumba* in his left hand (in his right hand he holds a scepter). Just as the shamans initially erect a fire-wall behind them, they also travel in a trance into the *bumba*, diving into the ocean of the 108 deities, returning back out through the spout enriched with new wisdom. (Drawing from Shakya 1994, 66)



“The spirit, which in many cultures is likened to fire, or to air that is impregnated with fire, incarnates itself in humans. It leaves the macrocosm of nature and finds a home in the microcosm of man. . . . a *Focus* is what a public and private sacred fire site was called by the Romans.”

STORL (1988, 18, 19)

“The Lord of the Birds is the divine eagle Garuda, who was later thought of as the vehicle of Vishnu [= Vishnu]. . . .”

HERTEL (1996, 386 F.)

firewall. “Fire can protect you. But it can also destroy your house,” said Maile Lama and emphasized, “We humans could not live without fire. It warms us. It shines in the dark. We can cook with fire and make tools with it. Our clay pots come from the fire oven. This is why we absolutely must first show our respect to Agni Deva.” Fire also exists as light or, on a parallel plane, as inspiration. The light radiates from the teacher (guru) of the shaman and shines on the pupil. The fire of wisdom blazes within him.

THE NORTH: GARUDA, THE ALLY

The bird Garuda rises up with expansive wings in the shamans’ line of sight to the North. His pointed beak grips a snake in the middle of its body. The snake’s tail and head twist to both sides. The snake therefore appears to be split into three sections. In principle it is the *naga*, a divine being with the attributes of strength and wisdom, although it can be threatening and bring illness. Then it is grabbed by the Lord of the Air. In this shamanic mandala (No. 2) Garuda embodies not only the vehicle of the god Vishnu, but he also embodies Shiva, who unifies all three Hindu deities—Shiva, Brahma, and Vishnu—within himself. The jhankris receive wisdom from the North. There stands the holy Mount Kailash on the peak of which, according to Hindu beliefs, Shiva meditated for thousands of years in silence. The North represents the energy of the spirit, the atmosphere, the ether—the element of air.

Among the Hindus, Newaris, and Tibetans, the bird Garuda (photo page 69 and 71) is very popular and is regarded as being identical to the deity Phurba

(Meredith 1966, 241). In mythology, Garuda is the “Destroyer of Snakes.” In Tibet, Garuda (*rna-khyun*, *bya khyung*) is even one of the medicine deities (Müller 1927, 970). In Vajrayana, Garuda is an emanation of the red Vajrapani (Lindhorst 1997, 136). As a knife handle, Garuda can also take the place of the *makara*.

The Garuda Bird

Today the bird Garuda is mostly known as the namesake of the Indonesian airline *Garuda Indonesia*, and as the symbol of the tourist-friendly island of Bali. The story of Garuda begins in ancient Babylon. There a strange bird named Zu was worshiped. He stole the tablets of fate from the gods and brought them to the humans. Iconographically, Garuda appears to trace all the way back to approximately 2600 B.C.E., to the Sumerian representation of a feathered creature found on the golden sacrificial altar of King Gudea of Lagash (Stutley 1985, 49). A strong influence on the pre-Buddhist Himalayan region came from Manicheism by way of Mesopotamia. The Manichean elements had a particularly powerful influence on the shamanistically imbued ancient Tibetan Bon religion (Nicolazzi 1995). In Bon mythology there were two birds, Khading and Khyung (= K’yung),⁷⁷ who symbolized the powers of light and dark. At the beginning of time they spontaneously manifested as fully mature beings from out of the cosmic egg. Later the Khyung and Khading melded together. This bird embodies the fire spirit of the Bon religion and is still found on Tibetan prayer flags as the symbol of the element of fire (Dowman 1994, 77). Khyung and Khading are identified with the Aryan *soma*, and became Garuda in the Sanskrit literature. In the Puranas and epics the Garuda is a fire spirit, an enemy to all snakes, the water spirits. In tantra, the bird Garuda represents the energy of fire, which heals diseases—such as cancer—that are caused by the *nagas* or water spirits. In Dzogchen, Garuda symbolizes the *yogis* and *yoginis* who follow that particular path. The similarities of his two wings indicates the “unitary nature of duality” (Dowman 1994, 77).

In Hindu mythology Garuda is considered the vehicle of Vishnu, the Preserver of the Cosmic Order, and also the vehicle of Krishna. He is the King of the Birds and is depicted either as an eagle or a

⁷⁷ “Even the old and, as one should think, long-established forms such as K’yung (a mythical bird that combines the Bon traditions and the later Indian influences of “Garuda”) are found with little variation all the way to southern Siberia and, in a more strongly modified form, all the way into Hungary. Behind such outward appearance, a general correspondence between them can be established throughout.” (Ackmann and Koenig 1982, 321)



Shamans examining the painter’s vision of Garuda.

Opposite: Garuda—the traveler of the Three Worlds—as a shaman.





Japanese depiction of the Tengu.

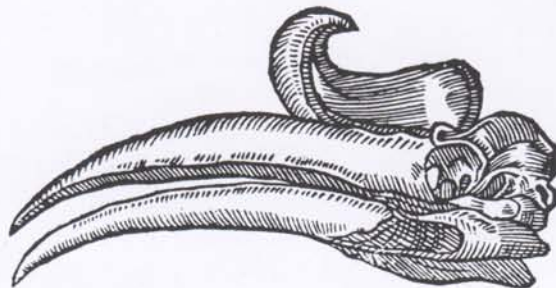
humanlike creature with a beak and wings. Garuda has the ability to move from one place to another in a fraction of a second. For this reason he is practically invincible in battle. In addition, this ability enabled him to steal the *soma* or *amrita* (= ambrosia) from Indra, the King of the Gods (*Mahabharata*, *Suparnadhya*). According to Schneider (1971, 31–37), Garuda is not to be at all identified with the Vedic Syená. After all, Garuda robbed the Drink of the Gods from Indra, who had already obtained it from the falcon Syená (Schleberger 1986, 180). This is the reason he is also called Amrtahavana, “nectar thief.”

Garuda not only stole the Drink of the Gods, but *amrita* is also one of his most significant attributes. *Amrita* literally means “immortal” and is a food or a drink of the gods. According to the *Atharvaveda* (IV, 35, 6) *amrita* is produced by cooking the sacrificial foods made from rice. The power of *amrita* is in victory over death. In a later myth it says that Dhanvantari, the Doctor of the Gods, was born in the pounding of the Primordial Ocean and holds in his hand a vessel filled with *amrita*. The moon is considered the vessel of *amrita*. This vessel refills itself each time it has been emptied; thus the moon waxes and wanes (Stutley 1985, 7).

Garuda is the wind personified; he is associated with the sun and represents the esoteric lessons of the Vedas. He stands for the magical words (mantras), which can transport people from one world to the next at the speed of a lightning bolt (the speed of light!) (Stutley 1985, 77). In Nepal, the Garuda also appears as the vehicle of the Avalokiteshvara and of the Amoghasiddhi Buddha (Shakya 1994, 14, 34).

All of the attributes and characteristics of Garuda fit very well with the iconography of the Magical Dagger. Garuda is also related to the Japanese Tengu,⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Concerning this goblin in the form of a bird in Japanese shamanism and the relevant mythology, see De Visser 1908, Fister 1985, Rättsch 1995c and 1997a.



In the early modern era the skull of the rhinoceros bird was presented in curiosity exhibits as the remains of a unicorn. (from: Gesner 1669)

who is a Magic Mushroom spirit and also seems to have a relationship to the Magical Dagger (Rättsch 1999d).

THE EAST: SHIVA, THE FATHER OF THE SHAMANS

The shamans visualize Shiva in the East. The rising sun brings life and light from the East, from the right. The shamans Maile Lama and Mohan Lal Rai emphasize that civilizations came from the East, and not only those people who populated Nepal over the course of the centuries. In particular they mean Tibeto-Mongolian people who, like the Newari for example, were supposed to have come from Burma, as well as the Rai or Kirati who came from Bhutan to Nepal. Because there can be no life without light, and because all life comes from water and life requires the vital water, the East is connected with the element of water. *Pani*, water, is worshipped as a god, Jala Deva. To the shamans, Shiva, the most important god in Shaivite Hinduism and the original father of the shamans, also appears in the East.

THE WEST: THE GREAT GODDESS

The West is the realm of the Goddess. She is *shakti*, the source of the power of the shamans. All that is found on the left is related to women. This direction signifies nutrition and energy. Only if he has first worked the soil can man harvest the fruits of the earth and put something on the table (in Nepal it would more likely be placed on the floor, where people sit cross-legged to eat). Only when he has focused his spirit does man create the energy he needs in order to think.

Kali, the terrifying manifestation of Shiva's wife, Parvati, provides protection against all dangers that come from the West.

Varuna Deva, God of the Water, is depicted in white, sitting on a *makara*. He is the Lord of the Snakes (*nagas*).

In the Buddhist *Guna Karanda Vyuha Sutra* it can be read that the Aryan Avalokiteshvara Varuna made an oath to only give nectar and clean water to the living creatures, but not to harm them with floods—in which case Buddhahood is reserved for him. This is how Buddhism tamed the ambivalent elementary deities and bound them into the service of the teachings (*Dharma*).

“There is healing power in every female vagina.”

SUFI SAYING

The division of right = masculine and left = feminine, is also true in Nepal for *pujas*. The women approach the temple, shrine, or divine figure with their offerings from the left side, the men approach from the right. This division can also be observed in Europe. In Renaissance portraits of couples, the women always sit or stand on the left side of the man (which is the right side from the perspective of viewer).



The representation of the dancing Garuda relates to shamanic ideas. (No. 50)



This thangka depicts a Tamang shaman's journey of consciousness. (No. 4)

THANGKAS, IMAGES FROM OTHER REALITIES

The shamans of Nepal are certain of the fact that shamans were the first people to paint thangkās. There are still many shamans living among the ethnic groups that have developed and refined the art of thangka painting over the course of centuries. The images are painted in order to render the invisible visible. They serve to train the visionary powers and thus assist in the ability to move about more purposefully in the three worlds. What the shamans see on the thangka is often known to them from their travels in the three worlds. For example, they confirm that Garuda looks exactly the way he is depicted (see image on page 71), and that the artist had taken some liberties only in terms of the coloring.

We showed a thangka that was painted by a Tamang shaman (see page 72) to the female Tamang shaman Maile Lama, the Kirati Parvati Rai, and the Gurung lama and jhankri Indra Doj Gurung. As soon as they saw it, all three immediately recognized the shamanic origins of the painting. They saw in it a “realistic” picture of their trance journeys: “Chenresi is depicted in the center. He is identical to Padma-sambhava and is concerned with the poor and the sick. When we travel, we are in the center. At the same time, it is the world of the *devas* (gods), whom we must communicate with in certain cases of illness.” They point out the four gates and compare them with the architectural structure of Pashupatinath: “These are the four directions that we shamans pass through into the realm of the gods and demons; through these four openings we can also, however, drive out the demons and the *bhutas*. We must mediate between this center and the surrounding world of the humans, animals, and nature. The painter has depicted the world of the gods and humans from above, from a bird’s eye perspective—or from the perspective we have when we travel in the upper world in a trance.

“At the same time, he has also indicated the way from below to above with the dragon [in other words, a vertical line has been placed into the horizontal perspective]. Dragons help us with grave illnesses when we must travel to *akash*, the upper world. In the middle world we are assisted by other protective spirits and animal spirits. But we would not be able to go into the underworld without help of the dragon. Dragons and snakes protect and help us. They transport us through the worlds when we need them.”

A detailed discussion about the dragon followed. Are the clouds around the lower half of the mythical beast a superfluous artistic addition, or is this snake-



The six-armed Mahakala with his consort, depicted in Bhutanese style. He embodies the unification of opposites.

like animal at the same time an expression of a *dhup* smoke column, with which the jhankris communicate with “the lords (and ladies)” of the three worlds? For it is specifically an incense that is necessary in order to invoke the mythical beings and to carry the shamans, as “their guru,” through the air. Is the animal a tunnel into the other worlds, or is it a kind of vehicle that makes a bridge over them and just lands with its head “in the clouds?” The opinions diverged here. However, all were in agreement that the dragon helps to bring justice to the agitators of evil diseases, to clear away poisonous and deadly animals such as snakes, scorpions, and millipedes, through visionary methods. In addition the dragon signifies the kundalini power, also called *shakti*. “When we have to travel in the upper worlds to find the origins of the disease so that we can cure people, we must speak the dragon mantra. Then the dragon comes and takes us with him. This is only necessary for very serious problems, though. We begin our path here below, by the tail. It is only at the end that we reach the head, whose wisdom we require. We move in a zigzag, like snakes, when we travel in the upper world and the underworld with the help of the dragon.

“Here below, an altar is depicted with all our

“Shamans were the first people to paint thangkās. The paintings have changed over time through contact with the Hindus in India. Shamans live everywhere: in Mongolia, China, Bhutan, Tibet, and Sikkim. The thangkās appear everywhere very differently and have developed and changed over the course of time. But all thangkās are about travel in other realities. The Buddhists adopted this art from the jhankris. When I hear that the jhankris have stolen thangka painting from the Buddhists, I get very annoyed. The jhankris were there first. It was only much later that the Buddhists came.”

(ML)

THANGKAS, IMAGES FROM
OTHER REALITIES



Above top: Every year the jhankris of the Sherpas and the Tamang renew this mandala-like yarn amulet in order to protect women, men, and children against negative influences.

Above bottom: In Tibet, the *ga'u* is an important amulet.

On a typical Sherpa house in the mountains of Nepal, windows and doors are decorated with this type of painting. They are *nagas* that protect the house and its occupants against disease and natural forces.

ritual objects. One would need several porters to carry all of the many things though. We only use a few of these things. The painter has shown far too many objects. He seems to be a Buddhist, a Tamang shaman, because many tantric objects can be seen.”

Thangkas represent timeless, universal, and cosmic realities. They are paintings for healing, teaching, and meditation. Those who immerse themselves in them are healed and edified, and they are led back to what is essential by the contemplation of images that have been created to aid in meditation and concentration. Such people comprehend that they are human beings who are bound to nature and to the cosmic forces. They understand that they were born, that life is led on a balance sometimes weighted toward the positive elements and sometimes toward the negative, and they recognize their own unavoidable death. They see themselves in *Mastyalok*, the world of humans, in the center of the four directions. The underworld is at their feet and the upper world spreads out above them like an umbrella.

Regardless of what can be seen on the scroll paintings and whether the scenes are peaceful or horrible to the observer, they all offer a refuge in the ultimate realities. They communicate principles that can lead to a harmonious way of life—if the rift between theory and practice is not too vast. Thangkas protect and cure the people who are absorbed in looking at them.

Thangkas are supposed to provide protection? How can a two-dimensional picture offer protection from danger? If art is traced back to the primordial source that brought it to life, we can establish that nearly every form of art, whether ceramics, sculpture, jewelry, or painting, was created for magical purposes. Every single active motif in art, no matter how inconspicuous or clumsy, has its origins in the magical-symbolical realm—and this is true for the art of all periods and all cultures. Even before the discovery of chemical weapons and the atom bomb, long before any arms race, our ancestors protected themselves



from danger with amulets, idols, and magical designs. Defense against harm and the invocation of otherworldly protective powers are found at the dawn of all art. Designs on glasses and carafes, on pieces of clothing and on house walls—all that we see today as no more than aesthetic ornament—were originally supposed to protect the owner and inhabitants against the evil eye and from influences that bring disease. All spirals and wavy lines, triangles and circles, all of the monsters and saint's figures, were supposed to ward off harm.

This original function is still relevant to the thangkas. If we show thangkas to shamans, we are led into dimensions of reality completely different from what we have become accustomed to as a result of the scholarly Buddhist interpretations. Shamans do not dwell on the numerous and often confusing details. They immediately arrive at the central expression of the thangka.

The jhankri Indra Doj Gurung, who also practices as a lama, described the Nyingmapa Lama thangka (No. 25) as follows:

“This is a Tantric Buddhist painting of Newari origins. We see a Nyingmapa lama.⁷⁹ In his right hand he holds a *phurba* in the *shanti mudra*.” (The hand position, Skr. *mudra*, interests him the most and he demonstrates it for us.) “The *phurba* must always be held with the right hand. Only when you hold two *phurbas* are you allowed to hold one in the left hand. In the left hand he holds a bone trumpet. Everything that is made out of wood, stone, or bone must be held with this hand if you wish to banish demons. Next to him, on the right side, is the blue Akash Bhairab.⁸⁰ Without calling on a Bhairab, we shamans are not able to begin a ceremony. We receive our power from him. He helps us to travel through the three worlds. He was a shaman himself. He can be peaceful and angry, and we must know how to pacify him. The lama invokes Akash Bhairab and asks him to establish peace

⁷⁹ Nyingmapa are the Red Hat sect of Tibetan lamas. The Nyingmapa are one of four sects belonging to Vajrayana Buddhism. Of all the Buddhist schools, they are the ones who have most preserved many shamanic elements. They are the only ones with monks that have long hair (similar to their shamanic ancestors). They stand in opposition to the Yellow Hats (Gelugpa), who make up the exile government and who also put forth the Dalai Lama. (The remaining two schools are the Kagyüpa and Sakyapa.)

⁸⁰ The Newari tradition recognizes seven Bhairabs: the black Kal Bhairab; the red Tika Bhairab; Bagha Bhairab, who is ochre; the white Seto Bhairab; the deep blue Akash Bhairab (who, like Bagha Bhairab, inhabits the upper world); the dark blue Patal Bhairab who is in the underworld; and the light blue Nilo Bhairab. In Buddhist interpretation they are the guardians of the knowledge (Skr. *dharmapala*) in the shamanic interpretation—from which they originally stem—they receive and communicate the power of Shiva and are called upon by the jhankris. Another list of seven Bhairabs can be found in the chapter “Mahakala—Mahakali,” page 89.



Yüntün Dorje (Tib.).
Invocation of Akash
Bhairab. (No. 25)

and harmony for—and also among—the humans and the animals.

“At the upper left we see Chenresi. He governs everything that can be seen on the thangka. This blue fellow here at the very bottom looks like a demon, but he helps the humans to be able to move in all directions. As I said, the lama [he is the Tibetan Siddha Yüntun Dorje] carries out the ritual in order to usher in peace; it is the *shanti* ritual. The other two monks who can be seen on the lower left side, honoring the lama, wear robes like those which were worn in the time when the shamans first came into contact with the Buddhists.”

As Mohan Rai handed back to us the color reproduction of the thangka, he showed us that here, once again, the sacred number 7 found expression, made out of the four human and three divine figures. They represent the four directions and the three worlds. In the interpretation of the jhankris, the most terrifying scenes often turn out to be healing visions from other realities.

Of all our informants, Indra Gurung is the shaman who most enjoyed working with images. In the collection of Gerd Wolfgang Essen, there is a thangka that has been identified as Srimati Devi or the Tibetan Lhamo Düsölma, and is dated from the early

“Dragons are connected with their tail to the bottom of ocean. With their head they reach into the highest realms of heaven. They connect all three worlds like a column.”

(PR)



The *shanti* mudra.

We repeatedly encountered discrepancies in the interpretations of the paintings. For example, the Newari are often reminded of the shamanic origins of a thangka, which is why they describe it as being “shamanic.” To the shamans themselves and above all to the Kirati, a people who are still situated at the primordial source of shamanism, such thangkas have already historically passed over into tantrism and for this reason they are described as being “tantric” or even “Lamaist.”

THANGKAS, IMAGES FROM
OTHER REALITIES



Srimati Devi or Lhamo Düsölma (Tib.). (Simplified reproduction, Shahi Workshops)

seventeenth century. When we showed Indra Gurung the extremely bloodthirsty picture in which an enraged Kali with bloodshot eyes rides through a sea that is filled to the brim with blood and body parts, we were very amazed at the aspects his explanation brought to light.⁸¹

“This thangka is 100 percent shamanic. It is a thangka for self-healing. It is extremely curative. Mahakala/Mahakali are depicted in one person. This is can be seen by the snake and lion in the earrings, and by the sun and moon in the navel. When we are in a trance, we then invoke the helping spirits and gods. We say ‘Bhairung!’ [Nep.; Kir. *bhairunga*],⁸² in order to invoke Kali and Bhairab, the wrathful manifestations of Parvati and Shiva. It is more like a technical word, but without the call of ‘Bhairung,’ this manifestation does not appear in our visions. The central figure can therefore be referred to in this way, even though it is more like an invocation than a name.

“The four-armed figure rides on the visionary white horse⁸³ through the middle world. Here the destructive qualities of the humans rage. In order to combat them, she swings the sword decorated with a scorpion handle, the skull cap, the *phurba*, and the *trishul*. Shiva’s trident is decorated with a death’s head, for he is the destroyer and the renewer. Beneath the trident, which symbolizes the three worlds and the three times, Shiva’s umbrella can be seen. As shamans, we stand beneath this umbrella.

Below the sea—which is also the present—one sees the underworld and the dark past. But the artist has painted it much too dark. The upper world and the future are depicted in the upper region. When man has left his envy and his destructive passions behind, this peaceful world is achieved. Then he will be able to live a good life, and will be immediately eaten by the vultures when he comes to *akash* in Yamalok. In the center of this region, the artist has depicted the Mahasiddha Naropa.”

⁸¹ The commentary of the shamans is based on a thangka from Essen’s collection that has been dated to the 17th century (Essen and Thingo 1989 Vol. 1, 224f./Fig. 1-138). The current administrator of this collection (The Museum of Cultures in Basel, Switzerland) denied permission to reproduce it here. They do not accept a shamanic interpretation of a thangka, which “in terms of content as well as style is entirely without doubt of Tibetan origin” (letter dated 3/01/00). This is a modern example of Lamaist theology being used toward the suppression of shamanism, even in contemporary museum circles. We commissioned Shahi Studios to render this simplified reproduction.

⁸² For the Kirati, *bhai run ga* can be a powerful mantra that sends trained shamans into a trance. (MR)

⁸³ Here, Gurung is referring to the eight-legged horse of the Nepali shamanic tradition, even though a four-legged donkey is depicted. He is not interested in the surrounding images which the catalogue text goes into: “the raven-headed Guardian of the Threshold,” “the wrathful female companions,” “the three servant girls,” and “the eight female guardians of the directions.”

THE THANGKA ART OF NEPAL

When you arrive in Nepal and wander around as a tourist through Thamel, the neighborhood “custom made” for globe-trotters, it’s noticeable that the bookstores mostly carry titles relating to Tibetan art and culture. Literature about Nepal takes up only a subordinate percentage of space. The stores offering thangkas for sale often have signs reading “Tibetan Thangkas.”

One of the two stores owned by our co-author Surendra Bahadur Shahi, who exclusively sells thangkas made in Nepal, even has the name “Tibetan Thangka Treasures.”⁸⁴ When we asked him about this, he explained: “I have chosen this name because the tourists expect thangkas to be Tibetan. Hardly anyone knows that the overwhelming number of thangkas are painted by Newari, Tamang, or Bhutanese people. Fifteen years ago the Newari made up the greatest percentage of artists whom I was working with. In the meantime this relationship has been reversed in favor of Tibetan groups, because Newari art is influenced by Hinduism. Buddhist thangkas are easier to sell today. My clients include many Buddhist monasteries around the world, and also proprietors of businesses in contemporary Chinese Tibet. Most of my business partners are Tibetan. They sell the thangkas they purchase from me to tourists in Tibet, or to the few monks and monasteries that were not destroyed by the Chinese occupiers, or in other words to those who manage to bring in thangkas for their own monasteries. But I would like to eventually change the name of my two businesses to ‘Nepali Thangka Treasures’ or ‘Newari Thangka Treasures’ because I hope that people eventually understand and appreciate that today this art is nurtured [by different ethnic groups] mainly in Nepal, and in the past was significantly influenced and inspired by us, the Newari.”

Again and again we could observe Tibetans coming into Surendra’s store and buying thangkas that they would then sell in Tibet, and they would shell out large sums of money for them. It was probably always like this (as historical research has suggested). The intuitive opinion of our Nepali associate confirmed the fact that it was the Newari who went to Tibet in the early period of thangka painting and disseminated this art form there.

Surendra Bahadur Shahi is one of the best thangka painters in the Kathmandu Valley and speaks Tibetan fluently. In his studios he employs a total of four hundred painters, of which eighty have attained the level of master.

⁸⁴ During the 1990s about 35 percent of the Tibetan thangka painters came from Nepal, 30 percent were Bhutanese, 20 percent were Tamang, and 15 percent were Newari.

“Thangkas can be good or bad; a true thangka can be recognized by its proper proportions, its gripping expression, and its faithfulness to reality.”

(SBS)

“A road to Tibet had been opened and by the seventh century diplomatic relations with China had already been initiated. . . . The newly opened road turned the Kathmandu Valley into an extremely important center of trade between India and Tibet, and generated a tremendous wealth that fueled a distinctive cosmopolitan culture,” emphasized Ulrich Wiesner (1986, 12), referring to the so-called golden age under the rule of the Licchavis. They ruled the Kathmandu Valley from 200 to approximately 750 C.E. During this time the art in Nepal reached a high flowering.

Today the Newari are the recognized bearers of the culture of the valley. Like the Licchavis before them, they cultivate the arts and a cosmopolitan culture.

His explanation for the preference of Tibetan Buddhist scroll paintings illuminates a stereotype. The stereotype is that thangkas are Tibetan. If one studies the thangka literature, this impression is intensified. However, if one roams through the thangka stores of Kathmandu with open eyes, one will immediately notice the typical characteristics of other ethnic groups, which will be further explained below. If we compare the published data on the origin of the thangkas with what we actually see on a thangka, whether printed in a book or for sale on the market, it becomes apparent, through style and imagery, that Nepal is their true place of origin—much in opposition to the accepted theory. To the informed viewer, thangkas that claim to be “Tibetan” have usually proven to be painted mainly by Newari, Tamang, or Bhutanese artists. Our suspicions were confirmed by every Nepali person to whom we showed the different books and exhibition catalogues: “What it says here is totally wrong. That is a Newari thangka!”⁸⁵

In our opinion, the facts concerning a thangka of the green Tara (see No. 36 below), which hangs in the Cleveland Museum of Art and dates from the thirteenth century, are a particularly flagrant example of this distortion. This thangka was exhibited as part of

Green Cleveland Tara, copy. (No. 36)



a group of contributions on the occasion of a 1997 international symposium on the current status of research of Tibetan Art.⁸⁶ Based on the typical Tibetan style of habit worn by the monk found in the lower left-hand corner, the author of the article deduces a central Tibetan origin for this thangka—a thangka which modern Newari painters still copy in varying degrees of quality and offer for sale.⁸⁷ In view of the great variety of motifs that indicate a Newari origin for the thangka, this small detail does not seem convincing.

The monk in prayer posture, who appears very small under the left hand of the green Tara, indicates that the thangka had a Tibetan patron and was possibly even created in Tibet. This does not, however, mean that the painter was a Tibetan. The discussion of the location where the thangka was created seems insignificant, considering the definite Newari style characteristics—which, oddly enough, are rarely discussed in any detail.

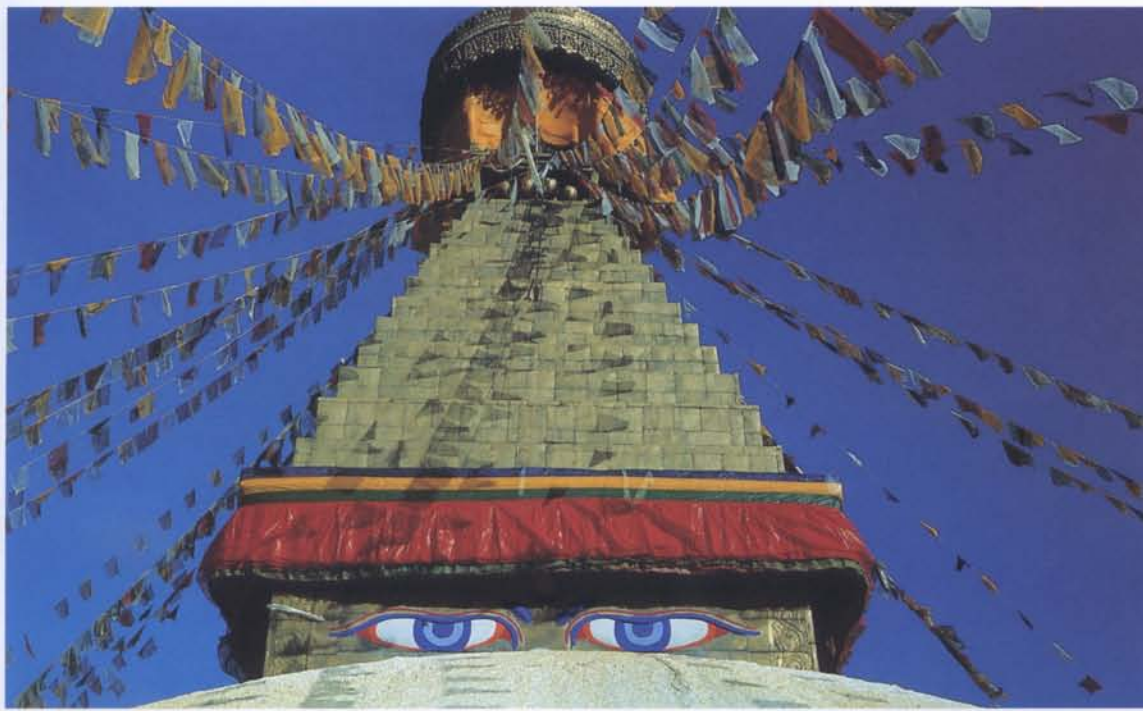
The cultural relationship between Tibet and Nepal has always been an active and mostly positive one. In past centuries spiritual dignitaries traveled through Nepal to study the original Buddhist texts in India. Before the border between Nepal and Tibet was closed in 1950 due to the invasion of the Chinese, many important trading routes led from Tibet to India via Nepal (for example, the “salt road,” which leads through the Kali Gandhaki valley, the deepest valley in the world). Bodhnath, the most important Buddhist shrine of the Tibetans, is found in Nepal.

In reference to thangka painting, this means a long tradition of exchanges and mutual inspiration. It would be one-sided and false to trace the vector of influence only from Tibet to Nepal. Artists from the Kathmandu Valley—such as the legendary architect and artist Arniko—were brought to Tibetan monasteries in order to paint thangkas for them on commission. They often remained there for years in order to teach painting to Tibetans and also founded their

⁸⁵ For example, a number of thangkas printed in the 1998 catalogue of Kossak and Singer are attributed to a central Tibetan province, despite the fact that the creator is repeatedly indicated as being a Nepalese artist, Cat. Nr. 14, 21, 32, 36 (Nepalese influenced), 37 (“green Tara”, attributed to the legendary Nepalese artist Anige [1245-1306]), 40, 45, 48, 49).

⁸⁶ Singer/Denwood 1997; see the article therein titled “Sakya Patrons and Nepalese Artists in the Thirteenth Century Tibet” by M. Steven Kossak, page 26. The symposium was curated by the School of Oriental and African Studies in conjunction with the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

⁸⁷ Kossak refers to earlier publications: P. Pal had recognized the Nepalese influences in the green Tara in Cleveland in 1975; however, he revised this in 1984 and determined the influence to be of a central Tibetan origin, which was confirmed in 1990 by John Huntington (Singer/Denwood 1997, 26).



Stupa in Bodnath, Kathmandu Valley. "Buddha is in the middle. No matter how initiated one is, one can only circumnavigate him. He is like the heart chakra, the center, the third eye, or *bindu*. Buddha embodies the number one hundred. All around him are the eight directions that are depicted in the eight manifestations of Buddha. This results in the sacred number of 108." (MR)

own schools there.⁸⁸ In this way the characteristic style, content, and thematic motifs of Nepalese scroll painting were spread throughout Tibet, and influenced Tibetan thangka far more significantly than is represented in the tibetophile literature.

A look at the current state of thangka painting reveals many different cultural influences. The representation of the bodies is significantly inspired by Indian Gupta painting.⁸⁹ Muscular Mongolian com-

batants serve as examples for the bodies of many of the protective deities. Chinese landscape painting left its traces on the scroll painting in the scenery of the earthly world. From Bhutan came the abstract geometric depictions of cosmology that are currently very popular,⁹⁰ as well as the white Tara and other peaceful motifs without further figural additions. The most significant Tibetan contributions are the hierarchical construction of the genealogy of the figures depicted and the structure of the mandalas. The Newari enriched the thangka with the Hindu motifs of adorned decorative frames and compositional elements that will be discussed in detail below.

Unlike European art, the style of thangka painting is enduring across time. Schools, styles, and epochs have not changed. They do not become antiquated⁹¹ (although there were times in which certain influences manifested more prominently than in other periods). The style of past eras is maintained into the present. A significant criterion for judging religious scroll painting is not the era, style, or originality,⁹² but the quality. There are merely thangka of lesser, better, and of highest quality, and there are painters who are more adept at lending expression to the faces of the figures depicted, giving their compositions a center of gravity, and subjecting the

"Thangka are pictures of spiritual worlds, not reproductions of the material world. They are navigational aids for the spirit. With their help, the person learns to visualize the three worlds so as to thus be able to travel in them. The thangka serve toward the liberation of the soul, which is polluted by envy, hate, and ignorance."

(CME)

⁸⁸ They did this so well that the entire literature about thangka painting refers to Tibet. Yet nevertheless, even when it concerns "Early Painting from Central Tibet" as in a 1998 catalogue published by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in conjunction with the Zürich Reitberg Museum, or in Detlef Ingo Lauf's book "Verborgene Botschaft tibetischer Thangkas" [*The Hidden Message of Tibetan Thangkas*] (1976, Aurum, Freiburg), the authors have to admit that most of the pictures are characteristic examples of "pure Nepalese style" (ibid., p. 38). Most importantly, the Sakyapa school (Sakya is the family name of one of the most influential and highest Newari castes), which can be traced back to Newari artists of the Kathmandu Valley, made a significant impact on Tibetan art in the thirteenth and fourteenth century. Their creations belong to the earliest examples of central Tibetan painting, "influenced by the highly developed artistic tradition of the Kathmandu Valley. The Sakya hierarchies developed a close relationship with the Newari artists from Nepal and offered them their support and patronage, which led to a new style being developed in the Tibetan painting of the thirteenth and fourteenth century." (quote from the exhibition catalogue of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York/Reitberg Museum, Zürich 1998/99, p. 22).

⁸⁹ The historians assign the Gupta dynasty to the time from 320–535 C.E. The distinctive style of Gupta art that revealed itself in this flourishing cultural period lasted until the twelfth century. The typical Gupta elements of style came to Nepal by way of the Licchavis, under whom the arts attained a high development in Nepal, outside of their northeast Indian heartland. The term "*pata* painting" that is found in the literature traces back to sources in which the manufacture of cloth images (cloth = *pata*) and their transmission to Tibet are mentioned.

⁹⁰ For example, the wall frescos of Paro castle in Bhutan contain cosmic mandalas of this sort.

⁹¹ From this perspective, the search for "antique" thangka by many buyers seems to be pointless. The rarity value of an older thangka would merely be a motivation, but not its artistic value.

⁹² The term "originality," which hypnotizes the western art scene, is of very marginal significance to the traditional painting throughout Asia.



Left: European art of the past also shows stylized depictions of nature, as this picture with the steep cliffs demonstrates. (Master from Hohenfurth, Christ at the Mount of Olives, tempera on canvas, circa 1350, Prague. Image from *Propyläen Kunstgeschichte*, vol. II)

Middle and right: The cultural landscape of the mountains of Nepal is recognizable on thangkas in the simplified schematic lines of the woodlands.



paintings to a stringent structure. This art has remained a craft up to the present—but it is not only a craft, for more than technical knowledge is required to produce a thangka that “follows all the rules” of the art. Often many painters work on the same thangka. The artistic genius of the individual is always subordinate to the religious responsibility of the painter to the scroll paintings, which are considered to be aids to meditation. Thangkas are not signed by the artists. They are given to a lama, who religiously “blesses” them on the back with the sacred core syllables *om a ho*, an abbreviation of *OM MANI PADME HUM*.

Modernization has been present throughout the entire history of this painted artform. This occurs in the backgrounds, in decorative details, in the composition, and in the attention toward and execution of details such as leaves, flowers, animals, crystals, and the use of brocades and other fabrics. Modernization does not occur in the figures depicted. The depiction



of the canon of gods, goddesses, bodhisattvas, gurus, *dakinis*, *dhampalas*, and so on, is absolutely determined all the way down to the angle of the head, the hand and feet postures—even the form of the eyeballs.

In regard to the Tara,⁹³ it is among the people of Nepal that the knowledge has been kept alive that the white Tara descends from an historical Chinese princess, and that the green Tara descends from a Nepali princess who lived in the seventh century and was married to the great Tibetan king, Srong Tsan Gampo (Tib.: Srong btsan sgam po; popular English form: Songtsen Gampo). The worship of the feminine principle in the form of the goddess Tara was introduced into Buddhism during the same century—as can be confirmed in many publications. In Nepal it is explained that the marriage of the Tibetan king with the Nepalese princess caused a war in which Nepal was defeated. We repeatedly read that the worship of



The blue Tara of the Bon tradition. (No. 47)

THANGKAS, IMAGES FROM
OTHER REALITIES

⁹³ In Nepal, essentially five forms of Tara are recognized: the green, white, and blue (which is the three-headed and six-armed Bhrikuti Tara, thought to have roots in the Bon tradition and who holds a swastika in her hand), as well as the three-headed and six-armed Vasudhara. The different forms of the feminine deity Kurukulla are counted among the forms of Tara.



Tara and Ganesha are revealed in the natural rock formations in the cave at Pharping in the southwestern Kathmandu Valley.

The white Tara is understood in Buddhism as the consort of Avalokiteshvara.

She is dressed like a bodhisattva and has additional eyes on her forehead and on the palms of her hands and soles of her feet. Her right hand forms the *mudra* of granting a wish (*varada mudra*) and her left hand forms the *mudra* of the teacher (*vitarka mudra*). It is said that 1,100 years after the death of Buddha, his mother reincarnated in the form of Tara (the white and the green) to bring Buddhism to Tibet. (No.7)



Tara was brought into Nepal from Tibet.⁹⁴ Is it not more likely that this merely expresses the perspective of the historical writings from the victorious nation that dominated? After all, Nepal was defeated by Tibet in numerous political battles. In any event, in Nepal the popular depictions of the different Taras have a very long tradition, and possibly their influence was radiated in the reverse direction, toward Tibet.

⁹⁴ For example this can be read in Aran 1978, 106.

The oldest icon of the green Tara in the Kathmandu Valley is found in the caves of Pharping (near the caves of Padmasambhava) in the southwest. The cult image is a conical stone that was created on its own and belongs to the category of "Svayambunath." It was modeled by human hands at a later time.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ The stone itself has a geological age although its worship is of a more recent date. It was not until the twentieth century that it was identified as the "green Tara" by Chatal Rinpoche, the Nyingmapa lama who lives there today.



The gold-painted bronze arches of the Sundhoka Palace in Bhaktapur (right), and a depiction on a contemporary pulp magazine.

The structure was added to the palace grounds in 1753 by Ranajitamalla (1722–1768) as a crowning finale to the facade. The decorations on the archways of the door are typical of Newari thangkas. At the peak is Garuda; at the bases are *makaras*. Out of their wide open mouths hangs a tongue shaped like a khukuri on which little bells swing in the wind. The wild sheep that are typical subjects of the thangkas are missing.



Stylistic Ethnic Features

Typical of Newari thangka art is the decorative border and arched form motif that was carried over from architecture. This is probably of Newari origins and spread from Nepal to the entire Hindu world. At the top in the center is the traditional bird Garuda who grips a snake with his beak and claw.⁹⁶ The base of the arch is completed with representational motifs: two wild sheep (Nep. *ban bheda*, Lat. *Pseudois nayaur*) standing upright, and the mythical crocodile monster, the *makara*, with wide-open jaws (most likely garwal⁹⁷ is the model for its long snout). The *makara* represents the underworld. Peony blossoms (Nep. *karna phul*, Lat. *Paeonia emodi*) climb in between these elements; they are also called moon, heaven, or healing blossoms.

Like the dragon, Garuda lives in the upper world, *akash*, heaven. But unlike *druk* (Nep. and Tib. “dragon”) he is primarily responsible for dealing with

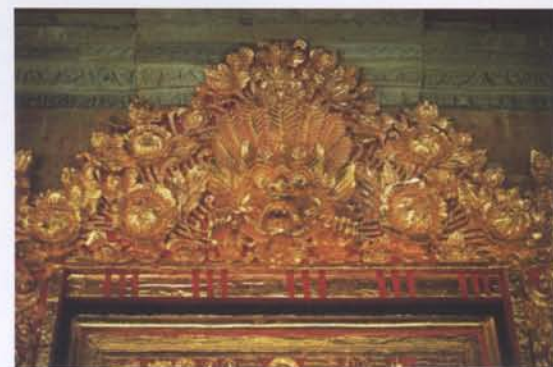
⁹⁶ On the Indonesian island of Bali, this motif which decorates the archway over every temple door and now also every hotel door is called *kola boma*.

⁹⁷ The garwal or ghaial (*Gavialis gangeticus* Gmelin) is an old species in the Himalayas (see Canley and Hodgson 1990, 32); it could very possibly represent the model for *makara*. To Parvati Rai, there is no question about this: “Of course *makara* is the Garwal crocodile.” It is said to grow as long as two meters. The name is derived from Skr. *ghara*, “[fruit] pods,” (ibid., 15)

lesser enemies than the dragon, who combats opponents in all worlds. Garuda (Nep.; Kir. *chawat*) forms the apex of the traditional arch, which as a whole is called *sirpech* in Nepali. The crowns of jewels (on peaceful deities) and skulls (on wrathful ones) are also called *sirpech* due to their archlike shape.

This decorative arch has a transformative as well as apotropaic function. The *makara*⁹⁸ embody life’s origins from water; from their open mouths spring the life forms that live on the earth (the sheep and the flowers) and in the air (Garuda). All deities who are surrounded by such an arch or who wear a halolike crown (aureole), are responsible for the maintenance of this cycle of life in their respective manifestations. As has happened everywhere, decorative arches became independent over the course of time. Only a few observers know of the symbolic origins; most of them merely see these elements as decoration.

⁹⁸ We assume that this iconographic element that is Sanskrit for “crocodile” can be traced back to the Garwal or *gharial* (*Gavialis gangeticus*).



Similar to the garuda of Nepal, a *sirpech*-like architectural motif crowns the Kola Boma demon of Bali.



Sirpech motif on thangka No. 36.



The arch-like arrangement of the skulls is also a *sirpech* motif.



The cloud formations in the skies of Nepal are diverse—as are those in the thangkas of her ethnic groups.

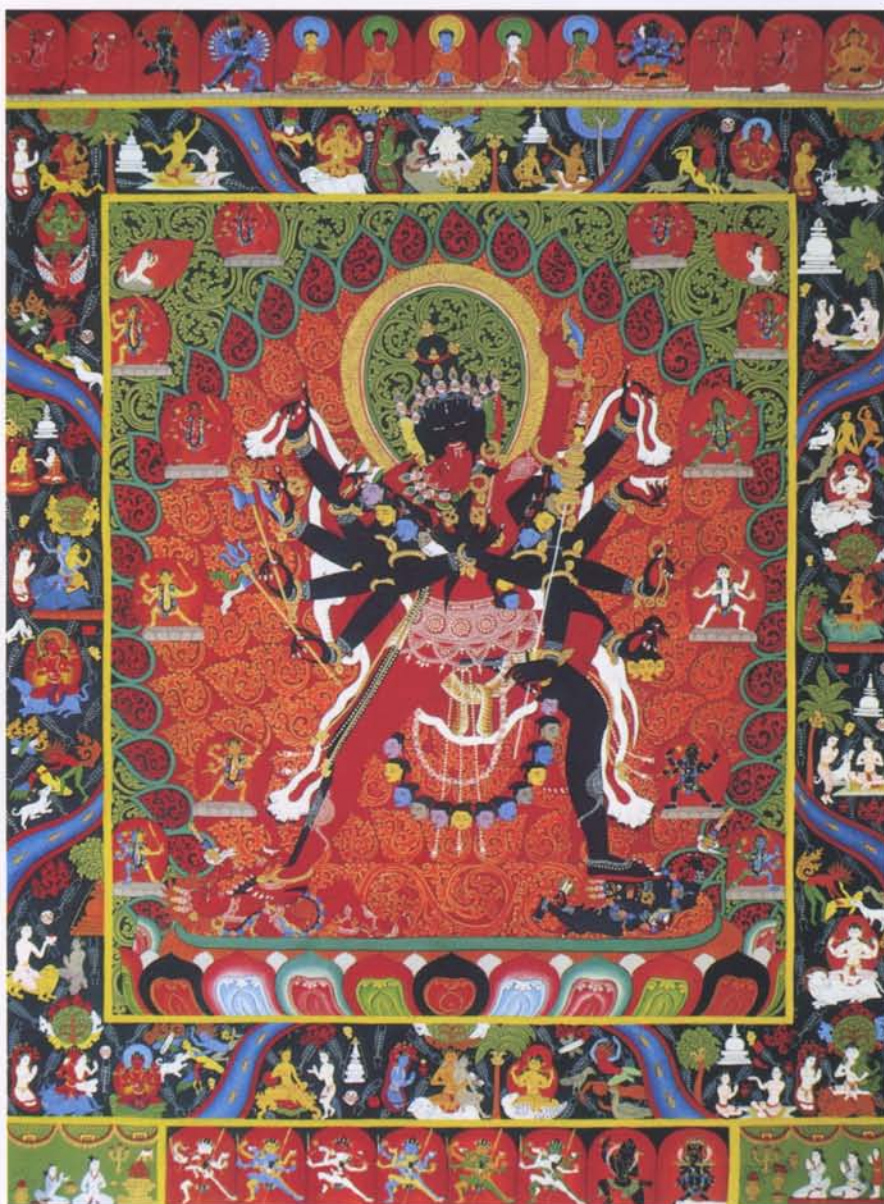
Ethnic Features of Thangka Art

Typical Newari features in this painting (No. 19) are its Hindu theme; the dark red, warm color scheme,⁹⁹ the elongated eyes; the stylized flame ornaments in the center field framed by green vines; the lavish borders; and particularly the central field at the far bottom with seven Vajrayoginis and the seated black Bhairab as the last figure on the right side.

This traditional Newari style thangka can be traced back to the twelfth century. The theme is of Hindu origin. In the central field the red, naked Vajrayogini is shown with her consort, Heruka Cakrasamvara, surrounded by six of her emanations. The remaining two larger figures, Bhairaba and Kalaratri,

⁹⁹ With the color criteria represented here, one should keep in mind that specific colors are attributed to specific divine manifestations: wrathful deities are mostly characterized in red and black. However every ethnic groups prefers its own color palette.

Cakrasamvara, thangka in the Newari style. (No. 19)



are trampled by the couple's feet. Vajrayogini wears a lavishly decorated belt made of bones. She embraces her consort and holds a chopping knife (*kartika*) aloft with her right hand. In his twelve black hands her companion holds (proceeding from lower left to lower right): the *trishul*; *parasu*; *kartika*; an elephant skin (symbolizing the energy of the animal); *kapala*; *kepa*; decapitated heads; *khatvanga* (the staff with heads in three stages of decay), crowned with a *vajra*; and in each of his hands, which he has brought toward the middle, he holds a *vajra*. The black background of the border is saturated with tiny white skeletons.

Tibetan thangkas always have Buddhist content. On the thangka on page 85 Guru Rinpoche—also called Padmasambhava—is depicted with both of his consorts, the Indian Mandraba and the Tibetan Yeshe Sogyal. The powerful tantric master, who was vested with many *siddhis*, was called to Tibet in the eighth century to spread the Buddhist teachings there. With the help of his extraordinary powers he spread the Vajrayana path in north India, Nepal, Bhutan, and Tibet. The Red Hats, the Nyingmapa sect, still belong to this path in the present day.

Typical Tibetan characteristics are the pastel tones, the greenish blue color, the Mongolian facial structure, and the unique manner of depicting clouds.¹⁰⁰ A feature of Tibetan thangkas is also the value that is placed on the figures—we will not address this further here—that contribute to the characterization of the main figure.

The picture on the upper right of page 85 radiates great calm and serenity. Typical of the Bhutanese style, the artist concentrates on the white Tara. Without the further addition of figures or detailed backgrounds, Tara sways in her lotus position with her characteristic half-shut eyelids. Doves and peonies surround her and reinforce the character of this Buddhist divinity who brings peace and love—the Bhutanese favor her exclusively. The dotted color background and the moving clouds stand out in detail. Both of these stylistic features are due to Bhutanese influences.

The Buddhist Tamang immigrated from Tibet into Nepal.¹⁰¹ Their paintings treat exclusively Buddhist themes.

Images such as this one (lower right, page 85) with the medicine Buddha in the center and the Amitabha Buddha in the vertex, are found in the treatment rooms of Tamang healers. The Tamang are the creators of the Bardo mandala. When a Tamang dies, this mandala is

¹⁰⁰ The English artist Robert Beer characterizes in detail the different styles and techniques of cloud painting (see David and Janice Jackson 1984).

¹⁰¹ They came on horses, as their Tibeto-Mongolian language roots show: *ta* = horse, *mang* = man.



The white Tara. Mineral colors and liquid gold (77.2 x 59 cm), Bhutanese artist, Pancha Lama Kathmandu, 1999. The painting took one and a half months of work to complete.



hung up in order to remember the dead man, and to provide him with a good escort into the world beyond. This custom has also been adopted by Tibetan and other Buddhist-oriented ethnic groups.

Typical Tamang characteristics in this painting are: the unique sequence of the figures that surround the central mandala, and the clouds broken up by rays of the rainbow, which denote the illuminated nature of the depicted figure. The dragons with flames on either side serve as guardians of the borders.

Stylistically typical is the use of a flat pencil, which is not all that important to the physical three-dimensional modeling; the blurry transition between blue and green on the lower curve of the circle; and the thick, white outline of the clouds on the borders.

Guru Rinpoche with his two consorts, Yeshe Sogyal and Mandraba. Mineral colors and liquid gold (93 x 61.8 cm), Tibetan artist, Chiring Dashi, Kathmandu, 1999. The painting took four months of work to complete.

Medicine Buddha mandala or Bardo Mandala. Mineral colors and liquid gold (99.8 x 75.8 cm), made by a Tamang artist Korsan Tamang, Kathmandu, 1999. The painting took three months of work to complete.



MAHAKALA—MAHAKALI

“Eat my flesh and drink
my soul!”

DISMAL EUPHONY (1999)

“To describe Mahakala as
a ‘Guardian of the
Teachings’ is to make a
servant out of Dionysus.”

(CR)

To banish dangers with terrifying images and to fend off danger with threatening ones is a universally valid technique used not only by animals, who make themselves appear larger when they raise their hackles or bare menacing grimaces, but also by humans throughout all ages and cultures. In Mesopotamia, gigantic mythical figures blocked enemy forces from entering the gates of the walls that surrounded a city. On Gothic cathedrals, the western facades are teeming with nightmarish ghouls to scare away the demonized heathen gods who haunt their former “homes,” the pre-Christian cultic sites upon which the new houses of God have been built. In mask dancing from Oceania to Africa, and in the “Fasching” carnival costumes and Shrovetide customs in Europe, the terrifying, grotesque faces are meant to fend off evil-seeking ancestral ghosts, illness spirits, or stubborn winter creatures.

Against this backdrop the two wrathful manifestations of the most important gods of Nepal’s Hindu and shamanic world can also be seen: Shiva, known by name as Kal Bhairab, Mahakala, or “the Great Black One,” among many others; and Parvati as Kali—to cite just one name for her wrathful nature. For the inhabitants of the small Kingdom of Nepal, which is surrounded on all sides by enormous countries, the protective function of the two main gods, Shiva and Parvati, in their terrifying manifestations as Kal Bhairab and Kali, remains extremely important. They are the most important gods of the Kathmandu Valley and countless shrines are dedicated to them.

Shiva in Nepal

The Hindu god Shiva, whose name means “The Merciful One,” is the most important male deity in the Kathmandu Valley and Hindu regions of Nepal. He is especially worshiped by the people in his phallus form (the Shiva lingam), and above all as the bestower of fertility. In Nepal, lingams can be conical-shaped natural rock formations (for example river detritus, stalagmites), saligrams (fossils of ammonite and belemnite), artificial plaster stones, *chilams* (pipes for smoking ganja), stone piles, chortens, and stupas.

In personal *pujas* and family rituals, Shiva is usually worshipped as Mahadeva, the “Great God,” and the Protector of Humans. With the mantra *bum shankara*, “Hail to you, doer of good,” sadhus and yogis consecrate to Shiva *chilams* filled with ganja, *charas*, or *dhaura* before lighting up. For the sadhus, Babas, and yogis, Shiva is the founder of tantra, the original yogi, and the first ascetic.



Kal Bhairab, the Great Black One. Shiva in his wrathful manifestation as a giant sculpture on the Hanuman Doka, Kathmandu.

Many of the most important—or in other words, the most holy and the most frequented—sacred sites (pilgrimage destinations) that all true Shiva worshippers must visit at least once in their lifetime are found in Nepal. Shiva is worshipped as Pashupati, “Lord of the Animals” or “Lord of the Soul”—almost as a shamanic psychopomp—in the great temple of Pashupatinath (near Kathmandu). The pilgrimage site of Muktinath, which lies between Jomson and Mustang at an altitude of almost 4,000 meters, must be sought in order to find a particular saligram in the river bed of the Kali Gandhaki (= Thakkhola) that lies below. The lake of Gosainkunda, which lies at an altitude of 4,300 meters, is a central pilgrimage site for all Shiva followers, as well as being a gathering place for the jhankris (particularly on the nights of full moons). According to Nepalese folklore, Shiva lies in the lake, stoned from ganja and in a state of samadhi.¹⁰² A further pilgrimage site of immense significance for Shaivites, and a central ritual location for the jhankris, is the Kalinchok.

¹⁰² Shiva’s state can also be described as *ghûrni*, “mystical drunkenness.”



Depiction of Kali. Twelfth Century, North India/ Nepal (National Museum, Delhi).



Mahakala Bhairab—one of the wrathful manifestations of Shiva—has been tamed in Tibet to be the Guardian of the Teachings. (No. 1)



In this frightening depiction, the eternal law of becoming and dying is symbolized. Tantric depiction. (No. 13)

For the Newari, Shiva is significant, above all, as Bhairab, “The Terrifying One.” Bhairab, or Kal Bhairab, is the local god of Kathmandu. He is the lord of the psychoactive substances (sacred plants, smoking plants, and alcohol). He is identified by the Newari as Mahakala and occupies a prominent place in tantric thangkas.¹⁰³ Many Newari even identify him with Padmasambhava.

The shamans in the Himalayas are under the protection of Shiva. For the jhankris of the various ethnic groups, Shiva (the “Primordial Shaman”) is the primary god in his form as Bhairab (or Bhairava = Mahakala). Nevertheless, there are Tantric statues from the twelfth century that depict Shiva and Kali with a Magical Dagger in their hands. Shiva also goes by the name Vaidyanātha, “Lord of the Doctors,” which clearly indicates his healing aspects (Zimmer 1984, 140).

Bhairab, the central deity for the Newari and for most of the other inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley, is the male counterpart to Kali, who clearly represents the most important and most profoundly worshipped goddess (see Nepali 1988, 298). Bhairab’s name is supposed to stem from the fact that he always looks to the sky, because otherwise his gaze would destroy everything that it fell upon (“laser vision”). In his black form, Bhairab is the city god of Kathmandu. There is a giant statue of him standing at Hanuman Doka, the central square in the old imperial city (next to Durbar Square).

The iconography of Bhairab is very old, quite consistent, and clearly shamanic. He has three eyes and four arms. He carries all the insignias of the shamans and tantrikas: a *damaru* (a drum made out of a monkey or human skull), a skull scepter, a *kartilea* (cutting knife) and a *kapala* (skull bowl). He wears tied around his waist a typical shaman’s loincloth made from pieces of human bone, and around his neck a necklace of decapitated heads. Bhairab is also the god of rice beer (*chhang*), *rakshi* (a local millet schnapps), and of (alcoholic) inebriation.¹⁰⁴

Mahakala

Mahakala (Skt.), “The Great Time,” and Kal Bhairab (Nep.), the “Great Darkness,” are two forms of Shiva in which his wrathful, devouring, and devastating character finds expression.

Seven different Bhairabs are worshipped in the

¹⁰³ Bhairab also takes the central position in the shavist tantrism of Kashmir (Baumer 1992).

¹⁰⁴ “As Bhairab is well known for his indulgence in intoxicants, certain sects of yogis invoke him while drinking alcohol and smoking hashish. Thus they identify more closely with the character of the terrifying god they emulate” (Fouce and Tomecko 1990, 19).



Kathmandu Valley.¹⁰⁵ They correspond to the seven days of the week, the seven planets, the seven steps of the ladder to the underworld, and the seven tunnels that are found there. These Bhairabs, whose names and correspondences can vary, stand for the four directions and the three worlds.

1. Akash Bhairab	“Heavenly Bhairab”	sky
2. Kal Bhairab	“Black Bhairab”	earth
3. Tika Bhairab	“Bhairab with mark on forehead”	South
4. Siddhi Bhairab	“Enlightened Bhairab”	East
5. Bathura Bhairab	“Beggar Bhairab”	underworld
6. Sankatha Bhairab	“Guardian Bhairab”	West
7. Mahakal Bhairab	“The Great Bhairab”	North

Mahadev took on the terrifying form of these Bhairabs in order to battle against the Rakshasas. Jhankris use them as ambassadors, to search out the germs of disease. For example, Akash Bhairab helps with feverish illness, Kal Bhairab for the danger of death, Tika Bhairab for dryness or when someone is about to drown. For each trance they must invoke the seven Bhairabs.

Mahakali

The goddess Kali is one of the most important deities in the Kathmandu Valley. In her various manifestations she is worshiped in temples and petitioned. Thus, many people make a pilgrimage every Sunday to Svayambunath, in order to ask Hariti/Ajima to protect their children and to guard against pox and other epidemics.¹⁰⁶ In her shrine on the western side of the stupa, the goddess Hariti—who is also called Ajima,

¹⁰⁵ In the end there are a countless number of them. Depending on the informant, the list of names and correspondences are different. Compare, in this regard, footnote 80 on page 74 of the Nyingmapa Lama thangka.

¹⁰⁶ Pox (= smallpox) is the name of a disease which, in the view of modern medicine, has died out. In Nepal, too, smallpox no longer exists. For this reason this significance is fading from the goddess and is making room for new diseases.

The temple of Tika Bhairab is nothing more than a roofed-over wall which the face of the god is painted upon. Goats’ feet and horns are nailed to the roof posts.

“In Nepal, the deities that are especially worshipped are the ones that repel and instill terror. This is based on the generally held idea that the more wrathful and horrifying a deity looks, the more effective they can protect against danger. Because they are as easily placated as they are insulted, they instill their followers with a sense of trust.”

MAJUPURIA (1991, 39)

“Kali’s fierce appearances have been the subject of extensive descriptions in several earlier and later tantric works. She is most commonly worshipped nowadays as Dakshinkali—the south-facing, black Kali. Though her fierce form is filled with awe-inspiring symbols, their real meaning is not what is first appears—they have equivocal significance.”

MOOKERJEE (1988, 62)

"Kali gets high
on blood."

(MR)

"Grandmother" (New.), or Mai, or who is identified with Shitala—can be recognized with her six (or sometimes five) children around her.

Another important site of Kali worship is the ravine of Dakshinkali south of Kathmandu. Pilgrims from all countries come here in order to offer the sacrifice of male animals to the goddess. The Kali priests ritually slaughter the animals in front of the cliffs where Kali is worshiped in her manifestation as Dakshin Kali.

The Kali *puja*, which occurs in February or March, is one of the most important festivals.

All families make regular visits to certain Kali shrines in the surrounding area. Rakta Kali, for example—symbolized as a stone with eyes and a mouth—is the familial goddess of Surendra Bahadur Shahi's family in the Chhetrapati district of Kathmandu. She has six sisters who live in the nearby vicinity. One of them is the white Sueta (or Sita) Kali, a silver sculpture with two assistant figures, another, Sovabhagamati, is made out of bronze and is on the Bagmati river. If we disregard for a moment that there are countless Kalis, then the list of either the seven or the nine Kalis is of particular significance. The seven Kalis correspond, in the shamanic way of thinking, to the four directions and three worlds, like the seven Bhairabs:

1. Rakta Kali	Bloodthirsty Goddess	North
2. Dakshin Kali	Black Goddess	South
3. Maha(n) Kali	Great Goddess	East
4. Bhadra Kali	Solemn Goddess	West
5. Sita Kali	Goddess of Truth	<i>akash</i>
6. Shital Kali	Goddess of the Waters	<i>patal</i>
7. Ban Kali	Goddess of the Forest	<i>dharti</i>

Nine selected Kalis would indicate the center and the eight directions. As always, the sequence is variable and dependent upon corresponding information.

In the ritual cycle of the day and year, this goddess, who, to the western mind, is bloodthirsty and almost devilish, is far more important than her loving tantric "sister," the Buddhist Tara. (Although in the esoteric tantric *shakti* rituals it is Kali who is at the centerpoint.) For shamans Kali is of greatest significance. Tara plays no role in healing rituals—even though she is ultimately to be understood as an embodiment of Kali. "Tara is a later Buddhist creation. Only lamas or tantrikas use her," was the dry opinion of the jhankris whom we asked about this.

Those who converse with members of the different ethnic groups of Nepal swiftly reach the conclusion that reality is as varied and multifaceted as the people who perceive it. Thus there can be no

single, true, universal definition of Kali—just as is the case with any Hindu- or Buddhist-influenced god. The place from whence she came and what forms she has assumed ultimately disappear into the dark tunnel of time.

Many authors have attempted to interpret the origins and existence of Kali. In place of the extensive literature on Kali, the inspiring study by the Indian tantra expert and author Ajit Mookerjee (1988), who consulted the textual sources as well as archaeological finds, should be mentioned. Mookerjee infers from the sutras and tantras making reference to Kali that she—like Durga—is a manifestation of Parvati. At the moment of greatest danger she sprang from Durga's eyebrow to help the gods in their fight against demons and to finally decide the outcome of the battle.

The shamans of Nepal—whose way of thinking can be traced back to pre-Hindu and pre-Buddhist times—see the story differently. For them Durga is the warrior manifestation of Lakshmi, the consort of Vishnu; Kali, on the other hand, is the wrathful nature of Parvati, the consort of Shiva. Regardless of which ethnic groups they belong to, the shamans of Nepal consider Shiva/Bhairab and Parvati/Kali to be the most important and loftiest deities to which the whole of creation can be traced.

We asked the Tamang shaman Maile Lama and the Kirati Mohan Rai to elucidate for us an episode between Shiva and Kali that was frequently depicted on *thangkas*. Then we showed them a painting, which they immediately identified as "Hindu, painted in the Newari style" (No. 34). Kali, who is depicted in blue, is in a bloodthirsty frenzy. In her ten hands she holds her instruments of murder. Clockwise from lower left to lower right are: a club (*lohasthomba*), a sword (*tarwal*), a discus (*chakra*), the trident (*trishul*) of her consort Shiva, and a small sickle (*khouda*). In her left hands she holds the head of the demon Asura¹⁰⁷; a bowl in which she catches his blood—she drinks it so that thousands more demons are not created, as they would be if drops of blood fell to the ground; a conch shell trumpet (*shankha*), which she uses for the battle call; a shield for protection (*thal*); and, finally, a bow and arrow (*dhanus*). The heads of her decapitated enemies are strung on a necklace, which she wears around her neck; their arms hang from her belt.

Shiva lies stretched out and sleeping under her feet. In the knot of his long, matted hair is a crescent

¹⁰⁷ *Asura* (Skr.) means "god" in the Rig Veda. At a later time *Asura* became the symbol of destructive energy. Above all in the interpretation of western authors the *Asuras* became negatively-occupied demons.



The raging goddess Kali halts just as she is about to trample her husband Shiva. (No. 34) The horn is one of the original Magical Daggers. Shiva wears it on his belt—as many shamans do today.

moon, for he is also Chandra (Skr.), the moon god who watches over visions and dreams. As a wandering ascetic and shaman, he wears nothing but a loin-cloth fashioned from the skin of a predator. His right hand grips the double drum (*damaru*), which he uses to call spirits or to scare them away. His other symbol, the trident (*trishul*), which identifies him as the Lord of the Times (present, past, and future) has been seized by Kali. The horn of the *nilgai* antelope (*Boselaphus tragocamelus*) dangles from his hips.¹⁰⁸

“The painter shows Kali at the moment in which she becomes conscious of her bloody rage,” is the literal explanation offered by Maile Lama. “The great

¹⁰⁸ Nilgai is usually described as the “blue bull” even though it is an antelope. It can grow bigger than a horse. In folk taxonomy it belongs to the cattle species. It corresponds to the steer of Shiva, Nandi.

amount of blood from the demon army has made her crazy. With giant steps she strides across the land from West to East and finds no end to her rage. Only Shiva is able to stop her. He lays down in her path. At the moment when Kali is about to put her foot on his chest, she awakens from her frenzy and realizes: ‘That is Shiva, my husband! I can’t kill him.’ This moment of consciousness can be discerned in Kali’s wide open eyes and by the eye on the sickle, which she had just drawn in order to chop her husband’s head off.”

How did this battle come about? Once upon a time, Shiva had thanked Asura for a vital service by making the promise that he could not be killed by any god or goddess. This invulnerability made Asura haughty and confused his senses. He became a demon who brought fear and terror to the world. In order to bring an end to his senseless murders without



On this thangka in the old Newari tradition, Kali holds shamanic insignias such as the *phurba* (below left) in her hands. (No. 46)

Since the Stone Age there have been prints of hands in caves and on cliffs—the oldest of which are probably from the Mesolithic era. Handprints on the wall of a house in Kathmandu.



breaking his former oath, Shiva asked Parvati to assume another name and another form and to take up battle against Asura and his army of demons. Thus Parvati became blue Kali, who in this manifestation destroys everything that lies in the way of love and everything that brings hate to the world.

The scene, which seems so gruesome to us Westerners, hovers over the waters of a mountainous landscape. As we learned from Mohan Rai, the scenes and figures on the lower border depict aspects of purification: “On the right side, a follower of Kali prays for the assistance of the great goddess through whose actions the world can be cleansed of injustice and cruelty. This is shown in the funeral pyre and the tiny skulls. The blood of the demons seethes into a skull cap bowl in the center and is freed from the negative aspects. On the far left, we can see Mahakala, who cleanses times of traumatic experiences.”

The shamanic interpretation of the Kali picture is rather pragmatic: The goddess reflects the practical workings of a jhankri who must not be squeamish when he wants to tear the destructive forces away from their prey in order to heal a sick person. “When I have to travel through the underworld because parts of a soul have been abducted and brought there and the demons don’t want to let go of me or their prey, then I recite the Kali mantra. If I myself become Kali, then these creatures who have their minds set on death and destruction are afraid of me. Only then do

I return to the middle world of the humans, back to the time and place where we find ourselves,” explained Maile Lama. (On the other hand, she only transforms herself into Durga on very specific occasions—for example, for a Durga puja.)

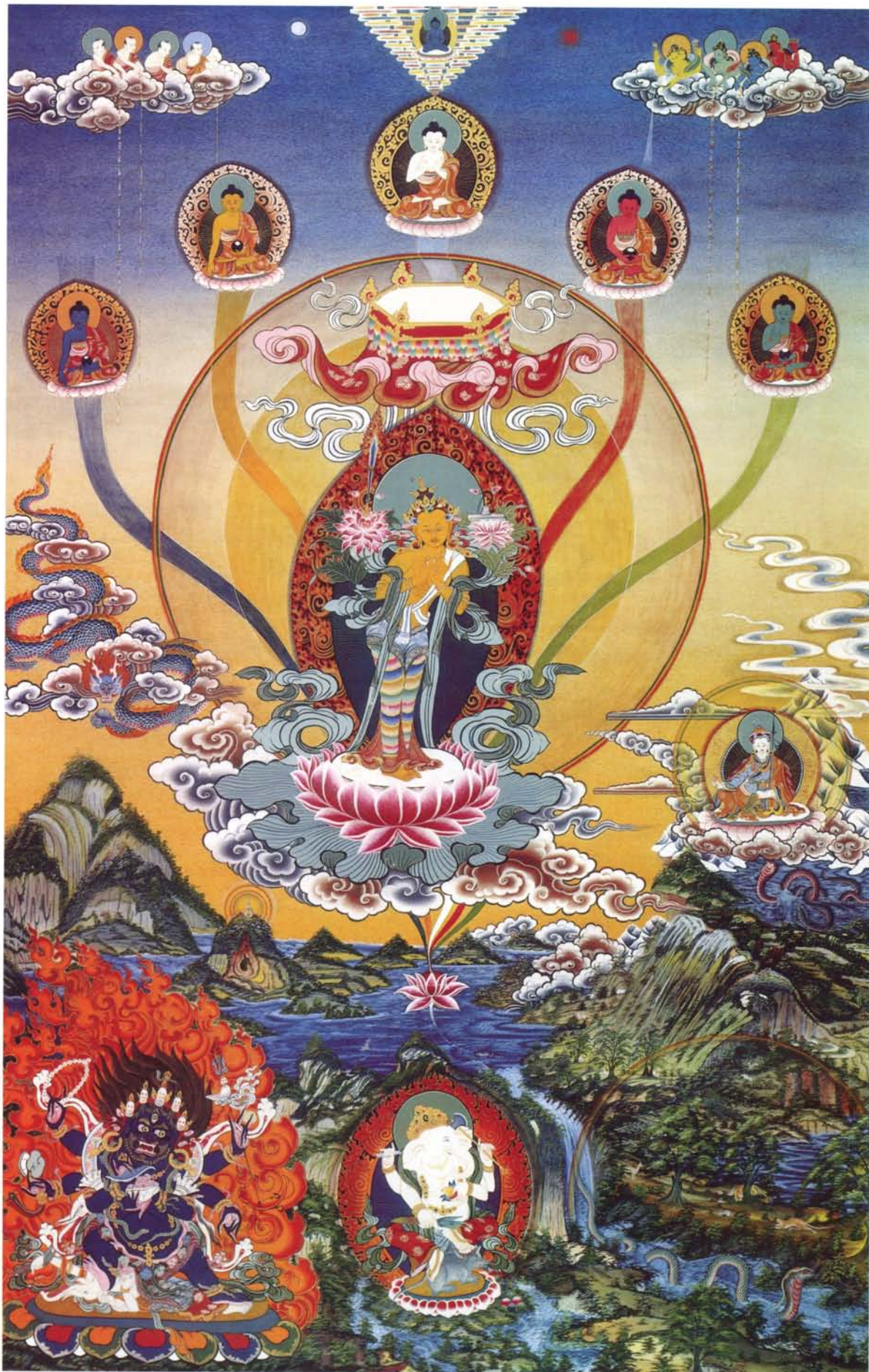
The perspective of the Hindu scholar Ajit Mookerjee reads as a more symbolically stylized but also more abstract interpretation of some of the especially repulsive details of the Kali depiction: “Her disheveled hair (*elokeshi*) forms a curtain of illusion, the fabric of space-time that organizes matter out of the chaotic sea of quantum foam. Her garland of fifty human heads, each representing one of the fifty letters of the Sanskrit alphabet, symbolizes the repository of knowledge and wisdom and also represents the fifty fundamental vibrations in the universe. She wears a girdle of human hands—hands are the principal instruments of work and so signify the action of karma or accumulated deeds, constantly reminding us that ultimate freedom is to be attained as the fruit of karmic action. . . . One left hand holds a severed head, indicating the annihilation of the ego-bound evil force, and the other carries the sword of physical extermination with which she cuts the thread of bondage. One right hand gestures to dispel fear and the other exhorts spiritual strength. In this form she is changeless, limitless primordial power, acting in the great drama, awakening the unmanifest Shiva beneath her feet” (Mookerjee 1988, 62).

Shiva is the protector of the jhankris. Shamans call the horn of a cloven footed animal the first *phurba*. Before they were carved and forged *phurbas*, the jhankris used horns as ritual daggers. They should always be stored in the direction of growth.

“Kali destroys the things that stand in the way of love.”
(ML)



An extremely unusual depiction of the dancing blue Guru Rinpoche. (No. 11)



Here the draining of the lake which once covered the Kathmandu Valley is depicted. Left is the Svayambunath valley, below right is the Chobar ravine. (Shahi Workshops)

MAÑJUSHRI AND THE VALLEY OF KATHMANDU

Standing high above the Bagmati river on the swaying suspension bridge that shook ominously with every step, we saw the water roar through the rocky gateway of the Chobar Gorge. On the river banks, people were sitting and standing on rocks that are usually bone-dry and sunbaked. Now, during the monsoon season, the saga of Mañjushri appeared vividly before our very eyes. We could see how, with a mighty blow from his sword, he had created this gorge through which the Bagmati forces its way from the high plateau of the Kathmandu Valley into the Terai to India, and pours into the Ganges, the great mother of all Indian rivers. (CME/CR)

Mañjushri is the oldest bodhisattva. He is said to have been created by Gautama Buddha himself, whose teachings he defends. Mañjushri is praised as a cultural hero in Nepal. The first day of the lunar calendrical year is dedicated in his honor. He can be seen on many thangkas, hovering over the Kathmandu Valley with his sword. Curiously, no fertile plateaus with fields and villages (which nowadays would have grown into large towns) lie at his feet, but instead there is an enormous lake. It is not only legend, but geological research as well that relates how



Chobar Gorge, Kathmandu Valley.

the entire valley was once covered by a giant lake. To this day, the shells of freshwater snails are discovered when houses, streets, or irrigation canals are built.

The myth relates how this Chinese holy man once made his way to Nepal with his family and farm because the flame of enlightenment, hovering over a lotus blossom, appeared to him in a vision. When he attempted to pay homage to the lotus blossom, which symbolized the Adibuddha and Svayambhu, it remained high above the middle of a great lake, unattainable. The blossom hovered in the distance above a huge mountain that rose up out of the water like a phallus. Then Mañjushri slashed out a gorge in the southern part of the mountain. The water flowed out of the lake. A fertile plateau was created.

Since that time, this plateau has become densely populated with the various ethnic groups of Nepal, who still live peacefully side by side—regardless of whether they are shamans, Hindus, or Buddhists. The hill of Svayambunath still juts up out of the plateau—and there is a stupa built on top. Svayambunath means “the self-created place.” The shamans come to this place in the early morning on Saturdays, the sacred day of Saturn, in order to invoke Shiva, the creator of the universe, and to summon Hariti Mata, the protective goddess of children, to create renewed strength for their personal healing work. The Hindus worship the sacred lingam of their god Shiva here, while the followers of Buddha see the flame of enlightenment of the Adibuddha in the phallic form.

“Mañjushri embodies the wisdom aspect of an enlightened spirit, the ability to recognize the true nature of reality, including humans and phenomena. . . . He holds a flaming sword in his right hand. It symbolizes the severing of the roots of illusion, which are the cause of suffering, ignorance, and envy. In his other hand he holds the book with the title, *The Perfection of Wisdom*, which provides freedom from all illusions.”

SHAKYA (1994, 38)

According to a flowery Chinese legend, Mañjushri sprang up out of the *Jambu* tree (*Syzygium cumini*), the Java plum which grows tall and provides shade. Buddha sent a ray from his third eye which split the *Jambu* tree in two. A lotus flower appeared in the crack and the wise one sat in the lap of the flower. The tree is found on the lower slopes of the Himalayas. Trunks, leaves, flowers, and fruit are used in a number of different ways as building material, animal feed, pigment, food, and medicine.

AVALOKITESHVARA, THE THOUSAND-ARMED GOD OF FERTILITY



Palabi (New.), also called palati or juga (Nep.), meaning "worm," is a "nut" from the fruit of a Leguminosae. It is milled, dissolved in water, and drunk during the festival of Avalokiteshvara in April or May. It is considered a purifying medicine which can cure violent nausea by keeping a taste of it in one's mouth.

Page 97: Avalokiteshvara—the Thousand-armed, or Ekadasitesvara, the Eleven-headed—hovers in the center. The bodhisattva of compassion has a white body, a mild, peaceful expression, and an eye on each of his thousand hands. Above him (from left to right) are found the white Tara, the Buddha of the long life, and the green Tara. Below him to the left is Mañjushri, beside whom, to the right, is Vajrapani, the blue Bodhisattva. He embodies the power of the compassion of Buddha, which is why he is always depicted in an emotionally gripping, wrathful manifestation. The black background (Nakti design) and the themes of the painting are of tantric origin. (No. 3)

AVALOKITESHVARA, THE
THOUSAND-ARMED
GOD OF FERTILITY

On an evening in April our host, Jagat Bahadur Shahi, and his eldest son, Surendra, brought us to a shrine on a mountain where a white manifestation of Avalokiteshvara is kept. In the small courtyard of the monastery, a large mass of people were crowding in front of the Adinath temple. The three-tiered shrine caught our attention, with its countless pots, pans, and copper water vessels shimmering in the setting sun. The fertility of the god who fills the vessels with food and drink is thus made visible and is reflected in all directions. Everyone feverishly awaited the moment when the tantric priest would take the likeness of the god from its shrine in order to bathe and clothe it anew. This tantric ritual is performed once a year under the gaze of the faithful. In the shapeless red figure with huge eyes—reminiscent of the gods of the tribes of northeastern India who live in Orissa—the Hindus worship the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, the Adinath of the Buddhists.

On a platform stood one of the most well known tantric priests of the Kathmandu Valley, a gaunt man about seventy years old with a sharp profile. His large figure, wrapped in white clothes, was imposing. With graceful movements he turned in each of the four directions and performed a set sequence of tantric mudras. To us, it seemed that his gestures were like the Chinese martial art and meditation practice of tai chi. Then, in all four directions he sprinkled the three essences in which the deity was to be bathed: purified water, milk, and the water from the place where the Bagmati river and the Naku Kuchi merge, near Chobar. Following this, he and his assistants had some difficulty making their way through the densely packed crowd to the shrine, and it became hard for us to catch a glimpse of the figure. In a solemn ritual, the figure was disrobed of its thirty-two garments of various colors and fabrics and bathed, after which—some hours later—it was locked up again in the shrine. (CME)

Following this, we learned a number of details about the ritual from our Newari friends. "After eight days the figure will be removed from the shrine one more time and before the eyes of the public it will be sprinkled with the water of the two rivers. The clothing is donated by people for whom the bodhisattva has fulfilled an important wish. People can go to the shrine of Chobar and ask the god to grant them a wish. If the wish is fulfilled, the bodhisattva receives a garment made of brocade, silk, or fur in exchange."



Once a year during a tantric ritual an icon of the white Machendranath, Avalokiteshvara, is brought out of its shrine in Chobar.



A number of statues of Avalokiteshvara can be seen in the Golden Temple of Patan. In order to prevent the widespread theft of artwork, they are secured with steel chains.





Above: Bara theo ritual for girls.



Right above and below:
and Ketapuja
ritual for boys.
(Photos: Shahi)

Unfortunately they could not tell us why the figure was undressed, bathed, and lavishly dressed again. We assume that it is a tantric ritual of sympathetic magic. The purpose of the bathing is to conjure the necessary rains for the fields while at the same time ensuring that the rivers do not overflow their banks. The ritual dressing reflects the people's desired prosperity.

Avalokiteshvara (also named Ekadasiteshvara, "the Eleven Headed," in Skt.; or Sosubokiteshvara in New.) is depicted as a thousand-armed god on thangkhas and bronzes. On each hand there is an eye. This expresses his compassion for all living beings and his all-encompassing wisdom. Tantric Vajrayana Buddhism, which includes Hindu elements in Nepal, considers compassion to be masculine and wisdom to be feminine. The deity is a hermaphrodite and embodies both sexes. It is even part of the puberty rituals of girls and boys.

Before a Newari girl begins her menstruation she is enclosed in a windowless room for twelve days as a

kind of Kumari, a living virgin goddess. Her first glance at the sun is taken through a mirror after her long stay in total darkness before she steps into the radiant sunlight wrapped in brilliant gold and red clothing. In the same way, Machendranath is removed from the sight of other humans for twelve days. And similarly, the sons of the Newari, when they are about twelve years old, are clothed in animal pelts and carried over certain plants in a procession. On the days when the sons ceremonially become men, they are also wrapped in animal skins and their heads are shaved. In this rite of passage—*keta puja* (New.; Nep. *pratabanda*)—they must be sadhus and, with begging bowls in hand, take seven steps over *pan* (Nep. betel leaves), *supari* (Nep. betel nuts), and *luang* (Nep. cloves) that are strewn on the ground.

Before they are married to a man, Newari girls of a certain caste are symbolically married two times: the first time to the round *bel* fruit—the fruit of a tree that is sacred to Shiva; the second time to the sun. Wearing fine jewelry and wrapped in red-gold robes, the embodiment of Kumari steps into the sun for the first time after twelve days of seclusion. In her right hand she holds a mirror through which she has seen the first rays of the sun. In her left hand she holds a replica of the Nyatapola temple from Bhaktapur. Inside of this is contained the orange tika pigment, which also marks her forehead. She will receive this vessel when she is finally married.

Bilva or Bel

Aegle marmelos (L.) Corr.

family: Rutaceae

Synonyms: Shiva's Tree, Wood Apple Tree, Bengal Quince, Golden Apple, Holy Fruit Tree.

Folk names:

Sanskrit	<i>shriphala</i> ("rich fruit"), <i>bilva</i> , <i>vilvah</i> , <i>sivadrumah</i>
Hindi	<i>bael</i> , <i>bilva</i> , <i>sirphal</i>
Nepali	<i>bel</i> , <i>belruk</i>
Bengali	<i>bel</i>
Newari	<i>borshima</i>
Tharu	<i>bel</i>
Tamil	<i>vilvum</i> , <i>kuvilam</i> , <i>vilvam</i>
Telegu	<i>muredu</i>
Mal.	<i>kuvvalam</i> , <i>kulakam</i>

Habitat:

Bilva trees are prevalent in the lowlands (Terai). Only cultivated Bilva trees are found in Kathmandu (on temple grounds, for example).

Use in the Shiva cult:

The bilva tree is said to have sprung from the sweat of Devi after she joined erotically with Shiva. According to Shaivite beliefs, those who worship a lingam at the roots of a bilva tree cleanse their inner self. If, while underneath the tree, a person pours water over himself, it is transformed into sacred water. Lighting a row of candles under the tree generates the clear light of knowledge (Lal 1992, 107).

The leaves have the shape of a *trishul*, the trident of Shiva. In the Shiva Purana it already states that “bilva leaves are sacred to Shiva.” Even one of the names of Shiva—Bilvadandin—reads “he who carries a stick of bilva” (Gandhi and Singh 1991, 69).

Bel leaves are considered to protect against demons. A chain or a garland (*belmala*) can be made from them and stretched around the house to protect it and its inhabitants from demons.

The leaves (*belpod*) can only be picked by Brahmans (in Kathmandu), and on New Year’s day, no one is allowed to pick them.

At the temple of Pashupatinath stands a bilva tree that is worshipped as a sacred relic. Recently it was replaced because it began losing its spiritual power with its advanced age. A colorless tika called *chandan* (actually the name for sandalwood) is made out of the fresh bilva wood in Pashupatinath.

According to tantric tradition, Lakshmi appeared on the earth in the form of a cow, and the bilva tree grew from her manure. (Maybe it is a symbol for mushrooms that grow on manure?) Lakshmi is often depicted with a bel fruit in her hand (Gandhi and Singh 1991, 71).

Medicinal uses:

The fruit has many different medicinal uses and is particularly taken for dysentery. A fever medicine is made from the roots.

Avalokiteshvara is one of the most important deities in the Kathmandu Valley. In Nepalese he is called Machendranath (also written as Matsyendranath). “Machendranath’s parents descended from the race of the Rakshasas. As a hermaphrodite he not only embodies man and woman, but also the benevolent and the frightening, and thus the godly and the demonic—for without demons there would be no gods. We humans also need both divine wisdom and demonic strength,” explained Surendra, referring to the primordial principles of tantrism which are encountered everywhere in Nepal: the masculine and the feminine are found on all levels in a progressive, cosmic union. The wrathful aspect is honored as natural, as is the peaceful aspect. Because the deity en-

compasses the masculine and as well as the feminine, Tara was born from the tears of Machendranath.

A Folktale About Avalokiteshvara

The Newari tell of this hermaphroditic god in the following story, which illustrates the pre-Hindu roots of this fertility deity.¹⁰⁹

“One day the sadhu Goraknath came into the valley in order to beg for *viksha* [Skt., alms] with his begging bowl as many of the monks and nuns from the nearby monasteries still do today. In all three imperial cities, however, this offering was denied to him. In his wrath, he collected all the *nagas* and sat upon the giant tangle of these elemental deities that provide rain and water to the valley. It stopped raining, and the fields of rice, millet, potatoes, wheat, and corn dried up. The people were in great need. The King of Lalitpur [contemporary Patan] sent out an ambassador to find out how to persuade the sadhu to accept the apologies of the people and to let the *nagas* go free. After a long investigation, the ambassador reached a solution. From a tantrika from Kantipur [contemporary Kathmandu] he had discovered that the master of the sadhu Goraknath was living somewhere: Avalokiteshvara, who could free the land from draught.

“The tantrika from Kantipur, the King of Lalitpur, and a porter from Bhaktapur traveled throughout all the lands in order to find Avalokiteshvara. They finally found him; yet the king of the country, whose youngest daughter/son was the hermaphrodite Avalokiteshvara, did not want to let his child go. So the tantrika spoke a mantra that turned Avalokiteshvara into a bee. They trapped it in a *bumba*, the ‘shaman’s stomach,’ and began their long journey back to Kantipur, where his student was still sitting on the *nagas*, the snakes. When they arrived, the tantrika transformed the hermaphrodite back into his human form. Then the sadhu Goraknath bowed down in front of his master. The *nagas* took the opportunity to flee in all directions. At once a great rain fertilized the land.

“Now, of course, each of the three were interested in bringing this fertility-bestowing deity back to their own kingdom: the porter wanted to bring him back to Bhaktapur; the king wanted to bring him back to Lalitpur; and the tantrika wanted to bring him to Kantipur. In order to reach a decision, they asked the oldest man in the valley. Because he was from Bhaktapur, he naturally suggested that they

¹⁰⁹ According to the present knowledge of the Newari, however, the story has been transposed into the Malla period, that is, into the seventeenth century.

The betel leaf is a symbol of the yoni, the nuts are a symbol of the lingam.

When both are mixed together with cloves into the stimulating betel blend, a symbol of the cosmic union is created.

bring him to his own city. As punishment for his egotistical behavior, he sank instantly into the ground. Becoming afraid, the tantrika from Kantipur decided that the deity should find a new home in Lalitpur.

“Since that time, a festival in his honor has been celebrated every year on the day on which the god came into the valley and provided a fertile rain—the festival of the bathing and clothing of the figure of Machendranath which was described above” (Shusma Shahi).

The Kathmandu Valley is small. Many people struggle here for their daily survival. Only with wisdom and compassion is this possible, and only through the protection of powerful gods who can defend the valley from outsiders. Machendranath is one of these mighty guardian deities. According to the Buddhist explanation from the current inhabitants of the valley, as a bodhisattva, he renounces nirvana in order to help those who are living.

Many shrines are consecrated to this deity. Machendranath also contains shamanic elements, including the four directions and the three worlds, which find expression in the tantric ritual described above. The two most important temples hold his red manifestation: Rato Machendranath in Chobar (New. *Chobar Kanamai*) and Patan (New. *Bungamati*), in addition to the two where his white manifestation is kept: Sueto Machendranath in Kathmandu (New. *Janamadio*; located in the vicinity of the Indra Chowk) and *Nala Kanamai* (New.) in the small district of Nala (southeast of Kathmandu on the way to Dulikhel). These four figures are called “sisters” by the Newari. For them, “she” has the function of a protective deity who brings fertility, rain, and nourishment. In the Tibetan tradition “he” is the masculine, thousand-armed deity of compassion.

Temple for Goraknath

The folktale takes place in the seventeenth century Malla period. However, its roots stretch back much further. To atone for the denial of the alms to



Figure of the sadhu Goraknath in the Kasthamandapa temple in Kathmandu.

Goraknath, the temple Kasthamandapa, “house of wood,” was erected for the sadhu in the eleventh century. The cultic image of Goraknath is in the center of the structure.¹¹⁰

At one time the temple was found in the center of the city, which received its name from the three-tiered hall that is said to have been built out of a single tree. Kasthamandapa was the highest building and visible from afar.

¹¹⁰ Weissner, 1986, 79, pointed out that the cultic image of Goraknath is displaced to the west of the center. An egg-shaped stone in an indentation is located in the exact center. From this he deduces that the structure was only later dedicated to the cult of the sadhu, and first was in the service of an archaic stone cult. He also expresses his doubt about the folk wisdom which places the story in the Malla period.



Samsara—the wheel of reincarnation. (No. 14)

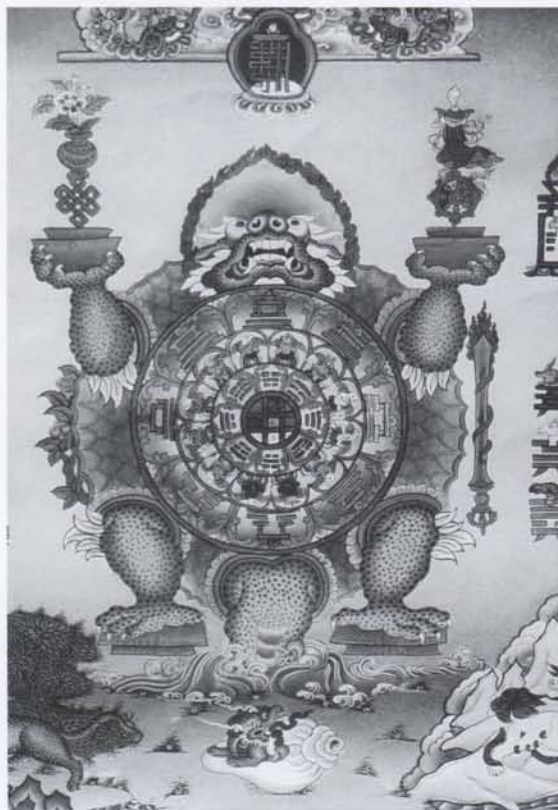
THE CYCLE OF TIME



The shamanic-tantric shields which depict the quadrisect cosmogram of the world and the cycle of time, atop the “hourglass drum” called the damaru.

There are numerous theories and differing beliefs about the phenomenon of time.¹¹¹ The vectorial arrows of time and the idea that the movement of time is cyclical or linear are well-known. Time is the result of life: the unification of spirit and matter. Perhaps time only exists through the spirit’s experience of the transformation of matter.

All cultures have contemplated time, which has been divided and carved up mathematically (like the reborn person who lives on the edge of life and who will become a shaman). From out of this division the calendar has arisen and, along with it, astrology: the endeavor to bring cosmic occurrences or conditions into relation with the fate of humans. The days of the week are named after the gods who relate to the planets. This order or structure for the human experience of time presumably first arose in Mesopotamia. From there, astrology developed and spread across Egypt,



Thangka with the Tibetan-Chinese calendar and the corresponding deity *mara*, the “tortoise-reptile creature” with the eight symbols of luck. The most important I-Ching trigrams are used in the eight-sectioned ring around the center. The twelve houses of astrology are organized around these.

“It is a representation of the cycle of time,” said Danashing Tamang, for whom the calendar is actually of no great importance. (Shahi Studios)

found fertile ground in Greece, and expanded outward to the roof of the world. Vedic astrology already existed there; Hindu astrology came later; and, finally, Tibetan-Chinese astrology.

On the calendar thangka, “Samsara,” time is depicted cyclically as a disk, just as it is on the Kalachakra mandala. It is also represented on the magical shield, or mirror of the shamans, which they wear in their Rudraksha chain. More often than not it is a brass disk 3 to 4 cm in diameter, which has Hindu and Buddhist (OM) or tantric (double *dorje*) symbols on the curved side, and the Tibetan-Chinese calendar system inscribed on the concave backside. To the right of the calendar on this much-worn and utilized pendants there is often a *phurba*.

Time is a circle, a shield, a spiral, a mandala, and a drum. Time is our birth, our life, and our death. Time is our material limitation. Without time there would be no existence upon which we could consciously reflect. Time is round, like a shaman’s drum (*denguru*). The shaman’s drum divides time, chopping it up rhythmically. Each rhythm is dedicated to a different world, a different time. For this reason, the traditional depictions of time in the form of astrological calendars are also always depictions of the *denguru*. Painted on the shaman’s drum, therefore, is the trident of Shiva: the symbol of time, and of the three times that ultimately flow together when an individual falls into a trance.

For the shamans in Nepal, astrology has no significance. To them, only the nights or days of the full moon count for something, for the moon moves cyclically around the earth or through the universe, just as the shaman’s drum moves through the night and through the trance—always in rhythm. Every shamanic ritual is a marking of time, and usually not time of the everyday sort. When the shaman returns from the trance into the circle of his comrades, “normal” time returns. The cycle of time is life; it is *amrita*, guided by the moon, the second largest star in the heaven of our consciousness.

The moon—Soma, Chandra Ma, or Shiva—is the vessel in which the heavenly *amrita* is collected.

It is puzzling why it is precisely the following animals that embody the three important poisons spurring on the endless consequences of reincarnations. No justification for this classification can be found in

¹¹¹ For example, *A Brief History of Time*, by Stephen Hawking (New York: Bantam, 1998) or *Der Zeitbaum* [The Fractal Tree of Time] by Friedrich Cramer (1994).



The Tibetan-Chinese calendar in the tantric depiction on black background reveals the relationship to the shaman's drum, the connection between the heavens and the earth. In addition, the Magical Daggers lay at the feet of it, of time, or of the drums. (No. 31)

ASTROLOGY
Originally discovered and used by the shamans, it was then adopted by Vedic, Hindu, and Buddhist scholars. In the current healing practices of the jhankris, the influences of the planets and houses play an important role, affecting the health of the people. The prevailing web of influences are graphically illustrated in a yantra or *rekhi*. But in everyday life, astrology is peripheral because everything which is important occurs on the earth, *dharti mata*, in the middle world where the humans live. "The shamans still speak with the planets. They are our homes. The astrologers have adapted much of this knowledge. But they are not able to go into a trance, and for this reason they see nothing. Instead, they read and interpret their books and charts."

"When the 'three poisons' are overcome and transcendent compassion enters, then *amrita*, the 'water of long life, or of immortality,' is created in the spiritual body which causes the liberation from *samsara*."

LINDHORST (1997, 44)



The snake stands for "hate," the rooster for "greed," and the pig for "ignorance." These three basic evils propel the wheel of existence and rebirth.



There are Tibetan incense sticks that are made in Nepal or Dharmasala (northern India) and christened *Kalachakra Incense* for the cycle of time. The ingredients are burned up in same manner that time devours life. They are usually made from saffron, nutmeg, luang, cardamom, banslochen, camphor, kusum flowers, barra, jaipatri, gaulothen, white sandalwood, sal resin, and "other jewels."



The Tibetan wheel of life, or samsara thangka. (No. 32)

artistic depictions or in mythic traditions.¹¹² The snake (*naga*) has an exalted and sacred meaning in Nepal. The hatred and the fear of snakes so highly developed in Europe is rarely encountered in Nepal. It is quite the contrary—snakes are the protectors of the water and of the underworld. They are ritually worshiped in specially designated *naga* ponds. Although fear of the poison does exist too, this fear is not identified with "hatred." In the context of this shamanic and Hindu background—out of which Buddhism arose—it is difficult to understand why this animal appears as the personification of hate in Buddhism.¹¹³

The rooster is not a sacred animal in Nepal; during shamanic *chintas* it is sacrificed in exchange for the

soul of the patient. Its fighting spirit and the fact that it is alone among many hens are interpreted as "greed," according to Buddhist understanding.

The pig, often identical to the wild boar in the mythical imagination, was sacrificed to the earth goddess in ancient times. No obvious negative symbolic interpretation of it is apparent in the depictions and concepts of Nepal, nor in the symbolic world of the Buddhists.

In the tradition of the lamaist sect of the Nying-mapa, one should "use the magical dagger in Bardo to kill the three basic evils or poisons which bind us to the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth (*samsara*)" (Lindhorst 1997, 142). Astrology is very important for the gubajus and tantrikas. They are able to read the fate of their clients from astrological books and almanacs, just as we do in the West.

¹¹² None of our informants from among the shamans of different ethnic groups who we asked were able to provide any information. Neither could the thangka painters of different ethnic backgrounds, nor the Brahmans of the Aryan immigrants, nor the gubajus of the Newari.

¹¹³ Concerning the role of snakes in the Hinduism and Buddhism of Nepal, see Majupuria 1991, 182–191.

HANUMAN, YETI, AND BAN JHANKRI



A hairy ape-man painted on the wall of a temple in Kathmandu.

“All scientists, lamas, and Brahmins have to understand that we humans descend from the monkey family,” said the Kirati shaman Parvati Rai. She did not read this in a scholarly treatise on evolution, but obtained this knowledge from the visionary tradition of Mundum shamanism—the oldest of the jhankri paths that are known in Nepal. For her it is clear and without a doubt: “We humans belong to the animal family. Hanuman is our great-grandfather.” Here she is referring to Hanuman the mythical monkey king in the Hindu Ramayana. He helped his lover Sita to escape from the hands of the Rakshasas. Hanuman the monkey is the primordial energy out of which humans originated. He is a form of Shiva (as is so often the case) because he represents his creative powers. For this reason the geographical-spiritual center of Kathmandu, the spot where the giant Kal Bhairab resides, is called Hanuman Doka, “Monkey God Square.”

“When we go into a trance, we ask for the blessing of Hanuman Deu because he is our primordial ancestor. Sometimes we also require his help directly—for example, when we must deal with a particularly powerful opponent such as an evil spirit, or with another shaman who is ‘playing games’ with us. We can only defeat such opponents if we embody the strength and the skill of our monkey ancestors.” Mohan Rai, our translator, made an angry, contorted expression and tensed all of his muscles in order to demonstrate to us the kind of strength that is passed onto the Kirati shamans through the invocation of this powerful ancestor. Then he raised both arms, bent at the elbows, so that his fists were at the same level as

his head. “Look how this resembles Hanuman, the *trishul* of Shiva, and the altar construction of the Kirati shaman Parvati Rai. The long bamboo stick in the middle is the body, the shorter ones to the left and to the right are the two hands. Thus, Hanuman is present on every Kirati altar.”

Hanuman can be both invoked and assuaged with special offerings. They are the foods that monkeys enjoy eating, such as bananas, papayas, potatoes, pumpkins, and cucumbers—as well as chili (after all, Hanuman is of Asian ancestry).

While we were speaking about the mythical monkey from the Ramayana, there was slaughtering going on in the courtyard. For the adornment of the altar and for the blessing of the slaughtered animals, a pig's head was brought in and placed, neatly and cleanly, on a piece of paper in front of the altar. It quickly became apparent that this event was not appropriate to the subject at hand—shamans are particularly sensitive when it comes to gestures, words, and deeds. Parvati resolutely shoved the pig's head to the side and soothingly burned dhup incense over the resulting pool of blood. “Hanuman does not accept any blood offerings! He will become angry when he notices that members of his [greater] family are being killed.” She immediately offered him betel nuts (peanuts were not at hand) to ask forgiveness from the mighty helping spirit. She added that she can also ask him to leave in the same manner, when his help is no longer required. (CME)

The yeti and the Ban Jhankri belong to the monkey family as well. They are not identical to Hanuman, but are different aspects of him. For quite some time in the West, people have been possessed with the notion of viewing the legendary snow man as a new and previously unknown biological species. The jhankris laugh about these materialistic expeditions for the famous yeti—“the yeti can only be seen in visions.” Even the mountain climber Reinhold Messner had to admit in the end that he had confused a bear for the yeti (Messner 1998).

There are countless legends and alleged eyewitness reports from the roof of the world regarding the mythical creature. He is said to be larger than a human, covered all over with hair, and his rear legs have two feet that face backwards.¹¹⁴ There certainly may

¹¹⁴ Cf., in this regard, the now out-of-print publication *Namaste Yeti* by Rättsch/Probst 1984. In the Amazon the saga also concerns a *chullachaqui*, a forest man whose feet have grown in reverse.

“Hanuman is the first and the mightiest shaman. He received his power from Shiva, for he is a manifestation of Mahadev. He is our roots. We come from the same family as this monkey prince. Only the one who is a good shaman, who presides over many powers, is able to invoke Hanuman. The one who does this but is too weak will be overpowered by his strength.”

(PR)



Hanuman accepts only fruit and vegetable offerings, never meat.

“The yeti has never been concerned with us; he only knows instinctively that we exist. We, however, are aware of him in two ways—we can see him as an animal who lives far away from any civilization, while we simultaneously preserve him as a legendary creature in our fantasy, and only both forms of his existence together result in his complete reality.”

REINHOLD MESSNER
(1998, 154)

“I always told Reinhold Messner that he should not search for the Yeti in nature. The Yeti is a shamanic deity and does not exist in the material world.”

(MR)

be jhankris who would want to encounter him—though we never met such shamans, nor did we meet the yeti. Even our translator Mohan Rai, who has conquered all of the European peaks over 4,000 meters and many peaks in the Himalayas as a mountain guide and climber, has encountered only shamans and alpinists—never the yeti. The yeti, also known as *ban manche* (Nep. “forest shaman”) or *skopa* (Kir.), is the “King of the Forest,” a spiritual being.

Ban Jhankri, the primordial shaman and mentor to the jhankri, has hair all over his body and lives deep in the forest as well. He is known by many names, but not every forest man is identical to the forest shaman (according to the translation of this term). For example, Maile Lama has encountered him, as can be read in her story about becoming a shaman, but he is as unlikely to be encountered in the material world as the yeti or Hanuman. However, the forest man can appear to those who seek contact with the mythical source of life, who possess the natural ability to fall into a trance, and who have a visionary awareness of the invisible world. He will initiate them into the secrets of nature and of life. Those who wish to set off on an expedition to track down the Ban Jhankri in the deep woods of the Himalayas are clearly “on the wrong track” and don’t see the forest for the trees.



Drawing of the Yeti with his reversed feet. (CR)

The Sacred Plants of the Ban Jhankri (according to Maile Lama)

<i>pati/titepati</i>	<i>Artemisia</i> spp., Asteraceae (Compositae)
<i>bhang/ganja</i>	<i>Cannabis sativa</i> L., ¹¹⁵ <i>C. indica</i> Lam., Cannabaceae
<i>dhaturo</i>	<i>Datura stramonium</i> L., Solanaceae
<i>kalo dhaturo</i>	<i>Datura metel</i> L., Solanaceae
<i>dhup</i>	<i>Juniperus</i> spp., Cupressaceae
<i>kaulo</i>	<i>Machilus odoratissima</i> Nees in Wall., Lauraceae
<i>amliso</i> (= <i>amrisau</i>)	<i>Thysanolaena maxima</i> (Roxb.) O. Kuntze, syn. <i>T. agrostis</i> Nees; Gramineae
<i>gungning</i> (= [Kir.] <i>ghungring</i> , [Nep.] <i>nigalo</i>)	<i>Arundinaria</i> spp., Gramineae
<i>kartus</i> (= <i>katus/katush</i> = <i>dhalnay katus</i> , = <i>serang</i>)	<i>Castanopsis</i> spp., Fagaceae (3 species in Nepal): ¹¹⁶ <i>Castanopsis indica</i> (Roxb.) DC. (= <i>dhale katus</i>) <i>Castanopsis hystrix</i> Miq. (= <i>patle cactus</i>) <i>Castanopsis tribuloides</i> (Smith) DC. (= <i>musure katus</i>)
<i>paiyung</i> (= <i>paiyu</i>) = <i>padamak</i>	<i>Prunus cerasoides</i> D. Don, Rosaceae ¹¹⁷ (= Himalayan cherry)
<i>totalaka phul</i> (= <i>tatelo</i> , <i>totela</i>)	<i>Oroxylum indicum</i> (L.) Kurz, Bignoniaceae (Indian trumpet flower)

¹¹⁵ Hemp is also called *siddhi* or *patti* (Nadkarni 1976: 260).

¹¹⁶ In Nepal, the plant is offered to Lakshmi, the Goddess of Prosperity, during the Tihar festival in the month of Kartik (Oct./Nov.) Majupuria and Joshi 1988, 211).

¹¹⁷ Leafy twigs are needed for the Balachaturdasi festival (14 days in the month of Mansir = Nov./Dec.) to celebrate the remembrance of the neighbors of the family and honor the demon Bala. Dried branches are used in the sacrificial ceremony called *jap* (or *havan*) (Majupuria and Joshi 1988, 252).

DRAGONS AND NAGAS

Every now and again a person wandering through the mountain regions with open eyes will see ropes stretched over rushing streams, with dried leaves and corncobs hanging from them. These are offerings for the snakes (*nagas*) of the waters. This is to urge them to bestow water to the fields, and to prevent the harvest from drowning in too much water. The leaves are from nettle plants (Nep. *bangre sisnu* or *sisnu*, probably an *Urticaceae*), and because they cause skin irritations, they are related to the poisonous snakes, which supposedly subsist on them.¹¹⁸

Nagas, the snakes and the sacred serpents, are shamanic animals and perhaps even the oldest shamanic gods. They are the rainbow; they are the canals connecting to other spheres and worlds. They bring health and they bring death. They are ambivalent, like all real things. They are ladders to the heavens and chutes to hell. They are symbols of the renewal of life, of the shedding of old mental debris. They are dangerous and they are useful. They deliver poison and they deliver aphrodisiacs. They can asphyxiate you, but they can also taste good—rattlesnake is considered a delicacy in parts of the United States. But shamans do not eat snakes, for if they did, they would be eating their own gods.

The snakes are of great importance to the shamans and tantrikas of the Kathmandu Valley. They represent primordial time and they live in the underworld. They are simultaneously links to all worlds and realities. They are also connecting links to death, to hemp, and to other traveling herbs.

Nagas have a deadly poison (*bis*, *biss*, *vis*, or *vikh*)¹¹⁹ that can be of pharmaceutical significance to shamans and sadhus or *Aghoris* and other representatives of extreme sects. The Ojha shamans, who make their home in the lowlands of the Terai and in northern India, have a *naga* mantra, a “snake spell,” which enables them to be bitten by poisonous snakes. The bite—which in Sanskrit is the same word as “poison”—causes the skin surrounding the wound to turn blue, just like the blue skin of Shiva as a yogi. The Tharu shamans even allow themselves to be bitten on their tongues by cobras and other snakes. Because they are able to stay alive due to their own strengths,

they attain more *shakti*, more healing power in this way. As always, the saying holds true: “that which does not kill you, makes you stronger.”

The famous snake charmers are called *sapera*. “They descend directly from the shamans. They make use of a particularly powerful mantra—they use a love spell in order to enter into a deeper relationship with the snake” (MR). With the snake charmers, however, what remains from shamanism is hardly anything more than a form of entertainment. They also, however, withdraw into the forest to meditate with their *nagas* (for more *shakti*), and sometimes they become especially active as healers for snake bites and other incidents of poisoning.

Just as the snake sheds its skin, new life returns to itself. Like poison, it brings new life and it destroys old life. Poison is Shiva! Without poison, neither our world, nor drama, nor tragedy would exist; our world would probably seem rather boring without poison. We need *bis*, poison, presents, gifts (in German, “gift” = poison).

The Indian cobra (*Naja naja* L., syn. *Naja tripudians*, Elapidae; Skr. *nag* or *nagâ*) is over two meters long and has a poison that affects the heart muscle, in particular. First the heart becomes agitated and



Top and middle: Snakes, *nagas*, and dragons are everywhere in Nepal, for example on buildings and on thangkhas. Bottom: The leaves of the nettle *bangre sisnu*.



Offerings of corncobs and nettles, which are associated with snakes, can occasionally be seen hanging over streams in the mountains in order to soothe the *nagas*, the gods of the waters, and to ask them to bestow fertility.

¹¹⁸ A delicious lentil broth, *Sisnu dhal*, can also be made from the leaves. It is made into *Dhal bhat*, the daily dish of rice and lentil soup.

¹¹⁹ Many very toxic species of *Aconitum* have the same names; see the chapter “Traveling Herbs and Traveling Mushrooms,” page 151.



Snake charmer at the shrine of Pashupatinath.



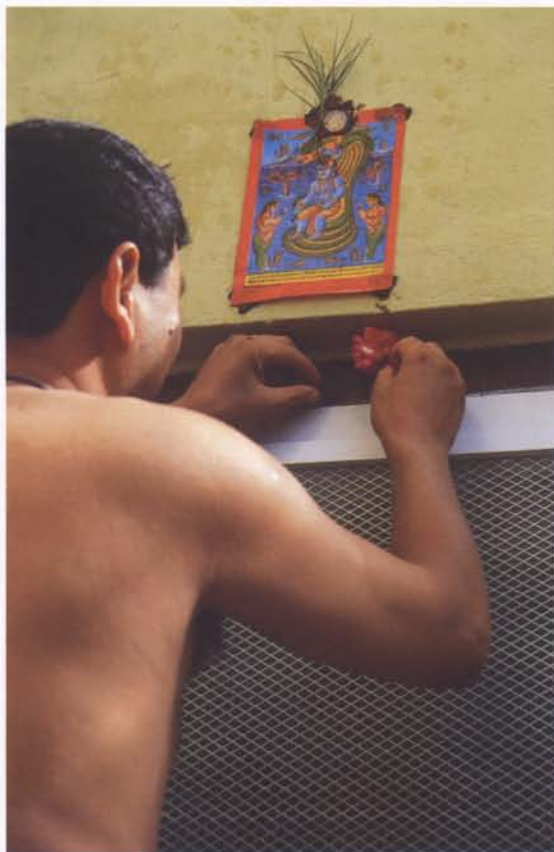
The sacred cobra (nineteenth-century engraving).

"The *phurba* belongs to all three worlds. It is connected one-hundred-percent with the dragons and snakes. The *phurba* is Shiva, the dragon is Shiva."

(MR)

"All Kirati descend from the *nagas*, the snakes. This is why we have no set place. This is why we can live anywhere. This is why we have no religion."

(PR)



In the early morning hours of the Naga Festival, using a little cow manure Pradeep sticks some amrita grass (*dob, dobu*) on the protective snake image that is renewed yearly.



Two Nepalese protective images which are placed over the house door with a little cow manure and twigs of Dubhotar grass (*Cynodon dactylon* [L.] Pers., Gramineae) for the Naga Festival.

The picture on the left shows the *astha naga*, the "eight sacred snakes," as well as scorpions (*bichhi*), spiders (*kalo makura*, "black widow"), and centipedes (*khajuro*). All of these poisonous animals are sacred to Shiva because he loves all poisons. Only Shiva can handle and survive all poisons, thus he protects the humans from poisoning. The picture on left is the shamanic variant of the protective image motif.

The picture on the right shows Vishnu in his form as Krishna among the snakes of his primeval snake river along with two Naginis, or snake goddesses; it is in the Hindu tradition. The two *devis* which are emerging from the mouth of the lower snake indicate the visionary state. This is exactly how the visionary snakes of the Mayas were depicted in ancient Mexico.

then totally paralyzed. This protein poison is considered one of the most powerful animal poisons in the world. One single gram is enough to kill about 150 people (Madejsky 1997, 1857). Cobra poison $C_{34}H_{20}O_{52}$ destroys the blood; it is considered a neurotoxin and nerve poison (Wall 1997). But cobra poison is also a long-standing medicinal agent. Its use for the treatment of leprosy possibly dates back to the medicinal practices of the Pharaonic doctors (Hartlaub 1940, 370).

Equally poisonous is the rare king cobra (*Ophiophagus hannah* Cantor), which can grow as long as 4.77 meters. It is also called *nagaraja* (Nep. "king snake"), *krishna nagam* (Tamil "Krishna snake"), or *shankha chur* (Bengali "snail creature"). It is considered to be very aggressive, although it mainly eats other snakes (Daniel 1992, 115).

It is thundering in the lower level of the building. The crows are screeching. What sort of sound do the snakes make, I ask myself while still half asleep in the early morning dawn. For today is their festival, the Naga Festival. The snakes are slithering once again under the earth. The kundalini can stretch and rise again. The underworld is awakening. The eight Nagas and Naginis, the shamanic snake gods and goddesses, waken from their month-long sleep. From their deep meditation they bring new shamanic energy. All of the deities—all of the shamanic ones, in any event—slept, tranced, meditated, and rested with the snakes. Even the gods need some peace and quiet once in a while. They lay frozen in sleep, in thunderstruck meditation, or in a hazy ganja trance. This is why the lunar month before the Naga Festival is not one that is so well-suited for carrying out powerful and elaborate healing ceremonies.¹²⁰ For these, they need the supportive strength of the reptiles. It seems to me as though our reptilian brain stem has been driven down into the depths of the universe. Although "our" shamans believe that it is best if one meditates and fasts during this month of the sleeping snakes, they nevertheless perform great chintas if a patient is really suffering. They also drum, which disturbs the nagas.

Drunk with sleep, I slither out of my sleeping bag like a snake slithering out of its old skin. I greet the strengthening kundalini and creep down the stairs. A plate of prasad is there—offerings for the nagas—with rice, a pear, red pigment, a few flowers, and incense. Hopefully the snake in me will awaken during these cosmic-geomantic events. (CR)

¹²⁰ So it has been written, for example by Larry Peters (1999). Often, however, the cultural ideal has nothing to do with the lived reality. It is an "ethnologist's disease" to believe that what the informants formulate as an ideal is actually cultural reality.

The eight sacred Nagas, which represent and lead the entire colony of snakes, live underneath the earth and in the ponds of the Kathmandu Valley. They are as old as the human reptile brain. They represent the shamanic primordial base of the family tree of shamanic, tantric, and religious culture. The *nagas* gnaw at the roots of existence just as Nidhog, the Germanic dragon, gnaws at the roots of the world tree. That is why it is important to be on good terms with the snake gods, to honor them, respect them, and protect them, preferably in the heart or as kundalini in the pelvis.

The *astha Nagas*, the “eight snakes,” represent the eight directions even though they are chthonic, i.e., underworldly creatures and representations of the underworld. They live under the earth or in the water. They disappear into the holes of the earth like a lingam disappears into the yoni.

The Eight Snake Gods of the Kathmandu Valley

- Nagaraja, “snake king,” is the king of the water-world.
- Nagarani, “snake queen,” is his *shakti*.
- Bashuki Naga is the prime minister of the snake world.
- Kali Naga, the “black snake.”



The image of a shaman (*maiba*) of the naga clan from the Indian land of the nagas. He holds the obligatory sacrificial rooster and the vessel with the sacred water. (Brass figure, 22 cm tall, twentieth century)

- Seti Naga, the “milk-white snake.”
- Shesa Naga, the “peace bringing” male snake.
- Shesa Nagini, the “peace bringing” female snake and *shakti*.
- Karkat Nagini, the “nourishing” snake.

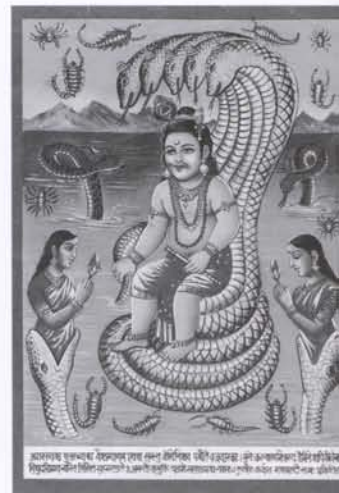
These Nagas are principally well-meaning and powerful deities that every shaman knows and loves. From them the shamans receive their energy, *shakti*, as well as aid for the travels in their underworld. The tantrikas and the gubajus also receive their *shakti* from the snakes, specifically from Nagini, the snake goddess. Most of the Magical Daggers of the Newari are *naginis*, loaded with the power of snakes.

But there are also negative, destructive Nagas, usually called *shime*, “they hurt” (MR), because they can bite or shoot their poison. They can be malicious, and they can harm and even kill humans. As spirits they are also able to nest in the bodies of humans or pets and cause a *naga* infection. This is a typical cause of disease which only the shaman can detect and cure, for this one requires the Garuda mantra, the spell of the divine bird, which is none other than the shaman’s manifestation or form—in any case, this is how it is seen by the shamans, who are often carried by Garuda on their flights, either on his neck or in his claws.

Garuda is the snake catcher, the snake destroyer, because he can handle all poisons just as blue-skinned Shiva himself can. When the shamans assume the form of Garuda in the other reality, they can withstand any poison. Because of this, they are able to suck them out of the poisoned body of the patient. The shaman’s tongue might turn blue, but “every poison produces special visions in the shamans themselves,” said Mohan’s father, the Royal Shaman of Bhutan.

The Food of the Nagas

Every creature must nourish itself; this is also true of the snakes, and even of the snake gods. The physical snakes eat all kinds of small and large animals. But, according to information from the Nepali, they also love milk, just as they do in European fairytales and stories (for example in “The Golden Pot” by E. T. A. Hoffmann). In addition to these, there are also a few plants that are said to be snake food. It is from these plant foods that snakes receive or strengthen their poison. There is the traveling plant of the shamans called *banko*, known in English as cobra plant, and Jack-in-the-Pulpit (*Arisaema* spp., Arum family). Its fruits, which, when fully ripe, glow like bright red corncocks amid the undergrowth as if they are radiating from the underworld, are considered to be the “grain” of the snakes and Nagas. They are also the Shiva lingam around which the *nagas* wrap themselves as kundalini



In 1999, the birthday of Krishna the flute player fell on September 2. Krishna is depicted on many protective images of the Naga Festival. His birth embodies life which emerges out of the water, out of the primordial ocean. With his flute he charms not only the Gopis, but the eight sacred snakes of the underworld as well. His flute is made out of bamboo, from the psychoactive species called *nigalo* (*Arundinaria* sp.), and represents the musical lingam of Shiva.



The yellow fruit of this wild plant from the Nightshade family is called *bihi* (*Solanum torvum* Swartz) and is considered a “food of the nagas” in the Kathmandu Valley. Perhaps it has to do with a psychoactive substance that activates the “snake energy.”

"In the Arabic-speaking world, the consumption of poisonous snakes has been considered a panacea for a long time. It makes you invincible to wounds, bestows eternal youth, and allows you to understand the language of the animals."

MADEJESKY (1997, 1853)

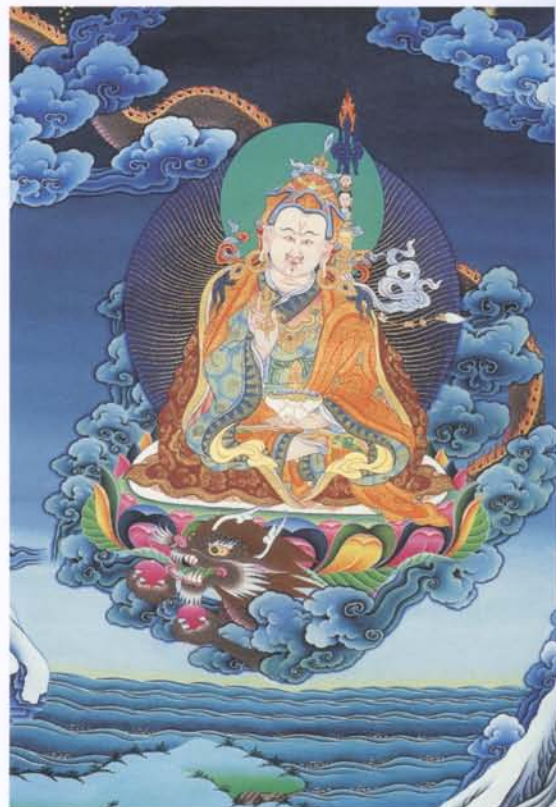
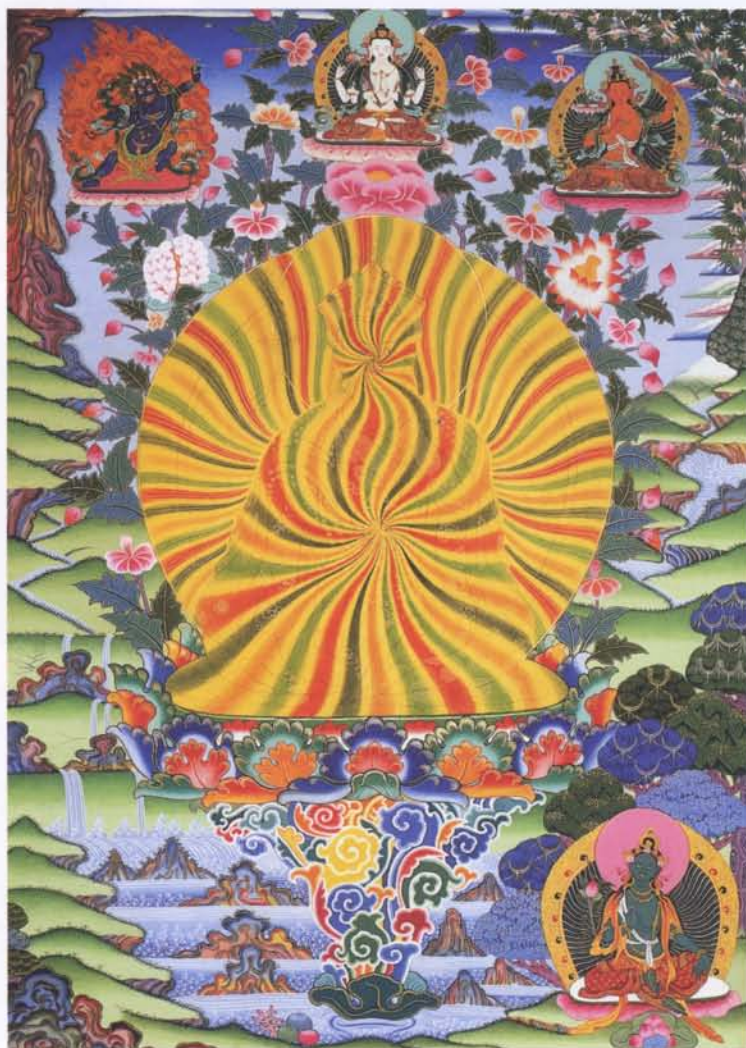
snakes. At the same time, the stalk itself, which pushes up obscenely from the underworld into the middle world, looks like the body of a snake. There are other plants that are referred to as *nag(a) beli*, "snake bodies," because they look like *nagas*, such as many of the lianas in the Terai, the betel pepper (*Piper betle* L.), and the common club moss (*Lycopodium clavatum* L.; cf. Shrestha 1998, 62).

Some round fruits are likewise considered to be the food of snakes, such as a prickly nightshade plant, and a tiny wild nut.

Druk, the Dragon

The dragon is one of the most important shamanic animals. He carries the shaman Guru Rinpoche through the air. He connects all three worlds. He is the rainbow (*indrayani*), the connection between the heavens, the earth, and the underworld. The dragon is a hybrid creature, or in other words, a shamanic being. He has horns like the Stone Age and prehistoric shaman gods. According to "our" shamans, his horns come from the wild goat (*Capricornis sumatrensis*) and are called *thar* or *serow*. (With regard to

Padmasambhava in a state of enlightenment.
(No. 18)



Guru Rinpoche (= Padmasambhava = Shiva) rides through the air on the dragon (*druk*). (Shamanic medicine thangka from Shahi Workshops, No. 35.)

the horns that serve as Magical Daggers for the *jhankris*, see the chapter "Ritual Tools," on page 193.)

The dragon lives in the clouds and is therefore also called "cloud dragon." He is often responsible for thunder and lighting, just like Indra, whose path, the rainbow, he symbolizes. He hurls to Earth the *vajra dhunga*, the thunder ax (usually a prehistoric ax made of stone), in order to slay the deadly poisonous *kahjuro*, the snakelike or even dragonlike insects that live in the underworld and that could be used for sorcery. This is why stone axes are found on the altar of shamans and in amulet bags: they can repel poison.

The dragon, usually called *druk* or *sotang* (Kir.), has his own shamanic mantra. With the mantra the shamans can travel in or on the dragon, into the other worlds. The body of the dragon is a sort of spiritual or shamanic elevator. The dragon mantra also serves for navigation, just like the rhythm of the drum. "Without the dragon, no shaman can travel through the dark tunnel" (MR). The dragon himself is already a healer and a kind of shaman.

The snake, exactly like the dragon, is connected with all three worlds, but only when the flame of the *dhupa*, the incense, is available to him.

The human spinal column is the body of the *naga* or the *naga* inside of us. Thus, there are inner and

outer snakes. We have its material skeleton in our own bones; but we also carry the spiritual energetic kundalini snake in our bodies. It can rise to life from up out of our pelvis, in other words, it can awaken to surging energy, or it can be fetched by the shaman from the altar.

“Poisons heal poisons,” explained the Kirati shaman Parvati Rai. In saying this she indicates that homeopathic principles had already been discovered by shamans during the Stone Age. When she deals with a snake bite, she first sucks the poison out of the wound. Then, depending on how concentrated the poison is, her tongue becomes thick and it swells up like the tongue and throat of Shiva did at one time—Shiva the “blue throat,” he who takes pleasure in poisons.

The Legendary Cobra Poison Traveling Substance

According to the scientific literature, the bite from a cobra is fatal within sixty-five minutes, but also there have been cases of insanity or intoxication, and cases of recovery (Wall 1997, 81).

Maile Lama told us that her grandfather, who was a powerful shaman, allowed himself to be bitten by cobras and other poisonous snakes.¹²¹ Because of this he was able to fly higher and faster, and saw only rainbows. Parvati Rai, who seems down-to-earth and serious, and who knows from personal experience nearly all of the traveling substances that have been described here (except for cobra poison), has observed many times in northern India how the Ojha let themselves be bitten on the tongue as well. “They seemed to be very dazed, and traveled very far away.”

The snake, especially the cobra, is the garland, the necklace of Shiva. Vishnu also sleeps in his space on a giant cobra, which raises its eight heads like a kind of umbrella behind his back. Even the enlightened Buddha is now and again depicted with cobras underneath the bodhi tree. The cobra obviously symbolizes the state of enlightenment in the Hindu and Buddhist pantheon, the journey to other spheres through which the truth can be comprehended behind the veil of illusion (*maya*). In the iconography, the snake is the protective umbrella of the deities—in other words, the *naga* is identical to the cosmic mushroom!

On the upper left side of the popular devotional picture on this page, Shiva is a white-haired, bearded man who is rather more reminiscent of the common

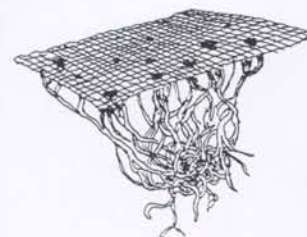
¹²¹ In Nepal, really poisonous snakes actually exist only in the Terai. Besides the cobra, there is the very long *Goman*, which is deadly; the approximately one-meter-long *harin*, *harare*, or *harao*, a deadly green snake; and the “flying snake” called the *sirise*, which grows to 2 meters. It can stretch itself out so quickly that it glides in the treetops. All species are able to provide their poison for shamanic flying.



The naked Naga Babas, “snake ascetics,” covered only with ashes, are extreme sadhus on the path of Shiva. They celebrate their initiation with their own burial. Through this, they shed their caste membership and, like the snakes, dress themselves in the skin of a new life. They leave societal conventions behind and take over sectarian ones. Many Naga Babas walk with iron *chintas*, or torches, through the region—a material reminder of the shamans. (Naga Babas at the Khumba Mela festival in Hardiwar, March/April 1998)



On the head, that is to say, in the heavens (*akash*), are pieces of variously colored fabric: the rainbow that represents the snakes and the dragons. The white cloth in the middle, in the middle world, is the symbol of peace.



The wormhole connections in the time-space continuum. (Drawing from Klein 1982, 12)

The *katvanga*, the ritual scepter of Guru Rinpoche or Padmasambhava, is considered to be a symbol of the three worlds, the three times, and the three states of consciousness.



Sintong, the lion-headed Vajrayogini, is an embodiment of Kali. In her arms she holds a *katvanga* decorated with a trishul. (No. 42)



Guru Rinpoche with a *katvanga*, crowned by Shiva's *trishul*. (No. 44)

SNAKE WISDOM

“The snakes teach us that it is also a part of their wisdom—and to a certain extent the legacy which they have bestowed upon the contemporary humans—that one comes to the same or certainly similar belief concepts, and to the same or a comparable symbolic, mystic world of images, during certain stages of development. This often occurs entirely independently of one another because of the common foundational structure of the soul and its subconscious connection with nature, earth, and universe.

Like the legendary serpent of Midgard, which encircles the entire earth in the sagas of the northern peoples, the snake—regardless of whether it is supposed to be a sacred animal or a demonic one—unites a mankind divided into countless different belief concepts, and leads it back to its communal great mother. The great mother is the earth.”

HARTLAUB (1940, 364)

SHAMANIC DREAM

*i see deserts on my flight
i see dragons in the glowing
night
the tigers of eternity
universal as light
i see
the desert queen
i live*

*my shamanic dream
i sail my ship to the sunset
skies
through the red feverous
night
i leave behind all misery
on the sinking shore called
past
the night turns to day
i see the opening morn
when i awake
to face reality*

BETRAY MY SECRETS
(SERENADES RECORDS,
1999)



Shiva as the drinker of poison.

images of Brahma. In his muscular arms, which a cobra winds itself around, he holds a *shankha* that contains the blue poison. *Bis* indicates poison in general; it is the name of the cobra and also of the extremely poisonous plant monkshood. The visions rise up out of the poison in bubbles, in the form of humans and animal-headed hermaphrodite creatures. *Bis* was liberated during the churning of the Milk Sea and only Shiva was able to drink the poison, which he did in order to protect the living creatures from its high concentration.

Cobra and Ganja

Occasionally one hears about how sadhus dribble cobra poison on hemp leaves in order to make them more potent. The effects of such a preparation are supposed to be similar to smoking DMT. The shamans of Nepal also know of a procedure for potentizing raw substances of this nature.

Danashing Tamang explained: “If you find a dead cobra or other poisonous snake, then you must bury it. It must be rolled up like a *saligram* and buried with its head in an upright position. Ganja must be planted on the grave—which should be enclosed with a (spiritual) barrier made of stones—within three days, otherwise the poison will wear off. Hemp requires three to four months to produce flowers. You have to harvest it when it is ripe, that is, before it goes to seed.

“When you smoke this cobra ganja, you fly. . . . A few tokes is enough. Then you see all the *nagas*, all



Naga malas and dried pieces of monkshood are found on an image of Shiva Vishpan, the poison drinker.

the snakes, flying around. I have done this and experienced it myself.”

Through the use of cobra ganja, the practiced shaman can increase his *shakti* and attain glimpses into the snake universe.



A snake charmer who not only tames the snake, but who also refuels her *shakti* in the middle of the wilderness; this was originally a shamanic meditation technique. (North Indian miniature, twentieth century)

THE CHAKRA TEACHINGS

When I heard about the experiments with the Samadhi Tank à la John Lilly, I wanted to experience being suspended in the water and “floating in the primordial soup.” To this end, I filled a bathtub with very warm water and poured about twelve pounds of salt in it. I hoped that the dense salt solution would prevent me from drowning. Following a sauna, I laid myself in the water and turned off all the lights. Immediately I thought of Vishnu on his snake raft and suddenly I saw the chakras, which I had heard and read so much about, as surging sources of energy in my (almost) floating body. Finally! But what to do with such visions? I decided to ask the chakras about analogous psychoactive plants or substances. Could there be a correspondence between them? In any event, I saw something that could be described in the following way. Each time I concentrated on a chakra, a specific psychoactive substance appeared to me. In the sexual chakra, a peyote cactus blossomed; in the genital chakra, a hemp leaf unfolded; in the stomach chakra, a mushroom sprang up; in the heart chakra, the chemical structure of MDMA (ecstasy) formed; in the neck or throat chakra, the ketamine molecule whirled around; in the forehead chakra, an LSD formula glistened; and in the crown chakra, DMT exploded. Someone was knocking on the bathroom door. The next person wanted to lie in the salt lake. Thankful for the vision, I climbed out of the cosmic tub. Who knows if what I saw was something real? Who knows if these substances really have anything to do with the ethereal body? But this set of correspondences that the vision revealed could conceivably make perfect sense. (CR)

“Our chakras are our *phurba*, our Magical Dagger. For our life ultimately begins in the sexual chakra,” explained Mohan Rai enthusiastically. “The crown chakra is the *phurba*, which connects everything. The yoni is the gateway to life, both for humans and for shamans. Without the yoni, life cannot begin” (MR).

“Our seven chakras are our guides,” said Parvati Rai. “We shamans discovered them. The seven chakras are your life that begins below. The altar is our heart. The seven chakras must always be present on it.” The seven chakras correspond to the seven Kalis and to the seven cosmic directions.

For the shamans the three most important chakras are the root chakra, where *shakti*—the shamanic energy that puts the whole system into swing—is created; the heart chakra, where the sexually loaded energy from the lower body is transformed into love, the actual healing power; and the head chakra, where

the sexual or love energy is transformed into knowledge.¹²² Fertility, love, knowledge, and learning are the most important sources of shamanic existence.

But the other chakras are also important. The navel chakra is the place of oceanic self-liberation.¹²³ The throat chakra (Kir. *ghoakro*) is where that the soul or consciousness slips out—during a trance of course.

To those who possess the ability to see them, the chakras offer dependable information about the health of the person concerned. When something in the chakra is not right, that is, when something is out of balance, there is a problem at hand. A shaman or a tantrika can cure it by returning the patient to a state of harmony. There are also congenital defects: “Those who are born with eight or only six chakras die immediately” (MR).

The chakra teachings contain different meanings depending upon the interpretation of the specific ethnic group. Just as varied are the descriptions of the individual chakras. The Sanskrit names are usually used in the research (cf. Johari 1986, Mookerjee 1971 and 1982). From the royal court Brahman, Muktinath Ghimire, we learned the names and meanings that are used by the Brahmans of Nepal:



1. *Shankha* (literally, “snail”) is the name of the root chakra (Skt. *muladhara* chakra; *mula* = “root”). “This is where *shakti* develops. It always comes

¹²² In the Sherpa language, chakra is called *mutuk*, and the heart chakra is called *ning mutuk*. With regard to the following correspondences between the names of the chakras and their meanings, it is important to keep in mind that the chakra teachings are not subordinate to any fixed system. The classification varies according to the informant or the literature source—this is a challenge for us, as we are accustomed to binding and definite systems. For instance, the Sanskrit source Garud Purana is based on six chakras. In that text they are organized—deviating from the statements of the Brahman, Muktinath Ghimire—as follows: 1) *muladhara*, perineum chakra, root of *shakti*; 2) *svadhishthana*, navel chakra, transforms nutrition into energy; 3) *manipura*, heart chakra, encourages compassion and thought; 4) *anahata*, throat chakra, makes contact with the three worlds possible; 5) *vishuddhakhya*, the chakra of the third eye; 6) *ajna*, crown chakra, fosters contact with the spiritual realm.

¹²³ “Oceanic self-liberation” is a term—or rather, a category of experience—which means blissful, joyful, and/or mystical states of consciousness. The term was suggested by the psychologist Adolf Dittrich (see Dittrich 1996).

“The heart is the greatest shaman.”

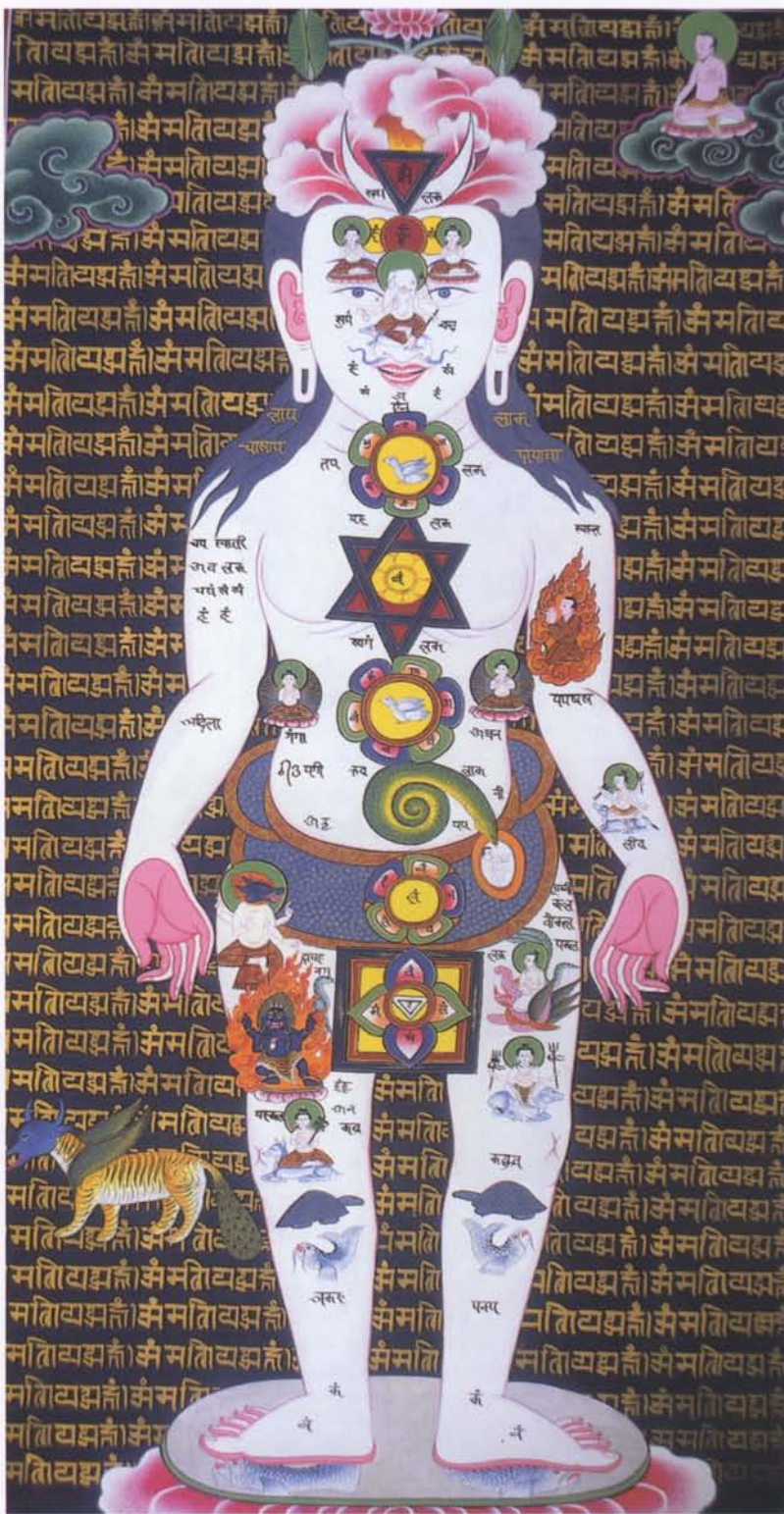
(MR)

SAMADHI

The word *samadhi* comes from Sanskrit and originally designated the ultimate state of yogic concentration in which all opposites are transcended (Stutley 1985, 122). *Samadhi mudra* indicates a hand position which expresses the deepest state of meditation.

In Nepal, the original Sanskrit word continues to be used to describe the ethereal body of man, based on the seven chakras and the kundalini snake. *Samadhi* is often translated as “enlightenment” and possibly represents the concept of “oceanic self-liberation” (cf. Dittrich 1996). The term *samadhi* has become well known in the West, among other ways through John Lilly’s “Samadhi Tank” (cf. Lilly 1976, Lilly and Gold 1995). The Samadhi Tank contains a salt solution, and one does nothing except float in the water, in total darkness and isolation.

The *Lexikon der östlichen Weisheitslehren* [Encyclopedia of Eastern Teachings of Wisdom] (1986, 315) defines *samadhi* as “a state of consciousness beyond wakefulness, dreams, and deep sleep, in which thought ceases. It is a complete absorption into the object that is meditated upon, or the attainment of a union with a god or the Absolute. There are different steps of *samadhi*. The highest is *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* [in Skt. the literal meaning is ‘changeless *samadhi*’].”



The Samadhi thangka comes from the gubaju tradition of the Newari. The human as *phurba* stands in the center. In his spinal column—his original snake body—are the symbols of the seven chakras and the kundalini snake that sleeps between them. A mythical shamanic hybrid creature, a *bosala* (= *wasala*), is depicted at the left side of the right leg. It has the head of a horned *garuda*; crossed with a “blue cow” (an antelope, *nilgai*)—some also say it is a “horned horse”; the body of a tiger; the wings of an eagle; and the tail of a masculine peacock. The *bosala* creature came from the Newari tradition. It is a hybrid creature that unites the abilities of animals, but belongs to *mundum*, to the root of shamanic thinking and action. (No. 5)

from the lower parts of the body. When we sit in the lotus posture in the mornings and blow the *shanka* [= conch shell, usually from the *Turbinella pyrum*], we activate this important chakra” (MG). In the esoteric literature, this source of energy is usually neglected in favor of the crown chakra. However, in the tantric-shamanic tradition of many cultures of Nepal, humans should “stand on their own two feet.” Only when he (or she) is able to satisfy sexual desire and emotional needs, will he (or she) be able to develop the spiritual strength that ultimately flows into the crown chakra.

The Guardian of the Threshold, Ganesha, opens the door of this chakra. Because of this, his sacred plant is called *mūlaka* (Skt.) or *mula* (Nep.), the “root”; it is a radish (*Raphanus sativus* L.) that looks like a mandrake. The wild radish, *ban mula* (Nep. “wild or forest radish”), is of outstanding significance to the shamans. When one eats the root of this plant, the root chakra becomes full.



2. *Gadha*¹²⁴ is the name of the sexual or genital chakra (Skt. *svadhithana* chakra). “Gadha is the energy center of the human being. This is where nutrition is transformed into energy and where the organic system of humans is detoxified.”



3. *Chakra* (Skt., Nep. “discus”) is the name of the navel chakra (Skt. *manipura* chakra). “This chakra protects us from dangers and builds a protective shield against things that can harm us.” This chakra is often depicted on the thangkas as a shamanic-tantric weapon used to defeat demons.

¹²⁴ This word could derive from the Sanskrit *gadā*, “club.”



4. *Padma* is the name of the heart chakra (Skt. *anahata* chakra). “With our heart we build relationships to the environment; to humans, animals, and plants; and to the world in which we live. It is the center of the four cardinal directions that we move within. If this chakra is blocked, we become spiritually and physically sick.”



5. *Chaturbuj*¹²⁵ is the name of the throat chakra (Skt. *vishuddha* chakra). This is where shamans are able to leave their own body and travel into the other worlds. “Chaturbuj gives us energy, brings us into resonance with the environment, and makes sure that we have the necessary energy for our intellect. It allows us humans access into the spiritual worlds, and connects matter, which ascends from below, with the spirit.”



6. *Trishul* (Skt. *ajna* chakra) is the name of the third-eye chakra. “It nourishes our relationship to the three times and to the three gods: Brahma (left), Vishnu (right), and Mahadev (center).” Many Brahmins use only six chakras. They don’t consider the *trishul* to be a chakra, but instead identify it with *chaturbuj*, the *vishuddha* chakra, which lies, then, not in the throat, but in the third eye.



7. *Sahastrasir* is the name of the crown chakra (Skt. *sahasrara* chakra). Muktinath Ghimire not only identifies the crown chakra with transpersonal cosmic energies, but also with the qualities of the chakra point between the eyes: “The cosmic wisdom is stored in the third eye, *trimurti*. That is the location where we make decisions and where we make contact with the suprahuman spirit world. We are only able to connect with the universal wisdom stored there when we nourish the crown or head chakra with energy from the root chakra.” We instinctively put our head in our hands or look up when we wish to retrieve buried knowledge from our memory. The melancholy gesture of the European thinker finds its Asiatic analogy here.

When a patient visits a Brahmin with physical or psychiatric problems, he must provide his name, and place and date of birth. The kernels of rice that the patient has brought with him or her are placed by the Brahmin into the respective “houses” of the planets, thus establishing a relationship to the chakras that is recorded in the corresponding diagram. In this way, he can recognize the individual chakras that are blocked. When he has finished with his “Latin”—i.e., Sanskrit—the Brahmin refers the client to a *jhankri*. According to information from the Brahmin Muktinath Ghimire—who is a *jhankri* as well—it is important for people’s health that all chakras are connected to each other by a spiraling flow of energy. Each individual chakra is filled through a circular flow of energy ascending from below in a spiral movement to each subsequent chakra until it reaches the crown chakra. In the tantric teachings of Nepal there is no hierarchy of these energy centers reaching from the genitals to the crown of the head along the spinal column. Humans are only healthy when all seven centers are filled with energy, and when the chakras are connected with each other through eternally ascending and descending energy.

“The shamans are our teachers. We Brahmins came later. We also follow Shiva—only in a different way.”

(MR)

¹²⁵ Probably from Sanskrit *caturbhujā*, “four-armed”; with this are indicated the four-armed deities as well as the four directions and, thus, the cosmic relationship (cf. Stutley 1985, 31).

SHAKTI, THE SHAMANIC ENERGY

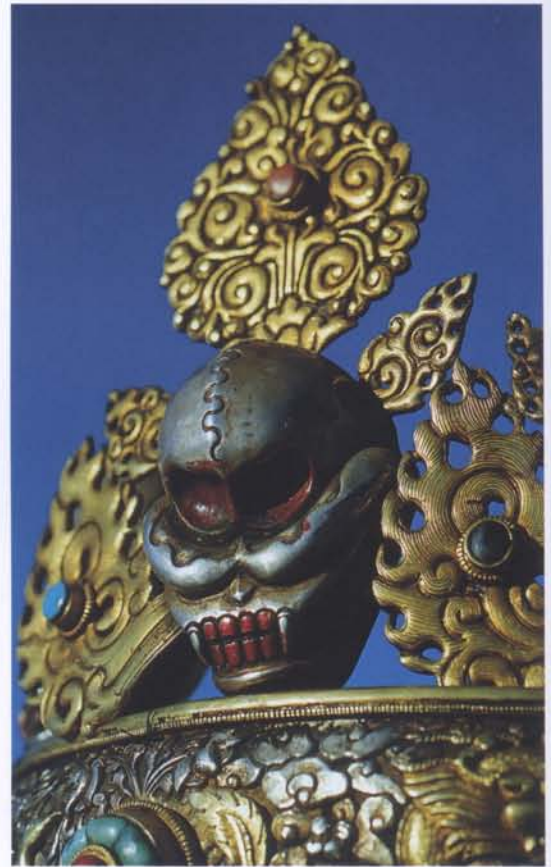
Shamans are dependent upon their healing energy. This energy is called *shakti* and it is not infinitely or limitlessly available. Like everything in life, *shakti* is subordinate to cyclical rhythms and must be replenished every now and again. To this end, one can undertake a *gupha* (see the chapter “Shamanism and Meditation,” page 231), a pilgrimage to a sacred site (“Kalinchok—Journey into the Heart Chakra,” page 245), or a retreat to a place where merciless nature must be confronted. The *chakra* of life and death is located in the cemetery. This is where the mortal shell of the human being finds its final peace. Jhankris occasionally go to the cemetery in order to confront and overcome their own fears about death and the associated fears of ghosts and decay.¹²⁶

“Even if there were a cable car to Gosainkunda, Kalinchok, or another mountain, we would walk there anyway. *Shakti* is bestowed on us not only at the place where it pours forth during the time of the Shiva moon,¹²⁷ but also on the route which is taken to get there. Those who travel by bus or cable car deceive themselves. They just want something and forget to sacrifice their own sweat for it,” said Indra Gurung, who has to make twice as much effort to conquer the steep and difficult path with his aching leg. In order to replenish their *shakti*, some Sherpas even make the effort of scaling Mount Everest—their sacred mountain Sagarmata (Sh. “Mother of the Mountains”). We heard again and again that the Sherpas have been doing this for at least five thousand years. We met a Sherpa-jhankri on Kalinchok who had already been on top of the highest mountain in the world four times—naturally without an oxygen tank. The fame for such great deeds is reaped only by alpinists of the Western world. The names of the porters, without whom the likes of Sir Edmund Hillary or Reinhold Messner would never have been able to take a step, are rarely published.

Without action, nothing is attained. Only those who endure the loneliness of a meditative retreat in the wilderness will receive energy; only those who undertake the effort to climb a four- to five-thousand-meter peak will be filled with *shakti*; only those who walk to the cemetery alone through empty streets at night to contemplate the laws of life and death will be rewarded with fearlessness and renewed life energy.

¹²⁶ Maile does not go to the cemetery, but instead she travels there from her house, where she kneels in a trance in front of her altar.

¹²⁷ The midsummer full moon, known as *Jaina Purni* or *Jhankri Mela*.



Confrontation with transitoriness fortifies the energy of the shamans (detail of the crown of a Tibetan State Oracle).

During one of our stays in Nepal we had the opportunity to witness a meditation (*gupha*) that the Gurung shaman Indra Doj Gurung performed at a cemetery.

Thursday evening, the night of the thunder god, Indra. “Our” Indra sits in full regalia in front of an altar made from four stems of amlisau grass, ten kernels of rice (= traveling tormas),¹²⁸ and sixteen millet balls (kodo). In front of him lays a trumpet fashioned out of a human bone. With it he will invoke the demons who will bestow wisdom and strength upon us. Indra has prepared everything for a meditation that we are to perform in Pashupatinath on Saturday, in the night of Saturn.

Next to Indra sits his principal student, who is a bit older than he is, but less experienced. He beats the drum while Indra sings and rings the bell, calling on all the gods, demons, natural realms, stones, and worlds. They are to stand by us when we go to the cemetery

¹²⁸ *Torma* (= *thurmi*) is an upside-down *phurba*.

“Everything is part of a kind of cosmic game. Everything is alive. Not enlivened like normal life, but filled with consciousness. Everything lives from consciousness.”

JODOROWSKY (IN MOEBIUS 1984, 38)

“Love conquers all . . .”
DEEP PURPLE, *SLAVES AND MASTERS*
(BMG, 1990)



Yamantaka, the Lord of Death, in union with his Shakti. (No. 8)

The sacrificial rooster of the nighttime cemetery ritual is not eaten by the humans. It is an offering to the wild animals, to nature, to Mother Earth.

Gurung must begin on

Thursday with the invocation of the dead.

The 108 guardian deities that he invokes require the time to prepare for their assignments.

to meditate. Before Gurung falls into a trance, he makes an offering of his own blood. He pricks his fingertip with the sharp quill of a porcupine and squeezes drops of blood into his incense bowl. The stronger the effect of his mantras, the deeper into a trance he is able to go. The cymbals crash. The bells ring. The drum sounds. Indra jumps around in a circle, yelling "Haat!" He is in the other world. He has made contact with it. He blows on the bone trumpet and falls so deeply into a trance that he begins to gnaw on it as if it were a dog bone. His face is gleefully distorted. He is now a dead spirit chewing on the last remaining pieces of flesh from decaying bodies. All are fascinated by the performance, which isn't really a performance, but reveals a genuine and important view into the world of the dead. Staggering back out of the trance, he finally says that we can perform the ritual on Saturday night. The spirits and gods that had been invoked are thanked and all bid them farewell. Kernels of rice and sacred water sprinkled in all four directions purify the space and provide the worlds beyond with food and drink. Just three minutes ago the atmosphere was gruesome. Now the expressions on the faces have settled down, and the rhythm of the drums leads us back to our "middle" world.

Cemetery Ritual

Saturday, Saturn's day and night: our driver, a Newari, refuses to take us to the sacred site of Shiva and cem-

The Thursday-night altar for preparing for the invocation of the dead.



Smoking Recipe for the Ceremony of Conjuring the Dead

(according to Indra Gurung)

Take seven *dhupas* of equal parts:

<i>gau dhupa</i>	clarified butter (ghee)	
<i>sukpa</i>	<i>Juniperus</i> spp.	juniper
<i>gokul</i>	<i>Cedrus deodora</i>	Himalayan cedar
<i>sun pati</i>	<i>Rhododendron lepidotum</i>	high-altitude rhododendron
<i>bhairunga pati</i>	<i>Potentilla fruticosa</i>	potentilla
<i>kumkum pati</i>	<i>Didymocarpus albicalyx</i>	
<i>titepati</i>	<i>Artemisia</i> spp.	mugwort

The ghee is invisible because it is sprinkled over the other ingredients which are evenly crumbled together.

etry of Pashupatinath. He has too great a fear of the dead spirits. I tell him that we have the best "Ghostbuster," Indra, with us. But it is of no use. His refusal is very definite. Fine. We will take a taxi, or rather, find a driver who will wait for us during the ritual.

Tires screeching, we speed through the night. The rooster in Mane's lap is clucking. On the radio, the sultry, erotic voice of the announcer plays romantic Hindi love songs for the midnight audience. Dim lanterns illuminate the streets. Only the dogs and occasional patrolling policemen are out on the streets. A policeman accompanies us, too, "In case there are any problems or we encounter some suspicious characters on our unusual trip . . ." Once again, Mohan Rai has thought of everything. The road leads us to the cemetery of his Kirati community. We were already here once before, when we witnessed Parvati Rai put a Kirati woman in her final resting place. What condition is her mortal shell in now?

The moon reveals only a shy sickle, but many stars light up the night and many sleeping monkeys sit sweetly snuggled up together at the Shiva shrine. The disturbed and annoyed dogs bark at us.

"Someone is always dying. Someone is always being born," Mohan Rai comments on two burning funeral pyres on the banks of the Bagmati. Sleeping people stir under the roof of the temple and beneath their blankets on the banks of the river. On the other side of the river everything is quiet. Gurung rings the bell and we silently follow behind him and Mane up the forest path. Only one flashlight lights the way over the scattered pieces of rock, which are supposed to provide a solid ground for the coffins buried here.

Then we are standing on the hill with the Kirati gravestones. Below us, in the distance, a few lights sparkle in the quiet night. We are allowed to take photos with a flash. The rooster that was brought with us is sacrificed. We wish to learn things from the dead souls, and thus we must give them something. The gravestones are sprinkled with the sacrificial blood. The wild animals in this place should also not be disturbed without being given something in return. With the swing of an arm, the rooster's body is hurled into the bushes. Next, we are instructed to lay down and stretch out on two graves. We are supposed to lay here for about an hour, with our eyes closed and our ears open, to feel the special atmosphere of the place. The others retreat. Only barking dogs and the breaking of branches can be heard. Between us sits the tall and black figure of Gurung. The peacock feathers of his shamanic crown reach toward the heavens. He slurps, chirps, laughs, and sings. Apparently he is calling the dead souls with affectionate words. Then he walks up and down between the gravestones and blows on his trumpet which is made from the forearm of a human. I am unable to find the sound

frightening. It sounds rather beguiling and sweet. He places the phurba next to my head. It is to give me strength and to protect me. I feel alive in a way that I have rarely felt. Beneath me rest the bones of a human being. The mosquitoes are buzzing around me. They are enjoying my tasty offering of blood. I feel very alive. Eventually, I even warm up the cold stone.

My brain is thinking about the fact that next to me are drops of the sacrificed blood and that on the next day they will be signs of our midnight visit. Images of grave vandalizers, necromantics, and black masses float across my mind. In the sensationalist press there are always gruesome pictures of Satanists who have turned their back on life and who find pleasure in violating corpses in a macabre connection of death and eroticism. These strange rituals might exist, especially in a culture like ours in the West, where a sharp line is drawn



Cemetery sacrifice. In order to lose his fear of mortality and to gain *shakti*, Indra Gurung invokes the dead souls and dead spirits with his trumpet made from the forearm of a human. On his lap he holds a rooster that will be offered to the realm of the night in return for gifts.



between good and evil, life and death. In a culture that perceives death as something negative, that approaches it with embarrassment, and that banishes death from life, people are even more curious about sensational stories of gruesome death rituals.

What I experience here has nothing to do with such necrophilic scenes. But it does relate to the Greek word *nekromanteia*. The original meaning of the word is: "the conjuring of and protection of the knowledge and the wisdom of the dead." It has to do with the confrontation of the night-side of death, which is inseparable from day and from life. If we do not comprehend that death is awaiting all of us, we will not be able to lead a conscious life. Gurung shows the dead their honor in an almost loving way. He whispers to them and noisily participates with them in

“Yama is a kind of traffic cop for the dying souls.”

(MR)

“Sex is a form of nourishment. Sixty percent is for pleasure, forty percent is for clearing the mind. Sex is so high that no one can stop it. The union of masculine and feminine creates the light. A celibate life is incomplete. The monks and nuns have not fulfilled their lives, they remain unfulfilled. The more sex the better. A lot of sex is good for the brain.”

(MR)

the concert of mortality. He laughs with them about the joke of a supposedly eternal life. From all four directions he calls them forth with his bone drum. (CME)

Gurung and I stretch out the rooster's neck. I feel the pulse of its blood, its life rhythm. I must draw my kukhuri. I cut its head off with a single stroke. The blood sprays in the right direction, on my glasses. Everything is okay—Gurung is very happy. It is a good sign. I lie down on the blood-sprinkled grave. I am supposed to listen only, not see. But “traveling” and “flying” are allowed. Suddenly it is clear to me that our German word “Friedhof” indicates the place of peace. [“Friedhof” is the German word for “cemetery.” Frieden = peace, hof = place, yard, court. Trans.] I am holding a Magical Dagger, a meditation bone, and a bone trumpet in my hands. I peacefully follow the mantras of Gurung. I see small golden lights. Then I dive into the golden ocean, into the origin of life. I feel like the dreaming Vishnu on the raft of snakes. Time and space disappear in the trance. An unbelievably tender peace envelops me. My consciousness loses itself. My ego is obliterated. Only the life-giving ocean remains—the oceanic self-liberation, as it is so beautifully called in the scientific literature on states of altered consciousness. I swim in warm gold on my cool gravestone. With a swig of whiskey I am awakened. My consciousness is nailed to my body again. I feel the energy that Indra Gurung had conjured with his bone trumpet and his devoted love. (CR)

“Without laughter, you will find no love. Without love, you will not be able to be a human being” (MR). “Without love, the brain is not able to function as it needs to” (SBS). Without love, no *shakti* is able to exist. The dead must also be loved, as we were able to learn at the cemetery of Pashupatinath. The more love, the more devotion, the more compassion—the more freedom from ego. In this way one can imagine the spiritual mandala in the root or sexual chakra of humans, which is guarded by Ganesha.

Shakti also arises when one nourishes the kundalini snake that stirs in the pelvis, for example, with snake poison or hemp (the cobra *ganja*) or by sacrificing sperm (rectally if possible) during tantric sexual rituals. It also emerges with meditation, preferably at cemeteries, in ravines, caves, or in remote forests. Shamans and tantrikas sometimes retreat into isolation in the woods for forty days or even five months.

The greatest amount of *shakti* is attained on Kalinchok, the cosmic “filling station” where *amrita* pours forth. Also shamans eat fire to increase their *shakti*. They are immune to pain when they are in a trance, and to the others who are present they document the depth of their unusual state of consciousness by eating fire.

Ceremonial staves which have a grinning skull with wings are called *Kala*. *Kala* are helping spirits that mediate between the jhankris and the realm of the dead. They are important helpers for normal people as well. A *kala* brings happiness and peace when one requests this of it; it brings unhappiness and turmoil when one mistreats it.





THE ORIGINS OF DISEASES

“Treat your own thoughts the way you treat your children. Love and accept the bad parts, too—otherwise they will fight against you!”

(MR)

Diseases come into the world when negative energies gain the upper hand.

Nepalese shamans classify diseases according to three causes. The first group of diseases is caused by negative spirits known as *bhutas*; the second group can be traced back to *grahas*, which are negative planetary influences or “bad egos”; and the third group of diseases is caused by bad karma. The rice or ginger *jokhana* is used to diagnose in which category illness should be classified. (See the chapter “Divination and Oracle,” page 229.)

This is, of course, a schematic simplification. The shamans of Nepal are thoroughly aware of the fact that there are also diseases that come into existence by way of other causes, such as through a mechanical disturbance or deterioration and through viruses or bacteria. They leave such cases to the doctors. However, in terms of the language of the *jhankris*, a false behavior can be the cause for consuming bad food or drinking water that has been polluted by bacteria, and is thus the original cause of the disease.

Diseases Caused by *Bhutas*

Those who suffer from minor symptoms, feel weak, or have no energy or motivation owe their ailments to the actions of the *bhutas*. The Kirati shaman Parvati Rai includes in this category harmless nerve and head complaints; twitching eyelids; broken bones; ringing in the ears; aching limbs; itchy skin; and occurrences of lameness, nausea, or motion sickness.

Bhutas are the spirits of humans who died under violent or unnatural circumstances. All *bhutas* surface during the twilight hours. They belong in the dark world of the night. Because they are the extinguished lights of humans who have died unnaturally, left hanging between life and death—such as stillborn babies, dead children, or people who were not guided properly into the death realm, Yamalok—these spirits are damned to wander restlessly between the worlds. Only two of them, *ranke bhut* and *jhumre bhut*, are visible to normal people and bring wealth, happiness, or strife. The others, which cause specific illnesses, can be seen only by shamans.

During the time we were talking with the shamans about this first category of causes of disease, there were also a few of the neighbors in the room. Each one of them took an active part in the discussion and, to our astonishment, knew precisely the names and the appearances of these creatures from the middle realms. The conversations once again

made clear the cyclical and systematic character of the shamanic worldview: nothing disappears from the universe. Nothing simply “vanishes into thin air.” Thus, either the souls of the dead are able to reach Yamalok, the realm of the heavens (*akash*) ruled by Yama, the God of Death, or they are damned to wander aimlessly in between the worlds. This is why *bhutas* are nearer to the living than those dead souls who have found their “eternal peace,” and this is why they can have a negative effect on the health of humans. The worldview that all of the Nepali share is a systematic one.¹²⁹ Therefore, those who die a violent death do so because they have themselves been murderers in an earlier life. They will continue to remain on the earth until they are able to bring the wheel of reincarnation to a stop through good deeds.

These dead souls are friends to the shamans—the shamans just have to know how to deal with them. “Without *bhutas*, we would be out of work. We need their energy and we use them as emissaries in *dharti* and *patal*. When they feel respected and when we sacrifice something to them, then they are not dangerous. They only become greedy and horrible when they don’t receive anything or when they have been insulted” (PR).

For this reason *jhankris* offer them rice, ginger, or *dhup*. Some also get *rakshi*. But as a rule, these dead souls become too crazy from alcohol. Alcoholic spirits are offerings more suited for *devis* and *devas*.

It could be said that *bhutas* represent the “negative energy source” of the shamans. The shamans profit from the special skills of the *bhutas* when they are trance-traveling through the middle world or underworld. Like bloodhounds, the *bhutas* lead the *jhankris* to the causes of their negative energies.

Diseases Caused by *Grahas*

The influence of planets on the fate of human beings and their bodily and spiritual well-being is extremely complex. In this text, we will be able to present only a superficial and abbreviated overview. Those who wish to study this topic in more depth are referred to Vedic astrology and the extensive specialist literature.

Grahas are negative influences from planets; from

¹²⁹ In the systematic therapy of the West, such relationships are recognized and treated accordingly. It has been established that children and grandchildren often share the fate of their forefathers because certain patterns are unconsciously communicated to them. In forensic psychiatry it has been established that people who were abused and who were victims of violence grow up to be violent themselves.



“*Bhutas* (masculine) and *bhutis* (feminine) are dead souls. It is later that they became *rakshasas* and *raksheshnis*—the masculine and feminine demons with ambivalent qualities. The *rakshasas* and *raksheshnis* were once the brothers and sisters of humans, before they decided to challenge the gods and to bring malice, violence, and destruction into the world.”

(MR)

Bhutas—Spirits of the Dead

NAME	APPEARANCE/CAUSE OF DEATH	EFFECT ON HUMANS
<i>Ranke bhut</i>	Sparkling light, visible to all	Brings good luck and bad luck
<i>Thangre bhut</i>	Tattered appearance only visible to shamans; death by drowning, earthquake, avalanche	Loss of Energy
<i>Dobate bhut</i>	Crawling baby at crossroads only visible to shamans; miscarriages	Nausea, diarrhea, coordination disturbances
<i>Mudkatta bhut</i>	Headless bodies with eyes on their shoulders, only visible to shamans; death by decapitation	Nausea, confusion
<i>Chhounda bhut</i>	Long-legged figure, only visible to shamans; death by suicide	Insomnia in the entire family
<i>Madre bhut</i>	Figure, who rolls a rafia mat and who appears at dawn and at dusk, only visible to shamans; death ceremony was not completed	Confusion, itching
<i>Mirmire bhut</i>	Appears at dawn, inside and outside the house, only visible to shamans; bed confinement or buried under a collapsed house	Back and neck pain
<i>Sangare bhut</i>	Appears at the threshold at dawn, only visible to shamans; death by drowning or suicide	Loss of appetite, depression, and nightly headaches
<i>Jhumre bhut</i>	Appears as a rolling ball of fabric visible to all. Dead spirit of a miser ¹³⁰	Brings wealth

¹³⁰ If the dead spirit of a miser brings luck to a person, it is because others receive—after his death—pleasure from his wealth.

greedy, hate-filled, and ignorant egos; from demons (*rakshasas*); or simply from problems. They cause acute symptoms of disease—in other words, an intensification of the symptoms described above. They cause accidents, catastrophes, and fatalities. *Grahas* as a cause of disease is first diagnosed with *jokhanas* as well. In order to reach the germ cell of the disease, the jhankris enter a trance.

Those who are victims of such diseases have, in principle, a “good” karma.

In 1988, the fourteenth and present Dalai Lama published the visions of his predecessor, the Ngawang Losang Gyatso, the fifth Dalai Lama (1617–1682), which had been previously kept secret. In nearly all of the mandalas and drawings shown, the central themes are the influence of disease-producing evil energies and which weapons can be ritually used against them. We showed two of these mandalas to Indra Gurung and Maile Lama. They were painted in the seventeenth century under commission from the Fifth Dalai Lama. The painting on the right they identified as “Lamaist” and the one on left as “shamanic.”

“The Fifth Dalai Lama is shown in the center,” explained Indra Doj Gurung, the lama and jhankri of the Gurung, who described the image from a shamanic perspective: “He is threatened by *grahas*. From all sides, physical or spiritual problems and negative planetary influences are pressing on him. There are seven.¹³¹ They are depicted as weapons. These can harm him, but he can also use them to defend himself against these negative influences. The round symbol on the lower right is a chakra.¹³² In a clockwise sequence the tools are skull-spear, axe, sword, two arrows, a *phurba*, and a *vajra*. Four *phurbas* stick into the shoulders and knees of the tormented Dalai Lama. They are weapons to ward off the effects of bad people, negative influences, and pains. They are sticking in the joints to clearly illustrate that pain cripples and that it limits mobility. The *phurbas* must be placed on these points for healing. The red interior

¹³¹ Gurung counts off the seven days of the week, which begin on Saturday in Nepal.

¹³² This symbol does not represent a planet, but rather it represents the entrance and exit into the circle of the *grahas* depicted here.

PLANETARY INFLUENCES

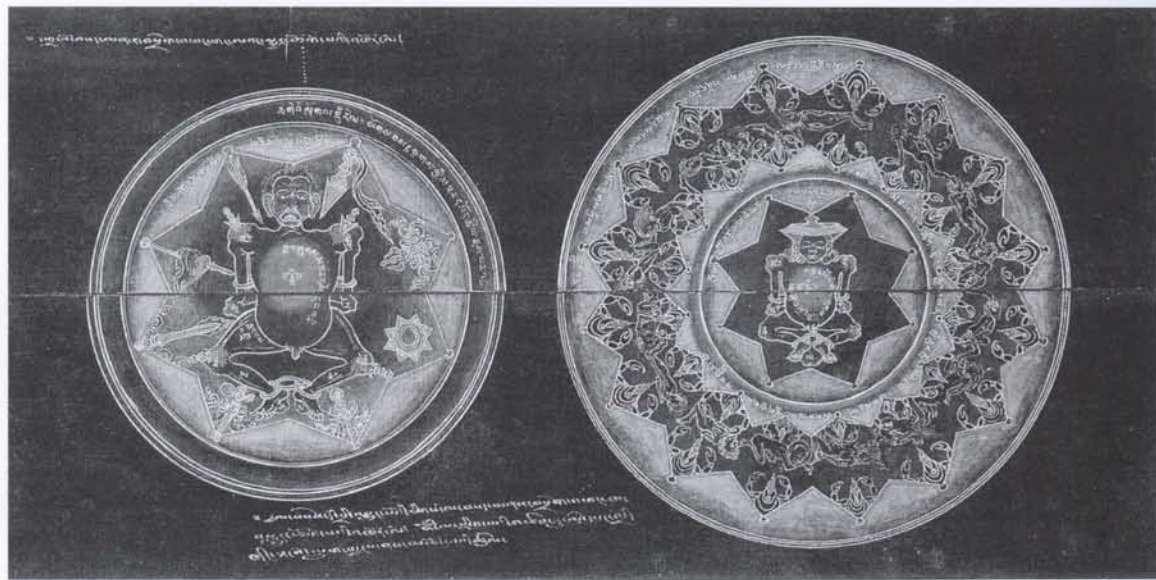
Shamans are able to intuitively recognize the planetary influences while in a trance. Using divination, they can discover which of the 27 planets are contributing to the symptoms, as well as which houses the planets are in. If a jhankri is not in a trance, he is not able to provide any information about the planets. In Nepal, many people consult Brahmins when they want to know what the alignment of the stars is, and which stars are favorable and which are unfavorable for certain occasions. With the help of the given name, date and location of birth, the Brahmin *pandits* (scholars) are able to provide them with detailed information. They use the extensive astrological chart drawn up by the *jotish* (astronomers and astrologers). For the treatment of diseases caused by *grahas*, some Brahmins refer their clients to jhankris, but never to gubajus!

The present King of Nepal, Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev, travels only with his “Court astrologer,” the Brahmin Muktinath Ghimire, who prepares a favorable schedule for the events of each day.





Maltreated demon. (Detail from thangka No. 43)



is the energy of the Fifth Dalai Lama. It is the good *graha* which glows in the interior of man. When it disappears, the person dies. Thus it is important to preserve this interior good *graha* through meditation and right living.”

All planets exist and are important. “We cannot send them away. We can only change their relationship to the humans who come to us for help,” said Maile Lama. She refers to the *chintas* that, with the aid of yantras or *rekhis*, sketch out a cyclical and dynamic model of the patient’s condition and the energies influencing him. Through divination and the drama of a healing ceremony, the *jhankris* are able to change the “state of being” of the patient and make a new constellation possible. In the Vedic-Hindu worldview there are a total of twenty-seven planets. The *jhankri* uses the *jokhana* to determine which planets are affecting a particular disease. Using the same method, they also determine which houses the planets are in and what their sequence is. Some planets have a positive influence on health, and some neutral or negative one. They can cause an individual to fall out of balance under certain constellations. He becomes insecure; he loses confidence and composure, and is instead overcome by greed, depression, anger, and confusion. The therapeutic measures that are available to shamans can be read in the chapters “Shamanic Healing,” page 42, “Mantra,” page 180, and “Yantra, Tantra, Mudra,” page 182.

Diseases Caused by Karma

Karma is the consequence of one’s own deeds. In the worst cases, thoughtless acts that are driven by greed, hate, and ignorance cause death. When life hangs by

a string, or when the spirit of the affected person becomes “insane,” the *jhankri* performs stylized and lengthy rituals in order to rescue the patient. But if someone has an accident due to careless and thoughtless action, or if they commit suicide, the *jhankri* is no longer consulted as a healer. He is merely able to point out the karmic causes of the disease that led to death.

Those who fall victims to such diseases have a “bad” karma.

The term “karma” is often erroneously interpreted in the literature, and in the esoteric scene it is all too eagerly misunderstood. Karma concerns one’s own personal, current life, and not the life of others. A person who looks upon a crippled man with the inner attitude that the man has only his own bad deeds (from a past life) to blame for his handicap, is not a wise esotericist. Such a person is blind, suffers from a lack of compassion, and has completely misunderstood the concept of karma. Just as paralyzing to our consciousness is the idea that we have done something bad in a “past life.” A conviction such as this prevents action, for what is past, is past. There is nothing we can change about an “earlier” life. We must accept it and, if necessary, come to terms with the rotten fruit of the past. As usual, we reap what we sow.

Karma accompanies every human like a second self. We are responsible for our own deeds, but not for the deeds of others. No god, no society, and no insurance can take away the personal responsibility of a person. Whatever he or she does, each person is responsible for their own actions, and must live—or die—with the consequences. This simple yet inaccessible awareness reveals itself, for example, when we

Grahas—Planets¹³³

DAY OF THE WEEK:		PLANET:		
Sanskrit	English	Sanskrit	English	Influence on Health
Shanibar	Saturday	Sapta Rishi	Saturn	Itchy legs
Aitabar	Sunday	Sanishar	Mercury	Headache, neck, nose, ears
Sombar	Monday	Surya	Sun/Venus	Chest, back
Mangalbar	Tuesday	Biraspati/Bhama	Earth	Stomach/intestine
Budhabar	Wednesday	Bargotara	Mars	Urogenital system
Bihibar	Thursday	Biraspatitara	Jupiter	Joint pain on the right side
Sukrabar	Friday	Sukratara	Uranus	Joint pain on the left side

VEDIC NAME	INFLUENCE ON THE PSYCHE
Rahu	Negative, steals money, health, and good relationships
Ketu	Brings disease
Sani	Makes one fearful and confused
Sankata	Brings difficulties and doubt
Ulka	Brings good as well as bad surprises
Bhamari	Brings depression and despondent brooding
Dhana	Brings money, but also takes it away
Mangala	Positive, brings good
Pingala	Ambivalent, brings good and bad

¹³³ This compilation is based on information from the Brahman Muktinath Ghimire, the astrologer of the Nepalese royal family. Although the Brahmins descend from the Aryans who belong to the Indo-European linguistic family—as do the Anglo-German languages of Europe—the correspondence of the planets to the days of the week diverges from ours. “Sunday” or “Sonntag” can be traced back in English and German to the sun; “Monday” or “Montag” to the moon. Upon inquiry we were informed that in principle, the sun and the moon accompany every day. It is also interesting that the Nepali were only able to provide information after thinking about it for a while, “We have a moon calendar on which the holidays, birthdays, and the days of the week are constantly shifting. For this reason it is easier for us to determine the date rather than the day of the week.”

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY
In the USA—and more and more in Europe as well—the juridical logic in insurance legal disputes has led to strange developments. Thus, a defendant’s court case received international attention when they sued the manufacturer of a microwave oven for a tidy sum. The woman had misunderstood the device to be a hair dryer and wondered why her housepets had died a horrible death after she put them in it to dry off their fur. The judge decided to place responsibility for the death of the animals not on the stupidity of the woman, but on the lack of information from the manufacturer. A lack of brain power can earn you money these days. In the legal system, the laws of cause and effect seem to be impotent.

“It is Maya,” responded a shaman dryly, “money is not life.”

are hiking in the mountains. Only our own own legs can carry us from a place. In dangerous spots, every step must be taken consciously. If we think about anything else other than the moment at hand, we stumble.

“Few people are capable of recognizing their mistakes and transgressions,” said Parvati Rai. “When there is too much dust in your eyes, you are not able to see anything. Only when you ask for it, can you receive help. Otherwise nothing can be done. Only you can realize that you are responsible for your own life. When you grasp this and change your behavior accordingly, you can become healthy. People who come close to death in an accident, or who make an unsuccessful suicide attempt, often have the feeling that the gods have given them a second chance at life. They work on themselves and often change dramatically because they have won profound insight into their own behavior.”

The shamans of Nepal embrace a Hinduistic-Buddhistic worldview. Therefore, they also proceed from the idea that humans are reincarnated. They do not concern themselves with the past life, though, but instead direct their gaze at the present. “The past is dark. The future is uncertain. I can only act in the present,” said Parvati, the Kirati shaman. “When I go into a trance, I find myself in front of three mirrors. One leads to the past, one to the present, and the other to the future. In the mirror of the past, sometimes an image of the person and what he has done and experienced spontaneously appears. I need this information in order to know about the person who is standing in front of me. I give this mirror 100 percent of my attention. I can also recognize things in the mirror of the future. Often I even see how the person will die. But I only report on half of what I see, so as not to frighten the person or to diminish his full ability to act.”

THE PAST

"In the mandala of the four directions, which surrounds all shamans during a *chinta*, the south represents the past. The South is the direction I come from. As a wall of fire it protects me from behind. Fire consumes the past. It is senseless to search in the charred remains of life. In the same way that ashes fertilize the soil and improve it for future harvests, past good deeds provide a good nourishing soil for the present. One can only learn from past mistakes. One cannot undo them."

(PR)

"Cross the bridge when you get to it."

ASIAN PROVERB

NATURAL AND SPIRITUAL DISEASES

Although the shamans descend from the Stone Age and still carry it within themselves, they have not remained stuck in the Stone Age. They are modern people like us, the difference being that they still have access to a path of knowledge that we no longer have.

Shamans have a very differentiated conception of diseases, their diagnoses, and their cures. In the context of this book we are able to present a simple outline of this complex thought structure, but by no means is it being addressed here thoroughly.

The (inaccurate) perception of outsiders that shamans supposedly see a spiritual cause in every disease is one stemming primarily from the fact that shamans really only treat diseases of a spiritual nature. If the shamans recognize that the situation relates to a mechanical, bacterial, or viral ailment, then they send the patient to the doctor. Although they don't "prescribe" medicine (in Nepal there are still no medications that require a prescription), shamans have had an overall good experience with antibiotics. In response to further inquiries, however, they emphasized that antibiotics should not be taken for every sniffle. When the shamans feel someone's pulse, they obtain "information from heart to heart. In this way we discover if a natural or spiritual cause is present." If they determine through their type of diagnosis that the disease has a natural cause, then they refer the patient to their medical colleagues or to the hospital. In remote regions this alternative does not exist. Then the shamans do everything they can with what they have available to them in order to also help these people.

Ultimately, the transition from natural to spiritual diseases is a fluid one. For example, if someone comes to them with a migraine, they first determine if this raging pain has genetic causes and runs in the family, or if it was caused by the patient not keeping a "promise to nature." They determine this with a rice or ginger *jokhana*. When a genetic susceptibility is present, they question the family gods of the last three generations.¹³⁴ Those who suffer from migraines or strong headaches due to their own misdeeds must go to the appropriate sacred site and bring a more or less substantial offering. With each cause, the jhankris undertake different steps. If they are not successful, they refer the patient to a doctor.

How can the breaking of a promise to nature be translated into our western world?

"There are transgressions like this everywhere. Regardless of the circumstances under which the

people are living," the jhankris of the different groups told us. "Such a promise also has to do with your faithfulness to yourself and your own statements. For instance, if I promise to help someone but don't keep the promise, my spirit becomes subliminally restless and gets 'knotted up.' Often it is useful to first reflect upon your own actions and look for the problems in yourself, instead of immediately blaming others, previous generations, or organic and nervous mistakes" (IG/PR). In the long term those people who are always rushing from task to task without bringing any to completion, those who are at the mercy of their moods, and those who blame their actions too much on others, will suffer from their behavior. Among other things, the behaviors can cause headaches, migraines, stress, or psychic disturbances.

In such cases the jhankris work with *mohanis*, which could be freely translated as "love magic."

This love magic, however, can only be used when the patient requests it, or when it is requested by a friend or relative who mediates between the jhankri and the patient. "We do not pressure anyone to accept our help. We act only when we are asked, and also only when it has significance for all involved. We could never convince someone of something that he or she didn't want." All jhankris repeatedly emphasized this point in one way or another.

Mohanis are put into effect through mantras. Depending on what is needed, there are sixteen different *mohanis* available to the shamans. Using the migraine as an example, we will explain how this magical procedure works. The jhankri diagnoses the cause as being an unkept promise made to the patient's spouse, but of which the patient is not aware. Reproaches, moralizing, or theoretical explanations would not achieve their purpose. What the sick person is lacking is a trust in him- or herself and in his or her immediate environment. The jhankri takes the patient's hand and feels his pulse. Without the patient noticing it, the jhankri leaves behind the appropriate *mohani*, which imparts a sort of spiritual imprint in the psyche of the person: "I can relax. My husband loves me. As I have promised, when I don't run around hectically from one thing to another, everything will be good."

A *mohani* lets itself be put directly to use—for example, in an instance when a long-standing partnership threatens to break apart because the mistrust has grown greater than the trust. If one of the spouses comes to the jhankri with the need to reestablish the former good relationship, and is not merely seeking the problems in his or her partner, then a love spell will help the situation. It replaces hate, discord, and

¹³⁴ "Family gods" is a description for the genetic roots of every individual. The expression "gods" indicates the respect and gratitude for one's own parents, grandparents, and ancestors, without whom no one would see the light of day.

other negative feelings with trust in their positive correspondences on the scale of emotion.

How this works concretely in family therapy can be observed in the following story. A young couple had traveled a long way to Photeng, to the summer house of the Sherpa and shaman Myingmar Sherpa. Somehow, things were not going well for them. Why? Neither of them knew. They wanted to create new energy and confidence. Myingmar, the “King of Kalinchok,” was well known as being able to help pull people out of muddled situations. He simply had the right contact to the right helping spirits for the situation. In the afternoon, the *jokhana* diagnosed “good luck” for the woman, but “bad luck” for the man.

During the nightly *chinta*, Myingmar made the husband, who clearly had “bad luck,” the center of his efforts. While in a trance he reported to him and the others: “Something is oppressing you. You often want to defend yourself but you don’t do it. This is holding you hostage.” A house was built symbolically in the courtyard and burned during the high point of the shamanic trance. A new structure for both partners can only be built on a new foundation.

The Sherpa shaman built this foundation. Although he had made the husband the center of his attention, he had imperceptibly directed sixteen *mohanis* with corresponding mantras to the wife. During his travels through the three worlds, he immediately determined the reason for the oppressive situation of the couple seeking his advice. The husband was suffering from constant humiliation at the hands of his wife. Myingmar directed his healing energy at the man, not at the woman. Because it was he who suffered, without being himself aware of it, he needed the healing energy more. His wife fought against it. She had instinctively suspected that she had to change herself. In order to neutralize every defensive reflex and to succeed in the healing, the *jhankri* as a healer gave the man the attention he had been lacking. For the wife, on the other hand—with the help of the sixteen *mohanis*—he replaced the carping with respect, and the neglect of her husband with friendly attention.

Later, as she accompanied us down the road, the daughter of the couple told us that the next day her mother had been much more friendly than usual to her father. The daughter was also the one who had convinced her parents to visit the *jhankri*.

A *jhankri* must make an oath to use *mohanis* only selflessly, and to use them only for the purpose of replacing discord with harmony. Also, the *mohanis* can be used only through the mediation of a third party who has positive intentions, or else with the consent of the affected parties.

In this case, the disturbance of family life had a natural and not a spiritual cause which, let us say, lay in the unhappiness of the wife who, in turn, would not leave her husband in peace.

The causes of disturbances such as those that have been discussed are never moody spirits or demons. Psychological or mental problems have their source in a shock or in an unfavorable social environment. “Those who are not loved or who live in bad family situations are more likely to be sick than happy people,” was the amazingly simple answer to our questions about the situation of the couple.

There are therefore diseases in the shamanic universe that have a natural cause. Nevertheless, the power of the demons is great. As we have seen in previous chapters, they are responsible for many diseases. However, this in no way means that the inhabitants of Nepal, or even the shamans, live in constant fear of evil spirits. Nor do the many ritual instructions serve the purpose of soothing the ever-present demons. The opposite is true. Demons belong to life. “Without demons, we shamans would be out of a job. We need demons, for we profit from their energy. They are helping spirits that stand at our side when we handle them correctly.” This is the truth of the co-existence of humans and demons in a country such as Nepal, which has not yet been poisoned by the separation of the world into good and evil.

Shamans see the world as rigorously cyclical. Everything is a cycle. Nothing is static. Every truth conceals its opposite. Every person can become a demon and cause disease and war.

“There have been doctors for about 600 years, but we *jhankris* have been around for 60,000 years. We refer not only to the body, but also to the soul and the spirit of humans, and to all of the gods and *bhutas* which brought health and disease into the world.”

(IG/PR)

“Everything that we do is concerned with guiding people back to love, peace, and harmony. We always establish equilibrium. We replace hate with love and peace, chaos with harmony. We bring the people back into harmony with nature.”

(ML/PR)

LOVE MAGIC

“We cannot impose a love spell on someone who doesn’t want it. We cannot and do not want to help the person who loves someone without being loved, or who desires someone who doesn’t respond! On the contrary, we are more likely to use a counter-spell in order to heal the person of their misdirected or unreciprocated feelings.”

(PR)

Peace, harmony, love, and compassion—that is the mandala of shamanism.

“The most important thing is to make other people happy. When you are happy, you lead a good life.”

(SBS)



Sing Thoma gallops through the bloody sea of human suffering in order to liberate living beings from disease. Sing Thoma embodies the wrathful appearance of Shiva/Bhairab and Parvati/Kali. (No. 41)

OF GODS, BOKSHIS, AND DEMONS

Every year the Newari of the Kathmandu Valley celebrate the festival of the devil Ghantakarna: it is called *Gathamoo* in Newari, *Gathamugal* in Nepalese, and others call it the Bokshi Festival. Like all festivals in Nepal, the dates are set according to the lunar calendar. It occurs during the time when the monsoon season is slowly departing, in the month of *Saun* (July or August). We learned the following story about it.

When Mañjushri caused the giant sea to drain with a decisive blow of his sword through the surrounding cliffs, he noticed not only a habitable valley floor that stretched out in front of him, but also noticed that the animals that had populated the sea were dying. He looked upon the panting frogs with compassion and said, "From now on you shall be people. Come here, take a place on the new earth and build a temple." So it came to pass that the frogs became the Newari—new people.¹³⁵ Then Ghantakarna appeared. He had been heavily and greedily devouring the fish. His hunger grew greater and greater and he swallowed one creature after the next. Suddenly, a giant frog was sitting in front of his mouth. It challenged the greedy demon: "I know you eat everything. But in order to eat me, you have to catch me first," and with a giant leap he hopped into the slime. Furious, Ghantakarna followed him—and sank into the muddy ground. As he pleaded for his life, the frog transformed into Vishnu, "That is the result of your actions. I never once touched you but nevertheless you are sinking in the mud. Mañjushri made this valley so that it would be good for humans and animals. But you were only negative and in your greed you devoured everything that was alive. I do not kill you. You bury yourself."

¹³⁵ Newar: *ne* = new, temple; *war* = take a place.

Because greed too is a part of life, Vishnu fulfilled a last wish for Ghantakarna before he sank into the mud. One day a year he is allowed to appear and eat mosquitos and other bloodsuckers. But before midnight he must sink back into the waters of the Bagmati.

Ever since then, on *Krishna Chatur Dasi*, the Newari have built a three- to five-meter-tall figure out of straw (in Bhaktapur), or from bushels of bamboo (in Kathmandu), and sacrifice entrails and the usual offerings—*tika* pigment, candles, flowers, incense, fruit, and rice on sal leaves. They burn the straw figures before midnight and sink the rest in the river.¹³⁶ On this day, the "devils are loose." In order to protect themselves, the Newari carry iron rings, and the women paint the palms of their hands with henna patterns. *Bokshi dhup* is burned, in particular in Bhaktapur.

The sweltering, humid summer heat gradually departs with the Gathamugal festival—and along with it the mosquitoes.

Gathamugal Festival

On the morning of the Gathamugal festival, I stroll through the streets of Kathmandu. There is much hustle and bustle. Merchants sit everywhere, selling iron rings and iron tridents. The men protect themselves against the influence of Ghantakarna and the bokshis with an iron ring. Many people are buying brooms for the thresholds of the doors, in order to sweep the negative influences away from the house and family. The many small butcher shops offer entrails for sale. It is good thing that the sweetbreads and brains are landing on the offering plates and not in my stomach . . .

¹³⁶ The Kirati have a similar festival which they call *hoktang* and celebrate on the same day.



The frightening goddess Kali is sometimes considered a "witch goddess," "mother of the witches," or as an "old witch with her tongue hanging out" (after an image by Schlehberger 1986).



Ghantakarna is a greedy demon. Once a year he is welcomed in the form of a straw figure.



Right: In order to protect themselves against Ghantakarna, the men wear iron rings, which are available everywhere on the street.

Left: Goats are important for the Nepalese. They provide milk, meat, fur, and as sacrificial animals they establish a contact with the gods.

"Greedy, blind, and hate-filled people who do nothing but evil are rakshasas."

(PR)

"Demons are illusions."

(MR)

DEMONS

"In the realm of science as it has developed in western Europe during the modern age, the meanings related with the terms 'gods' and 'demons,' are the result of part of the conflict between Antiquity and Christendom. The exclusive . . . connotation of demons as negative, destructive, and misanthropic could only first come about after Christianity had damned or diminished the heathen gods and figures which could have been otherwise called gods or demons in a neutral way as well."

(REALLEXIKON FÜR ANTIKE UND CHRISTENTUM [ENCYCLOPEDIA OF ANTIQUITY AND CHRISTIANITY] IX, 546)

I go with Shusma to the house of her mother. The seven daughters of the house, along with cousins, aunts, and young girls from the neighborhood, are sitting on the floor of the small living room and bedroom of this traditional Newari house nearby Durbar Square. With a skillful and steady hand, our hostess's artistic youngest daughter squeezes the green henna paste out of the pointed bag and onto the many outstretched palms. She squeezes it onto mine as well. I am doomed to three hours of sitting still. Painting on a wobbling hand is difficult. The pigment must dry and bond for at least two hours before the sticky substance can be removed with the help of oil and lemon, leaving behind the designs which become more and more dark red. The women invest the whole day into elaborately painting their hands and feet in order to protect themselves from Ghantakarna. With so many hours involved in the process, it seems to me more as if the demon were painting with us for the day.

As I venture out on a small expedition, I encounter many blocked streets. At every larger intersection, men are busy building three-meter-tall, three-legged bamboo figures that are decorated with a demonic face and drawings of genitals. As usual, there are masculine and feminine Ghantakarnas here as well. Young boys or older men are begging for money in front of these figures. After all, it is the day of the poor. Brave youths fight their fear of evil demons (for there are good ones as well) by pulling Ghantakarna bushels out of the bamboo body, and stopping pedestrians who willingly give them money or used clothing. Mobile kitchens are built for the needy, and many temples and shrines give their sacrificed offerings of fruit to those who need help. Shusma tells me while we watch from the second floor as the figure is set on fire amid howling and noise from trumpets and horns. The burning heap collapses and is hurriedly dragged with much commotion to the Bagmati river.

Then quiet falls over the streets. The Newari make sure to go into their protective houses where they gather for a ritual meal. It consists of salted and roasted beans, rice that has been pounded flat like rolled oats, and rakshi, the traditional millet schnapps. Only after all of the family members have come home safely do they push the iron ornaments to the threshold. The Newari are certain that the streets now belong to the bokshis and bokshas, who usually disguise themselves as beautiful men and women: "If they avoid catching your eye, and you realize that their pupils are curved inwards, then you know that a witch or a sorcerer stands before you." Rumors circulate of their deeds, their exposure, and their punishment. I do not come into direct contact with them. I don't notice anything resembling bokshi or Ghantakarna hysteria. Only a distant respect is perceptible. (CME)



At twilight in the three imperial cities of Nepal, three-legged, three-meter-tall Ghantakarna figures made out of bamboo or straw are erected at the intersections.

The Ghantakarna story and the fact that there is a festival "to honor witches, sorcerers, and demons," reveals the basic understanding of the people of Nepal—that evil, greed, and destruction are just as much a part of world and of human nature as good, serenity, and creation. The negative aspects cannot be destroyed. They can only be subdued and put in their place.

The Nepalese concept of demons corresponds to the idea of the *daimon* from Antiquity, an ambivalent force that mediates between gods and humans. It was only with the advent of Christianity that demons received an exclusively negative significance.

Demons did not fall from heaven, nor were they created by the devil. Humans who have lost love, harmony, peace, and compassion become demons. The boundary between man and demon is fluid—whether or not you overstep it is solely dependent upon your own deeds. This is why on Nepalese thangkhas it is always humans—and not snakes or monsters—that the gods are stepping on. The human figures who lie on their backs at the feet of divine beings are symbols for the lower impulses and negative emotions that humans must tame if they wish to awaken the divine within themselves. The negative aspects chal-



The Newari women spend the day of the Gathamugal festival painting artistic henna patterns on their palms and feet in order to scare away demons.

lenge humans, and the gods as well, to measure themselves against them and to develop capabilities that promote good. This battle against new adversaries, which continually flares up again and again, also created the Hindu (and subsequent Buddhist) pantheon of gods in different manifestations. Shiva and Parvati must assume wrathful manifestations in order to be able to fight against the *rakshasas*.

Deities with bulging eyes, sharp teeth, claws, and weapons are encountered everywhere in Nepal. They often appear to Westerners as devils or demons. The monotheistic influence of a single, exclusively good god and his devilish opponent who creates evil, diseases, and poisonous animals and plants has led to many misinterpretations of Asian art or shamanism by western authors. In reality, the iconographic details distinguishing a wrathful god from a demon are subtle. For example, who would know that pointy canine teeth in the upper and lower jaw are characteristic of a wrathful god, but fangs that only protrude from the upper jaw are characteristic of a demon?

Bhairab—one of many wrathful manifestations of Shiva—always carries a *rudraksha* or a skull chain. But a *rakshasa* is concealed behind a figure decorated with flower garlands and a furious expression. In such tiny details lies the psychological awareness that a criminal often hides behind the mask of a friendly father and family man.

A god possesses the ability to have such a demonic effect that even the *rakshasas* flee. Gods and demons need each other. In the same way, the jhankris need bokshis (witches) or bokshas (warlocks). This mutual dependence is also demonstrated in the story of the fight between the healers and the killers, the jhankris and the bokshis, which is told in the chapter “The Way of the Shamans,” on page 19.



The Chinese demon Azaria is depicted with pointy fangs that jut out of his lower and upper jaws. He has a large eye and a small eye, and was tamed to be a *dharmapala* by Tibetan Mahayana Buddhism. He appears as such on thangkas.

To our surprise, the jhankris in Nepal reported to us that they also know of a kind of witches’ sabbath, and that the bokshis of their country also ride on brooms just as their European relatives supposedly did. “Bokshis hold every sort of broom between their legs—except for the *kucho* broom. On nights of the full moon, they dance around the pipal tree and wish for energy for their negative goals. We jhankris do this too. However, our broom is the *kucho* broom made out of the sacred *amlisau* grass. We ask for the energy to be able to cure diseases. This dance reminds us of the original fight between the jhankris and bokshis, of our responsibility to use our power for positive goals, and of the interplay between illness and health.”

Punishment by the Gods

Shamans do not know any fear of gods and demons—only respect. No “punishment from heaven” falls on them as a result of false behavior, only the karmic consequences of their own deeds. “When we think and talk negatively, then we become dreary and depressing.” “When I forget to invoke the gods, helping spirits, and demons because I have drunk too much *rakshi*, I punish myself because then I forget important mantras and pay the price with part of my abilities as a healer,” went the succinct but illuminating reply of the shamans. As has already been often stated, the shamans are mainly concerned with personal responsibility, not a hypnotized dependence on foreign powers descending upon them uncontrollably.



Bhutung Ming Wang, archaic demon and tantric master. (No. 20)



The spiritual and material dust is swept out of the house with a soft *amlisau kucho*, as is being done in this shamanic healing. The mental and solid dirt is swept away with the stiffer *thakre kucho*.

For the harvest festivals of *udhauri* and *ubhauri*, the Kirati shamans dance wearing a mask of a hybrid creature called *jatayu* (Kir.; Nep. Gokharna). The dance is called *sakewa* or *chandinacha* (Kir.). It has its origins in fertility rituals. The *jatayu* belongs to the garuda family. He has the head of a bird and the horns of the *nilgai*, a Himalayan antelope. The antelope, also called “blue cow,” is a sacred animal that bestows fertility. The bird brings hunting booty from distant regions to the humans. His creation myth is found in the Ramayana: once there was a cow that had no legs and a bird that had no wings. In order to bring an end to their misery, they went to Rama. “Live together!” he said and put them together into one creature. Since that time, this spiritual animal lives in the Himalayas and bestows fertility upon people.



Yamantaka, the Lord of Death, with shamanic weapons which are depicted individually on the back side (opposite). (No. 43)





For many people, sandalwood and incense claws are like heaven and hell with regard to their scent.

"All incenses stem from the shamans. We first discovered them in our dreams and visions."

(IG)

"Incense is burned in front of the images to symbolize the scent of the loving god."

MAJUPURIA AND KUMAR
(1996, 203)

Shamanism is not a religion, nor is it a belief—it is a spiritual and material technology. The technology is an empirical store of the knowledge accumulated by its practitioners. It is handed down and always developed further. The various areas of technology utilized in Nepalese shamanism will be elucidated in the following pages.

DHUP: INCENSE FOR THE ALTAR OF CONSCIOUSNESS¹³⁷

Incenses can have either an exquisite scent or a repulsive stench. They are like life itself—sometimes one way, sometimes another. Incenses represent the three worlds with their scents. They can be "heavenly," "earthly," or "hellish." Because every person's sense of smell is different, the perception of each person is different as well. What stinks to one person is pleasing to another. However, certain reactions are shared by many people. Nearly everyone likes the smell of white sandalwood (*Santalum album*); hardly anyone enjoys the smoke of the "incense claws" (the operculum of a conch shell). Similarly, certain plant species and genera are preferred or avoided around the world.

A small store in a narrow alleyway in Kathmandu sells incense (dhup) exclusively: Tibetan incense sticks (all "made in Nepal"), ayurvedic incense powder, and simples. I buy sal resin, as well as resin from the magnificent, long-needled, Himalayan pine (Pinus roxburghii). The old dhup wala is surprised by my interests. He recommends an ayurvedic incense called Maha Dhoop—"makes peaceful feeling." As soon as I see the list of ingredients, I buy it immediately. Later I show the package to our gurun shaman Indra Doj. He is amused. How can someone who isn't a shaman use an incense called Maha, the "highest," the veneratory name of Shiva, for commercial purposes? As soon as Gurung looks over the list of ingredients, he notices right away that there is a mistake in them. All of the ingredients listed are shamanic incenses, only bojo (calamus root) doesn't belong. It is a medicinal plant, but it is not a shamanic incense. (CR)

Incenses have a central significance in shamanism throughout the world. However, incense, known as *dhup* or *dhupa*, is of particular importance to the shamans of Nepal and is used extensively by them. In

¹³⁷ We borrowed the phrase "for the altar of consciousness" from the company Sensatronics™ (Berlin), which specializes in Ethnobotany. Many thanks!



An incense merchant of the Newari in Kathmandu lights some crude drug ingredients.

our culture, we carefully light one stick of incense or one scented candle; in Nepal, the whole package is burned at once. In the West, we cautiously sprinkle incense powder on the charcoal (which has been soaked in saltpeter); in Nepal, the plant matter is dumped by the shovelful onto the glowing wooden embers. The shamans consider the smoke to be the steps to the other worlds.

The shamans prefer the high-altitude juniper (*Juniperus recurva*) as incense not only because it comes from the roof of the world and smells wonderful, but also because it is the prototype for incense, and also has psychoactive effects. If there is no *dhupi* at hand, the shaman can turn to other plants, even to the sacred *kusha* grass (*Costus speciosus*), although it has no particular effect.

Surendra and I leave the house ("our house," as he always says). We walk through the narrow alleys of the very old quarter of Kathmandu between Chhetrapati and Durbar Square. At every small, medium, and large

shrine, Surendra grabs his ears—this is the quickest and most minimal form of the puja, the worship of the gods. During the five-minute stroll we pass countless Ganesha shrines. Ganesha is omnipresent. There are thousands of Ganesha shrines in Kathmandu, explains Surendra. We turn onto a street in the Newari district, the street of the banya, the caste within the Newari that specializes in the trade of incense and medicinal plants. It cannot be said that the trade castes are organized hierarchically; it has more to do with specialized groups within a class. Although they all sell their wares on one street, they don't seem to behave like competitors. When a dealer is asked for a product he doesn't carry, he immediately asks his colleague. I think to myself that this society would have the sociologists pulling their hair out, just as the whole culture does to the Jesuits. It seems to me that no one has ever really comprehended the different caste systems of the Newari.

All of a sudden, we are standing in front of a store on one of the old, worn-out streets of this regal fairy-tale city. It is a wooden shack. Between huge vessels filled to the brim with medicinal plants sits a friendly Newari, the dhup shau, an incense dealer. Surendra explains to him that I require samples of all—truly all—incenses for our project. He responds that it is good we have come so early in the morning, for now he has enough time; later there would be lines of people who need his help. While he is taking samples from all his wares and labeling them in devanagari script, many gubajus and diobajus come in to buy their personal incense blends. The dhup wala—as he is called in Nepali—and his assistants pull out a piece of newspaper and together throw the ingredients on it. It is a kilo—a diobaju needs that much every three days. Incenses are important throughout the Newari society. In every Newari house one of the family members, usually one of the women, must bring an incense offering every morning to the family gods, the local gods, and the tree gods.

The incense dealer conscientiously packs up further samples from his assortment. His assistant brings

two bottles of Coca-Cola and offers them to us with the typical posture of honor, and two stools also appear out of nowhere. We sit down on them. The sun beats down—now I understand why the stores of the incense dealers are designed this way, so that Surya, the sun god, can't scorch the dhup. In response to my inquiries, the dealer says that most of his customers are shamans and gubajus, but that there are also many diobajus, and “normal” Newari as well. Even the Muslims come here to buy their sacred incense, called loban¹³⁸ and packaged by an India company named Ganesh Brand.

I cautiously ask him about the bokshi dhup, the “witches’ incense.” Surendra laughs and says that a client who was standing next to us had just ordered this blend. It consists of some twenty ingredients. Among them is included a pinch of dried, decayed human flesh! Shocked, I ask, “Where do you get such a thing?” Surendra explains to me that the incense dealer got the dehydrated and leftover body parts from the cremation sites at Pashupatinath. Of course, this is officially illegal. Many people buy the witches’ incense in order to appease bokshis who are disturbing their family.

Nearly dazed from this unexpected information, I stumble along next to Surendra back to “our house.” I carry a huge bag filled with treasures of the Nepalese incense kitchen. Suddenly a beautiful woman with finely chiseled features rushes up to Surendra, falls at his feet, and touches her forehead to them. She is a relative and therefore must honor the god Vishnu in him. What a morning! (CR)

The Nepalese shamans use simple homemade blends, incense braids that are homemade or bought from the dhup shau or dhupa wala, and commercially-made incense sticks. The incense sticks, called agarbhatti, must, however, be in a package that displays a trishul—Shiva’s trident—and must consist of seven

¹³⁸ It is the Indian incense, *salla* or *salakhi*, *Boswellia serrata* Roxb. (Burseraceae), know to us as the ayurvedic rheumatism medicine H15.

INCENSE—SCENT
Everyone knows the experience of suddenly noticing a scent which abruptly awakens an inner image from distant days. Such an effect caused by a smell can be quasi-hallucinogenic. In this respect, all scents are actually psychoactive. Shamans and priests of all cultures make use of this characteristic of incense. In other words, by utilizing particular incenses they conjure old memories and connect people to significant experiences. Therefore, certain incenses correspond to the gods and to their rituals.

The shamans of Nepal use numerous different incenses for their healing ceremonies, for cleansing the house and yard, chasing away the demons of disease, exorcising bokshis or witches, aiding meditation, and at the opening of every sacrificial ceremony.



Left: The incense sticks called *maha dhup*, “superior incense,” from a commercial business in Kathmandu.

Right: The burning incense clouds the atmosphere more like a bonfire might, rather than a household hearth fire. Tamang shamans after their ceremony.

TECHNOLOGY: THE MATTER OF THE SHAMANS



Meena Shahi honors the sacred tree every morning with incense. The braids of incense are used by the Newari people as well as shamans.

“Incense is not for humans; it is food for the gods.”

(MR)

“All plant *dhupas* are connected to all three worlds, because they grow out of the earth and absorb the rain and the dew of heaven.”

(PR)

The shamanic *dhup mudra*, the hand sign for the offering of three incense sticks to the three worlds.



The bountiful display of a *dhup wala* on “incense street” in Kathmandu.

ingredients corresponding to the seven directions.¹³⁹ Unfortunately, the shamans often buy Indian products that are known to be pure chemicals. They rarely use the high-quality, hand-rolled Tibetan incense sticks (*Zimpu ritual incense*).

The gubajus have their hand-rolled incense sticks made by the incense factories from personal recipes. Every gubaju has his own favorite blend; every deity and every ritual demands a particular blend as well. The base of all of these blends is made from red and white sandalwood and with luck, *agar*, the precious Aloe wood (*Aquillaria agallocha*); juniper; and various resins. The gubajus have their regular dealers,

¹³⁹ A brand that is beloved among the shamans is called *Endi*, which is the name of a goddess (made in India).



mostly in the Newari district of Kathmandu. Many incense dealers have set up their shops and manufacturing at the sacred shrine of Bodnath. Nearly all Tibetan incenses, also used by tantrikas, and—through the campaign of the Tibetan Buddhist missionary conquest of the West—exported throughout the world, are made in Nepal. It is unfortunate that as a result of this, the wild plants of the Himalayas are being exploited in the worst possible ways and many are close to extinction. The “natural health freaks” around the world contribute to the intensive destruction of nature and to the ecological devastation in the roof of the world through their demand. Everyone wants their plants collected from the wild, despite the fact that the yields from organic farming are superior and are much more concentrated in terms of their active compounds.

Juniper, *Dhupi*—“The Number One Incense”

The high-altitude juniper (*Juniperus recurva*) grows only at heights of three thousand meters and above. It grows up to twelve meters high and sometimes creates large forests (“incense forests”) in the sub-alpine zones (Malla 1976, 33). In Tamang it is called *shangshing*, “incense tree”; in Nepali it is known as *dhupi*, which also means “incense tree.” In English it is known as “incense tree.” It is sacred to most people of the Himalayas. High-altitude juniper is placed on the prayer flag masts at Kyangjin Gompa, a Tamang monastery. To show gratitude for a good and safe trip, juniper branches with stones are brought to the *chorten*.

The tips of the juniper branches are the most commonly used incense of the Tamang. The tips are burned as incense on wood coals in a clay incense censer during the daily morning *puja* for the Buddha Shakyamuni. The typical aroma of juniper often hangs for hours in the air of the meager huts.

The Tamang shamans, like other peoples of the

The following plants belong to the family of the plants called *dhupi* (they are also used as incense, primarily by shamans).

<i>Abies spectabilis</i> (D. Don) Spach (pine)	Coniferae/Pinaceae	<i>talis patra</i> (Nep.)
<i>Abies webbiana</i> (Wall. ex Don) Lindl. ¹⁴⁰ (syn. <i>Abies densa</i>)	Pinaceae	<i>gobray salla</i> (Nep.) <i>dunshing</i> (Bhutia) <i>dangre salla</i>
<i>Araucaria</i> spp.	Coniferae	
<i>Cedrus deodora</i> (Roxb. ex Don) G. Don (Himalayan cedar)	Pinaceae/Coniferae	<i>dev[a] daru</i>
<i>Cupressus tortulosa</i> D. Don (Himalayan cypress)	Cupressaceae	<i>dhupi, rai salla</i>
<i>Cryptomeria japonica</i> (L.f.) D. Don	Coniferae, Taxodiaceae	<i>dhupi salla</i>
<i>Juniperus communis</i> (L.) (common juniper)	Cupressaceae	<i>dhupi</i>
<i>Juniperus recurvai</i> Buch.–Ham. (high-altitude juniper)	Cupressaceae	<i>dhupi</i>
<i>Larix griffithii</i> Carrière (Himalayan larch)	Pinaceae	<i>bargay salla</i> (Nep.), <i>sah/saar</i> (Bhutia), <i>bogre sallo, lekh sallo</i>
<i>Picea smithiana</i> (Wall.) Boiss (syn. <i>Picea morinda</i>) (Himalayan spruce)	Coniferae/Pinaceae	<i>jhule salla, jure salla</i>
<i>Pinus</i> spp. (pine)	Coniferae/Pinaceae	<i>salla</i>
<i>Pinus roxburghii</i> Sargent (syn. <i>Pinus longifolia</i>) (long-needled Himalayan pine)	Coniferae/Pinaceae	<i>khote salla, salla</i>
<i>Pinus wallichiana</i> A.B. Jackson (syn. <i>Pinus excelsa</i>) (Bhutanese pine)	Coniferae/Pinaceae	<i>gobre salla</i> <i>dhupi, sunpati</i>
<i>Rhododendron anthopogon</i> D. Don	Ericaceae	<i>barma salla</i>
<i>Taxus baccata</i> L. ssp. <i>wallichiana</i> (yew)	Coniferae/Taxaceae	<i>dhupi, mayur pankhi</i>
<i>Thuja orientalis</i> L. (oriental tree of life)	Cupressaceae	<i>dhupi, mayur pankhi</i>
<i>Tsuga dumosa</i> (Don) Eichler (syn. <i>Tsuga brunoniana</i>)	Coniferae/Pinaceae	<i>thigre salla</i>

¹⁴⁰ This pine is a “sister-herb” to the traveling or flying bamboo *Arundinaria* sp. (cf. Rai and Rai 1994, 18)



A Himalayan cedar (*Cedrus deodara*) hung with prayer flags in the Kali Gandhaki valley near Somoson.



The sacred Himalayan juniper (*Juniperus recurva*) is recognizable by the drooping tips of its branches.

“Juniper is the most important of all the shamanic incenses.”

(PR)

INCENSE

The European literature refers to a clinical phenomenon known as “incense addiction.” According to the research, it occurs mainly among Catholics who regularly become “dependent” or “addicted” to the church incense, which contains mostly frankincense resin from *Boswellia* spp. (This is why the stubborn rumor persists that when burned, the incense becomes THC, the active ingredient in *Cannabis*. Unfortunately this is not the case!)

On the packaging of all Tibetan incense sticks is the statement, “We confirm that it is non-toxic and non-addictive.” In light of the wisdom of Paracelsus that toxicity is dependent upon dosage, and in consideration of the modern psychiatric view that “dependence and addiction” are not produced by substances but indicate instead a disturbance in the personality, this advice is absurd because it only refers to the material and not to how humans handle it. Why is it that only the material, the *mater*—the mother of existence—is always denounced?

TECHNOLOGY: THE MATTER OF THE SHAMANS

Himalayas, produce incense braids from ground *Juniperus* branches and handmade daphne (*nepali kagas*) paper that they burn at their rituals (also Knecht 1971).

It can be seen from the above that the shamanic taxonomy and the common Nepalese taxonomy are in nearly exact accordance with botanical classification. Ethnobotany is science, and shamanism is science too. Perhaps scientific botany is only a slightly differentiated form of folk wisdom.

Mugwort, Probably the Oldest Incense of Mankind

The word *pate* or *pati*, similar to the English sage, is found in many Nepalese languages and is used as a kind of general term for an herbaceous or leafy incense. It refers to herbaceous plants that are valued as incense. The first among all *patis* is mugwort.

Mugwort (*Artemisia* spp.), called *pati*, *tite pate*, or *titepati*, is placed on altars, hung in the house, or

rubbed on the shaman’s drum for protection against disease-carrying demons. No shamanic ceremony can be carried out without *titepati*. Mugwort is considered one of the central shamanic plants of Nepal. The fresh or dried herb is placed on heated pieces of limestone in order to disperse its scent. It aids the purification of body and house, spirit and yard.

“The *titepati* seeds can put shamans into a trance, but they can also bring them back out of it” (PR). Mugwort is therefore a traveling herb as well. A stem of it is nearly always stuck into the *bumba*—the water pitcher on the altar. Sometimes the shaman’s altar remains set up for a number of days or weeks. All of the altar plants dry up; only the mugwort stem keeps growing. In this, the shamans see the particular life energy of the herb. The shamans first purify or “wash” themselves with mugwort before they fly into the *bumba*, the *amrita* ocean.

If the shamans are unable to find mugwort for their nightly ceremonies and altars, they can use



Mugwort in nature and culture.



The complete calamus plant (bojo).



The rhododendron is the national plant of Nepal.

goosefoot (*Chenopodium ambrosioides* L., Goosefoot family), but only in a dried form. Goosefoot, called *alimah*, is classified by the shamans as being in the *pati* family. For this reason the plant is a protective charm; it drives away harmful things. The aromatic but strongly characteristic smoke is not only used for shamanizing, but can also be used for strong headaches or migraines, or inhaled for sinus problems. According to other reports, both mugwort and goosefoot belong with the “mother herbs,” part of the gynecological folk medicine. Parvati knows all too well that both plants can have an abortive effect in certain concentrations. But she would never do such a thing, for her duty is to preserve life and not to kill it. That

must be undertaken by others. In principle she is not against abortions but, due to her oath, she is not able to perform them.

A pre-mixed blend made primarily from crumbled mugwort and called *shu paati* can be bought on the incense market. It is only used by the lamas; shamans and gubajus do not purchase it. There are many such pre-mixed blends that are only bought by lamas (for example, *ram dhup*, “incense of the gods”).

If a person rubs the juice of fresh mugwort onto the legs, leeches will stay away. They hate the smell and taste of it, just as the demons hate it. The only animals that eat mugwort are goats.

Nepalese Incense Material (approximately 69 simples)

COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	PART USED
<i>agar</i> (= <i>aguru</i> , <i>agura</i> , <i>calambac</i>)	<i>Aquillaria agallocha</i> Roxb. (Alder wood, Aloës wood)	resinous wood
<i>alimah</i>	<i>Chenopodium agallocha</i> L.	dried herbage
<i>aatashu dhu</i> (= <i>asura</i>)	<i>Justicia adhotoda</i> L.	crushed herbage
<i>balu</i> (Tamang) (= <i>bhale</i> , <i>bhale sunpate</i> , <i>simris</i> , <i>talispatra</i> ¹⁴¹)	<i>Rhododendron lepidotum</i> Wall. ex Don, Ericaceae	leaves, branches
<i>bhairunga pate</i>	<i>Potentilla fruticosa</i> L. Rosaceae	leaves
<i>bhimsen pate</i>	<i>Buddleia asiatica</i> Lour., Loganiaceae (Butterfly Bush)	leaves
<i>bhutakesh dhup</i>	1) <i>Selinum tenuifolium</i> Wall., Umbelliferae 2) <i>Corydalis govaniana</i> Wall., Papaveraceae	root
<i>bis</i> (= <i>biss</i> , <i>bikh</i>)	<i>Aconitum ferox</i> Wall. ex Seringe	leaves
<i>bojo</i> , <i>bojho</i>	<i>Acorus calamus</i> L.	rhizome
<i>chir kaato</i>	<i>Cinnamomum camphora</i> (L.) Prel., Lauraceae	wood
<i>devdwar</i> (= <i>devdaru</i> , “tree of the gods”)	<i>Cedrus deodora</i> (Roxb. ex Don) G. Don (Himalayan Cedar)	resin
<i>dhiyaalo</i>	<i>Cedrus deodora</i> (Roxb. ex Don) G. Don	wood (heartwood)
<i>dhupi</i> , <i>dhuppi</i>	1) <i>Juniperus recurva</i> Buch.-Ham. ex.D. Don Cupressaceae 2) <i>Cupressus tortulosa</i> D. Don in Lamb. Cupressaceae	branch tips heartwood
<i>dhupma</i>	<i>Artemisia absinthium</i> L., Asteraceae	herbage
<i>edujau</i>	<i>Rhododendron</i> spp.	leaves
<i>ewas</i>	<i>Illicium verum</i> Hooker (True Star Anise), Illiceaceae (syn. <i>Badianifera officinarum</i> Kuntze)	fruit
<i>gakadhu</i> (= <i>gadak</i>)	sulfur	mineral
<i>ganja</i> (= <i>bhanga</i>)	<i>Cannabis sativa</i> L. (hemp)	flowers, leaves
<i>gau dhup</i>	butterfat (literally “cow incense”)	ghee
<i>gokul dhup</i>	<i>Cedrus deodora</i> (Roxb. ex Don) G. Don, Pinaceae	resin
<i>harro</i>	<i>Terminalia chebula</i> Retz.	fruit
<i>himal pate</i>	<i>Artemisia</i> sp.	seed-bearing herbage
<i>hing</i>	<i>Ferula asa-foetida</i> L. Umbelliferae	exudate
<i>hutamo</i> (= <i>pankha phul</i>)	<i>Hedychium spicatum</i> L.	rhizome, branches
<i>jahiko phul</i> (= <i>hasana</i>)	<i>Cestrum nocturnum</i> L. Solanaceae	flower panicles
<i>jai patri</i>	<i>Myristica fragrans</i> Houtt., Myristicaceae	“nuts” = seeds

¹⁴¹ The dried leaves are sold under this name as herbal medicine and a stimulant (Dang 1993, 79). The plant belongs to the variable genera of rhododendrons (Pradhan and Lachungpa 1990, 64 ff.).

COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	PART USED
<i>jala dhup</i>	rock salt (see <i>khar</i>)	
<i>jatamansi</i>	<i>Nardostachys grandiflora</i> DC., Valerianaceae	rhizome
<i>kaancho laae</i> ¹⁴²	1) <i>Cyperus esculentus</i> L. 2) <i>Eleocharis dulcis</i> (Burm.f) Trin. ex Hen. 3) <i>Scirpus kysoor</i> Roxb. all three: species of Gramineae	seeds
<i>kachura</i> (= <i>kacur</i>)	<i>Curcuma zedoaria</i> rosc. Zingiberaceae	rhizome
<i>kalo aaran</i>	<i>Cinnamomum camphora</i> (L.) Presl. Lauraceae	root, heartwood
<i>kapur</i>	<i>Cinnamomum camphora</i> (L.) Presl. Lauraceae	exudate
<i>khar</i>	rock salt, salt peter	mineral or recrystallized pieces
<i>khas khas</i> (<i>khus khus</i>)	<i>Vetiveria zizanioides</i> (L.) Nash., Gramineae	seeds
<i>kumkum pate</i>	<i>Crocus sativus</i> L. Iridaceae ¹⁴³	
<i>kumkum pati</i>	<i>Didymocarpus albicalyx</i> C. B. Clarke, Gesneriaceae	leaves
<i>kush</i> (= <i>kushta</i>)	<i>Costus speciosus</i> (Koenig) sm., Zingiberaceae	whole plant
<i>kusum fal</i> (<i>kusum dhup</i>)	<i>Carthamus tinctorius</i> L.	petals ¹⁴⁴
<i>kut, kuth</i>	<i>Saussurea lapa</i> C. B. Clarke, Compositae	rhizome
<i>kyashar</i>	<i>Meconopsis horridula</i> Hook. f. et. Thomas, Papaveraceae	plant
<i>laliguras</i>	<i>Rhododendron</i> sp. Ericaceae	flowers
<i>lalu pate</i>	<i>Euphorbia pulcherrima</i> Wild. ex Kletzsch, Euphorbiaceae (Poinsettia)	leaves
<i>lepā</i> (= <i>lepca kaulo</i>)	<i>Machilus edulis</i> King ex. Hook. f., Lauraceae	wood
<i>nagheshowr</i>	<i>Mesua ferrea</i> L. Guttiferae	fruit
<i>nakpo</i>	<i>Valeriana jaamasii</i> Jones, Valerianaceae	rhizome
<i>narawi</i>	conch ("Onycha"), usually <i>Murex</i> spp., <i>Chicereus</i> spp. or <i>Turbinella pyrum</i> L. from the Gulf of Bengal, or the Indian Ocean	opercula
<i>narayan pati</i>	<i>Buddleia paniculata</i> Wall. in Roxb., Loganaceae	leaves
<i>pama</i>	<i>Juniperus indica</i> Bertol. (Tib. <i>pama</i>), Cupressaceae	branch tips
<i>panko jaraa</i> (= <i>pankha phul</i>)	<i>Hedychium spicatum</i> Smith, Zingiberaceae	rhizome
<i>pataa</i>	<i>Juniperus indica</i> Bertol., Compositae	herbage
<i>pati/titepati</i>	<i>Artemisia</i> spp., Compositae	herbage
<i>rato dhu</i> (= <i>rakta candan</i>) (red sandalwood)	<i>Pterocarpus santalinus</i> L. f., Leguminosae	
<i>rupkesari</i> (= <i>ruk keshar</i>)	<i>Mesua ferrea</i> L. Guttiferae	wood
<i>sal</i> (= <i>runecho</i>)	<i>Shorea robusta</i> Gaertn., Dipterocarpaceae	resin
<i>salla dhup</i>	pine resin from the <i>Pinus wallichiana</i> A. B. Jacks, Pinaceae; or from <i>Pinus roxburghii</i> Sargent	
<i>seto dhup</i>	<i>Santalum album</i> L.	wood shavings
<i>seto sen</i>	<i>Cinnamomum camphora</i> (L.) Presl., Lauraceae	flower exudate
<i>shila dhup</i>	<i>Pinus</i> spp.	resin
<i>shimali pati</i>	<i>Artemisia absinthium</i> L. Asteraceae	herbage
<i>sinkauli dhup</i>	<i>Cinnamomum glanduliferum</i> (Wall.) Maisn., Lauraceae	bark
<i>sirikandah</i> (= <i>shree</i> <i>khandā, shrikhand</i>)	White Sandalwood <i>Santalum album</i> L. Santalaceae	wood
<i>somalata</i>	<i>Ephedra gerardiana</i> Wallich ex Stapf, Gnetaceae (Ephedraceae)	herbage
<i>somana</i>	<i>Valeriana jatamansi</i> Jones, Valerianaceae	rhizome
<i>sukpa dhup</i>	<i>Juniperus</i> spp. Cupressaceae (in the Tibetan high-plateau <i>J. pseudosabina</i>)	branch tips
<i>sun(a) pati</i>	<i>Rhododendron anthopogon</i> D. Don, Ericaceae <i>Rhododendron</i> spp., <i>R. lepidotum</i>	leaves
<i>sungandhaval</i> (= <i>shanga</i> <i>sugandabahal, shugadawal</i>)	<i>Valeriana jatamansi</i> Jones, Valerianaceae	rhizome



The flowering female hemp (*ganja*) in front of Annapurna (8,091 meters above sea level).

In principle, 108 ingredients belong in every shamanic incense blend. As a rule, it is not realistically possible to collect so many elements. For this reason the shamans use mantras to complete the one hundred eight ingredients of their special incenses.

¹⁴² The Kirati shamans never use this incense. We were not able to find out why.

¹⁴³ The saffron crocus is usually grown at elevations of 1600 meters and can be harvested in October. Judging from certain experiments, the Himalayan saffron is particularly psychoactive, above all when it is baked into "space cakes."

¹⁴⁴ This incense is only used by gubajus and Brahmins, but usually only in blends. Shamans use the flowers only as offerings to their gods and for their altars.



The shoots of ferns (*uniw*) are used as incense.



Tulsi, or Holy basil (*Ocimum sanctum*), is cultivated in temples and shrines, and is also burned on *Shiva Ratri*—the night of the great god's birthday.

"*Titepati*, mugwort, was the first plant on earth. It was the first to be churned out of the primordial ocean. For this reason it is the first plant that the shamans use—historically as well as currently—in every ceremony."

(MR)

COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	PART USED
<i>tejpat</i>	<i>Cinnamomum tamala</i> (Buch.–Ham.) Nees et Eberm.	flowers, bark
<i>titaypati</i>	<i>Artemisia vulagris</i> L., Compositae	herbage
<i>tite pate</i>	<i>Artemisia dubia</i> Wall. ex DC., Compositae	herbage
	<i>Artemisia japonica</i> Thunb., Compositae	herbage
	<i>Artemisia</i> spp.	herbage
<i>tulsi, tulasi</i>	<i>Ocimum sanctum</i> L.	herbage
<i>uniw</i>	<i>Dryopteris</i> spp. Aspidiaceae	shoots ¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ The snake-shaped or ammonite-shaped fern shoots (*ningure* or *ningro*, *Dryopteris cochleata* [D. Don] C. Chr.) are also used as a (very tasty) vegetable.

Aloes Wood *Aquillaria agallocha* Roxb.

Most *dhup wala* sell other woods, for example sandalwood, as "true Aloes wood." The Aloes wood, also called *calambac*, comes primarily from Assam, northern India. The resinous wood of dead trees is the famous biblical incense that is usually erroneously translated as "aloe." From it comes the luxurious essence *ud*, which is treasured around the world as one of the most precious and psychoactive scents. The Sanskrit name *agar* forms the basis of the word for incense sticks, *agarbhatti*.

According to Parvati Rai, Aloes wood, which in Kirati is called *agar* or *agur pati*, is related to the substance of pleasure, *angeri*. It has a direct relation to Garuda. The mighty shamanic bird himself is said to have found the Aloes wood and discovered its medicinal effects. In the *mundum* path the Aloes wood must be invoked with a mantra at the beginning of every shamanic session. The Aloes wood, or rather its aroma, brings the shamans back from a deep trance.

The smoke is inhaled medicinally for headaches (cf. Winnewisser and Schütt-Kainata 1999).

Bhairunga pate *Potentilla fructiosa* L.

This small shrub is in the Rose family and has five petals. The fruit is reminiscent of a pentagram and is therefore a natural yantra.

The word *bhairunga* is said to have come from the Kirati language and actually means "to put people in a trance with a magical spell," as Parvati Rai explained. At the same time, it refers to Bhairab, the great shamanic god. All plants called *pate* or *pati* are connected to this herb. *Bhairunga pati* could be translated as something like "invocation herb."

Camphor *Cinnamomum camphora* (L.) Presl.

The camphor tree is sacred. It is a plant of Shiva, a beloved tree in his psychotropic garden. Its aroma is pleasing to the great god. Camphor is also intoxicat-

ing and thus a favorite substance of Mr. Bluethroat. The medicinal effects of the exudate need not be especially emphasized. Every child knows about the camphor chest salves for the relief of colds and coughs.

The camphor tree is also a very important shamanic traveling herb, though the camphor is not usually used in its material form but rather in its spiritual one. Many shamans invoke *kapur* in their traveling mantras; it helps them to fly better.

The camphor tree is used in many ways in Nepal. Camphor is distilled from the flowers (*seto sen*). The aromatic heartwood of the roots is considered a very valuable incense (*kalo aaran*) but is rarely obtained. It is said that camphor purifies the entire system of a human being. For this reason, people prefer to use this wood on funeral pyres for cremations at Pashupatinath, in Varnasi, and even in southern India.

If someone is sick and there are no shamans, tantrikas, or lamas present, then a piece of camphor wood (*chir kaato*) can be burned while prayers are said for the sick person. This is supposed to help.

The camphor tree is closely related to the cinnamon tree, or more precisely, to various cinnamon trees. A relative called *sinkauli dhup* can be used as a substitute. A decoction from the bark is a shamanic medicine for the treatment of food poisoning.

Sal—*Shorea robusta* Gaertn., the Deliverer of Intoxicating Resin

In springtime, preferably in May, the Kirati shamans harvest the resin (*salu pati*) from the tropical sal tree, also called *sakhewa* (Kir.), which only grows in the lowlands.¹⁴⁶ The resin (*khoto*; cf. Rai and Rai 1994, 98) is harvested by making cuts in the bark. When the shamans harvest it, they make their way, either naked or wearing a small loincloth, into the broad sal

¹⁴⁶ It does grow in the Kathmandu Valley, but only as a tiny shrub.



The fresh foliage of a young camphor tree in Kathmandu. The Kirati shaman tenderly strokes the sacred healing plant. The final product is the white, very penetrating or quite pungent aromatic camphor which is used for coughs and colds.

forests—the tree is no rarity in the Terai—and with special mantras they seek out the right or useable specimen. This is a significant contrast to the ayurvedic or Tibetan resin hunters who take everything they can (which has unfortunately led to severe ecological damage).

The sal tree belongs among the sacred plants because of its characteristics. It is considered to be a form of the lotus,¹⁴⁷ with wood that is nearly indestructible. It can remain underwater forever without rotting. It can hardly be broken or shattered. It can lie forever—“for a thousand years!” (MR)—in decaying forests without deteriorating. It is found at altitudes of up to one thousand meters.

The sal tree, also called *Indian Dammer* (Indian Dammar Resin), belongs to the botanical family Dipterocarpaceae. This family came into existence during the tertiary period and forms a large segment of the tropical vegetation. The very tall and powerful deciduous tree creates copious amounts of resin, which even flows forth without having to damage the bark in any way. The fossilized resin deposits found all over the world (such as amber) are created from this.¹⁴⁸

The smoke from sal resin that has been placed on wood coals is thick and white. People get high when it is inhaled. The psychoactive and intoxicating effects are almost overwhelming. Many shamans enter very deep trances though it. The observers are also swept away by the powerful, aromatic smoke. Sal resin is a shamanic traveling agent about which nothing has been known until now.

The aromatic flowers of the sal tree are also used

dried as incense, although this is done only rarely. The flowers are fried in mustard oil and used as medicine for different ailments.

The leaves are very robust, hence the name of the species (*Shorea robusta*), and have been used since prehistoric times as plates and other kitchenware. The leaves (*salkopat*) are also used for rolling the “Indian” cigarettes called *biribiri* (*bidi* or *beedee*). Unfortunately the leaves do not have the same or comparable effect as the resin.

Somalata, the Moon Plant

The plant with the botanical name *Ephedra Gerardiana* Wall. ex Stapf (Ephedraceae) is called *tseh* in Tamang, *somalata* or *somlata* (“moon plant”)¹⁴⁹ in Nepalese, and *sang kaba* in Sherpa. It grows only in the highest vegetation zones of the Himalayas, primarily between three thousand and four thousand meters.

“The herb is only used as an incense by powerful shamans and high lamas for burial ceremonies” (ML).

Gakadhu—Sulfur

Every drugstore in the West used to carry sticks of sulfur incense to get rid of vermin or for sulfiting vats of wine. Sulfur was not always associated with the destruction of other lifeforms. In ancient Rome, sulfur was a sacred material (incense) of Venus. With the advent of Christianity, it was turned into its opposite. For the Christians, the smell of sulfur, a natural element, was the stench of Satan. “The devil reeks of pitch and sulfur . . .” In Nepal, it is still considered to have the same qualities as it did in Antiquity. Sulfur is prized as an incense and is probably also used practically as a disinfectant.



The psychoactive resin of the tropical sal tree (*Shorea robusta*).

“The smoke of the *dhup* or of ganja is the tunnel to the other world. It is a tunnel in the body of the snake or dragon.”

(ML)

TECHNOLOGY: THE MATTER OF THE SHAMANS

¹⁴⁷ The oldest Sanskrit literature describes the tree known as *sāla* as being especially aromatic (Banerjee 1980, 71).

¹⁴⁸ Ganzelewski and Slotka 1996. [At this point in the main text, the authors also parenthetically note the etymological relationship in German between *Bernstein* (amber) and *Brennstein* (“burning stone,” i.e., resin for burning as incense).—Translator’s note.]

¹⁴⁹ The common rue (*Ruta graveolens* L.) is called *somalata* (Shrestha 1998, 81); this is interesting since this plant is also called *homa* or *haoma* (soma) in Persian (cf. Flattery and Schwartz 1989).

“The aroma produced [by the operculum] is approximately the same as burnt horn or hair.

Rumphius the elder principally accentuates its value as an additive to the finer, more delicate scents; it is comparable to the bass tone in music, which is likewise not pleasant by itself. However, if such incenses are considered to be particularly for the expulsion of disease and evil spirits, this may be based on the idea that it is precisely the repulsive which is medicinal, and that the devil cannot stand this smell.”

MARTENS (I. C. P. 298;
QUOTED IN: PFEIFFER
1914, 238)



Somalata, the “moon plant.”



The high-altitude rhododendron is psychoactive.

The Kirati do not use sulfur directly as incense for shamanizing, but rather as a medicine. When domestic animals, above all buffalo, cattle, and pigs become sick in an unusual way, then the shaman goes to the farm and makes a sulfur incense, naturally combined with the *chiuri* mantra. The name *chiuri* designates a large tree in the Sapotaceae family, the *Aesandra butyracea* (Roxb.) Baehni (syn. *Bassia butyracea*), the Indian butter tree. It has a widely branched and strong root system. Parvati Rai is of the opinion that the tree pulls sulfur out of the earth; for this reason the shamans and incense hunters are able to find sulfur at the base of these trees. Thus sulfur is called *chiurisin* in Kirati.

Under normal circumstances, shamans are not able to heal themselves, regardless of their particular culture and tradition. But there are exceptions; all ideals are nothing more than ideas and extrapolations of concepts. Even the laws of nature are nothing but idealized concepts. They are nothing but human assumptions and abstractions. When shamans become sick, they usually go to a trusted colleague, just as doctors and psychiatrists do in our culture. For smaller problems, they are able to concentrate on their Magical Dagger, or make an incense of *sun[a] pati*, the high-altitude rhododendron (*Rhododendron lepidotum*).

The Incense of the Three Worlds

(according to Parvati Rai, Mundum tradition)

Upper world:

<i>kumkum pati</i>	<i>Didymocarpus albicalyx</i> , <i>Crocus sativus</i>
<i>sun pati</i>	<i>Rhododendron lepidotum</i>
<i>bhairunga pati</i>	<i>Potentilla fructiosa</i>

These three plants are oriented to the heavens because they only grow in the high mountain regions. They stand for Shiva.

Middle world:

<i>titepati</i>	<i>Artemisia vulgaris</i> , <i>A. nilagirica</i>
-----------------	--

In order to travel in the realm of the earth, it is only necessary to invoke mugwort. It grows everywhere, though is not as prevalent in the mountains. Mugwort stands for Vishnu.

Underworld:

<i>titepati</i>	<i>Artemisia vulgaris</i> , <i>A. nilagirica</i>
<i>sal pati</i>	<i>Shorea robusta</i>

Both plants are found in the Terai, the lowlands of Nepal, and thus belong to the lowest world. “No shamanic [or tantric] ceremony can be carried out without sal” (MR). The sal leaves build the foundation upon which the shamanic operations can take place—similar to the way in which kundalini rises from below. The incense of the underworld stands for Brahma, whose breath of life also ascends into the world.

Incense Recipe from Maile Lama

Equal parts:

<i>titepati</i>	<i>Artemisia</i> sp., herbage
<i>laliguras</i>	<i>Rhododendron lepidotum</i> (leaves) or <i>R. arboreum</i> (flowers)
<i>sukpa</i>	<i>Juniperus recurva</i>
<i>sun pati</i>	<i>Rhododendron anthopogon</i>

The blend is strewn (sometimes in very generous quantities) on the glowing wood coals in the *dhupauro*. The scent can be merely enjoyed, or it can be inhaled with deep breaths. It can be used for traveling in all of the worlds.

Incense Claws, a Rediscovered

Incense of Antiquity

In Kirati, the opercula of conch shells are called *kulkelengma*, the “doors of the conch” (from *Murex* spp., *Fasciolaria* spp., *Ampularia*, *Turbinella pyrum*, and so forth).¹⁵⁰ In antiquity they were known by the names *onycha* and *onyx* (also *blatta byzantina* or *unquais oderatus*). They are the horny covers which serve as lids for the different conchs when they retreat fully into their shells—for instance, when they are being attacked (cf. Pfeiffer 1914, 238). Therefore this incense, which smells like burnt hair on its own but adds an interesting note to a blend, is considered to be protective (cf. Rättsch 1995g).

In Nepal, incense claws are used principally by the Brahmins as *dhupa*. They do not play a role in shamanism. They are merely drunk in a tea to nourish the womb. Just as they can protect the conches in their shells, the gates of the womb can be closed or opened, depending on what is required by the case at hand.

Bokshi dhup, the Witches’ Incense

Bokshi dhup or *dankina dhupa* (Nep. “witches’ incense”) or *kiuyama dhupa* (Kir.) is the name of an incense blend of (five, seven, or twenty-one) different herbs (all plants containing the word *pati* in their names) and chili pods (*Capsicum* spp.) called *khursani*

¹⁵⁰ In other words, they are the openings of the conch shells that are used as trumpets (*shanka*).

Incense Recipe from Danashing Tamang and Yonjon

These are the seven shamanic directions that symbolize the universe.

More or less equal parts of the following ingredients should be mixed together. The material should be in chopped up or crumbled, not pulverized.

<i>sun pati</i>	<i>Rhododendron lepidotum</i>	leaves
<i>dhupi</i>	<i>Juniperus recurva</i>	branch tips
<i>sukpa dhup</i>	<i>Juniperus indica</i>	branch tips
<i>kumkum pati</i>	<i>Didymocarpus albicalyx</i> or <i>Crocus sativus</i>	herbage flowers/pistils
<i>bhairunga pati</i>	<i>Potentilla fruticosa</i>	herbage
<i>titepati</i>	<i>Artemisia</i> spp.	herbage
<i>uniw pati, uniw dhupi</i>	<i>Dryopteris filis-mas</i> (L.) Schott.	shoots

(“millipede”). It is burned for protection against negative energies, but above all it is supposed to be effective against the bokshi, the “witches.” Ready-made blends are available for purchase in Kathmandu incense stores. There does not appear to be any set recipe for these incenses. Every *dhup wala*, every tantrika, every shaman swears by their own blend. Sometimes the mixture called *dankini dhupa* is only one ingredient in a larger blend.¹⁵¹ Perhaps we are entering a universe of fractal recipes . . . the individual component parts can be rediscovered as you like.

Danashing Tamang only makes his “witches’ incense” when the antics of the witches become too wild. He uses the flowers called *bokshi ghans*, “witches’ flowers,” of the *Mimosa rubicaulis* Lam. (Leguminosae)¹⁵² and three types of chili pods: the wild chili, a long chili, and a round chili.

The *bokshi dhup* of Indra Gurung is made of the small, round, extremely hot chilies called *dhalo khursani* or *dalle khursane* (*Capsicum annum* L. var.); the Newari blend *dankini dhup* must contain *sodamukhi*, the mineral salt called *juwala* (= *muki dhoop*), and *jatamichi* or *jata makhi* (Gur., *Nardostichys grandiflora* DC., Valerianaceae).

The tantric gubajus produce a *bokshi dhup* (New.) that secretes a precious aroma when burned. While it does not smell good to normal people, it is very seductive to the witches. They feel immediately enchanted and are captivated by the resulting attraction. They invariably follow the trail of the fragrance like a dog follows the scent of a piece of meat. When they arrive at the location where the alchemical smok-

ing process is occurring, they are spellbound by the magical power of the gubaju’s mantras. The gubaju can thus steal the witch mantras away from the witch, regardless of which sex they are, and can render them impotent. The gubaju does not destroy the witches, but rather transforms their negative spiritual mindset, which they use to torment people, into positive energy and thus liberates the black magician or witch. Witches can be made into people again. The tantrika helps such poor people who—as a result of blindness, seduction, social needs, or ignorance—have pursued the path of vileness, the destructive way of the witch-beings. If only it had been the gubajus and not the Inquisitors who came to Europe.

In the Newari tradition, the witches’ incense is made out of a blend of seven to twenty ingredients. The most important of these is a piece of dried human flesh. Where does it come from?

When we inquired about it, we received very contradictory answers. As mentioned previously, some Newaris confirmed this completely, and said that the charred remains come from cremation sites such as Pashupatinath, or from Kali shrines. Others told us of secret, nightly self-sacrifices at a certain Kali shrine in the Kathmandu Valley.¹⁵³ People supposedly sacrifice themselves on the shrine in order that they may be totally embraced in the arms of the great goddess. When the body is later found, pieces of it are dried, pulverized, and sold to the incense dealers.

When we told our shaman informants about this, they were unable to suppress their laughter. Indra Gurung said that at one time there might have been pieces of human flesh in the bokshi incense. He did not, however, know personally of any such blends, and would be very surprised if such a practice still existed. What is practiced, though, is the addition of ashes from the cremation of a member of one’s own family. Some Kirati shamans put a drop of their own blood in the witches’ incense. With their incense blends they honor the witches; through them, the witches are captivated.

The witches’ incense of the Newari smells considerably more pleasant and sweeter than the blends of the different shamans. When it is strewn on wood coals or cinders, a curious display can be observed. Some of the ingredients are roasted, others die or fade out slowly but some ingredients positively explode



Kirati incense mixture.

WITCHES’ INCENSE

“Witches’ incense” was available in Europe, even in apothecaries, into the twentieth century. The blends were mostly simple blends of frankincense, black caraway, and valerian. Such incenses were supposed to protect house, farm, and livestock from the attacks of witches. Höfler (1994, 117) provides a recipe with seven ingredients as well.

¹⁵¹ The ready-made blend available in Newari incense stores called *dankini dhup* contains red sandalwood, white sandalwood, mustard seeds, and chili pods. When burned, it has a aroma like that of a Nepalese curry.

¹⁵² It is entirely possible that this mimosa contains DMT.

¹⁵³ We have not yet been able to confirm this self-sacrifice via our own observation. But should people exist who wish of their own volition to offer their life to the great mother Kali—entirely away from the public eye, and against legal regulations—we do not want to expose them to sensationalist attention. For this reason, the name of the shrine will not be mentioned.



A Tamang boy displays the ingredients of the witches' incense according to the recipe of Indra Gurung.



The witches' incense of the Newari.

Khar, the rock salt in the witches' incense blend, was researched by Dr. Jochen Schlüter using x-ray analysis at the Mineralogical Institute of the Hamburg University. It was revealed that it concerned two natural salts, potassium nitrate (= saltpeter, KNO_3 , the large salt crystal) and potassium chloride (KCl, the small salt crystal). The saltpeter encourages the combustion of the other ingredients.

The Brahmins do not use witches' incense—they send people who are possessed by witches to shamans. But the Brahmins have an incense recipe for their own personal *pujas*, see ingredients in table at right above.



Newari Recipe for the Witches' Incense (*bokshi dhup*)

The recipe was written for us in Newari; unfortunately no one could decipher it. The shamans made a pharmacological study on the sample they received from me (see pictures) and came to the following conclusions:

<i>simali</i> (= <i>siwali</i>)	<i>Vitex negundo</i>	seeds
<i>sil timbur</i> ¹⁵⁴	<i>Zanthoxylum oxyphyllum</i>	fruit
<i>sal dhupa</i> (= <i>sal pati</i>)	<i>Shorea robusta</i>	resin
<i>khar</i> ¹⁵⁵	mountain salt	crystal
<i>kumkum pati</i> ¹⁵⁶	<i>Didymocarpus albicalyx</i>	leaves
<i>sun pati</i>	<i>Rhododendron lepidotum</i>	leaves
<i>ghokal dhup</i>	<i>Cedrus deodora</i>	resin
<i>khurusami</i>	<i>Capsicum</i> spp.	fruit pods

also pinches of secret ingredients such as ground up bones and human flesh, which would more likely be the ashes from a cremation. In addition, sulfur pieces or crystals are, or could be, included.

¹⁵⁴ This plant is known to us as Szechuan pepper. It is very aromatic, smells slightly like lemon and cloves, and has thick thorns on its branches like a blackberry plant. The thorns are found underneath the small leaves in groups of three; they are therefore wholly shamanic, which means they are also protective.

¹⁵⁵ The two grasses *Themeda triandra* Forssk and *Typha angustifolia* L. are also called *khar* in Nepali (Shrestha 1998, 48).

¹⁵⁶ The name *kumkum pati* can also mean saffron (*Crocus sativus* L.), but not in this recipe.

or burn quite unexpectedly—crackling and popping with a bluish flame. This is presumably due to the sulfur as well as the potassium salts.

The Brahmins do not use witches' incense—they send people who are possessed by witches to shamans. But the Brahmins have an incense recipe for their own personal *pujas*, see ingredients in table at right above.

Incense Recipe of the Nepalese Brahmins (according to instructions of Muktinath, the Royal Court Brahman)

<i>sal dhup</i>	<i>Shorea robusta</i>	resin
<i>gokul</i>	<i>Cedrus deodora</i>	heartwood
<i>gau dhup</i>	clarified butter	ghee

ALCOHOL AND AMRITA

“Without alcohol, the shamans would not be able to achieve anything,” said Mohan Rai, laughing. “All the plants that alcohol is made from belong to Shiva and the shamans. They drink alcohol to protect themselves.”

Alcohol is *spiritus*—the spirit from the bottle. It is the cement between matter and spirit. “Whether or not alcohol acts as a poison or a medicine depends on our state of awareness when we are drinking. Conscious drinking—remaining aware of our own state of consciousness—can transform the effects of alcohol” (Trungpa 1993, 198).

Many shamans in Nepal, and actually throughout the Himalayas, drink an enormous amount of alcoholic beverages, the “aqua fortis.” For example, every day Myingmar Sherpa drinks about three to four liters of *rakshi*, schnapps that he has distilled at his home. It is diluted with water, though, to have an alcoholic content of 15 to 25 percent. The day begins with *rakshi* and ends with *rakshi*, and in between there are countless rounds of *chhang* beer. But this copious consumption is not apparent in Myingmar. Other shamans, especially those who live in the mountains, also drink such amounts. As a researcher, one must also drink, for it is better to accept things offered by shamans. The shamans can drink without becoming drunk, going about their daily chores normally, and carrying out healing rituals at night. How are they able to do this?

“We have a mantra that neutralizes the poisons of alcohol and transforms it into *amrita*—the elixir of life—inside our bodies. Through this we receive *shakti*.” There are a few further tricks shamans use to assert themselves against alcohol and to master it. Three fingertips smear (yak) butter on the schnapps bottle, freeing it of “germs of disease.” Then, before drinking, a few drops of the alcohol are sprinkled with the offering finger (our ring finger). The first drop of schnapps is for Agni, the fire god; it is best to sprinkle it into the hearth fire.¹⁵⁷ The Vajrayoginis then receive their offering, then the mother earth and the four directions, and also Shiva, of course. This is the approximate sequence, but here again the different sha-

¹⁵⁷ Those who know it intone the *agni mantra*, which honors Devi/Parvati and spiritually nourishes her at the same time.

mans have their individual procedures. This offering “detoxifies” the alcoholic drink concerned.¹⁵⁸

There is practically no *chinta* or pilgrimage that is conducted without alcohol. The shamans transform the alcohol, which they sacrifice and then drink themselves, into *amrita*. There are often *rakshi* bottles and *chhang* vessels standing on the altars. The gourds of the Kirati often contain the “water of life.” In small bowls, preferably made of copper, there is an alcoholic sea of *amrita*. The shaman sprinkles some of it on the altar and takes a slug of it to give himself strength for his upcoming trip. He consecrates the drinks on the altar; they, too, become *amrita*. After the ceremony, the cups and bottles go around. Everyone present should share the elixir. It is a sort of grail ceremony. And this happens every night. When the shamans have command of the right mantras, many things can be transformed into *amrita*.

According to the Newari tradition, the tree or shrub called *indrajow* emerged from a drop of soma or *amrita*. It smells similar to jasmine and grows only on the ground. For this reason it is planted in the garden. As a result, Indra comes to the middle world and protects the humans, who have planted this heavenly primordial plant.

What Is Considered *Amrita*

Amrita is always sweet. To the jhankris everything bitter is poison and everything sweet is *amrita*, including the following:

- the spiritual liquid in the vessel of the moon (= soma)
- the water in the *bumba*, the jug on the altar
- the aromatic dew of angel’s trumpet flowers (*Brugmansia* spp.)
- *dubhotar*, the widespread variety of grass *Cynodon dactylon* (L.) Pers.
- coconut milk
- every form of alcohol, after it has been treated with a mantra
- *katus*, the chestnut tree (*Castanopsis* spp.) and in particular the light interior of the nutlike fruit
- psychoactive or psychedelic mushrooms
- the sacred *amala* tree (*Phyllanthus emblica* L., Euphorbiaceae)

- the *indrayani* (Skr.), “rainbow” tree *Vitex negundo* L. (also a soma plant and a *bokshi* incense)
- the *indrajow* (Nep., New.), “rainbow” tree *Holarrhena pubescens* (Buch.-Ham.) Wall. ex G. Don (*H. antidysenterica*)
- the water from the peony blossom (*Paeonia emodi* Wall ex Royle)
- *guduchi*, a soma substitute (*Tinospora cordifolia*) and tonic
- *dhupi* branches (juniper) in a vase
- anti-toxins or antidotes (for example *bikhuna*)
- the wise words of an old person

Palm Wine, a Shamanic Fuel

Palms produce a natural alcohol (ethanol) in a process through which wild yeast begins fermentation of the liquid in its stem. This liquid is sacred to the shamans who, depending on the species of palm, need only the appropriate equipment to tap the tree.

More often than not, the leaf that sprouts from the stem is cut off, or a hole is cut into the woody stem (in colloquial language the stem would be called a trunk, but palms are not trees; rather, they are tall grasses). The palm wine, called *tharo*, can contain a little to a lot of alcohol, anywhere from 0.5 to 12 percent!

Palm wine is sacred to the shamans and a source of their strength. It is a gift from Shiva, who naturally discovered palm wine and revealed it to humans. (Coconuts are considered the testicles of the great god, and therefore the milk contained in them is filled with *shakti*. It is drunk on *Shiva Rattri*, Shiva’s birthday.)

Palm wine is used mainly by the Tharu and the northern Indian Ojha (healing shamans) for the purpose of traveling. But not every palm or every palm wine is of significance to the shamans of Nepal. When they want to strengthen themselves on palm wine, they go into the forest or into palm groves and search in a visionary state, through mantras or traveling herbs, for the right palm. Then they wander through the grove, “lost in a dream,” either in sleep at home, or in a trance in nature. They have found the right tree when they see a light in the stem. The light-filled—that is, *shakti*-loaded—palm is then tapped. It serves the shamans as a “fueling station.”



This hand painted advertisement for a Nepalese beer incorporates the association of Bhairab/Mahakala and alcohol/*amrita*.

For the shamans, alcohol is not a “bad drug” (as it is for many neo-puritanical marijuana smokers), but rather a welcomed drink. With a further mantra, schnapps is transformed into *amrita*, the “elixir of life.”

“I use alcohol (*rakshi*) as a trance drug, to travel.”
(IG)

“The shamans drink that much alcohol in order to enter an aggressive emotional so that they can better resist demons and are able to achieve their objectives.”
(MR)

The schnapps bottles and the *chhang* vessels are each smeared with three fingers of butter in order to protect the alcoholic drink contained in them from demonic and other negative influences.

¹⁵⁸ This practice can be observed by many shamans of many cultures (cf. Ratsch 1999c).



Ulmata Bhairab with tantric weapons. (No. 28)

Rakshi and Chhang

Because the village wakes up early, I drag myself out of my room and go into the bar of the “Karthali Hilton” as we jokingly call the only guest house in the small village on the way to Kalinchok. It is simple, but well cared for. The bar is a real shamanic meeting place. It is barely light out when the local jhankris come in, and soon they are joined by the ones traveling through the village. Bandari, the host who has also become a friend in the meantime, laughs and asks me if I need a schnapps to wake up. At that moment Yonjon comes in, soaking wet with his own sweat. He had to drum all night for a severe illness. Namaste, “May the divine within you be greeted!” He is handed a large glass of liquid without a word. I am amazed—it must be schnapps, for he first sprinkles offerings of it while mumbling to his gods. I ask for a glass myself and do the same as he. He has already emptied his glass and has a second in hand. I am still on my first test sip. At home we drink tea or coffee in the morning—also psychoactive, each simply a stimulating or energizing drink. Here in the mountains, people begin the day with schnapps. It also wakes you up, because it is grounding. When a shaman has tranced a lot or dreamed, the soul and body (mind and

matter) are unified. What is surprising to me is the absence of any alcoholic or inebriating effects. Perhaps it has to do with the altitude. By the time I take the last swallow, the shaman has emptied his fourth glass. Now he smokes a hand-rolled angeri cigarette. He briefly reports that the chinta was successful. But he now must go to his rice fields. He runs off on his wiry legs of steel. (CR)

In principle, *rakshi* and *chhang* can be made out of all types of grain.

The sacred rice *akshyata*, used for shamanic journeys and for the shamanic basket, is naturally suitable for brewing rice beer (*chhang*). The more sacred something becomes, the more *shakti* it contains, and the more shamans and people use it. Westerners should exercise caution with this drink, for even small amounts can cause diarrhea and stomach cramps in those unaccustomed to it.

It is also customary for the Tamang and Sherpa of the high mountains to distill schnapps from the fruits of wild plants, such as the berberis shrub (*Berberis* spp.), the branches of which are a talisman against *bhutas*. *Rakshi* is called *airak* by the Tamang.



The sacred *danphe* bird (*tragopan*) drinks *amrita* water from the peony flower called *chandra ma*, “moon mother.” (Detail of a thangka)



The flowering (in August) tree (*Holarhena pubescens*) called *indrajow*, “rainbow,” or “way/bridge of the thunder god Indra,” is an *amrita* plant.



Two Kirati women distilling homemade *rakshi*.



A man tapping *tharo* from the wild date palm (*Phoenix sylvestris* Roxb.) in the tropical plains of India with the Himalayas in the background.



Two-armed Mahakala, surrounded by Yamantakas, the Lords of Death. (No. 10)

TRAVELING HERBS AND TRAVELING MUSHROOMS: SHIVA'S GARDEN

These plants and mushrooms can just as easily be called flying herbs and flying mushrooms, for they assist the shamans in flying, traveling, and seeing. The plants that come from Shiva's garden—the Himalayas—have bestowed shamanic consciousness upon humans.

In most Himalayan languages, the traveling plants or traveling herbs are called *nisa jhar*, literally “intoxicating plants.” “In the Kirati way, we have to invoke many plants before we are able to fly” (PR).

There is said to be a total of 108 psychoactive plants¹⁵⁹ that are consecrated to Shiva and are sacred, and that transport the shamans into a trance. In other words, they are plants that enable them to travel. “All species of traveling plants and poisons are fundamentally connected to shamanism” (MR). In her travel-

¹⁵⁹ At this point it should be pointed out that “108” is a synonym for cosmic completeness. It appears in this book countless times—for example in the 108 beads of the mala, the 108 names of Shiva, etc.

mantra Parvati Rai invokes all of the psychoactive plants of Shiva; only then is she truly able to travel. For the Kirati shamans it is an absolute necessity to utilize all psychoactive plants. All of the other peoples of the Himalayan region have learned this practice from the Kirati and adopted it. Parvati Rai still remembers well that tobacco (*Nicotiana rustica* and *N. tabacum*) was introduced into Nepal only a short while ago. By this she is referring to the historically “young” era of the sixteenth or seventeenth century. Most shamans today think of tobacco as a Shiva plant, that can also be used as a traveling herb; nonetheless, for them it is more likely an agent of pleasure and relaxation. A cigarette after a trip can be nice.

In our researches over the past two decades, we have found only approximately eighty-eight psychoactive plants of Nepal, as the following table illustrates. In other words, there are many psychoactive plants to be discovered that are still unknown to us.



A hemp pipe from the high Himalayas.



In Nepal, cultivated tobacco (*Nicotiana tabacum*) is a “newcomer” to Shiva's garden (photographed in the Kathmandu Valley).

Latin Names of Psychoactive Plants in Nepal¹⁶⁰

The species designated with an * presumably introduced during the Indian colonial time (and some now grow wild).

BOTANICAL NAME	TRADITIONAL USE
<i>Aconitum</i> spp.:	Traveling herbs, incense material
<i>Aconitum ferox</i> Wallich ex Seringe	Aghori –substance of intoxication
<i>Aconitum napellus</i> L.	
<i>Aconitum spicatum</i> (Brühl.) Stapf	
<i>Acorus calamus</i> L.	Incense, ayurveda
<i>Alstonia scholaris</i> (L.) r. Br.	Folk medicine, ayurveda
<i>Amanita muscaria</i> (L. ex Fr.) Pers.	Shamanic entheogen
<i>Areca catechu</i> L.	Betel, aphrodisiac
<i>Argemone mexicana</i> L.*	Folk medicine, ayurveda
<i>Argyrea hookeri</i> C. B. Clarke	
<i>Argyrea nervosa</i> (Burm.f.) Boj.	Traveling herb
<i>Arisaema</i> spp.:	Traveling herbs
<i>Arisaema griffithii</i> Schott.	Traveling herb
<i>Arisaema propinquum</i> Schott.	Traveling herb
<i>Arisaema utile</i> Hook. f. ex Schott.	Traveling herb, food
<i>Artemisia</i> spp.:	
<i>Artemisia absinthium</i> L.	Incense, medicine
<i>A. dubia</i> Wall. ex DC.	Incense, talisman
<i>Artemisia gmelinii</i>	Traveling herb, smoking material
<i>A. nilagirica</i> (Clarke) Pamp.	
[= <i>A. vulgaris</i> auct. non Linn.]	Incense
<i>Artemisia vulgaris</i> L.	Incense
<i>Arundo donax</i> L.*	

¹⁶⁰ Psychoactive elements have not been established or proven in all of the plants cited here. (cf. Rätsch, *Enzyklopädie der psychoaktiven Pflanzen* [*Encyclopaedia of Psychoactive Plants*, available in English in 2003]). Nevertheless, they have been included to complete the picture because until now there has been hardly anything published about these psychoactive plants in Nepal.

"The enigma lies broken
 Searching for those
 precious moments
 Reaching for a
 higher existence
 Like a newborn migrant
 in the void."

NAGASH (DIMMU BORGIR,
 SPIRITUAL BLACK
 DIMENSIONS, 1998)

"One must walk in nature
 with the shamans to
 "discover" all of the sacred
 plants, the natural
 teachers. Until now, it was
 not known in the scientific
 or popular literature that
 the Nepalese shamans
 know about and use
 psychoactive plants.
 Because the specialized
 field of ethnological
 research very seldom
 incorporates botanical
 knowledge, this important
 aspect remained hidden
 from many people until
 now—and its existence
 was even denied."

(CR)

BOTANICAL NAME	TRADITIONAL USE
<i>Atropa acuminata</i> Royle [= <i>A. belladonna</i> (non L.) C.B. Clarke]	Alkaloid producing
<i>Atropa belladonna</i> L.	
<i>Brugmansia arborea</i> (L.) Lagerh.	Flower offering, traveling herb
<i>Brugmansia suaveolens</i> (HBK.) Bercht. et Prestl.* (= <i>Datura suaveolens</i> HBK.)	Flower offering (especially for Shiva)
<i>Caesalpinia decapetala</i> (Roth) Alston (= <i>C. sepiaria</i> Roxb.)	Dye, spiritual fence
<i>Camellia sinensis</i> L.	Intoxicating substance, food
<i>Cannabis indica</i> Lam.	Rasayana, intoxicating substance
<i>Cannabis sativa</i> L.	Rasayana, intoxicating substance
<i>Cestrum nocturnum</i> L.	Flower offering (especially for Shiva)
<i>Cestrum parqui</i> L'Herit.*	
<i>Cinnamomum camphora</i> (L.) Presl.	Camphor, incense
<i>Cocos nucifera</i> L.	Palm wine (<i>tharo</i>)
<i>Coffea arabica</i> L.*	Coffee
<i>Cordyceps sinensis</i> (Berk.) Sacc.	Tonic for man and yak; traveling substance
<i>Crocus sativus</i> L.	Incense, medicine, dye
<i>Datura metel</i> L. var. <i>alba</i> Bernh. var. <i>fastuosa</i> (L.)	Flower offering (particularly for Shiva)
<i>Datura stramonium</i> L. (*) var. <i>tatula</i> Torr.	Flower offering (particularly for Shiva)
<i>Desmodium elegans</i> DC.	Flower offering of the Brahmins
<i>Desmodium gangeticum</i> (L.) DC.	Soma substitute, flower offering of the Brahmins
<i>Ephedra</i> spp.	Folk medicine
<i>Ephedra Gerardiana</i> Wallich ex Stapf	Rasayana, incense
<i>Erythrina</i> spp.	
<i>E. arborescens</i> Roxb.	
<i>E. stricta</i> Roxb.	
<i>Erythrina indica</i> Lam. —Mandara ¹⁶¹ (syn. <i>Erythrina variegata</i> L.) ¹⁶²	Flower offering (particularly for Shiva)
<i>Eschscholzia californica</i> Cham.*	Flower offering
<i>Humulus lupulus</i> L.*	Beer additive
<i>Hyoscyamus niger</i> L.	Beer additive
<i>H. niger</i> var. <i>chinensis</i> Makino	
<i>H. reticulatus</i> L.	Tibetan medicine (for parasites)
<i>Ipomoea carnea</i> Jacq.* (= <i>Ipomoea fistulosa</i> Mart. ex Choisy)	
<i>Juniperus recurva</i> Buch. —Ham. ex D. Don	Incense
<i>Leonotis nepetaefolia</i> (L.) Aiton (presumably <i>Leonotis leonurus</i>)	Flower offering of the Brahmins
<i>Lyonia ovalifolia</i> (Wall.) Drude	Incense
<i>Mandragora caulescens</i> C.B. Clarke	
<i>Mesembryanthemum crystallinum</i> L.	
<i>Mimosa pudica</i> L.*	
<i>Mimosa rubicaulis</i> Lam.	"witches' incense"
<i>Mitragyna parviflora</i> (Roxb.) Korth.	Brahman offering plant
<i>Mucuna pruriens</i> (L.) DC.	Nerve tonic
<i>Myristica fragrans</i> Houtt.	Offering, traveling substance

¹⁶¹ A sacred tree in India and Nepal, associated with the production of *amrita*, the drink of immortality, and with Shiva's paradise. According to Vedic mythology, the tree came into being when the milk of the primordial ocean was churned in order to create the godly drink. The brilliant red flowers of Shiva are sacrificed (Majupuria and Joshi 1998, 227) and the three leaves per stalk symbolize the trinity of the Hindu gods: Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva (Gupta 1991, 39).

¹⁶² The tree is called *bras* in Hindi.



The night jasmine (*Cestrum nocturnum*) in full bloom.



The Asian thorn apple (*Datura metel*)



The high-altitude Juniper (*Juniperus recurva*) on Kalinchok.

BOTANICAL NAME	TRADITIONAL USE
<i>Nicotiana rustica</i> L.*	Traveling herb
<i>Nicotiana tabacum</i> L.*	Pleasure substance
<i>Papaver somniferum</i> L.	Ayurveda, shamanism
<i>Paspalum distichum</i> L.	Beer brewing
<i>Paspalum scrobiculatum</i> L.	Beer brewing
<i>Peganum harmala</i> L.	
<i>Phytolacca acinosa</i> Roxb.	Salad, vegetable
<i>Piper betle</i> L.	Betel blend
<i>Psidium guajava</i> L.	Folk medicine, diarrhea
<i>Psilocybe cubensis</i> (Earle) Sing.	Traveling mushroom
<i>Psilocybe subcubensis</i> Guzman	Traveling mushroom
<i>Rauvolfia serpentina</i> (L.) Benth. ex Kurz	Hypnotic
<i>Rhododendron anthopogon</i> D. Don	Incense
var. <i>hypananthum</i> (Balf. f.) Hara	Incense
<i>Rhododendron cinnabarinum</i> Hook.f.	Incense
<i>Rhododendron lepidotum</i> Wall. ex Don	Incense
<i>Scopolia lurida</i> (Link et Otto) Dunal [= <i>S. anomala</i> (Link et Otto) Airy Shaw, <i>S. stramonifolia</i> (Wallich) Shrestha]	Traveling substance (seeds)
<i>Senecio</i> spp.	Offering flowers
<i>Shorea robusta</i> Gaertn.	Incense, traveling substance
<i>Sida</i> spp.:	Folk medicine, the roots are used as a shamanic (spiritual) medicine
<i>Sida rhombifolia</i> L.	Folk medicine
<i>Sida cordifolia</i> L.	
<i>Sida spinosa</i> L.	
<i>Strychnos nux-vomica</i> L.	Ayurveda, incense, aphrodisiac
<i>Tabernaemontana divaricata</i> (L.) Br. ex Roem.	
<i>Tribulus terrestris</i> L.	Beer additive in Ladakh, ayurveda
<i>Vitis vinifera</i> L.	Pressing wine
<i>Withania somnifera</i> (L.) Dunal	Tonic, narcotic

Indigenous Names of Psychoactive Plants in Nepal

INDIGENOUS NAME	BOTANICAL NAME	CONSTITUENTS
Ambak	<i>Psidium guajava</i> L.	
Angeri	<i>Lyonia ovalifolia</i> (Wall.) Drude <i>Melastoma melabathricum</i> L. <i>Berchemia edgeworthii</i> Lawson	Nicotine (?)
Angur	<i>Vitis vinifera</i> L.	Alcohol
Aphim	<i>Papaver somniferum</i> L.	Opium alkaloids
Areli kanda	<i>Caesalpinia decapetala</i> (Roth) Alston (= <i>C. sepiaria</i> Roxb.)	
Aswagandha	<i>Withania somnifera</i> (L.) Dunal	Withanolide
Atiwala	<i>Ipomoea</i> spp. <i>Ipomoea carnea</i> Jacq. (= <i>Ipomoea fistulosa</i> Mart. ex Choisy)	Lysergic acids
Atis	<i>Aconitum</i> spp.: <i>A. ferox</i> Wallich ex Seringe <i>A. napellus</i> L. <i>A. spicatum</i> (Brühl) Stapf	Alkaloids Aconitine Aconitine Aconitine
Bäluchare	"A strong kind of hemp"	
Bajar bharg	<i>Hyoscyamus niger</i> L. <i>H. niger</i> var. <i>chinensis</i> Makino <i>H. reticulatus</i> L.	Tropane alkaloids Scopolamine
Bakhre kane	<i>Senecio</i> spp. (= <i>Senecio cappa</i> Buch. -Ham. ex D. Don)	
Balu	<i>Sida</i> spp.	Ephedrine



Yonjon smokes a *bidi* rolled from *Lyonia ovalifolia* leaves (*angeri*) for relaxation.

According to her own reports, an old man (*not* the Ban Jhankri) appeared to the Kirati shaman Parvati Rai in her dreams numerous times during her youth. He showed her the sacred plants, such as *Datura* and *Psilocybe* mushrooms, as well as their preparation.

The shamans in the Peruvian Amazon region call the psychoactive plants *plantas maestras*, "master plants," because they are their true teachers. A plant that moves the spirit can teach much more than any university professor! Are these plants not just as much crowns of creation as we and all other beings are?

"Everything poisonous produces visions in the respective shamans."

DIL BAHADUR RAI

"Every drug belongs to Shiva! All drugs are connected to the three worlds!"

(MR)

TRAVELING HERBS AND
TRAVELING MUSHROOMS:
SHIVA'S GARDEN

INDIGENOUS NAME	BOTANICAL NAME	CONSTITUENTS
<i>Beladona</i>	<i>Atropa belladonna</i> L.	Atropine
<i>Bhang/Ganja</i>	<i>Cannabis sativa</i> L.	THC
	<i>Cannabis indica</i> Lam.	THC
<i>Bis</i>	<i>Aconitum</i> spp.	Alkaloids
<i>Bojo</i>	<i>Acorus calamus</i> L.	Asaron
<i>Bokshi ghans</i>	<i>Mimosa rubicaulis</i> L.	DMT (?)
	<i>Mimosa pudica</i> L.	Alkaloids
<i>Bulu gurans</i>	<i>Rhododendron cinabrinum</i> Hook.f.	Essential oil
<i>Camle</i>	<i>Desmodium elegans</i> DC.	DMT (?)
<i>Candamari</i>	<i>Rauvolfia serpentina</i> (L.) Benth.	Reserpine
<i>Chativan</i> ¹⁶³	<i>Alsonia scholaris</i> (L.) R Br.	Yohimbine
<i>Chiniya gurans</i>	<i>Rhododendron lepidotum</i> Wall. ex Don	Essential oil
<i>Chiya</i>	<i>Camellia sinensis</i> L.	Caffeine
<i>Chyau</i>	<i>Psilocybe cubensis</i> <i>Psilocybe subcubensis</i>	Psilocybine/Psilocyn Psilocybine/Psilocyn
<i>Damura</i>	<i>Artemisia absinthum</i> L.	Thujone
<i>Dhaturo</i>	<i>Datura stramonium</i> L. var. <i>tatula</i> Torr.	Scopolamine
<i>Dhaturo</i>	<i>Brugmansia suaveolens</i> (HBK.) Bercht. et Presl. (= <i>Datura suaveolens</i> HBK)	Scopolamine
<i>Dhupma</i>	<i>Artemisia absinthium</i> L.	Thujone
<i>Dhupi</i>	<i>Juniperus recurva</i> Buch.–Ham. ex D. Don <i>Rhododendron anthopogon</i> D. Don	Essential oil Essential oil
<i>Dupsi</i>	1) A plant that has not yet been botanically identified 2) (Kir.) <i>Piper betle</i> L.	Essential oil
<i>Dutre</i>	<i>Brugmansia suaveolens</i> (HBK.) Bercht. et Presl. <i>Brugmansia</i> spp.	Scopolamine Scopolamine
<i>Ganja</i>	<i>Cannabis indica</i> Lam.	THC
<i>Ghanti phul</i>	<i>Scopolia stramonifolia</i> (Wall.) Shrestha	Scopolitine
<i>Gokhur</i>	<i>Tribulus terrestris</i> L.	Harmala-Alkaloids
<i>Gyalanglang</i>	<i>Scopolia lurida</i> (Link et Otto) Dunal [= <i>S. anomala</i> (Link et Otto) Airy Shaw, <i>S. stramonifolia</i> (Wallich) Shrestha]	Scopolitine
<i>Haps</i>	<i>Humulus lupulus</i> L.	Lupuline
<i>Harmal</i>	<i>Peganum harmala</i> L.	Harmine, harmaline
<i>Hasana</i>	<i>Cestrum nocturnum</i> L.	Alkaloid
<i>Himal pati</i>	<i>Artemisia gmelinii</i>	Essential oil
<i>Indian Beladona</i>	<i>Atropa acuminata</i> Royle [= <i>A. Belladonna</i> (non L.) C.B. Clarke]	Atropine
<i>Jaar</i>	<i>Datura stramonium</i> L.	Scopolamine
<i>Jai patri</i>	<i>Myristica fragrans</i> Houtt.	Essential oil
<i>Janai ghans</i>	<i>Paspalum distichum</i> L.	Ergot alkaloids
<i>Jaringo</i>	<i>Phytolacca acinosa</i> Roxb.	
<i>Jhar</i>	<i>Datura stramonium</i> L.	Scopolamine
<i>Kachopat</i>	<i>Nicotiana rustica</i> L.	Nicotine
<i>Kagcaro</i>	<i>Ephedra Gerardiana</i> Wallich ex Stapf	Ephedrine
<i>Kafi</i>	<i>Coffea arabica</i> L.	Caffeine
<i>Kalo dhaturo</i>	<i>Datura metel</i> L. var. <i>alba</i> Bernh. var. <i>fastuosa</i> (L.)	Scopolamine



Camphor (*Camphor kapur*) is a white, crystalline, and organic substance that plays an important role in Nepalese shamanism as an incense, agent for traveling, and medicine. *Kapur* is therefore a substance sacred to Shiva.

¹⁶³ The name describes the chest and raised hands that form a *trishul*; the tree is sacred to the Kirati. The branches are said to sometimes be three-cornered, therefore the shamanic three again.

INDIGENOUS NAME	BOTANICAL NAME	CONSTITUENTS
<i>Kalunge chyau</i>	<i>Amanita muscaria</i> (L. ex Fr.) Pers.	Ibotenic acid
<i>Kapur</i>	<i>Cinnamomum camphora</i> (L.) J. Presl.	Camphor
<i>Kauso</i>	<i>Mucuna pruriens</i> (L.) DC.	DMT
	<i>Mucuna nigricans</i> (Lour.) Steud. (= <i>M. imbricata</i> DC)	DMT (?)
<i>Khursani ajavan</i>	<i>Hyoscyamus niger</i> L.	Scopolamine
<i>Kodi</i>	<i>Paspalum scrobiculatum</i> L.	Ergot alkaloids
<i>Kuchila</i>	<i>Strychnos nux-vomica</i> L.	Strychnine
<i>Mandara</i>	<i>Erythrina indica</i> Lam. (syn. <i>Erythrina variegata</i> L.) <i>Erythrina stricta</i> Roxb.	Cystine
<i>Nalani</i>	<i>Arundo donax</i> L.	DMT
<i>Narkat</i>	1) "Phragmites maxima" 2) <i>Phragmites karka</i> (Retz.) Trin. ex Steudel	DMT (?)
<i>Narival</i>	<i>Cocos nucifera</i> L.	Ethanol
<i>Nigalo</i>	<i>Arundinaria</i> sp.	DMT (?)
<i>Paan</i>	<i>Piper betle</i> L.	Essential oil
<i>Palua</i>	<i>Nicotiana rustica</i> L. ¹⁶⁴	Nicotine
<i>Pati</i>	<i>Artemisia</i> spp.: <i>A. absinthium</i> L.	Thujone Thujone
<i>Phaldu</i>	<i>Mitragyna parviflora</i> (Roxb.) Korth.	Mytraginine (?)
<i>Phaledo</i>	<i>Erythrina stricta</i> Roxb.	Cystine
<i>Purbo (Lepcha)</i>	<i>Alstonia scholaris</i> (L.) R. Br.	Yohimbine
<i>Sal</i>	<i>Shorea robusta</i> Gaertn.	Resin
<i>Sala parni</i>	<i>Desmodium gangeticum</i> (L.) DC.	DMT
<i>Samundra phul</i>	<i>Argyrea nervosa</i> (Bum.f.) Boj. <i>Argyrea hookeri</i> C. B. Clarke	Lysergic acid derivative Lysergic acid derivative
<i>Sano chillya</i>	<i>Sida rhombifolia</i> L.	Ephedrine
<i>Sarpagandha</i>	<i>Rauvolfia serpentina</i> (L.) Benth. ex Kurz	Reserpine
<i>Seto dhaturu</i>	<i>Datura stramonium</i> L.	Scopolamine
<i>Shimali [pati]</i>	<i>Artemisia absinthium</i> L.	Thujone
<i>Siva ghanta</i>	<i>Brugmansia arborea</i> (L.) Lagerh. <i>Brugmansia suaveolens</i>	Scopolamine
<i>Somalata</i>	<i>Ephedra gerardiana</i> Wallich ex Stapf	Ephedrine
<i>Supari</i>	<i>Areca catechu</i> L.	Arecoline
<i>Surti</i>	<i>Nicotiana tabacum</i> L.	Nicotine
<i>Takar</i>	<i>Tabernaemontana divaricata</i> (L.) Br. ex Roem.	Iboga alkaloids
<i>Tama</i>	<i>Arundinaria</i> sp.	DMT (?)
<i>Thakkal</i>	<i>Argemone mexicana</i> L.	Opium-like alkaloids
<i>Tharo (= Tadi)</i>	<i>Phoenix sylvestris</i> Roxb.	Palm wine
<i>Thecara</i>	<i>Ipomoea carnea</i> Jacq. (= <i>Ipomoea fistulosa</i> Mart. ex Choisy)	Lysergic acid
<i>Theki kath</i>	<i>Erythrina arboescens</i> Roxb.	Cystine
<i>Titipati</i>	<i>Artemisia vulgaris</i> L.	Essential oil
<i>Udusmara</i>	<i>Leonotis nepetaefolia</i> (L.) Aiton (presumably syn. <i>Leonotis leonurus</i>)	
<i>Vajra bhang</i>	<i>Hyoscyamus niger</i> L.	Scopolamine
<i>Van gahate</i>	<i>Desmodium gangeticum</i> (L.) DC.	DMT
<i>Vikha</i>	<i>Aconitum ferox</i>	Aconitine
<i>Yarsagumba</i>	<i>Cordyceps sinensis</i> (Berk.) Sacc.	

no names are known for:
Eschscholzia californica Cham.
Mandragora caulescens C.B. Clarke

¹⁶⁴ The seeds are particularly strong when smoked and thus they are used by some shamans.



A woman sells sal leaves on the temple stairs at Hanuman Doka in the center of Kathmandu.

"This is Shiva's holy fucking shit!"

FOLK SAYING

The *Raja Valabha*, a Sanskrit text from the seventeenth century, claimed that the gods sent cannabis "through compassion for the human race, so that they might attain delight, lose fear, and have sexual desires."

MORNINGSTAR
(1985, 148)

Charas, the hemp resin of Nepal, contains the sunshine of nature and the goodheartedness of the humans.

Some traveling plants are merely invoked and honored with mantras. Shiva and the shamans are nothing without their plant helpers . . . Sometimes the shamans use traveling herbs or traveling mushrooms to deepen the trance, if this is necessary for the treatment at hand, or to extend it. The Nepalese shamans take the plants mostly to learn. The plants are their genuine gurus, their true or natural teachers. With the help of these Shiva plants, the shamans are able to explore the universe and reach a better understanding of it. The traveling herbs can answer questions that are put to them. With these plants the shamans are able to better understand nature and increase their knowledge of it. This is why these plants are also known as *gurubua* (Nep.) or "teaching plants."¹⁶⁵ They are also considered principally as being "food of the *nagas*."

Jhankris consult their traveling herbs to learn which medicine they could use for the treatment of a patient. Then the shamans go traveling. With luck, when they bore themselves spirally into the other worlds, they discover the correct answer there. Sometimes it is enough for the shamans to recite their mantras just before they go to sleep, invoking the plant spirits or plant gods and the *devas*, and requesting their support. It might then happen that the particular plant spirit reveals the answer to the questioner in a dream. When shamans desire getting in touch with the traveling herbs, it is not always necessary to ingest them; shamans have only to respect and honor them.

Not all shamans take all traveling herbs. Some rarely use psychotropic plants and mushrooms, while others have learned much through personal experience—but even then they restrict their use to very

¹⁶⁵ This view is also widely held in other shamanic cultures, particularly in the Amazon regions. In their local Spanish there they speak of *plantas maestras*, "master plants" (cf. Luna 1985, also Gottwald and Rättsch 1998).

Pseudo-shamans are called "chicken shamans" in Nepal. They are not able to heal, but can only offer a sensationalist show with smoke, noise, and a lot of flowing red pigment. In this picture, a shaman turns his attention to his "patient" during a folklore exhibition presented by a Nepalese hotel.



TRAVELING HERBS AND
TRAVELING MUSHROOMS:
SHIVA'S GARDEN

limited circumstances. There are only a few psychoactive stimulants that are used a number of times per week: *anger*, *surti*, *ganja*, *charas*, *chhang*, and *rakshi*. Because the traveling herbs, as a rule, are utilized to increase *shakti* or to obtain secret information from nature, their use is usually not revealed, and to others—for example, to ethnologists—it is not visible.

A "chicken shaman" can be recognized when they tell those tourists who are dressed like hippies that they always smoke *ganja* or *charas* for their rituals and healing ceremonies. The stoners are indeed very happy and excited to hear this, but it is a typical story made up for tourists. If the true shamans were asked if they use *Cannabis*, they would answer: "once a year (for *Shiva Rattri*) or when it is absolutely necessary for a deep trance."

THE MOST IMPORTANT TEACHING PLANTS

Boooooommm!!!! It explodes right in front of my feet. An adolescent girl has thrown a bamboo stick, which has been heated on the fire, on the ground at my feet. It is like a firework. She laughs at me with a friendly but triumphant grin. It is Shiva Rattri, the Night of Shiva, the birthday of the Great God. All around the large lake of Pokhara bonfires are being lit in the twilight, as is done in Germany at Easter time. The air is pregnant with dhupa and hashish. Ecstatic drumming rings from every direction. An excited woman leaps across my line of sight. She is like a maenad, I think to myself, and remember that I have drunk an entire bottle of bhang as twilight set in. The woman has a drum (madhal) hung around her neck. She beats on the drum wildly, but in a positively divine rhythm. I vibrate with her. She is "out of her gourd" as we would say. Drumming, she jumps over the large fire and screams in ecstasy, quivering like you can't even begin to imagine. She is one with Shiva. She is his shakti, one thousand percent! She sweeps me away. Suddenly I see Shiva laughing in front of me. Where am I? Is this still the banks of lake Pokhara? Staggering, I allow myself to be carried along with the dancer and the drummer. I think to myself: "This is where I belong, this is where I am allowed to be."

Almost twenty years later I am at a techno party in north Germany. It has the pompous name Shiva Moon. I like the north German techno or psychedelic trance music. It gets into my bones like the ecstatic drumming of the Nepalese woman. Shiva Moon—that is nothing other than janaipurni, or the Jhankri Mela on Kalinchok or other sacred sites in the Himalayas. I let my body dance; again I see Shiva in front of me. "Hi! It's all good!" What are you supposed to say to Shiva? He knows everything already.

Slowly I begin to understand. We don't need any religion, we require ecstasy. Only through this am I able to comprehend the sacredness of nature. Only through this am I able to understand myself as a meaningful piece of the universe. Ecstasy serves not only the healing of the sick; it helps every person to deepen their understanding of themselves and nature as well. It offer us perspectives that we previously had no idea existed. Bum Shankara—many thanks, Shiva! I will carry this lesson in my heart. (CR)

Bhang, Ganja, Charas—*Cannabis* spp.

Kathmandu is most beautiful during the rainy season, the infamous time of the monsoon (from June to August). The rain that usually falls nightly not only cleans the streets and purifies the air, it also encourages the wild hemp plants that are found everywhere to mature and grow abundantly green.

Here in the Kathmandu Valley, *Cannabis sativa* is predominant. Higher up in the Himalayas, wild *Cannabis indica* plants are found. There are probably all kinds of hybrids as well. Besides, no one knows for sure if *C. sativa* and *C. indica* are truly different species, or varieties, or simply different sub-species. Regardless, both have an intoxicating, or more precisely, a euphoric and relaxing effect on the user (cf. Clarke 1997 and 2000).¹⁶⁶

Ganja is one of the sacred offerings of the Kirati shamans, because it is the favorite plant of the shamanic god Shiva.

How Hemp Came to the People

Shiva was married to Parvati and lived with her in a beautiful house at the foothills of the Himalayas. But he liked to prowl around the area, take pleasure with other goddesses, and he was rarely at home. Parvati was annoyed at this. She asked herself, "What shall I do? My husband is always out, and I sit alone in our house." Then she saw a blossoming hemp plant and picked a few of the splendid, resinous, and fragrant flowers. When Shiva returned home, she gave him the flowers to smoke. Shiva smoked ganja for the first time in cosmic history. It made him happy and excited. Then his third eye opened and he saw the divine Parvati. To her, the most beautiful creation in the universe, he said: "It is most lovely like this. Now I will remain with you

¹⁶⁶ It can be noted at this point that the Dutch, Californian, and German hemp growers and Cannabis Cup champions make a much more refined differentiation between the species, hybrids, and sub-species. It is probably due to the intimate relationship that they build with their plants, and the refined awareness they have developed for the various characteristics and effects—an awareness which the normal botanist is not able to achieve.

forever." And thus Shiva and Parvati smoked ganja and drank *bhanga*.

This is why people still smoke ganja to honor Shiva, and they drink *bhanga* on his birthday, *Shiva Rattri*.

Humanity had received its aphrodisiac (*vajikarana*). This is how the medicine of the gods wound up in the hands of the humans. This is why hemp is also known as *siddhi*, the "miraculous strength." Perhaps this is also where *siddha*, "enlightenment," the Sanskrit word used by the Newari, derives from.

The shamans use hemp in a variety of ways, as an incense (*dhup*), a traveling herb, a flower for offerings, a sacred plant, an aphrodisiac, and an agent of pleasure. Many shamans like to smoke a *chilam* after their journeys, others like to puff on a tobacco or *angeri* cigarette in order to come back to earth. Ganja can take a person up high, but it can nicely take them back down again too. The intention determines the effect—at least as much as the active compound (THC) does. The shamans—at least, the real and authentic ones, rarely use hemp and hemp preparations as agents for traveling. They only use it when they must go into a very deep trance; this occurs with especially acute and difficult cases.



A hemp tree about ten meters high at approximately three thousand meters altitude in the Kalinchok region.

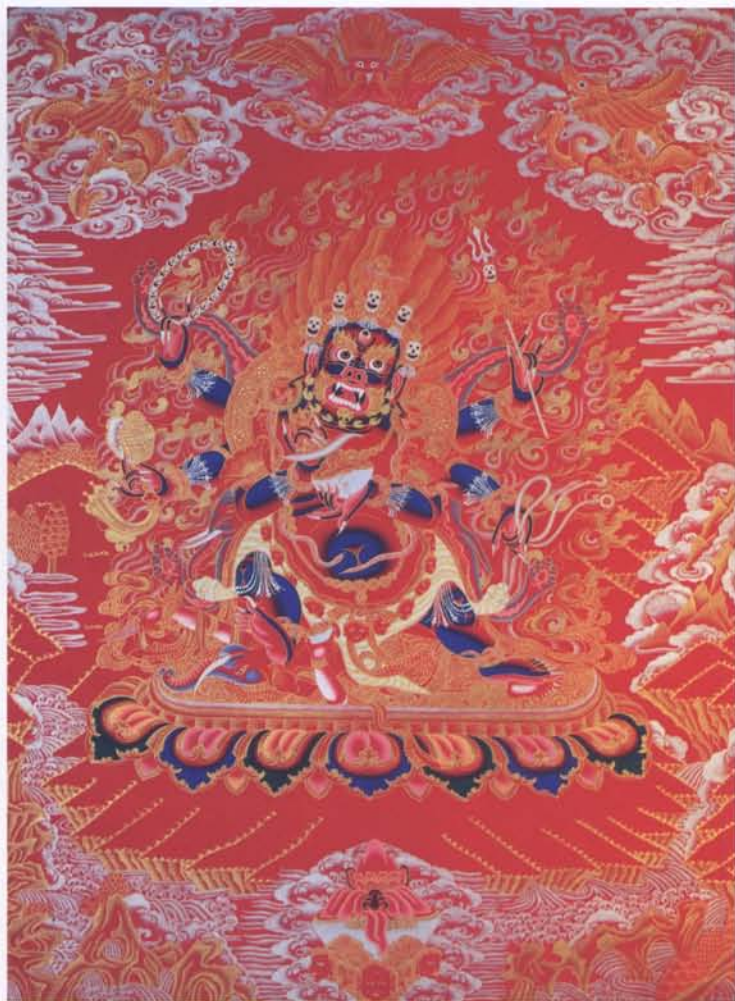
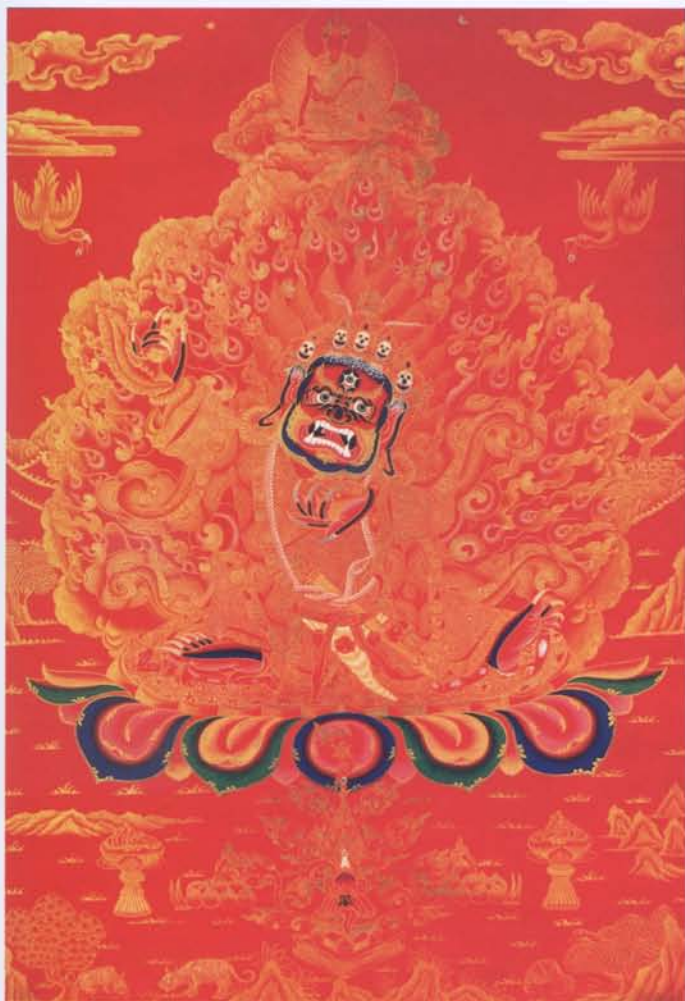


The betel leaves (*pan* or *pam*) are an offering for the excited Hanuman.

The Tamang shaman Danashing ardently dedicates his hemp-filled *chilam* to his god Shiva.



Tika Bhairab, a good-luck-bringing yet wrathful emanation of Shiva. (No. 17a)



Barnajin Bhairab and Mahakal Bhairab in the red *marti* design. (No. 17, b and c)

A Kirati Incense (according to Parvati Rai)

Take equal parts of:

<i>ganja</i>	<i>Cannabis</i> spp.	leaves
<i>titepati</i>	<i>Artemisia</i> spp.	herbage
<i>bhairunga pati</i>	<i>Potentilla fruticosa</i>	herbage
<i>sun pati</i>	<i>Rhododendron lepidotum</i>	leaves

The dried plants are chopped up coarsely and mixed. The mixture is strewn on glowing wood coals.

The psychoactive incense blends of the Kirati are, as always, copiously used during rituals. The shamans go through the room with the incense burner so that everyone present can amply inhale from it and also feel an effect. Sometimes Parvati Rai goes so far as to walk through the entire village with the smoking *dhupauro*. This is done not only to put the people into a better mood, but to pay homage to the demons and bring the gods their nourishment. This incense has a euphoric effect.

Bhang recipe from Pokhara

Indispensable ingredients:

<i>ganja</i>	hemp flowers (<i>Cannabis</i>)
<i>dhud</i>	(buffalo) milk
<i>chini</i>	sugar or
<i>moha</i>	honey ¹⁶⁷
<i>masala</i>	spices, or spice blend

(For example cardamom, Kurkuma, nutmeg, clove, pepper, cinnamon, chili, timbur = Szechuan pepper, ground nuts such as almonds, pistachios, coconut)

Further possible ingredients:

<i>gante</i>	strychnine (<i>Stychnos nux-vomica</i>)
<i>aphim</i>	opium
<i>dhaturo</i>	thorn-apple seeds (<i>Datura metel</i> or <i>Datura stramonium</i>)
<i>ghee</i>	clarified butter
<i>tulsi</i>	<i>Ocimum sanctum</i> , <i>O. spp.</i>
<i>keshar</i>	<i>Crocus sativus</i> (true saffron)

¹⁶⁷ In Nepal there is an abundant amount of wild honey. As in other areas of the world, some kinds are already in and of themselves psychoactive (cf. Ott 1998).

The resinous hemp flowers are cut into fine pieces and mixed with the spices (and the further



Top: Angeri plants in the mountains.
Bottom: The *Lyonia ovafolia* called *angeri*.



The *Pievis formosa* also called *angeri*.

Two shamans smoke their teaching plant *angeri* together with a type of joint.



possible ingredients). The sugar or honey is mixed with the milk, and then the hemp and the spices are mixed in. An average person can ingest about two grams of the dried hemp flowers or leaves. The Nepalese take much more, but this is extremely inadvisable for others.

Angeri, the Smoking Leaf (*bidi*)

There are a number of small trees known as *angeri*: *Lyonia ovafolia* (Wall.) Drude,¹⁶⁸ *Pieris formosa* (Wall.) D. Don, *Melastoma melabathricum* L., *Berchemia edgeworthii* Lawson. All of these trees have very similar inflorescences, yellowish panicles rising up with bell flowers shaped like lilies of the valley—in a certain way, they are reminiscent of the shamanic bell chains. They bloom in March and April.

On Kalinchok, from approximately two thousand meters altitude, the Heath family plant *Lyonia* (Ericaceae) is found, usually in rhododendron groves. The tree is sacred to the shamans, as all trees are. They especially value the leaves, because these serve as cigarette papers, *angeri kopat*. It is said that the leaves, which are suited for smoking in the form of *biribiri* (= *bidi*), were specially discovered or created by Shiva for the shamans. The leaves give them energy and increase their *shakti*. For the Kirati shamans the leaf is even a guru, a teaching plant that is consumed in order to learn. The leaves are also crushed into a curative salve with a special *angeri* mantra for skin diseases.

For smoking, the leaf is filled with *surti*, the home-grown tobacco (*Nicotiana tabacum* L. or *N. rustica* L.), and/or ganja, or finely crushed *angeri*

leaves. The effects of smoking *angeris* are extremely nicotine-like and strong! (The chemical analysis is still awaited.)

Aphim, Ophim—Opium Poppy (*Papaver somniferum* L., Papaveraceae)

“Opium belongs to the ganja (hemp) family,” declared Parvati Rai. It is only very rarely taken by the shamans as an agent for traveling. It is said to have been an indispensable element of the offerings on the altar in earlier times. This was not only the case for the shamans, but also for the Brahmins, yogis, and sadhus. Only a tiny crumble should be offered, for Shiva loves opium very much.

For the Kirati shamans, opium is directly connected to the Seti Naga, one of the eight sacred snakes of the underworld. Opium can be used for the treatment of every kind of poisoning, especially snake bites.¹⁶⁹

The shamans also use opium for medicinal purposes; the dosage must be adjusted according to each patient. “This depends upon the ailments of each individual patient,” say the shamans, who are the ones best able to determine what is good and what is harmful for a person.

Over the past two decades opium has fallen into disuse in Kathmandu. One of the reasons for this is the state of legal affairs. Nepal signed the International Opium Treaty—which means prohibition and control of the substance under pressure from the United States. A second reason is the few remaining junkies

¹⁶⁸ This tree is also known by the names *anjir*, *cele*, *gobre tissi*, and *jaggucal* (Shrestha 1998, 141).

¹⁶⁹ In this context it became apparent to us that the giant orphic snake, which incubated the world according to myths from antiquity, was named Orphion (cf. Madejsky 1997, 1858). It is not clear whether this is linguistically correct to make a connection between this and the names for opium, such as *ophin*, *afinn*, *ophium*, and so on. The shamanic cosmology lies close to this, though.

who do not know how to handle the substance. Third, on the streets of Thamel, morphine and heroin-enriched “brown sugar” and “white sugar” are sold—all made from raw opium or, more or less, raw heroin. The dealers, mostly Nepalis or Indians, are often junkies themselves.

Betel: Supari, Paan, and Pan Parag Masala

Betel, like all traveling herbs, was originally discovered by the shamans. For many shamans, betel nuts are one of the important offerings brought to the mobile altar.

“The betel palm (*Areca catechu* L.) is one of the sacred traveling plants of the shamans. It has very powerful nuts (*supari*) that can carry you away” (MR). The betel nuts, actually the seeds of the orange colored fruit, are the starting point for the betel blend that is spread throughout Southeast Asia, and that is chewed daily by millions of people. Of these millions of people only a very few travel into the other worlds with betel. The reason for this is clear: in the commercial usages the fresh, strongly psychoactive fruits are treated or, as is the practice in other industries dealing with pleasurable substances (such as tobacco or tea), they are fermented. The raw nuts are cooked together with milk. “They lose their strength that way, they lose their soul,” explained Mohan Rai. Shamans use only the untreated, raw betel nuts, which are mixed in a solution of dissolved lime. Eventually they are mixed with some salt, are shelled, and are chewed up in a betel leaf (*Piper betle* L., called *pan* or *paan*).

There are also repeated reports that other powerful ingredients are mixed into the betel blend—for example, opium, ganja, thorn apple seeds, strychnine, “brown sugar,” heroin, cocaine, and so on. A knowledgeable *pan wala*, “betel merchant,” also said that it is mostly clever Indian merchants who mix “addictive” substances into the betel without the knowledge of their clients, in order to make them “addicted.” An interesting hypothesis.

Bis—*Aconitum* spp. (Ranunculaceae)

Bisma, the “mother of poisons,” is the name of the Himalayan monkshood (*Aconitum ferox*)¹⁷⁰ that cannot be superficially distinguished from the central European monkshood (*Aconitum napellus* L.). All other species of *Aconitum* are identified under the name *bis* (also *biss* or *viss*), which means “poison.” The blue monkshood was identified by our shamans as *chhora phul* (*chhora* is the name of the large, fourteen-centimeter-tall bird *Muscicapa dauurica*, or “Asian

¹⁷⁰ Also called *tin phale biss*.

¹⁷¹ The delicious morel mushroom (*Morchella esculenta* Pers. ex St. Amans) is also named after this bird *chhora chyaw* (Schrestha 1998, 17).



Different betel nut products (such as *Areca catechu*, the betel palm) available at the market in Kathmandu. Whole nuts of the finest quality (i.e., with a potent effect); chopped and fermented nuts, packed in groups of three pieces, which correspond to the three godheads etc., sealed in plastic; as well as prepared betel blends (*pan parag*) from India.

brown Flycatcher”; *phul* means “flower”).¹⁷¹ The name of the monkshood (*Aconitum napellus* L.) is called *bisa* in Sanskrit and is already mentioned in the earliest literature. There it says that the stems are the bowstrings of Kama, the love god (Banerjee 1980, 36). He “poisons” his victims so that they fall madly in love.

The plant is used in many ways: the dried leaves are burned as a shamanic incense; the small, black seeds are sometimes offered on the yantra during the ritual of “cutting the threads of fate”; and the entire plant is considered to be an agent of protection. A tea from the flowers and/or leaves is drunk in order to enter a trance, and to have visions. The dosage for this must be carefully intuited, warned Maile Lama knowingly. She said that after five to ten minutes the feeling of flying would come on. Very miniscule doses are given to patients who suffer from lack of motivation or from permanent fatigue; naturally these doses are only administered by the shamans (there is no self-medication!). The flowers and leaves are harvested from March to May.

Aconitum ferox is probably the most poisonous plant in the Himalayas; it can easily lead to fatal poisoning. A mere three to four milligrams of the alkaloid aconitine—the equivalent of only a few grams of the dried or even fresh plant material—can kill an adult. A true shamanic plant! It is also a plant of the hunters (*shikari*): the root extract has been used as an arrowhead poison since Vedic times (cf. Bisset and Mazars 1984).

The Origins of the Poisons

(*bis*, *vish*, *bikh*, *vikha*)

Monkshood (*bis*) came into being during the churning of the primordial ocean. When the milk sea was churned into butter (*samudramathana*), not only did the sacred cow come forth, but the essences of all poisons bubbled up as well. The startled and frightened gods hurried to Shiva, who sat stoned or meditating on the peak of Mount Kailash. They pleaded

The blue Shiva as Nilkantha, “Bluethroat,” is known as *Shiva Vishpan*, “Shiva, the poison drinker.”



The monkshood on a medicine thangka. *Aconitum ferox* is depicted next to other species (*Aconitum napellus* as well). On the image of the Tibetan medicine tree a “leaf” is consecrated to it, on which the making of a medicinal butter from the “great medicine” is shown. (from Aris 1992, 179, 233)



Yonjon digs monkshood on Kalinchok. The monkshood (*Aconitum ferox*, Tam. *vikha*) was used in earlier times by hunters (*shikari*) and warriors (*chhetri*) in the Himalayan region as a poison for the arrowheads. Today, the extremely poisonous plant (*bisma*, “mother of the poisons”) is only used by shamans as a trance drug or smoked by Aghoris. In Europe, the monkshood was associated with shamanism, witchcraft, and magic as well.

Medea of Kolchis, the archetypal witch of classical antiquity, was said to have used the poisonous plant. In more recent times, witches were said to have mixed it into their salves, and sorcerers were said to have used it to kill their victims.

TRAVELING HERBS AND
TRAVELING MUSHROOMS:
SHIVA’S GARDEN

with him for help. Shiva took the poison in his hand and drank it. His wife Parvati became afraid for him and squeezed her hands around his throat. This caused the poison to become stuck in his throat, and colored it entirely blue.

This is why Shiva is known as Nilakanta, “Blue-throat.” Through this deed, Shiva saved all creatures from death by poisoning. Only a little of the poison dripped from his hand or tongue and over the Himalayas. The blue monkshood and many other poisonous plants sprang up out of these drops. *Aconitum ferox* is also called *smanchen*, the “great medicine,” in Tibetan. The ground bulbs are mixed with bezoar stones and used as a universal antidote. The roots are also used for the treatment of cancerous growths (Laufer 1991, 57); the “great medicine” is prized as a cure for demonic possession (Aris 1992, 77). The monkshood is used in Nepalese folk medicine for leprosy, cholera, and rheumatism (Manandhar 1980, 7).

Dhaturo—*Datura* spp. (Solanaceae)

Datura, or thorn apple, is considered to be the most powerful shamanic plant in Nepal. It is steadfastly bound to Shiva. Its name (*dhaturo*) comes from the Sanskrit (*dhatura* [-ka]), the oldest scholarly language in the world (Banerjee 1980, 38). No one knows anymore exactly what it means—it is too ancient. In this context the heuristically outrageous hypothesis of two American botanists that *Datura* is exclusively a New World genus is questionable (Symon and Haegi 1991).¹⁷²

The Kirati shaman Parvati Rai uses the seeds of all species of *Datura* for her shamanizing. The species called *chochowah* (Kir.), which means “black,” is preferred as an offering for Shiva. This species, the *Datura metel* with dark violet flowers, is also used to treat sick animals and insane humans. In Kirati all *Datura* species are called *ongbi* which means “traveling from place to place.” It is better to leave this kind of traveling to the shamans. Thorn apple is not a useful vehicle for non-shamans or shaman wannabes.

¹⁷² In the meantime the ethno-historic presence of *Datura metel* in the ancient world has been proven (Siklós 1993, 1995, and 1996).

Kirati Recipe for the Treatment of Insanity

Take one seed respectively from each of the three thorn apple species:

<i>sekle wah</i> (Kir.)	<i>Datura stramonium</i>	common thorn apple
<i>chocho wah</i>	<i>Datura metel</i>	Indian thorn apple
<i>bhakli wah</i>	<i>Datura metel</i> var. <i>fastuosa</i>	red thorn apple

Over the next few days the patient is given two to three seeds of each species. Under the attentive observation of the knowledgeable shaman, the insanity should depart.

The Indian thorn apple is first mentioned in the Sanskrit literature (Vamana Purana, Garuda Purana).¹⁷³ The famous medieval Arabian doctor Avicenna (= Ali al-Husayn Abd Allah Ibn Sina, 980–1037) refers to its medicinal use and the significance of the dosage for the Muslim Arabs who counted thorn apple among the so-called *mokederrat*, the “narcotics” (Avery 1959, 3). This thorn apple, *dhaturo*, also appears in very ancient Tibetan and Mongolian texts. This proves that *Datura metel* was already widespread in Asia before the fifteenth century (Siklós 1993 and 1996).

The seeds of the thorn apple are used in Nepal, Darjeeling, and Sikkim for strengthening the *rakshi*, and are also an ingredient of betel blend and of bhang.

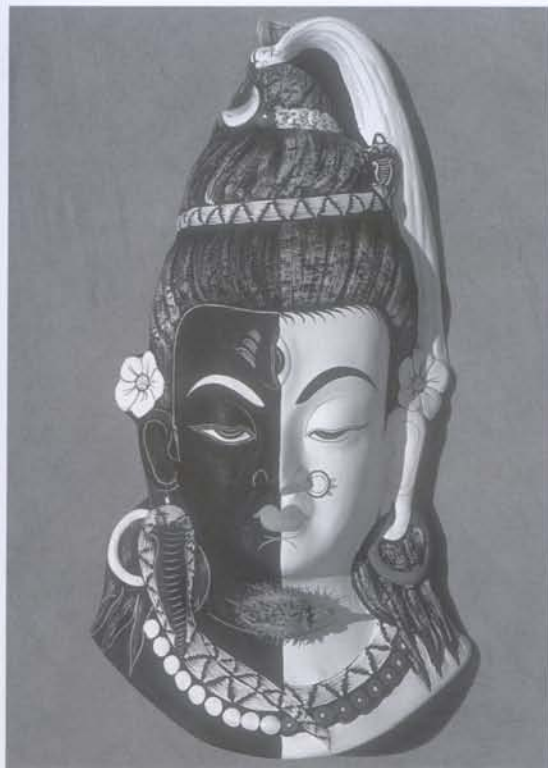
According to the Vamana Purana, a thorn apple grew out of the chest of the Hindu god Shiva, the Lord of the Intoxicants, while he was meditating or in a trance of some sort. According to the Garuda Purana, *dhaturo* flowers (the vessel filled with *amrita*!) should be offered to the god Yogashwara (= Shiva) on the thirteenth day of the waxing moon (Mehra 1979, 63). In Nepal, *dhaturo* is sacred to Shiva and is usually called *dhatur-ma*. In this regard, *dhatur* is another name for Shiva; *ma* means “plant.”

In ancient Tibet and in ancient Mongolia, the thorn apple was burned as incense in the context of the secret *Vajrama bhairava tantra* ritual to transform wealth into poverty and to scare off certain spirits or energies. The fruit or seeds are used in order to make someone insane (Siklós 1996, 252).

In the Kathmandu Valley, in the temple district of Pashupatinath, there is an Unmata Bhairab, a “divinely intoxicated thorn apple Bhairab”—a particularly tantric form of Shiva—who on thangkhas and as statues is depicted standing upright.¹⁷⁴ The statue has

¹⁷³ *Da dhu ra* (Tib.), *dhattura* (Skr.), *dhatur-ma*, *dhaturo* (Skt. “diverse”), *unmata* (Skt. “divine intoxication”), *man-t’o-lo* (Chin.).

¹⁷⁴ This form is called, or rather expressed as, *ulmata bhairab* or *ugla bhairab* in Newari.



Shiva and Parvati, melded into unity (Skt., *Ardhanarisvara*) wear thorn apple flowers on their ears. (Newari mask for the house altar)

a very large and erect *lingam*. Infertile or childless women rub their yoni on it, even when the condition can be traced back to the inability of their husbands. Through this they hope to receive the blessing of a child. Unfortunately, the small temple pagoda is inaccessible to non-Hindus. Even Hindus are not allowed to take photos there. Sometimes the rigidity of the law is impenetrable.

Dupsi

Dupsi, also written as *dhupsi* in Kirati and *dutsi* (Tib.), is one of the best known shamanic traveling plants. It is a shrub or a small tree with large leaves and white flowers found at altitudes of three thousand to four thousand meters. “You need not even smoke or eat the leaves, the smell alone puts you into a trance” (IG).

According to Shrestha (1998, 242), *dhupsi* is the betel pepper (*Piper betle* L.). But according to information from the shamans, it must be a different, although similar, plant with strong psychoactive power.

Ghanti phul—*Scopolia straminifolia* (Solanaceae)

In Nepal, henbane is called *ghanti phul*, “bell flower.” The yellow flowers hang down and remind everyone of the tantric ritual bell. When the seeds are ingested, “the bells can be heard ringing.” The plant is little



The “thorn apple Bhairab,” the *ulmata mahakala*, depicted on a tantric thangka in Tibetan style with wings and shamanic weapons. He is considered the Bhairab who gathers all of the energy of his different manifestations inside himself. He is, at any rate, the divinely intoxicated dark god who is dedicated to lunacy. (No. 28, detail)

known in Nepal, just as its psychoactive use is almost unknown. The father of Mohan Rai has used the roasted seeds as a traveling substance; this is a very rare practice. The roasted seeds are added to *dhal*—a yellow lentil soup that is essential to every Nepalese rice dish. The Kirati shamans collect the seeds in April and May. In Nepal, this plant of the nightshade family is also called *langdang* (= *gyalanglang*) or *vangale* (cf. Shrestha 1998, 165).

Hasana—*Cestrum nocturnum* L. (Solanaceae)

This shrub in the nightshade family is usually known as night jasmine around the world. It is widespread throughout the Kathmandu Valley and can often be seen on the edge of the roads. It blooms in luxuriant clusters during the monsoon months (June to August). The small, yellow, star-shaped and five-rayed flowers release their aroma only at night. The flower clusters are used as offerings to the gods. We mostly saw the flowers at the shrines of Ganesha and Shiva. “The yellow flower of happiness is first offered to Ganesha and then to Shiva” (MR).

The plant is usually called *hasana* by the shamans, but in Nepalese it is also known as *jahiko phul* (“nec-tar flower”), *pahelo jayi phul* (“yellow happiness flower”), or *ati bas aune* (“plant that changes at night”). In Kirati it is called *bounwat* or *michili boung*, “fire flower.” The shamans eat the fresh flowers or smoke the dried flower clusters in order to get more *shakti* and thus increase their healing powers. The tripping effect is not particularly strong, but it is distinctly noticeable. The scent that wafts through the night gives the Kirati shamans energy for the journey. The dried herb is also pulverized and drunk in schnapps, at least in the Kalinchok region.

The dried flower clusters, complete with the leaves, are burned as *dhup* for the shamanic ceremonies, especially by the Kirati and the Tamang shamans. Sometimes the clusters or the small branches are stuck into the *bumba*, the water pitcher. The plant transforms the water into the primordial *amrita* ocean



The fruits of the thorn apple (*Datura metel*) are offered for sale to the devout at Pashupatinath, the shrine of Shiva, the guide of the souls and the lord of the animals. The *datura* fruits are offered especially on the day of the moon of Shiva, the *somnabar*, the day of the entheogenic super-drug soma (= *amrita*) during the month of Saun (July and August of the lunar calendar), after the Jhankri Mela, the Jaina Purni of the full moon of Shiva, has already taken place. When this is done, Shiva can relax in his favorite condition—the deep intoxicating trance.

For tantric and psychoactive purposes, the root of the monkshood (*Aconitum ferox*) is simply dried, chopped up, and mixed, usually with ganja (*Cannabis indica*), and smoked. The leaves are dried and smoked.

“Many forms of Shiva wear a *dhatura* flower on the side of their heads; mainly *Candrashekharamurti* and *Nataraja*.”

STUTLEY (1985, 39)

(holy water). A medicinal tea prescribed for bronchitis is also made from the tips of the flowering branches.

Exquisite Smoking Blend

2 parts	<i>titepati</i>	herbage from <i>Artemisia vulgaris</i> , <i>A. Nilagirica</i> , <i>A. spp.</i>
2 parts	<i>hasana</i>	leaves of <i>Cestrum nocturnum</i>
1 part	<i>charas</i>	hemp resin (<i>Cannabis spp.</i>)

The dried leaves of mugwort and night jasmine are mixed with crumbled hashish and rolled into a joint or smoked from a pipe. The dose is self-determined—a person smokes until high or on a journey.

Jai patri—*Myristica fragrans* Houtt. (Myristicaceae)

The nutmeg, also called *ram patri*, “fruit of the gods,” is suitable for every kind of offering. It is a traveling fruit for the Kirati shamans. In the ancient literature it is called *mada shauna*, “intoxicating fruit”; it is probably identical with the intoxicating plant *madarati* (Skt.) in the Sanskrit literature (AV; Banerjee 1980, 55). Until now, no truly psychoactive use was known of from the ancient traditions. But the Kirati know about it and still use it. One nut is enough to fly.

The essential oil of the nut, which is actually a seed, can trigger feelings of flying or flying experiences in people who are not shamans (cf. Devereux 1992).

The Cobra Plant—*Arisaema* spp., Araceae

The cobra plants or cobra lilies (*gurbo*, *banko*) bloom in the Himalayas from May to July. There are twenty-seven species, with many varieties that are sometimes very difficult to distinguish from one another (Pradhan 1997). In August they bear their phallic fruits, which are considered to be the “grain of the jhankri” and the food of the *nagas* (*gurubua*), the poisonous and sacred snakes. Because the Nagas are snake gods, the cobra plants represent shamanic plants. They are rarely used, for they are very dangerous traveling herbs. The seeds of the cornlike fruit are green at first, and when ripe, are bright red. The fruit-bearing stems are considered to be *phurbas*, because they represent the three worlds: the fruit is *akash*, the heavens; the spotted stem is the middle world; and the root ball is the underworld. The plant is therefore also a *shiva-lingam*, the flower a *lingam-yoni*.

Arisaema tortuosum (Wall.) Schott (possibly *Arisaema propinquum*), commonly called *bakoh* or *banko*, grows at altitudes of one thousand five hundred to two thousand eight hundred meters. The shamanic traveling plants *Arisaema utile* and *Arisaema griffithii* prefer altitudes between two thousand five hundred and four thousand meters (cf. Dang 1993,

126; Polunin and Stainton 1997, 158). Both species grow on Kalinchok, the geographic center of shamanic consciousness.

Arisaema utile, also known by the name *spathe*, is rarely found but it is of great significance. The flowers look exactly like an upright cobra, including the split tongue. The leaves are tripartite, like the shamanic worlds and realities; they are a *trishul*.

The cobra plants are *gurubua*, “teaching plants,” for the shamans. The roots can be used for traveling and for the *jokhana*; they bestow *shakti*. A small piece of about five millimeters in diameter is cooked with salt and *timbur*, the Szechuan pepper (*Zanthoxylum sp.*). Through this process the root loses its toxicity. If one attempts to ingest the roots or plant matter in any other way, the results will be violent vomiting and a swollen tongue. For this reason they are also called *bis jharné*, “poisonous herbs.”

“When the shamans eat the cobra root (*banko*), they tremble until they’re crazy. Then they receive many more visions and can take up direct contact with the Ban Jhankri” (MR).

The cobra plants that are called *karkalo mane* (Nep.) all have different kinds of tripartite leaves. With them, a person can meet the Ban Jhankri directly, if he has the ability to see. Ban Jhankri dances on the leaves like a shaman in the three worlds, drinking the dew from the leaves as nectar (= *amrita*). He also



The flower clusters of the night jasmine (*Cestrum nocturnum*), photographed on the road to Bhaktapur.



The fruit clusters of the cobra plant (*Arisaema* sp.) are considered to be “corn cobs” for the snakes.

Trance through skin contact: Parvati takes the two dragon herbs that come from Kalinchok (left: *Arisaema tortuosum*, right: *Arisaema utile*) in her hands and shudders immediately into a trance. The fruit (*pindalu*) are placed as offerings on the altars of the shamans.



passes it on to his students, who then likewise dance on the leaves. This produces the sound of a drum that a person must be able to hear. The leaves are a shamans' drum (*denguru*).

Lache lahara, the “Snaking Vine” (Leguminosae)

This coiling, climbing vine is one of the chief helpers of the Kirati shamans. It is allegedly unknown to the other shamans in Nepal. The plant is also called *debra lahara* in Kirati.¹⁷⁵ It grows in the tropical lowlands, above all in the Terai of eastern Nepal and in Darjeeling. It is well known to the Tharu, one of the seven Kirati tribes.¹⁷⁶

The word *lache* means “snaking, or winding around”; *lahara* (Nep.)¹⁷⁷ means “vine” or “twining plant.” This climbing and winding plant of the legume family, possibly *Spatholobus parviflorus* (Roxb.) Kuntze (cf. Shrestha 1998, 21), prefers to climb high on the *sakuwah* (Kir.) or sal flowers (*Shorea robusta*), and always twists from left to right. It can grow to be over ten meters long. It bears long bean-shaped pods (approximately fifteen centimeters) with fruits that look like speckled beans. They are a favorite domestic animal food, particularly for cattle.

The vine is not only a traveling herb—three fin-

gernail-sized pieces of the root are enough to induce flying—it is also a powerful symbolic plant and for this reason is sacred. It appears in traveling mantras and helps in the ascent into other realms. The leaves represent the *trishul*, Shiva's trident. The ascending snake is the *naga*, the rainbow, the spiral tunnel through which the shamans travel to the heavens.

Because the sal tree that the vine climbs on is the tree of the witches—“witchcraft is practiced under its roof” (PR)—this biological association is a symbol of the relationship between the *jhankri* and the *bokshi*: the shaman, i.e., the vine, strangles the witch, the sal tree.¹⁷⁸ It is the shamanic mastery of witchcraft; naturally, it is therefore particularly sacred: a healer and a killer.

The plant is recommended for all throat, nose, and ear problems. The fruits, leaves, and shoots are taken for throat problems, sinusitis, and the accompanying headaches. Children get three leaves; adults should take seven.

From this plant, which is unfortunately not precisely known botanically, the Kirati shamans use the reddish root that has been dried for three to four years. One to three fingernail-sized pieces of the root are enough to make a person travel. Root pieces are also sewn into amulets or carried as talismans.

According to Kirati practices, it is preferable

The tripartite leaves of the cobra lily (*Arisaema* sp., *Kir saki*) not only have an erotic effect (from a tantric perspective) but are also a symbol of the trinity, the tripartite world, etc. In *mundum* the shamans dance on these leaves like a stick dancing on a drum.

Cobra lilies and dragon plants can easily poison humans, even merely through contact. They cause convulsive vomiting, shivering, and cold sweat. But they are cathartic and purifying. Poisonings that are passed through can be liberating from physical and spiritual poisons. The traveling herb is also called a “purifying herb.”

¹⁷⁵ Schrestha (1998, 21) places the Leguminosae *Spatholobus parviflorus* (Roxb.) Kuntze under this name.

¹⁷⁶ To the Kirati language group belong the Rai, Limbu, Tharu, Chepang, Dhimar, Danuwar, and Sunuwar.

¹⁷⁷ Also *lathi lahara* (*lathi* = “thorn” = *phurba!*)

¹⁷⁸ The sal tree is considered especially strongly effective and is for this reason suited to the witches. The shamans do use it, but due to its strength and association, they only do so in combination with other plants (for example in incense recipes).

Until now there were only rumors about the hallucinogenic effects of the dragon plant, which is related to arum, the biblical staff of Moses that turned into a snake (Schultes and Farnsworth 1982, 18; Schultes and Hoffmann 1980, 366). We now know that there are numerous shamanic traveling herbs in Nepal. The genus *Arisaema* is known for the allergic effect that occurs with contact or ingestion. Fruits and all other parts of the plants contain microscopic needles of crystallized calcium oxalate, which give out strong histamines upon contact (Turner and Azcawinski 1992, 116). Shamans who touch them fall instantly into a powerful trance.



The Kirati shaman Makcha shows the *lachelahara* vine.

that the root be mixed with hemp and thorn apple, ideally following the *Bobkha* recipe:

Bobkha Recipe

bobkha (Kir.), *morchha* (Nep.)

5 parts	<i>lache lahara</i>	undetermined	root
5 parts	rice	<i>Oryza sativa</i> L.	grain
5 parts	<i>chabo</i>	<i>Piper chaba</i> Hunter	root
5 parts	<i>palham beth phul</i>	<i>Bergenia ciliata</i> (Haw.) Sternb.	seeds
5 parts	<i>ganjal/bhang</i>	<i>Cannabis</i> spp.	flowers with seeds
1 part	<i>dhaturo</i>	<i>Datura</i> spp.	seeds

Everything is ground and mixed together. The powder is then moistened with a little water and kneaded into dough. Then the loaf is dried in the sun.

The shamans eat some of this cake, which is reminiscent of a sort of yeast cake, in order to travel and to attain knowledge. They also give a tiny piece, smaller than a fingernail, to their patients if they have an upset stomach.

Mala bung—*Caesalpinia decapetala* (Roth) Alston (Leguminosae)

The yellow-flowering shrub in the Pea family¹⁷⁹ is called *mala bung*, “chain flower,” by the Kirati shamans. The Tamang shamans call it *mala mukhi*, which also means “chain flower.”¹⁸⁰ The name refers to the chainlike flower clusters that bloom from March to June. Parvati Rai sometimes uses the flower clusters to make a “spiritual fence” for her altar because the plant is protective and apotropaic. It is also called “peacock flower”—a reference to its shamanic use.

The small seeds are a shamanic traveling herb, as Maile Lama as well as Parvati Rai have confirmed.¹⁸¹ In small doses they can be added to curry blends or put in with pickles. The seeds cleanse the entire human system.

The flower clusters are also suitable for offering, naturally to Shiva.

Nigalo—*Arundinaria* spp.,¹⁸² Gramineae

Mohan Rai told us that the Kirati shamans (his father was a famous and powerful *mudun*, a shaman) eat the young shoots of the high-altitude bamboo species called *nigalo* or *ningalo* (Nep.; Tam. *ma*) in order to go on a trip. These bamboo shoots are supposed to be visionary or hallucinogenic, and foster

¹⁷⁹ Syn.: *Caesalpinia pulcherrima* (cf. Li 1978).

¹⁸⁰ *Mukhi* also means “mouth.” The plant is also known in the Himalayas under the names *alai* or *karanj* (cf. Dang 1993, 39).

¹⁸¹ Until now it was merely speculated in the literature that this plant was used earlier as a psychoactive (cf. Li 1978).



The sacred rice cake of Parvati Rai called *bobkha* in Kirati. She always carries a piece of it with her, as it is also a medicine for her patients.

both flying as well as the understanding of secrets. The Kirati shamans learned this practice from the bears (*balu*). In general, bears are considered animal shamans, shamans, and teachers and guides of the human shamans. “The bear is our grandfather” (PR). For this reason some shamans carry bear claws with them, as a talisman, a guru, and protection.

The *tama* shoots, as *nigalo* is called in Kirati, “belong entirely to shamans” (MR). Even the playful Hindu god Krishna’s flute, which serves above all for love magic, is made from *nigalo* branches. It goes without saying that every form of the bamboo represents the world tree, the world axis, and the cosmic *phurba*.

Parvati Rai is perhaps the last shaman who knows the secret of *nigalo* (this is the first time she has published it). She says that she found this traveling herb, the “flying bamboo” or “fly bamboo,” through the guidance of *balus*, her grandfather, or the wild boars called *yangbag*. The animals, both of which she invokes in her traveling mantras, are allied animal spirit helpers. They guide her in real life or in visionary life to the best plants, i.e., the specimens that can actually bring about traveling and flying. These animals have the right sense for the right shoot. When Parvati Rai has found the young bamboo shoot, she can harvest it. In doing so she must leave the first three segments standing. It is optimal that the piece cut with the sickle encompasses four segments so that the sacred num-

¹⁸² Probably *Arundaria maling* Gamble [syn. *A. racemosa* Munro]; (cf. Polunin and Stainton 1985, 442). Unlikely, but possibly *Arundinaria falvata* Nees in Linnaea 9; (cf. Malla 1982, 26, 1986, 831); to *Arundinaria* spp.; (cf. Recht and Wetterfeld 1992 as well as Starosta and Crounet 1998). Following Shrestha (1998, 63) *nigalo* is identified as *Drepanostachyum intermedium* (Munro) Keng.f. The plant is also supposedly known as *nigalo tusa*. Another identification of the same author names *Thamnocalamus spathiflorus* (Trin.) Munro. Interestingly, there is a parasitical bamboo fungus *Cavimalum indicum* Doi et al.) in the Calvipataceae family, therefore a type of ergot, which is called *nigalo phoke cyau* (Shrestha 1998, 63).



A sample was taken from this *nigalo* plant on the peak of Kalinchok (eastern Nepal) at 3,000 meters elevation on August 8, 1998 under the supervision of Mohan Rai. He identified it as the right type of *nigalo*, i.e., the shamanic traveling herb.

ber seven is maintained. An effective dose is considered to be four segments of the bamboo. It is highly possible that the *Arundaria* contains DMT, an extremely potent entheogen.

The *Arundinaria*, known not only by the names *ningalo* and *tama*, but also as *ringal bans* (English name: ringal bamboo), grows at an altitude of 1,200 to almost 3,000 meters (cf. Dang 1993, 128). Unfortunately, its botanical classification has not yet been clarified. There are no detailed scientific descriptions of this species, which grows throughout the Himalayas.

Samundra phul—*Argyreia nervosa* (Burm.f.) Boj. (Convolvulaceae)

The vine usually known under the name “Hawaiian woodrose,” is a native plant on the Indian subcontinent. The Nepalese name means “silver flower.” In Kirati the shiny, silvery climbing plant is called *bhuanath haku*, “ocean fruit,” perhaps because the fruit, or more precisely the seeds, can elicit an oceanic feeling. The seeds contain lysergic acid derivatives that are similar to LSD and have strong psychoactive effects (Shawcross 1983).

These effects have been discussed in the chemical and entheogenic literature for a long time, but outside of a few non-psychoactive uses in ayurvedic medicine, nothing was known of a traditional usage (cf. Ott 1993).

“Naturally the ocean fruit is one of our traveling plants,” laughed Parvati Rai. They are an essential part of *mundum*, the “shamanic way.” The flowers are an

important offering to the *nagas*. “The Kirati shamans use the seeds to fly. They fly as fast as a jumbo jet or a supersonic airliner” (MR). The seeds of one fruit capsule is enough.¹⁸³

Sometimes the Vedic or post-Vedic soma plant is described as a “creeper.” The use of the woodrose by the Kirati shamans could be a first clear indication that *Argyreia nervosa* is a sacred and ritual soma plant.

***Siva Ghanta—Brugmansia* spp. (Solanaceae)¹⁸⁴**

The name *siva ghanta*, which sounds so seductive to Shiva, means “bell-like appearance.” The name describes the form of the hanging, mostly white, flowers. This plant is called “angel’s trumpet” in English—with a powerful dose the “angels’ trumpets” of the other worlds can be heard, possibly for the last time, or for eternity. The plant is also known in Nepal by the name *dhodre* (“goblet”) *phul*, or *dhaturo phul*, “flower like a thorn apple.” The species *Brugmansia arborea* and *Brugmansia suaveolens* are spread throughout Nepal, that is, they have in the meanwhile become

¹⁸³ 4–5 seeds are a good dose to start with (Ott 1993, 140). On average 4–8 seeds are enough for an LSD-like experience. This corresponds to approximately 2 g. of the seeds, which should be ground before use. The highest dose is 13–14 seeds. The ground seeds are swallowed down with water. They can also be chewed. The highest dose reported in the literature is 15 seeds (Smith 1985).

¹⁸⁴ Often the genus *Brugmansia* is described as being synonymous to *Datura*. A great disagreement among botanists predominates about this. For the shamans it is totally clear: the *siva ghanta* does not belong to *dhaturo*, even if it is occasionally called *dhodre phul*, which is somewhat reminiscent of *dhaturo*.

“All types of bamboo can become a spiritual binoculars or a spiritual microscope.”

(MR)

The bamboo, every bamboo, is a sacred plant to the Kirati, as it serves for many things:

- traveling plant
- medicine
- arrow shaft
- firetongs (*cimtra*)
- flute
- *binaya*, a musical instrument
- basketwork
- hunting trap
- comb
- pen holder
- sling
- spiritual fence/bars
- altar crown (seven segments)

The wood rose (*Argyreia nervosa*) has been used since earliest times in the ayurvedic medicine. The root is considered a tonic for the nerves and the brain, and is taken as an anti-aging agent (*rasayana*), an aphrodisiac (*vajikarana*), and to increase the intelligence.

“We must remain perfect strangers”

DEEP PURPLE 1984

“This plant lets you journey. It is the umbrella of Shiva.”

(MR)

The angel’s trumpet is sacred to the Nagas, the snake gods. The plant is divinely consecrated. That is why the roots also look like snakes. The Nagas go to the flowering shrub early in the morning in order to slurp *amrita* from the hanging flowers by boring into them like a lingam into the yoni. The Nagas become happy from this psychoactive nectar.

native. The angel’s trumpet is also sometimes planted as a “living fence.”

Maile Lama says that this wonderful plant is the “chief of the garden flowers”—naturally, in the garden of her god Shiva. The plant is there for all people, for them to find pleasure in, to look at, and for them to smell, but it is taken internally only by shamans! Thus, the Tamang shaman says the same thing as the shamans of South America. The plant originally comes from South America, where it belongs to the most powerful, i.e., the most respected shamanic drugs or *plantas maestras*, “plant masters” (Bristol 1969, Lockwood 1979).

Obviously the Nepalese shamans have recognized a plant that probably arrived on the Indian subcontinent in the sixteenth century as a Shiva plant. They use the leaves and flowers to facilitate “clear visions.” For this the dried flowers and leaves are smoked or only burned (usually mixed with ganja). The flowers of angel’s trumpet help the shamans in *mundum* to travel in the underworld, and for flight to the Nagas, the eight sacred snakes.

Maile and Parvati were both of the opinion that it is often enough to merely inhale the luxurious wafting scent of the large bell-shaped blossoms in order to travel or have visionary dreams while sleeping. The angel’s trumpet is a typical scented night-blooming flower. Dewdrops that have been imbued with the scent of the trumpet flowers are *amrita*.

The blossoms are brought as flower offerings to Shiva, for his lingam, his erect phallus, above all. The flower itself is a lingam, as well as being intoxicating and full of wisdom. It looks almost like a *chilam*—a sacred smoking pipe. The angel’s trumpet contains extremely hallucinogenic tropane alkaloids (especially scopolamine) that can have a deadly effect. The plant is a particularly powerful teacher, a shamanic plant—not a toy! It is not something to fool around with!¹⁸⁵

Angel’s trumpets are the most powerful hallucinogen the plant world has to offer, causing hallucinations that cannot be recognized as such. South American shamans urgently warn against the use of it by those who are unacquainted with the plant. Angel’s trumpets are also almost exclusively used as psychoactives by experienced shamans. Overdoses can cause a delirium that lasts for days, with aftereffects that continue for weeks. A further difficulty is the dosage: different people have very different reactions to tropane alkaloids. This means that the same dose

¹⁸⁵ In the past few years there has been an increase in the number of reports of poisonings and even fatalities of drug-hungry young people who ingested overdoses of angel’s trumpet. It would be totally backwards to hold this beautiful flower responsible for this.



The flowering vine *Argyreia nervosa* produces seeds with effects similar to LSD which are used by the Kirati as a traveling herb.

can have totally different effects depending on the situation. It has been reported in the toxicological literature that a powerful overdose can lead to death, though the cases are poorly documented (cf. Hall et al. 1978 and Rättsch 1998).

MUSHROOMS, PHALLUSES, AND THE FOOD OF THE GODS

Ancient Attic vases from Greece occasionally depict mycological erotic scenes: in one, a lightly dressed woman (cloaked in transparent fabric) goes into a field of mushrooms or phalluses. All of them are called *mykes*, “mushroom.” It is typical of Greek art and language that words have a multifaceted and symbolic meaning. In any event, the seductive woman is busy with God, or she is searching for him—for Dionysus, god of intoxication and ecstasy. Dionysus is a god or primordial shaman who came out of Asia¹⁸⁶ and liberated the Hellenic world from moral constraint. But at the same time he is Shiva. It had already been noticed by Alexander the Great that in all probability Shiva and Dionysus were one and the same, merely with regional/cultural variations (cf. Danielou 1992a).

In just the same way that Dionysus was worshipped in Greece and Rome in the form of a phallus, reduced to his essential element as a man and carried in processions through the streets at night, so all shamans recognize their god Shiva in the mushrooms of the Himalayas. “Our” shamans all agree, laughing, that the mushroom is obviously the penis of god (*chyau*

¹⁸⁶ Dionysus is usually misinterpreted as being a “wine god.” He is not the god of wine, but rather he uses the wine in the same way that alcohol is used by shamans—not for drunkenness, but for an intoxication that leads to knowledge. Dionysus brought the grape vine (*Vitis vinifera* L.) from Asia to Greece, and established the wine culture there (Emboden 1977). But the grape vine is a plant which originally came from the Himalayas. There it is called *angur*, *dakh*, or *kismis*, all names that indicate a long linguistic tradition and awareness of it (Shrestha 1998, 176).



The angel's trumpet (*Brugmansia* sp.) is not native to Nepal. It was probably brought to Nepal in the sixteenth or seventeenth century and quickly received cult respect in connection with Shiva—the god of the traveling plants.

= *shiva lingam*); how could there be any doubt? Besides, with the amanitas, the universe is complete: as the mushroom is sprouting, the egglike fruiting body (the yoni) slowly becomes the mature mushroom, the lingam.

Mushrooms are sacred to the Nepalese shamans because they grow out of the earth faster than any living being. Their umbrellas connect them with the cosmic umbrella of Shiva. The mushroom is the cap of the universe. It is the arch of the sky or the umbrella of the heavens. Of course, the umbrella is also the Buddhist good luck symbol, the *chhata* (Nep.). The mush-

room connects the three worlds: the mycelium develops in the underworld, the stem corresponds to the middle world, the cap is the regions of the upper world. In addition, there are mushrooms that make travel between the worlds possible—the sacred traveling mushrooms of the shamans. The umbrella (the crown) that can be seen on some *phurba* handles is also the cosmic mushroom and not an umbrella for rain or sun. “The umbrella was modeled after the mushroom cap” (MR/PR).

According to the Kirati tradition, the mushroom arose from the lightning that was an effect of the soma-intoxicated thunder god, Indra. He hurls his thunder ax, the *vajra dhunga* (Nep. or Kir. *ban theng lung*, “lightning thunder stone”) to the earth, which causes thunder, lightning, and of course rain as well. When lightning strikes the earth, mushrooms sprout up (cf. Wasson 1986). “Without lightning, the spiritual mushrooms would not exist” (PR/MR). The mushroom not only connects the three worlds because of its shape and growth process, but also because of its cosmic generation: lighting = heaven, rainwater = middle world, earth = underworld.

“The significance of the mushrooms for us shamans is that we use them as a parachute. This spiritual parachute is one hundred times as strong as a material one. There are hundreds of mushroom species, but we use only a very few as umbrellas. We travel under their protective caps,” said Myingmar Sherpa, the mushroom expert from Kalinchok. The shamanic mushrooms are traveling mushrooms. In Nepalese and in other languages they are called *matne chyau*; in Sherpa they are known as *duk shyamu*, which is translated as “the mushroom that lets you travel for free.”

The mushroom season in Nepal is between June and September. The wild mushrooms in the forest are generally called *jungali chyau*, “forest mushrooms.” But there are also mushrooms that grow on the dung of the water buffalo. They are almost always species in the *Psilocybe* family. The mushrooms that sprout out of old buffalo horns are reported to be particularly good. *Psilocybe* mushrooms are all very well known shamanic drugs (cf. Liggenstorfer and Rättsch 1996).

“These small mushrooms can be used as *amrita*. For this, they are roasted with some salt. Through them the shamans receive a heavenly feeling. To achieve this, they take about a handful of the fresh mushrooms” (MR).

Polypores: Pipes into Other Worlds

The polypores, *thute chyau* (Nep.), which “Ötzi the Ice Man” also had with him, are of ethno-medicinal significance in different shamanic cultures. This is also

“The sacred mushroom looks like a penis. Certain mushrooms look exactly like a *lingam*, that is why we call them *Shiva lingam*.” (MR)

“Our spiritual umbrella is the sacred mushroom!” (MS)

“Mushrooms can kill or cure. Therefore they are important offerings. Nothing shoots up out of the earth as fast as a mushroom.” (PR)

“The mushroom is an antenna.” (MR)

“If we live in a fractal universe, everything must actually be possible.” (CR)



“Mushroom caps”: the handle of a Kirati Magical Dagger with the cosmic mushroom at the end. Beneath it are the nine faces of the fractal universe. (*Phurba* made of wood, painted, early twentieth century)

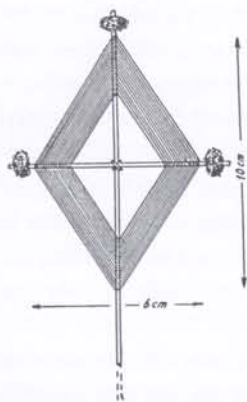


The "umbrella of the shamans," a yarn cross which represents the cosmic mushroom, the arch of the sky, the true protective umbrella.



The cosmic mushroom (= umbrella) also appears in the consciousness and expression of European artists. Grandville, a French illustrator in the nineteenth century, confronts the "Transformation of Sleep." The dreaming consciousness transforms what is seen into fantastic associative sequences. In an engraving from 1847, a mushroom changes from an umbrella, to an owl, and finally into a sun-chariot as it flies to heaven.

TRAVELING HERBS AND
TRAVELING MUSHROOMS:
SHIVA'S GARDEN



The yarn cross of the Ao-Naga is nearly identical to the Kirati yarn cross. They function as "spirit catchers." (after Kauffmann 1960, 40)

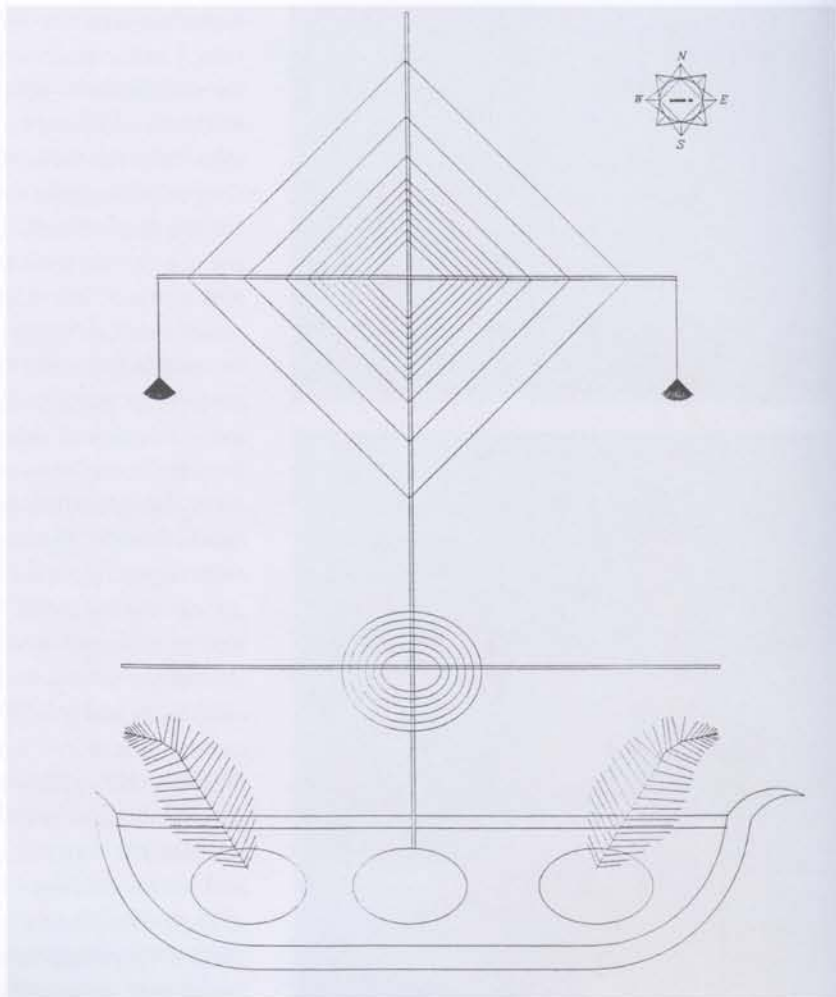


An umbrella-shaped yarn cross of the Chittagong people in remote India (Marma). The yarn cross umbrella is called *thi*, "umbrella," and is directly reminiscent of the cosmic mushroom of the Kirati shamans. (after Kauffmann 1960, 58)

the case among the Sherpa shamans in Nepal. They know of and eat a polypore called *shakti shyamu* or *shakti chyau* (*Polyporus*) in order to receive *shakti*, shamanic power. Sometimes they eat it raw (it is practically indigestible) or as curry (it tastes a thousand times better this way), according to Myingmar Sherpa.

A reddish-orange-colored polypore, the sulfur shelf,¹⁸⁷ closely related to the larch polypore, is reported to cause strong tryptamine-like, i.e., DMT-like

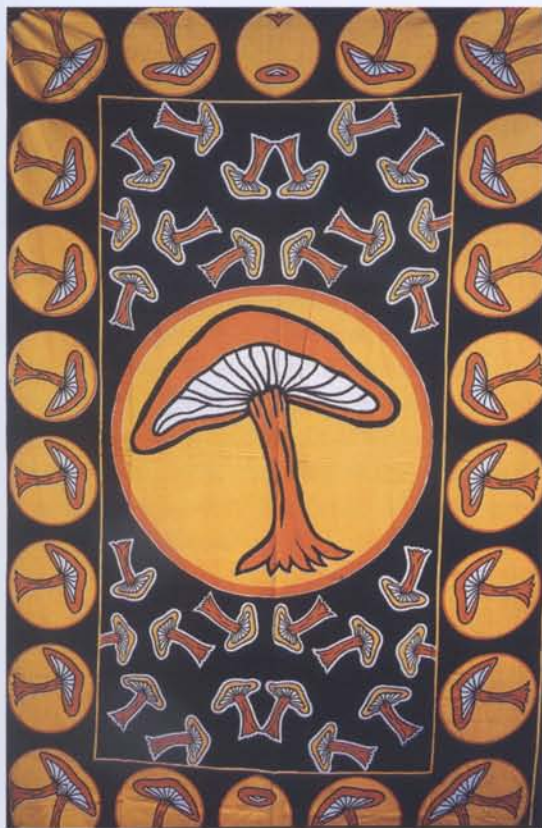
¹⁸⁷ Sulfur shelf *Laetiporus sulphureus* (Bull. ex Fr.) Bond. et Sing. = *Lactiporus sulphureus* (Fr.) Murr.; syn. *Boletus sulphureus* Bull., *Boletus caudicinus* Scop., *Cladomeris sulphurea* Quél., *Polyporus caudicinus* Köhl., *Polyporus sulphureus* Fr.



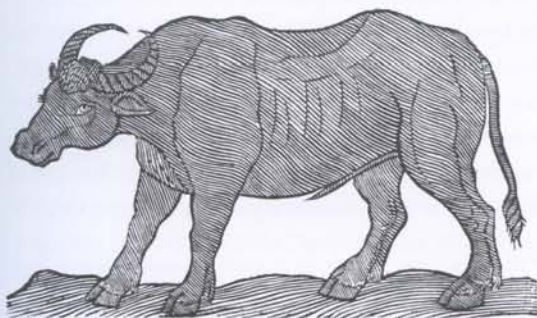
In certain instances, a yarn cross is found on the Kirati altar as a "demon-catcher." In this image the "umbrella mushroom" (*chhatri chyau* = fly agaric) is presented as the "cosmic antenna." The yarn antenna, and with it the entire altar, stands in a direct connection with the arch of the heavens which is perceived as a mushroom cap. The altar is the *axis mundi*, the *phurba*, the ladder into the three worlds. The yarn cross also serves to purify the house spiritually and protect against nightmares. It is also a mandala on the altar of consciousness. (Drawing: Saroj Rai)

hallucinations, at least in the clinical documentation (Appleton 1988). Otherwise, it has been said that "used as a snuff powder, [it] could be described as a light disinfecting agent" (Chapius 1985, 111). This mushroom also grows in Nepal, where it is called *gorato chyau*, "red mushroom," as well as *asyamo* or *kukhure chyau* (Shrestha 1998, 74, 137). Perhaps this polypore is one of the many types of "shamanic power mushrooms."

The artist's conch (*Ganoderma lucidum*) is the mushroom most intimately connected to the Sherpa shamans on Kalinchok. It is the famous *ling-shi*, "the mushroom of immortality." This mushroom is rare



A bedsheet from Kathmandu with a design that clearly suggests the magic mushroom (*Psilocybe cubensis*).



The water buffalo (*bubalus*) not only deliver milk for mozzarella, but also dung, the fertilizer for the magic fly agaric. (from: Gesner 1669)

to find in nature although it grows throughout the world.¹⁸⁸ It is considered to be a sign of good luck and a long life to find the wild mushroom. Since the early days of Chinese history it has been described as a plant of immortality and considered a wonderful, life-extending medicine. It is only in the past few years or decades that it has been possible to develop growing methods and cultivate it (cf. Stamets 1995). Nevertheless, the ones found in the wild are still treasured as a medicine. They fetch the highest prices in China and Korea. The Sherpas who collect them during the

¹⁸⁸ Albert Hofmann found one in the woods near Basel, Switzerland; C. Müller-Ebeling found one in North Queensland/Australia, and a second in the Donglisan mountains of South Korea.

monsoon season receive 12,000 rupees per kilo.¹⁸⁹ A single person usually collects only a kilo in the period from July to September. In China the same price can be fetched for a single wild mushroom which probably only weighs thirty grams.

The Sherpa and the Tamang use this mushroom, which they call *denguru shyamu*, “shamans’ drum mushroom”; *dhami chyau*, “medicine mushroom”; or even *bonpo shamaup* (Tam.) or *jhankri cha* (Nep.), “shaman’s mushroom” primarily for spiritual rather than financial aims. “It is a kind of guide,” explained Myingmar Sherpa, the master mycologist. “I use them to fly. I invoke all mushrooms with my *chyau* mantra. The most prominent of all mushrooms is this one. Therefore it is always invoked last. But because I do not have much time for invocations, I can leave out all other mushroom names, of which there are very many; I need only invoke the *denguru chyau*. It is the strongest.”

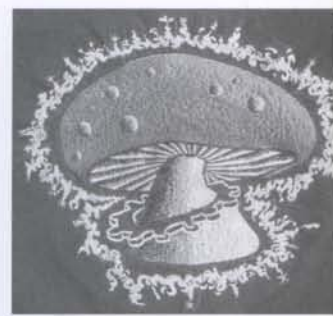
The Kirati, Sherpa, and Tamang use their “shaman’s mushrooms” to fly, to increase *shakti*, and as medicine to revitalize the fatally ill. They also use them for diagnosis or divination. For this the freshly pressed juice (which is very difficult to produce) or the crushed fruiting bodies are placed on the forehead, temples, and mouth of the patient who is deathly ill. A special mantra, the *chyau* mantra, is also included. Through the reaction to the procedure, the shaman can determine whether or not the patient will survive and recuperate. The mushroom is very bitter and usually elicits a strong reaction. Parvati told us that if the mushroom is used incorrectly, i.e., with too high a dose or without the right mantra, it can have poisonous and therefore damaging effects.

Thokre Chyau, the Shamanic Club

Mushrooms are already in and of themselves strange creatures, but this mushroom is particularly unusual. It only grows in a certain type of caterpillar or larvae living a few centimeters under the earth. The body of the mushroom entirely fills up the body of the larvae, and stretches its red arrow-shaped head up out of the underworld. It is therefore known as *thokre chyau*, *thakre*, or *thokre shyamu* (Sherpa). A *thokre* is “someone who carries many arrows,” who is both a hunter and a shaman. It is a shaman’s mushroom and an agent for traveling.

The cordyceps *Cordyceps sinensis* (Berkeley) Sacc. is found in the highlands of the Himalayas. In English it is known as caterpillar mushroom, but perhaps the best name for it is “shamans’ club.” The larvae that the mushroom invades comes from the bat-moth

¹⁸⁹ 12,000 rupees = \$245.00.



The fly agaric as an embroidered T-shirt motif from a manufacturer in Kathmandu.



Myingmar Sherpa and his stepdaughter excitedly examine *shakti shyamu*, the power mushrooms of the shamans. They are polypores from Kalinchok which were possibly unknown until now.

WORDS FOR “MUSHROOM” IN SEVEN LANGUAGES OF NEPAL

Bhutanese	<i>shamup</i>
Gurung	<i>syow/poy</i>
Kirati	<i>bakha-khan</i>
Magar	<i>magun</i>
Nepali	<i>chyau</i>
Newari	<i>mukan</i>
Sherpa	<i>shyamu</i>



Mohan Rai plays with two artist's conchs (*Ganoderma lucidum*), the shamanic mushrooms from Kalinchok, the shamans' drum. The *denguru chyau* is also worn as a talisman. The shamanic mushrooms are also found on thangkas. (No. 44, back side)

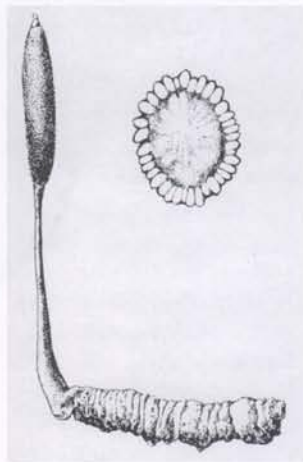


(*Hepialus armoricanus* Oberthür; cf. Jones 1997), which is called *bian fu e* in Chinese. The yaks seek them out during their rutting season in order to ingest them as an aphrodisiac, very similar to the way truffles are sought out by pigs. Humans also consume the mushroom as a love medicine and tonic. Therefore it is called *jivanbuti*, "strengthening agent," in Nepalese. The mushroom, also called *kurki*, is a fever medicine in the Kalinchok region.

In Nepal, the cordyceps grows on Kalinchok at altitudes of three thousand meters and higher. It stretches its head out of the ground from the end of September to the middle of October. Many of the Sherpas who live in that area collect the unusual creation. Only a few know of its uses and avail themselves of it. Most sell their small harvest to China.

Some shamans in the upper Kalinchok region use the *thokre chyau* for traveling: they pulverize the dried or roasted "arrow heads," which they call "seeds." The powder is then mixed with some ganja or tobacco, then is smoked or added to the *rakshi*. Then the shamans are able to lift off.

The drug contains cordycepin acids, china acids, cordycepin, proteins, saturated and unsaturated fatty acids, D-mannit, and vitamin B₁₂. Cordycepin has demonstrable antibiotic effects (Paulus and Sing 1987, 114). The tinctures from the mushroom, including the larvae body, have a mildly psychoactive, stimulating, primarily mood-elevating and antidepressant effect, in addition to an erotic effect. The blood vessels also expand, and the respiratory system becomes more



The "shaman's neck," a grainy club *Cordyceps sinensis* that has a symbiotic growth with a larvae. (Old Chinese illustration)

effective (cf. Stamets and Wu Yao 1999, 22; Halpern 1999).

Gobar chyau, The Traveling Mottlegills

We creep through the thin air at 3,600 meters. At this altitude, you often forget yourself and trudge along like a cow, unfortunately, rather than a yak. "Here it is!" shouts Claudia. She actually found it, IT! Next to a huge pile of yak dung, a mottlegill is sprouting up. The alchemical wonder is there, right before our very eyes. This is how enlightenment is created from shit. What flourishes in excrement illuminates the consciousness. Finally we have found the traveling mushrooms of the shamans. Claudia has discovered it, as Parvati had discovered hemp. As usual, the women are connected to the earth, they are the earth, and they have the wisdom of the earth. This is why men should lay at the feet of women—and not the other way around.

The next twenty meters of our path, our pilgrimage route to Kalinchok, are the purest mycological research fields. We collect everything that "smells" like enlightenment. Afterward, we see no more mushrooms. We were at the right place at the right time. Maile, Gurung, and Parvati identify the collected fruiting bodies as the true traveling mushrooms. Shamanism begins with a mushroom trip here as well. (CR)

The *gobar chyau* (Nep.), also called *gobre chyau*,¹⁹⁰ is the "yak-dung mushroom." *Gobar* are the cow patties left behind by high-altitude cattle (*Bos grunniens*).¹⁹¹ The shamans use this mottlegill, possibly a *Panaeolus* sp.,¹⁹² for flying. It represents the arch of the sky, the cosmic umbrella, the protective cloak of

¹⁹⁰ Shrestha (1998, 28) calls the *Agaricus bisporus* (J. Lange) Imbach, Agaricaceae, an edible mushroom, by this name.

¹⁹¹ The crosses between the wild yak, the domestic yak (*chauri*), the cows (*gau*), and the half-yaks (*nak*) produce this alchemical primordial soil.

¹⁹² Cf. Stamets 1999, 67.



The *gobar chyau* prefer the manure patty as nourishment; it was the largest specimen we were able to find.

the shamans, and even the tantric bell and the crowning of the *mandir* (temple).

Parvati Rai has eaten and sniffed this mushroom in her mushroom blends (see “The Snuff Powder of the Kirati Shamans,” page 178). Maile Lama knows the mushroom, and knows that there are shamans who eat it in order to travel better. She herself has never tried it.

The Raven Mushroom, A Previously Unknown Inky Cap

After I lay out the Psathyrella-like mushroom on the roof terrace to dry in the setting sun, a crow comes dancing along with obvious great interest. I go storming out, panicked about my very valuable scientific specimen and exhibit. I barely have time to save the drying fruiting body. (CR)

The fibrous *kakke chyau*, “raven or crow mushroom,” or the mushroom called *buri chyau* (*burian chyau*), “old ladies’ mushroom,” is an inky cap or mottlegill in the *Psathyrella* genus (*Coprinaceae* family)¹⁹³ and belongs among the shamanic traveling mushrooms. According to Parvati Rai, the effects are like the “true magic mushroom” (*Psilocybe* spp.) or the fly agaric. It is used for clarifying the mind of the shamans and is a spiritual medicine. It should be roasted in the fire before consumption. Because it is considered the “raven or crow mushroom,” it is one of the mushrooms of the gods.

The *gobre chyau*, the “dung mushroom,” a previously unidentified species in the *Coprinus* genus (*Coprinaceae* family as well), belongs in the same category. This is not a true traveling mushroom, but it does have some *shakti*, as Maile Lama remarked—that is, it is mildly psychoactive.

Of Germanic Raven Bread

In Germanic mythology as it was recorded in the modern era, there are a number of traditions connecting Wotan (also: Wodan or Odin—naturally a close relative of Shiva and Dionysus), our shamanic god of ecstasy and wisdom, with the fly agaric. According to the German and Bohemian sagas, the fly agarics are created when Wotan rides through the clouds at winter solstice on his eight-legged steed—just as the Kirati

¹⁹³ This genus has many species (ca. 100). Its classification is Agaricales (Basidiomycetes class) and is closely related to the genus of the mottlegill (*Panaeolus*). A Japanese test of the worldwide distributed Suburban *Psathyrella* [*Psathyrella canolleana* (Fr.) Maire; syn. *Agaricus violaceus lamellatus* DC., *Agaricus appendiculatus* Bull.] supposedly contains psilocybin. The mottlegill is said to have psychoactive effects (Gartz 1986; Ott 1993, 310; cf. Stive and Kuyper 1988).



The Kirati shaman Parvati Rai with the cosmic mushroom (*Panaeolus* sp.), the protective umbrella, and the rain umbrella on Kalinchok.



The Chinese aphrodisiac *dong chong xia cao*, now desired around the world, is made from the dried larvae and fruiting bodies of the mushrooms. It is praised in the oldest Chinese herbals, a reputation that has endured all the way to the Chinatowns of today.

DAVIS (1983, 62–64)

shamans ride or fly on their eight-legged horse—with his retinue, the wild hunt. Whenever the manure from Wotan’s horse drops on the ground, fly agarics spring up in autumn—exactly nine months later—from the pregnant soil (Haseneier 1992). The fly agarics are also called “raven bread” in several different ethnic languages (Klapp 1985; Bauer et al. 2000, 46). Ravens are not only ancient shamanic and power animals, but

“We take this mushroom [*gobar chyau*] only when it is very important to fight against demons. We roast it and take it with salt in order to neutralize its poison (*bisma*). We take it for medicine and for knowledge.”

(MS)

Recently, the mycologist Paul Stamets (among others) was able to successfully cultivate this difficult-to-collect mushroom, and without the larvae fungus (what luck for vegetarians . . .).

Extracts (alcoholic tinctures) are drunk as tonics and aphrodisiacs, and are an accepted doping agent in sports.



Maile shows that the psychedelic mushroom is identical to the cosmic umbrella on the crown of the Magical Dagger.

are also the ambassadors or “telepathic antennas” of Wotan/Odin, who is known as the “raven god.” Apollo, the Hyperborean sun and oracle god, was also considered a raven god in antiquity!

Crows and ravens are also shamanic birds in Nepal, as well as spirit helpers and nature gods. They likewise have their “raven bread”—that is, certain mushrooms (inky caps).

SOMA AND THE MAGIC MUSHROOM IN THE HIMALAYAS

The red fly agaric with white flecks (*Amanita muscaria*) is not only the most beautiful mushroom, the one most commonly depicted in children’s books and simultaneously the most disreputable one; it is also one of the oldest traveling mushrooms found throughout all subarctic regions. It has been used psychoactively in many regions of Eurasia, even by the Germanic peoples (Rosenbohm 1991). They are still eaten in Kamtschatka, the eastern peninsula of Asia, for prophecy, divination, diagnosis, and in order to heal while in a trance (Salzmann et al. 1996, Rättsch 1998).



Myingmar Sherpa is excited about the discovery of the raven mushroom.



The dried raven mushroom (*Psythyrella* sp.), a traveling mushroom, and the mushroom cap (“umbrella”) of a Tamang wooden *phurba* from the eighteenth century.



The raven mushroom (above and right) is like the *bindu*, the cosmic point in the unification of the complementary poles.



An Overview of The Traveling Mushrooms of the Nepalese Shamans

<i>bhut chyau</i>	(Nep./ New.)	"demon mushroom"	<i>Amanita muscaria</i> ¹⁹⁴
<i>buri chyau</i>	(Nep.)	"old lady mushroom"	<i>Psathyrella</i> sp.
<i>chhatri chia</i>	(Kir.)	"umbrella mushroom"	<i>Amanita</i> spp.
<i>gobar chyau</i>	(Nep.)	"(yak-) dung mushroom"	<i>Panaeolus</i> sp.
<i>gobre chyau</i>	(Nep.)	"dung mushroom"	1) <i>Coprinus</i> spp. 2) <i>Agaricus bisporus</i>
<i>jivanbuti</i>	(Nep.)	"strengthening agent"	<i>Cordyceps sinensis</i>
<i>jhumre chyau</i>	(Nep.)	"crumpled mushroom"	not determined
<i>ake chyau</i>	(Nep.)	"crow mushroom"	<i>Omphalina</i> aff. <i>ericetorum</i>
<i>kakhuti chyau</i>	(Nep.)	"crow or raven mushroom"	<i>Psathyrella</i> sp., <i>Faserling</i> evtl. <i>Hygrocybe</i> sp. or <i>Inocybe</i> sp.
<i>kalunge chyau</i>	(Nep.)	"umbrella mushroom"	<i>Amanita</i> spp., <i>Amanita muscaria</i> , <i>Amanita pantherina</i>
<i>kadle chyau</i>	(Nep.)	"scaley mushroom"	<i>Amanita muscaria</i>
<i>knaga shyamu</i>	(Tam.)	"sacred chicken mushroom" "sacred rooster mushroom" ¹⁹⁵	<i>Amanita muscaria</i>
<i>kukhure chyau</i>	(Nep.)	"chicken mushroom"	<i>Lactiporus sulphureus</i>
<i>mukan</i>	(New.)	general mushroom ¹⁹⁶	<i>Amanita</i> spp.
<i>mulang chao</i>	(Gur.)	"umbrella mushroom"	<i>Amanita muscaria</i>
<i>phak timu</i>	(New.)	"pak – spice"	<i>Panaeolus semiovatus</i> (Sow ex Fr.) Lund et Nannt ¹⁹⁷
<i>phak shyamu</i>	(Sherpa)	"pig mushroom"	<i>Psilocybe</i> spp.
<i>shakti chyau</i>	(Nep.)	"shamanic energy mushroom"	1) <i>Polyporus</i> sp. 2) <i>Laetiporus sulphureus</i>
<i>shyamu</i>	(Sherpa)	"umbrella mushroom"	1) mushroom, general 2) <i>Amanita muscaria</i> 3) <i>Auricularia</i> sp.
<i>Tephkak</i>	(Kir.)	"pig mushroom"	<i>Psilocybe</i> spp.
<i>thokre shyamu</i>	(Sherpa)	"shamans' mushroom"	<i>Cordyceps sinensis</i>

¹⁹⁴ The name "demon mushroom" for the magic mushroom was first documented by the Newari botanist, Keshab Shrestha (1998, 13, 97); therewith the existence of *Amanita muscaria* in Nepal as well.

¹⁹⁵ In English this mushroom, *Grifolia frondosa*, which is of culinary and medicinal value, is also called "chicken of the woods" (Hobbs 1987, 23)

¹⁹⁶ In Siberia and Kamtschatka magic mushroom is called *mukhomor* (cf. Kutalek 1995, Saar 1991, Saltzman et al. 1996), in other words, half of the name is identical to the Newari word. Perhaps this is a Newari-Mongolian memory of the time of the cult of the magic mushroom.

¹⁹⁷ Following the identification by Shrestha.

In earlier times, the Siberian shamans ate dried fly agaric or drank the urine of those already intoxicated, in order to fall into a clairvoyant trance and to activate their shamanic healing powers—and perhaps they are eating them again (Enderli 1903). According to Koryak tradition, the fly agaric is created out of the spit of their highest god; therefore the mushroom is a sacred "plant"—actually a "growth," a being, or alien (Nep. *muka*) or however one wishes to call it. . . . (Bauer et al. 1991, 147). The Siberian shamans usually take the mushrooms when they wish to communicate with the souls of their ancestors; when they would like to take up contact with helping spirits and demons; when a newborn should receive a name; in threatening situations, in order to find a way out; to see the future; to see into the past; and to travel and fly in other worlds. The Khanty (= east Yaken) test shamanic



Raven, from the Tibetan Book of the Dead.

THE PSYCHEDELIC MAGIC MUSHROOM

(*Psilocybe cubensis*) is found throughout the tropics and grows on cow manure, water buffalo dung, and possibly on elephant droppings as well. (Maybe this is the secret of Ganesha?) In the beginning of the seventies when the real hippies flowed into Nepal they discovered the magic mushroom there. The Nepalese quickly recognized the foreigners' desire for spiritual growth. They harvested the magic mushrooms and sold them to the travelers. In those days, traditional relationships were still in place in Kathmandu. In a side street off the central square (Durbar Square) there was the Hashish Eden Center along with many other official stores in which the *cannabis* products, even opium, were sold completely legally. This street—surely the only one in the world named after the hippies—is still called by the nice name of "Freak Street." Because of an international interest in Shiva's favorite substances, a new tourism industry developed. Since then all sorts of mushroom motifs, reminiscent of the psychedelic world or the Grateful Dead, are embroidered onto T-shirts. What remained hidden to all of the freaks, ethnologists, and mycologists, is that the mushroom cult is intimately bound to the origins of (Kirati) shamanism.

"This mushroom [artist's conch; *Ganoderma lucidum*] is a type of umbrella, under which we can fly through the other worlds."

(MS)

TRAVELING HERBS AND
TRAVELING MUSHROOMS:
SHIVA'S GARDEN



The fur of the *chitali* or spotted deer (*Axis axis*) is reminiscent of the fly agaric.

The Nepalese fly agaric is orange colored and has only a few white “flecks” (the remains of the “skin,” the “birth cap”) that are usually rinsed off during the downpours of the monsoon rain. The Himalayan fly agaric possibly belongs to a subspecies of *Amanita muscaria* spp. *formosa* (cf. Lincoff 1995, No. 3). It looks very similar to the species found in Washington state.

“It is well known that people who drink the urine of those already intoxicated on *Amanita* receive a much more powerful hallucinogenic dose—maybe this was the first *electric Kool-Aid acid test*.”

CHRISTOPHER HOBBS
(1987, 13)

Until now, fly agaric has not been documented in the Himalayas. Nevertheless, “our” shamans all know the mushroom from their native countries—eastern and western Nepal, as well as Bhutan.

Myingmar Sherpa looks amazedly at the *kalunge chyau*, the amanitas from the Kathmandu Valley. On the left are the mushroom in all phases of growth, as well as some dried examples.

apprentices with high doses of fly agaric to establish that they are able to master the mushroom and are suited to their future profession. In Siberia, the fly agaric is consumed fresh, cooked, or dried (Saar 1991).

R. Gordon Wasson, the New York banker and founder of modern ethnopharmacology, relied on the Siberian evidence to support his theory that the fly agaric was the soma of the ancient Vedic Aryans of the Indus valley (Wasson 1968, 1972, and 1995; Ott 1998b). In the Vedic tradition, it is written in the Rig Veda that the intoxicating and inspiring soma plant grows in the high mountains, the Himalayas. Until today, there has been no verification of the presence of *Amanita muscaria* in the entire Himalayan region. The identification of soma as fly agaric was only a speculation until now.¹⁹⁸

“Without the sacred mushroom, *mundum*—the way of the shamans—would not be complete. It is totally bound up with Shiva. Even the tigers love the amanitas. One or two of these mushrooms is enough to fly” (MR). The effects set in after ten to fifteen minutes. An overwhelming nausea can come on, followed by a feeling of dizziness. Then you are able to “take

¹⁹⁸ Though there have been rudiments retained in Hindukush of a ritual ingestion of fly agaric, known there as *tshashm baskon*, “eye opener.” (Mochtar and Geerken 1979).

off.” “This mushroom is our spiritual leader. It comes from nature, and nature is our guide. This mushroom gives the strength and energy to fly quickly and directly” (MS). “These mushrooms are the food of the Kirati. They originally discovered them in their dreams and visions. Without the mushroom we would never have been able to learn how to fly. It isn’t always necessary to ingest it; often it is enough to invoke the mushroom with traveling mantras. The mushrooms are conjured first, above all natural things” (MR).

Mohan Rai recalls well how his father had used fly agaric for shamanizing. His father, Dil Bahadur Rai (1900–1976)—whose name means “wealth of heart,” and thus expresses the essence of Himalayan shamanism—was the royal shaman of the court, in other words, the personal healer and protector to the King of Bhutan.¹⁹⁹

“For a deep trance, he ate a few pieces of a prepared fly agaric, at most a half of a cap, in order to make his journey into the other worlds. He fell fairly quickly into a trance and flew around the area. In this way he could visit his distant house or see his family members” (MR).

¹⁹⁹ Unfortunately it was not possible to obtain a picture of Dil Rai because the trunk containing photographs, memorabilia, jewelry, and other valuable objects was stolen from Mohan Rai’s house on the edge of Kathmandu.



Many people were very shocked at the fact that Dil Rai ate mushrooms that were supposedly poisonous. On the other hand, they were hardly surprised that such a powerful shaman could handle everything that exists, every poison, not only without harm, but with success. It is said that every true shaman—just like Shiva himself—is not only able to endure and survive every poison (*viss* or *bis*), every drug, and every substance, but through indulging in them is able to grow more and receive more *shakti*, more healing power, and more understanding of the universe and all its facets.

The fly agaric is called *kalunge chyau*, literally “umbrella mushroom.” It has a lighter color than its European cousins. It also has fewer white spots, perhaps because they are rinsed off the caps during the powerful downpours of the monsoon season.

Many people in Nepal, above all in the Kathmandu Valley, believe that the fly agaric is fatally poisonous. This is a worldwide misunderstanding that is especially widespread in central Europe. It is a typical modern superstition and an extremely tenacious rumor.

In actuality, Parvati Rai informed us, fly agaric makes good curry pickles—a person receives great strength by eating them. The raw or roasted fruiting bodies are important to the shamans (their dosage is one to two pieces). The Kirati shamans collect the fly agaric once a year. The mushrooms can sprout from March to October, mostly in the vicinity of majestic pines. According to Parvati Rai, the birch (*Betula alnoides* Buch.-Ham. ex D. Don, Betulaceae), known as *piayu* or *piaphul*, also fosters mushroom growth.

The Kirati shamans use the fly agaric not more than ten times per year to travel and fly. They also use the roasted fly agaric as medicine for their patients. The warmed mushroom is used externally mainly for cuts; it is pressed directly on the wound. Cuts or rips in the tongue are supposed to be quickly and effectively healed with this method.

Indra Doj Gurung eats amanitas fried in *ghee* (clarified butter) once a year to strengthen his *shakti*. The psychoactive effect sets in for him after about half an hour. Then he goes alone into the forest. He describes the transformation of his consciousness as a “forest walk” as well: he finds himself under the umbrella of the cosmic mushroom.

The fly agaric is usually only roasted over glowing wood coals, and not fried in butter, ghee, or oil. The closely related Caesar’s mushroom (*Amanita caesaria* [Scop. ex Fr.] Pers. ex Schw.) is one of the most cherished wild mushrooms in the Kathmandu Valley. It looks extremely similar to the Himalayan

The Fly Agaric: Medicine or “Flying Poison”?

The fly agaric has been used in many times and many places as a remedy for epilepsy and as “flying poison.”²⁰⁰ It must be emphatically added to this that flies do not die from milk and *Amanita* mixtures! The Italian ethnobotanist Giorgio Samorini, a devoted scholar and fly agaric expert, told us that flies (the insects which are associated with the “devil”) actually seek out the fly agaric, “lick” it and suck the milk from it because they become very intoxicated by doing so. If one leaves the intoxicated flies laying where they are, they regain their consciousness after a little while. Thus, it is not a fatal poisoning, but a happy intoxication—and this in the world of insects!²⁰¹

²⁰⁰ Hobbs 1987, 12.

²⁰¹ In general there is hardly another natural object about which so much nonsense has been written as the fly agaric.

We find the book *Verführung und Verzauberung* [English: “Seduction and Enchantment”], which in and of itself is beautifully produced, to be particularly insulting and harmful. It is nothing more than a misunderstood plagiarism of the writings of Ch. Ratsch (Druden et al. 1998, 98). The authors had the audacity to reprint Ratsch’s monograph text from the *Enzyklopädie der psychoaktiven Pflanzen* (Ratsch 1998) without permission and contaminated it with additional text about an imagined “fatal dose” of the flying mushroom. We are working towards the de-demonization of nature and protest in the strongest possible terms against such falsehoods!

The most factually accurate publications include the writings of Bauer 1992, Bauer et al. 2000, Cosack 1995 (“die anspruchsvolle Droge”—[Eng. “the demanding drug”]) and 1998, Festi and Bianchi 1992, Heinrich 1998, Kutalek 1995, Ott 1976 and 1977, Rosenbohm 1995, Saar 1991, Samorini 1996, Schurr 1995.

fly agaric, which is a possible reason many people are afraid to eat it. The Newari Caesar’s mushroom curry that we were served is one of the best mushroom dishes we have ever tasted.

Soma, Amrita, and Hemp

Soma is the name for a plant from which an intoxicating, meadlike drink is made, and is also the name of a masculine deity. In the Vedic literature it is the thunder god Indra, in particular, who is always drunk on soma. The plant, which has not been clearly identified botanically, grew on the highest mountains in the Himalayas (Ott 1994). From there it was stolen by the falcon Syená—who is naturally the shaman bird Garuda—and brought to Indra in heaven. Soma was an intoxicating drink that inspired poetry and possessed magical powers to make the offering effective (“the falcon brought you from heaven, o nectar, adorned with all [poetic] thoughts,” Rig Veda IX 86, 24). The drink bestows on the gods essential spiritual and physical powers; it is even a “world creating element.” (Schneider 1971, vii).

JUNGALI CHYAU—“MUSHROOM OF THE FOREST”:

The newspaper “Kantipur, Nepali National Daily” published an article on 20 August 1999 about the dangers of wild mushrooms collected in the jungle. The reason: a family of five had died during the night after eating wild mushrooms. It is not clear which species they mistakenly ate. The cautionary article was illustrated with four mushroom photos: fly agaric, Satan’s mushroom, death cap, and panther mushroom. Without providing any further details, all were described as being equally fatal. Myingmar Sherpa and Parvati Rai smiled a little, because they knew that neither the fly agaric nor the panther mushroom was fatally poisonous, besides, *they* are the traveling mushrooms of the shamans.

The prehistoric Indian *kuda-kallu*, a megalithic mushroom stone and *lingam-yoni* (Samorini 1995 and 1998; photo: Giorgio Samorini).



The fly agarics were immediately placed by Rättsch in vodka and after a few days have fully lost their color (7/99). At the same time the vodka has taken on a yellow tone. We look forward to the chemical analyses.

Indra, the Vedic thunder god and later the Hindu King of the Gods, “discovered shamanic traditions as a result of hemp and planted it on the Himalayas so that it was always available to the humans, so that they could attain joy, courage, and strengthen sexual desires” (Haag 1995, 78). Therefore, *charas* is also called *Indracense* “incense of Indra.” In post-Vedic times it is known that the soma ritual was performed with *bhang*²⁰² or *Cannabis indica*, and *somalata* or *Ephedra gerardiana*. Soma was probably nothing more than a generic term (taxon) that was used in the same way as the words “drug,” “entheogen,” “psychedelic,” or “psychoactive substance” are used today.

In a Purana myth it is said the Dhanvantari, the doctor or shaman of the gods, was born during the churning of the primordial ocean, the world ocean. He appeared with a milk-white goblet in his hands, which was filled with *amrita*, the nectar or elixir of

²⁰² Banerjee (1980, 34), says that *bhanga* (Skt.) is *Cannabis sativa* and was an epithet for soma in the Rig Veda.

immortality. The moon (*soma* or *chandra*) is considered a vessel of *amrita*. After it has been emptied, this vessel refills itself again, which is why the moon waxes and wanes. Dhanvantari not only brought the drink of immortality with him, he also brought ayurveda.

“According to the medicinal textbooks of Susruta, he received *ayurveda*, which means ‘the Veda of the whole course of life,’ from Brahma himself. According to the view of the Puranas, the mere mention of his name destroys disease. Only a few temples are dedicated to him, but he gives cause for interesting concepts because he unites the two aspects of Indian medicine—the ability to extend life and the art of fighting off disease and demons. Over the course of time he became a manifestation of Vishnu” (Gonda 1978, 232).

Of course, the shamans know the shaman Dhanvantari, the god who gives everything endlessly. He bestows the riches, not of money or power, but of health, the greatest good, the goal of shamanism. “Dhanvantari is the divine shaman who cures all of your needs” (MR).

The Snuff Powder of the Kirati Shamans

The ethnological, ethnobotanical, and entheobotanical scientific research literature indicates that it was until now almost exclusively the Caribbean Indians (now extinct) and the South American Indians who were known to have used psychoactive snuff powder in extreme doses (and as often as possible) to shamanize (and probably for a bit of fun as well) (Torres 1998).²⁰³ During our research, we came upon a psychoactive shamanic snuff powder in the Himalayan region for the first time.

Only the Kirati shamans use snuffs, the food of the shamanic god Shiva. They are called *thapana*, and are usually only used on *Shiva Rattri*. Sometimes they are also snuffed for traveling. Fresh preparations are made when they are required. Only thoroughly dried mushrooms are stored in well-sealed bamboo pipes.

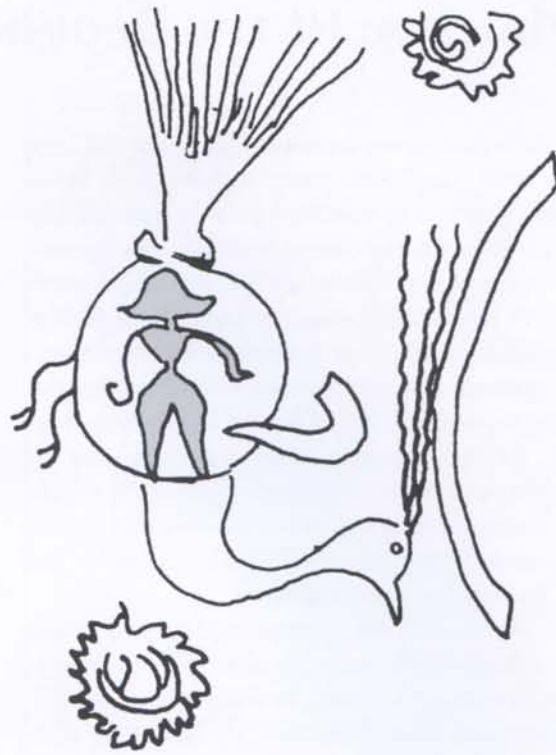
Parvati Rai told us that she found the snuff in a dream. In general it seems that the Kirati shaman is connected to the *mundum*, to her shamanic as well as fractal tree of time. Through dreams and visions, she is able to connect with a 60,000-year-old source of information.

The pulverized plants or mushrooms must al-

²⁰³ The active compounds in all South American snuff powders that are shamanically used are the tryptamine derivatives *N,N*-DMT, 5-MeO-DMT, and bufotenine. Some powders contain all three substances, others have only two or only one. The sources for these tryptamines are species of the genus *Anadenanthera* and *Virola* (Holmstedt 1965).

ways be mixed with dampened lime²⁰⁴ before being snuffed. It is usually mixed with pulverized hemp leaves and flowers (ganja, bhang), thorn-apple seeds (*dhaturo*), tobacco leaves (*surti*), and mushrooms. To approximately five hundred grams of *Cannabis* are added ten grams of mushroom powder, then five grams of dried *Psilocybe* spp. and five grams of dried *Amanita pantherina*; both mushrooms have mutual control over each other's "poisonness." In other words—through this blend the product is no longer toxic! Could it be chemical synergy?

²⁰⁴ In other words, through the roasting and moistening the limestone becomes a sacred stone.



"Every shaman knows that the Kirati shamans have always used snuff for traveling. Every one of them knows that the Kirati use snuff as the "food of Shiva."

(MS)

A copy of a cliff drawing from Mohenjodaro that shows a peacock, the bird of shamanic flight and enlightenment, with an anthropomorphic mushroom in its body.

MANTRA: IN THE BEGINNING IS THE WORD

"In the beginning was the word and the word was God and it has remained one of the mysteries ever since."

BURROUGHS (1976, 5)

"All mantras come from the *phurba*, the Magical Dagger. The mantra is the shaman!"

(MR)

The poisonous plant Solomon's seal (*Polygonatum multiflorum* L., Liliaceae), known as *ek phale vikh* (Nep.), "instant death," is invoked with shamanic mantras in order to poison the bad spirits.

In the beginning was the sound OM. Out of this came the word "Om." Both sound and word are Shiva. Mahadev is the universe. Shiva gives the shamans their words, mantras, and charms, which they use for mastering the various realities and for exorcising diseases.

The shamans sacrifice their own lives for the lives of others, giving all that they have. They reveal everything about their art and about their knowledge. But there is one thing they will never reveal: their mantras, for these are their secret tools. They were bestowed upon them—and them alone—at the time of or during their calling. When a shaman betrays his secrets, he betrays himself. He will lose his power and be destroyed by a wrathful Shiva.

The mantras are the most important technique for a jhankri with healing powers. With them he is able to enter a trance, and, by using a traveling mantra, to travel through the three worlds and the eight directions. With them he invokes gods, spirits, and demons. With the help of mantras he is able to heal. Without mantras, a jhankri of Nepal is not a shaman!

There are mantras for every kind of disease. Those that a jhankri knows therefore make him a specialist for particular complaints, for not everyone has mastery of all mantras. There are mantras for toothaches, respiratory or joint diseases, and broken bones. The latter injuries are only helped when the mantra is spoken along with a *pungari* technique of exhaling and inhaling over the location of the break every day for a period of about two weeks. The *lingam mantra*, which is uttered in secret, is important in the mediation of arguments.

A special form of the mantra is called *mohani* (Nep., "love magic"). With this, the shamans transform their patient's hate into love, true to their way and their vows.

A shaman should know at least 108 mantras, equivalent to the number of gods. There are said to be jhankris who have mastery over 1,800 (or even millions of) mantras. We never found anyone, though, who knew such an astronomical number. The shamans retain their mantras for as long as they have teeth in their mouths. When their teeth fall out in old age, they also lose their mantras. A toothless shaman is in retirement.

There are also mantras that are not secret, for example the mantra invocations to Shiva. They always consist of three words, corresponding to the three worlds and techniques.

Mantras to Shiva

om	namah	shivayah
om	phat	shohar ²⁰⁵
bom	bom	shankar ²⁰⁶
bo	om	shankar
bo	aum	shankar
bom	shankar	jata
bom	bom	bhola ²⁰⁷
hari	om	takshat

²⁰⁵ "Om phat shohar!" has already been encountered in the chapter "The Three Worlds and Four Directions." This is what the shamans intone when they want to break through the boundaries of our world while in a trance: "OM, here I come!"

²⁰⁶ *Shankar[a]* = the Charitable.

²⁰⁷ *Bhola* = the Intoxicated.

How do Mantras Function?

We asked this question not only of ourselves, but also of the many researchers who wander (or have wandered) on the trails of the shamans. There have been scientists²⁰⁸ who believed that they would be able to snatch away the shamans' secret if they came into possession of their mantras.

With the mantras, the shamans evoke inner images—without the patients even noticing—that are so powerful that they influence the other reality, and in doing so alter the everyday reality in accordance with their desire. Mantras conjure a series of images from the invisible world.²⁰⁹ Painted synesthetically in sound, they correspond with their triad to the steps of a Western physician: they make a diagnosis, offer therapy, and heal.

Our positivistic and linear science has conditioned us to proceed from the assumption that a logical explanation exists for every phenomenon. Whatever we are not able to comprehend with our paradigms is considered either "impossible," "backward," or "superstitious." In the course of the historic study of shamanism, scientists have run into many limitations. Above all, this has occurred regarding the healing effects of secretly held, incomprehensible mantras. This is why the ethnologists have left open two little backdoors: "belief" and "placebo." A patient who goes to the jhankri "simply believes that he is going to be cured," or his mind thinks an inert substance to be medicine and thereby activates the patient's own powers of self-healing.

²⁰⁸ Mascarenic 1998.

²⁰⁹ In reference to this, see the two publications of Christian Ratsch 1984 and 1985.

In this regard, the shamans are superior to us. They do not precisely understand the Western approach to medicine, but they do not deny the nature of its reality. Jhankris are empiricists down to their very bones. They only do what works.

Even though we will definitely not be able to provide a satisfactory explanation for everyone concerning “how mantras function,” we have to state from experience: They heal. And they do so whether or not we believe in them!

For three weeks I was tormented with searing pain at the bridge of my nose and in my sinuses. From my high school days I was familiar with these episodes of unbearable pain that stayed with me for about a week at a time. For inexplicable reasons, this suffering had happily disappeared for about twenty years. Even though I had hoped each time that the agony would go away as quickly as possible, in retrospect I had indeed learned something: Health is not to be taken for granted and suffering is a part of life, which can really be enjoyed only when you understand that a joyful, healthy life is a gift!

Alas, it had gotten me again, this hellhole in my sinuses. I scarfed down the package of painkillers (Tramal) that I had brought with me. The pain remained. No mucus was loosened. To destroy the bacteria colony I prescribed myself a package of antibiotics (Doxycyclin 200). In the meantime I had the impression that the situation was improving. But the tablets still disappeared down my gullet; so did two more ten-dose packages of opiates, which I obtained without a prescription in Kathmandu. They caused a loss of appetite, powerful nausea, and vomiting. What wonderful side effects!

Claudia suggested I consult one of the shamans. But I thought such bacterial diseases were not within their area of responsibility. A stupid assumption!

Finally, we headed for the mountains. One evening, Mohan said casually that Maile’s main specialty was treating sinus problems. She had a very effective mantra for them. Electrified, I went to the Tamang shaman right away. The pain killers dampened the symptoms, but they had not left. Maile stroked the affected areas in a massage-like way with two fingers for about three minutes. She breathed in and out as usual and concentrated on her mantra. As if I were hit with an anesthe-



The Siddha (tantric master) Sangyay Yeshey protects himself with this phurba gesture before he goes into the mantra meditation consecrated to Yamantaka. (Woodblock engraving, Nyingmapa style)

tizing club, the underlying pain was blown away. I stopped taking the tablets immediately. (Perhaps the commercial interests of the pharmaceutical industry are the reason for the persecution and derision of shamans around the world?) I enlisted Maile’s healing power one more time, then the throbbing pain was banished.

Maile’s mantra is better than any medicine. Maile herself is better than any painkiller. (CR)

YANTRA, TANTRA, MUDRA

“Without a mantra,
you cannot eat.”

(MR)

Yantra

Yantras are used for some healing rituals, for example during the ritual of cutting the threads of fate (see page 43). While in the mountains we were witnesses to a dramatic healing event in which the *nava graha rekhi*—the yantra of the nine planets—stood at the center.

A German doctor came with us for part of the way. He wanted to know how shamans heal—and indeed he was in need of a healing himself, as different jhankris had determined during a number of visits, entirely independently of one another. Many of us are surrounded by greedy, resentful, and jealous people; this is a fact of which successful people of all cultures are especially well aware. Wounded or weak egos rob many people of their money, their love, or their reputation. A number of things had to be in place in order to disperse the shadows from the doctor’s past and enable him to make a path to a better future. In the following story of the nava graha rekhi (= yantra), we shall focus on the essential aspects of the healing (a whole book could be written on this subject alone in order to do justice to all the details).

The jekhana had indicated that the man’s life had been overshadowed by the influences of two planets: Sani, which causes stress and problems and can even

take away life (and thus sows fear and confusion); and Sankata, which brings financial difficulties and manifold dangers (and bestows an irritable and doubting mood). The nine-pointed nava graha rekhi star was painted on the floor in two colors with cornmeal and Kurkuma, as usual, in order to represent the feminine and the masculine.

Nava graha rekhi

The doctor is sitting on the place where the two planets are attacking him. He has a rope around his neck that is weighed down by a khukuri. The knife is supposed to scare the grahas with its metal blade and is an imposing symbol of what it is that “drags down” the person seeking help. The Tamang shaman is in a trance. He has greeted all gods and goddesses, called upon his helping spirits, and determined through the jekhana which houses the patient’s planets are located in. Then he rides on the spiritual white horse—the hoofbeats of which are mimicked by the drum—into the correct area of the three worlds in order to fetch help.

Jimin Graha, the demon that is pestering the man, stands vividly before him.²¹⁰ Danashing’s chalk-white face is meant to show respect for his supernatural opponent. Will he retreat from his charge? The jhankri

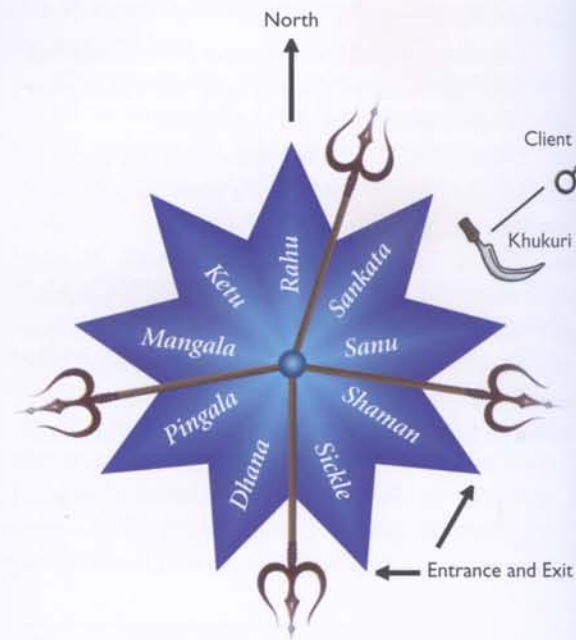
²¹⁰ A description of this visionary appearance is in Müller-Ebeling 2000.

An assistant paints the yantra *nava grahi rekhi* on a slate with the white and red powder, which stand for the masculine and the feminine aspects.

The two dangerous planets, Sanu and Sankata, are “trapped” by the two *trishuli*. Further Shiva tridents open the way to the two other directions of the heavens in order to liberate negative energies and to prevent the entrance of any new ones.

The five planets, Rahu, Ketu, Mangala, Pingala, Dhana, are connected counterclockwise to one another. The next is the exit with the sickle, and the entrance for the shamans. The patient takes his place in front of the planets with the negative influences.

This yantra is a fluid system. For the healing ritual it is necessary to “place” the positive planets—in this case Mangala—in such a way that the negative ones can no longer harm the respective human.



Nava graha rekhi



Danashing Tamang has smeared his face with ricemal to frighten the lurking *graha*, a negative planetary influence. It is supposed to leave the patient alone. Only then can the suffocating connection to the past be severed and the way be freed to new possibilities. Only then will the string that pulls the doctor to the ground be cut.

In all times and in all cultures, medicinal spells follow the same scheme: they are tripartite, like the three worlds and the three times, and are recited three times in a row. First they describe the condition of being, the present and the world of humans; then the cause of the disease, i.e., the past and the underworld; and finally the desired condition, therefore the way of healing in the healthy future—the upper world. With the completion of the spell this process is set in motion.

The healthy have many desires. The sick have only one: health.

The crystal in and of itself is a yantra; it is a natural yantra.

YANTRA, TANTRA, MUDRA

holds Jimin Graha in check with an impressive mudra dance. Danashing Tamang cannot kill him—he can only scare him. He must offer him a replacement for “his food that was stolen.” Demons, too, have to live. He therefore strews rice kernels seven times into each yantra point—each of which represents a planetary house—with the words: “I give you this nourishment. Leave him in peace!” Then he throws two khukuri knives and a sickle. The position in which they fall on the yantra reveals to the shaman that the demons are leaving their victim. They land on the diagram in the place where the positive planets are able to release their healing power (see image on page 182).

The extraordinary and dramatic event—in which the entire village takes part, cheering it on with shouts and laughter—now comes to a climax. A rooster is grabbed by the feet, carried to the patient—who still sits on the floor with a composed, but visibly moved expression, still bound by the khukuri—and is let free again. The bird runs out of the circle in the opposite direction. There is a sigh of laughter from all sides. The patient is freed from the claws of the demons! The rooster has run in the direction where salvation awaits, in the direction of the planet Mangala, which brings good. (If the rooster had run into the lap of the doctor, it would have been a very bad sign.) Now the animal must fulfill two last duties: it is captured and the body is wiped on the German in order to absorb all of the bad ener-

gies. Then it is decapitated. The demon needs this blood sacrifice in order to leave the people in peace. In the same moment, the *jhankri*'s assistants sever the connection between the man and the khukuri, and then destroy the yantra and the ricemal figures on the altar.

The blessing of the animal had preceeded the sacrifice. The rooster shook itself under the dripping water—this was likewise a positive parchhine oracle. Meanwhile, Danashing and his assistant are apologizing to the animal: “You have left your life for the man. Without you we would not have been able to heal him. We give thanks to you.” (CME)

We know now that the German doctor is better able to adequately defend himself against the greedy egos in his environment. In this case, the *chinta* aimed at improving the doctor's psychic condition and emotional state through the use of a yantra. Illness in Nepal always refers simultaneously to body, spirit, and soul. We asked the shamans who participated to explain the principles of the ritual to us. “Those who are being held in the suffocating grip of demons are not able to lead a healthy life. Some demons hide themselves in people who are in our environment, others hide themselves in planetary influences that exercise power over us for a certain time. In this instance, we saw that the power of this demon was indeed very great, but now it has been ended. As we



The sri yantra is the most important of all yantras. (No. 23)

established a connection to the past, by binding the khukuri knife with a string around the neck of the person we were able to make this burden apparent. When we cut the string, the burden is tangibly released and the person senses that things will now go better for him. But without the animal sacrifice it would all have had no purpose. The rooster has two legs like a human. He has a heart, a liver, and kidneys. He just looks a little different. In order for the demon to let go, he has to have compensation. The rooster was this compensation.”

Danashing Tamang added in closing: “When I go to a Western doctor, he takes my blood. I don’t know what he does with this blood sacrifice, but it appears to be very necessary.”

A yantra is the visualization of a mantra. It is not subject to a code of secrecy, but is there, out in the open and visible for the jhankri, the patient, and the audience. A yantra is a geometric diagram that depicts the temporal progression of a healing and helps give the patient the energy to figuratively visualize what is holding him captive, and thereby enables him to free himself from it. Yantras drawn on paper appear very abstract, but in the context of a shamanic treatment, they are extraordinarily gripping and dramatic. They are depictions of cosmic events, the macrocosm that influences the microcosm of humans.

Sri Yantra

The first of all yantras is the sri yantra. It is a magical weapon (*shastra*) of the shamans and an effective model of (tantric) meditation. It is constructed from triangles that create a total of forty-two (= 6 × 7) triangles (cf. Lawson 1992, 9). It is fractal, as is everything shamanic.

“The sri yantra is a nucleus of the visible and known, a diagram of interconnected lines in which the energies that are made visible are concentrated. There are different kinds of yantras and sri yantras in the great yantra. Other lesser yantras, for example the Om yantra or the Kali yantra, are clearly parts of the all-encompassing sri yantras,” said Surendra Bahadur Shahi who, as a painter, is very well versed with many iconographic source texts. “A permanent yantra can be made from many different materials. The most important are made from crystal. Its clear, colorless substance can be cut in such a way that the light collects in its point like an emblem. The all-encompassing reality is refracted in a colorless light containing all possible colors. A crystal therefore serves as the equation of the substance containing all substances” (SBS).

The order of yantras’ importance is different for

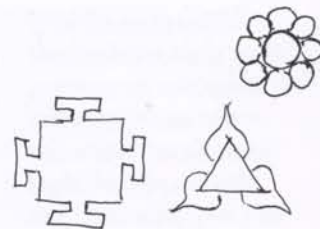
individual groups such as the jhankris, Brahmans, or gubajus. For example, the young gubaju Deepak Buddacharya said: “Mantra, yantra, and tantra are like proton, electron, and neutron.” For him, the mantra, yantra, and tantra correspond to the three blades or the three heads of the *phurba*. Together they form a *Vajrakila* triangle:



Mantra is the word, yantra is the geometric structure, and tantra is the technique or magic that enlivens everything.

Tantra

The tantric tradition plays an important role in Nepalese art. With the help of symbolic imagery, and in a vivid and impressive style, the thangka paintings reveal the profound philosophical significance of the tantric teachings that are essential in Vajrayana Buddhism: the union of man and woman is the union of god and goddess. In this way we humans are best able to grasp the intangible cosmic principle of the eternal coupling—of transformation, reproduction, and separation. Many people, though, confuse this symbolic



Three yantras which the gubaju Asha Ratna Bhajracharya uses together with *phurbas* for the release of demons. He traps the demons in the drawing and stabs them in it. (Drawing: Asha Ratna Bhajracharya)

In this detail of a thangka (No. 26b) the two most important ritual tools of the tantric oriented gubajus of the Newari can be recognized—the thunderbolt, *vajra*, which symbolizes the phallus, and the bell, *ghanta*, which represents the ringing feminine principle.

HARMONY BETWEEN MASCULINE AND FEMININE

“Those who are greedy or immature do not receive any tantra techniques. The tantrikas will only share their knowledge with those who are pure of heart, and who prove themselves to be worthy of using the powerful techniques of tantra in a moral and responsible way.”

DIPAK BUDDACHARYA

“One hand can’t clap,” say the Nepalis, and by this they mean that unity is first created with a man and a woman.

Tantra is the union of the masculine with the feminine on every plane. Harmony filled with energy creates *shakti*.

“In the universe of double meanings it is difficult [in tantric texts] to differentiate between the concrete and the symbolic. States of consciousness are expressed through erotic terms, and the mythological or cosmological vocabulary is filled with sexual meanings from hatha yoga. For example, the vulva is called the lotus (*padma*), the phallus is the thunderbolt (*vajra*), the menses is the sun (*surya*), and the coitus is the spirit of enlightenment (*bodhichitta*)”

RAHM-BONWITT
(1997, 152)

YANTRA, TANTRA, MUDRA

level of tantra with a catalog of sexual positions in the style of a vulgarized Kama Sutra.

The Hindu teachings on tantra say that the universe is propelled by *shakti*, the feminine, creative principle. It is married to the passive, masculine element of energy that is first activated by the feminine creative energy. Consequently, the feminine energy stands in the center of Hindu tantric sculptures, wedded (*mithuna*, Skt.) to the masculine energy. It is invoked in Shaktiism. In the Hindu context it is correct to refer to the feminine partner on a tantric depiction as “Shakti.”

In the Buddhist tantric tradition, on the other hand, the power relations follow a different order of priority. In this tradition, it is the masculine principle in which energy is embodied, and that pairs with the feminine. According to Vajrayana Buddhism, the universe is urged on by compassion, which is conceived of as being masculine, and wisdom, which is conceived of as feminine. When they join together the highest state of joy—nirvana—is attained. Therefore gods, the bodhisattvas of compassion, are depicted in the *yab-yum* position with their feminine counterparts of wisdom (*prajna*, Skt., = *yin* and *yang*) on Tibetan-inspired thangkas. In the Buddhist context, the feminine part is called “*prajna*” or “*yogini*”—but not *shakti*.

Our investigations in Nepal revealed that the meaning of the term *tantra* there bears little or no resemblance to the concept or projection of a cosmic-erotic unification, which has become established understanding in Europe. To put it succinctly, tantra is a teaching that results in magical effects through linking with cosmic energies. In response to our numerous questions about tantra, we always received the same answer from shamans: “Tantra is a magical action or technique.”

For the shamans, tantra is the magical activation of mantras, yantras, and mudras. Without a mantra, nothing is possible. No healing, no shamanic journey, no ability to influence reality. Tantra is the way and manner in which the mantra, yantra, and mudra are used for the benefit of the patient. For shamans, “tantra” is not a secret, dangerous affair, but a technique they have learned and use to help those who are ill. The fact that both masculine and feminine aspects must always be present, and that they must be united, is a truism for the shamans, as is the knowledge that the universe contains creative and destructive energy. The destructive cannot be destroyed, only soothed, trapped, or transformed. We could see how strongly this combination of masculine and feminine pervades every altar and every ritual object. Jhankris

are not ascetics. The way of sensual denial makes no sense to them, because it distances humanity from its natural roots.

In contrast, we noticed that during conversations with gubajus we repeatedly ran into limitations when discussing “tantra.” We came up against limitations in the verbal exchange, the intellectual foundations, and the mediation of knowledge. When gubajus are tantrikas, they protect their secrets, for it implies the ability to exercise power over negative forces.²¹¹ They only share their secrets with people whom they respect, whom they consider morally mature and worthy, and who treat responsibly the tantric techniques that they have learned. “If I have sons who wish to follow the family tradition as I have, and who wish to be initiated into the tantric teachings, I assess them for a long time to determine which one has a ‘good heart,’” explained the second highest gubaju from Svayambunath. “I pass on only certain things to those who have attained a certain age and spiritual maturity.” Which “certain things” he had in mind were not to be learned from this gubaju or from the others.

“A tantrika is like a judge. He sees a situation, and the negative and positive energies that are connected to it. First he deals with the negative energies. If they do not leave his ‘client’ alone and allow their destructive energies to continue undisturbed, then the judge, the tantrika, makes a decision to destroy them. The tantrika is able to do this with the help of destructive mantras and tantric magic,” according the highest gubaju of Patan, Asar Ratna Vajracharya.

The only two Newari castes that produce gubajus are the Buddacharya and the Vajracharya. The gateway to tantra is open to both of them. After all, the Buddacharya cultivated the tantric tradition. “They use the negative as well as the positive. For them, the doors in both directions stand open. They have mastered the tantric techniques in order to destroy the threat. It is dependent only upon their moral integrity whether or not they use their power for the positive, life-sustaining side, or use their abilities and the power of destruction to manipulate others.” So we heard from a gubaju from Patan. He was a member of the Vajracharya and knew a number of tantric techniques—although in his daily life as a priest they played an insignificant role: “We only act

²¹¹ A significant difference between the tantrism of the gubajus and the shamanic concept of tantra becomes clear with the following example: if a gubaju realizes that his opponent—who has likewise mastered mantras which allow him to manipulate good and evil—pursues negative intentions, then the gubaju “destroys their mantra” (information from Asar Ratna Vajracharya). On the other hand, a jhankri in such a situation can only use a *mohani*—a love spell—in his defense, in order to create a positive equilibrium for negative motivations. There is a tendency of both sides, gubajus and jhankris, to consider the work of the other as “dangerous.”

on the positive. We have less contact with the destructive. Therefore, we have little to do with tantra.” But as is so often the case in Nepal, the opposite is true here as well.



Responding to the question of the order of importance of mantra, yantra, tantra, and the mudra, the Patan gubaju Asar Ratna Vajracharya answered: “For me, tantra is at the beginning. I first consult my books and learn the specifically suggested techniques. That is tantra. Then I speak the mantra—which, without tantric techniques, remains ineffectual. The way in which I carry out the ritual, my *puja*, is yantra. Yantra is in the third place. Finally, I indicate with the mudra whom I want to consult.”

The hierarchy of importance of mantra, yantra, and mudra is different for gubajus, Brahmins, and jhankris. We have already discovered what the gubajus consider to be important. Now let us turn our gaze to the Brahmins and jhankris so as to be better able to understand what these four mysterious words signify to each group, and how they must necessarily follow one another.

We consulted the royal Brahman court shaman Muktinath Ghimire and the Gurung shaman and lama Indra Doj Gurung. They named two different sequences:

Gubaju	Brahmin	Jhankri
1. tantra	yantra	mantra
2. mantra	tantra	tantra
3. yantra	mantra	yantra
4. mudra	mudra	mudra

Mantra, Yantra, and Tantra are each in different positions for each of the three groups we asked. The last position is always taken by the mudra. But how do these four terms come into play among the Brahmins and the jhankris (who, in comparing the sequences for the three groups, were most similar to each other),²¹² and what do they mean? We asked both groups to give us examples from their daily ritual practice. The sequence was adhered to equally for all ritu-

als. The ritual that Brahmins and jhankris perform when a family member has died could serve as an example. The Brahmin said: “First I sit in a specific posture—that is the yantra. Without this body posture, the action that follows has no meaning. By speaking the Brahma Purana and the name of the dead person, I complete the tantra, the magical technique that sets the ritual action in motion. Then I speak a Vedic mantra and make the mudra of mortality, of the life that has been brought to a close, in order to guide the soul to a safe place” (MG).

The jhankri answered: “The very first thing I do is speak the Shiva mantra. Nothing can be brought to life without this mantra. It is the most important thing to a shaman. It is precisely the knowledge of the mantras that decides who is a good *dhami jhankri* (healer), as opposed to one whose efforts will always be in vain. For us, tantra is the way the altar is built. Tantra is a magical technique. Through the altar we are able to enter into a magical relationship with the cosmic energies which, in turn, bring about healing. Yantra consists of the ritual tools that we choose. The tools assist us in visualizing the evil-seeking forces as well as the healing forces that participate in the *chinta*. With the hand posture that points down or counterclockwise, the death mudra, we bring the life of the person to an end and secure for the deceased a place where his dead soul will not be able to harm the living” (IG).

Cosmology and Technology

upper world	<i>akash</i>	mantra	spells, magical words
middle world	<i>dharti</i>	yantra	magical diagrams, images of worlds
underworld	<i>patal</i>	tantra	funeral rites, union, sex

Mudra

The hand postures, the mudras, of the deities on the thangkhas are often puzzling. When we look to the iconographic literature for advice, we can learn, for example, that the gesture “do not fear,” *abhaya mudra* in Sanskrit, is when the hand is in front of the chest pointing up and the palm is facing the observer. In the mudra called *bhumispara mudra*, the palm is facing in and the tips of the fingers lightly touch the ground. This is how Buddha called for the earth to be his witness, in order to secure his victory over Mara, the demon of seduction.

However, mudras are used not only in remote regions; we make use of hand signals every day without being conscious of it. It is even possible to make ourselves completely understood beyond any doubt

“The unusual characteristic of tantra consists of the fact that—in contrast to all other known spiritual disciplines—it does not negate ‘evil’ but rather uses the liberating manipulation of it in order to help people.”

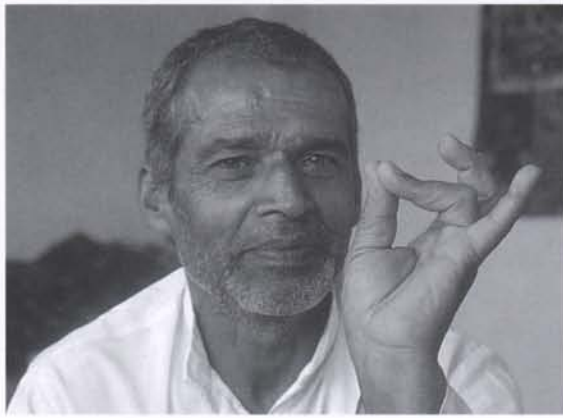
ARJAN (1978, 54)

TANTRA AND SEX

Sexual tantric techniques are carried out only in secret. They are not spoken about, and nothing can be learned about them unless you belong to one of the two castes of tantric priests of the gubajus, or you have been initiated by tantrikas. “When the two sexes are together, the negative is destroyed,” said the gubaju obliquely.

²¹² This closeness between the Brahmins and the jhankris can be explained historically, since the Brahmins have a longer tradition than the gubajus. See the chapter “The Way of the Gubaju and Tantrika,” page 29.

Left: The *puja* mudra.
 Right: The *stupa* mudra, an
 expression of peace.



internationally. Everyone understands that they are being instructed when the index finger is stuck straight out and the rest of the fingers are closed under the thumb. When the thumb is sticking straight up out of a closed fist, it expresses our agreement or our acknowledgment for something of high quality; if the thumb is pointing down, it is a bad sign.

Mudras collect energy. With them, we express our emotional state of mind and share its positive or negative significance unmistakably with our environment. “Every hand gesture is a mudra,” observed Mohan Rai, and with convincing hand signals he demonstrated in an entirely new light those gestures that we already knew well. With the prior knowledge that *rakshasa* is a demon, we were able to recognize immediately that when someone bangs their closed fist on the table, and is thus obviously defending themselves against an attack, the gesture is related to a *rakshasa* mudra. When we threaten our opponents with two closed fists, bundling our aggression into balls of fire, we are performing—without realizing it—the *agni* mudra (the fire mudra).

Mudras are signals of communication. We use them to make contact with gods and people, to connect with one another, to create boundaries, or to de-

fend ourselves against danger. When we greet each other, depending on our culture, we shake hands or bring our clasped hand to our forehead and bow with respect, demonstrating our social status.

For some shamans, it is obvious that the mudras play a significant role, depending on the family tradition and teachers. Danashing Tamang, for example, is never without mudras when he enters a trance or performs more extensive healing ceremonies. With a *phurba* in both hands, he defends himself completely tangibly with magical, flowing hand gestures against the attacking demons and enemy powers: “There are certain mudras that I use, but I don’t think about them when I am in a trance. The mudras simply flow into my hands and I instinctively make the right gestures.” In discussion with him, as well as with other Tamang and Sherpa shamans who use mudras, the origin of these magical hand gestures was revealed. It lies in the conjuring of positive energies and the exorcising of negative ones. This exorcism is in no way one of a symbolic character. The demons—whom the shamans are able to describe in every detail, because they can see them—react to it immediately. Mudras are also gestures of a magical martial art.

“A mudra is a focus
 of energy.”

ULRICH WALKER

Mudras in Daily Life

Pabitra Mudra	Thumb and little finger touch to form a circle, the rest of the fingers point straight up: gesture of divinity.
Shanti Mudra	Thumb and index finger touch to a circle and signify “peace” (or also “top quality”).
Angoti Mudra	The thumb makes a circular motion: “I am not so certain, how this will work out.”
Puja Mudra	Thumb and ring finger touch to form a circle: gesture with which the first drops of alcohol are offered to the gods.
Namaskara Mudra	The palms are placed together with the fingertips pointing up and then are brought to touch the forehead, throat, and heart. ²¹³ At the same time one bows reverently: “I greet the god in you.”
Tika Mudra	With thumb or ringfinger, the forehead mark is made with the pigment.

²¹³ The shamans address the upper, middle, and underworld with forehead, throat, and heart.



Danashing Tamang demonstrates the sequence of the *phurba* mudra, the gestures of the Magical Dagger.



The Brahman Muktinath Ghimire performs the *pinda* mudra to honor his recently deceased mother.

It has taken nearly twenty years for us to find a shaman who knows the mudras of the Magical Dagger—phurba mudra—and is able to perform them. This mudra is not a frozen gesture, but a series of movements. It is a loose sequence of hand movements made with a phurba in each hand. Danashing is the master of this mudra. All of the other shamans who saw him in action were at least as impressed as we were. They rarely witness such things themselves. Danashing becomes Mahakala, god of the phurba, the dancer of the Magical Dagger. He appears like a 3-D animation of a thanka. He becomes god. He fights the demons. It is like a boxing match. He says it is like a freestyle fight. He must maintain the correct hand postures, but he can use them according to the rules in a boxing match—corresponding to the opponent and his intuition.

The battles of the shamans are real, not merely symbolic. They are a martial art fitted to the situation at hand. Danashing is a powerful warrior and thus a successful and beloved healer. He is the master of the phurba. (CR)

The mudras that have been refined in religions throughout the world and are still cultivated today in tantric practice, are a later but tangible echo of this “violent” disagreement among humans, gods, and demons. In contrast to the mudras of the shamans, they have become symbolic gestures stemming from a process of cultivation that has increasingly distanced us from nature to such an extent that we have learned to shield ourselves from its forces. The genetic heritage of the mudras from shamanic primordial times is still encoded in us: for example, when we are sitting in an automobile and instinctively (but unnecessarily) stretch out our palms in front of us for protection when there is lightning and thunder outside, or when the shadow of a flying bird passes over the windshield.

NUMBER SYMBOLISM

Numbers serve mathematics. They have also served magic and symbolism since ancient times (i.e., in the Kabala, with the Pythagoreans, and in astrology; cf. Endres and Schimmel 1984). Numbers were discovered by humans. They are the intellectual heritage of humankind. To be precise, mathematics is not a natural science, but a purely intellectual one. In fact, there is no science that serves the human intellect so well as mathematics. It is only peripherally connected to nature. Nature is amorphic, and in the best case it is fractal, but it has its own ways that cannot be manifested in math or through any other form of human intellect. No animal would keep track of his life in numbers! Mathematics is a well-intentioned attempt



The *nigalo* bamboo with seven bushy stems—in the top picture on a Kirati altar—helps the shamans to orient themselves in the four directions and the three worlds. If there is no wild bamboo at hand, they cut other species into bushy stems.

When someone loses their soul, the thirteen sacred birds are sent out by the shamans to fetch it back.

“The third eye is the shamanic eye.”

to make certain aspects of nature more understandable for the brain.

Because as humans we carry in us a strong preference toward a systematization of our world and the cosmos, we have created numbers and their symbolism so as to better orient ourselves. It is fatal to consider numbers and math to be reality. This is nothing more than another, or rather a further, shadow of Maya!

Three is the center of the shamanic universe. But thirteen is the best shamanic number, expressing completion. It is the most important number in the shamanic mantras used for traveling and flying. Thirteen is constructed out of the twelve planets plus the

Number Symbolism, Especially Relating to Shamanism.

NUMBER	MEANING	NUMBER	MEANING
0	Ganesha	9	the center and the eight directions of the compass 3 x 3 the ladder to the heavens the five elements and the four directions nine rice balls or travel- <i>tormas</i> , which are placed on the altar during <i>chintas</i>
1	Unity of all things; the one way of shamanism <i>phurba</i> the shaman <i>bindu</i> , the mathematical point, the union of masculine and feminine	10	a mandala number: the eight directions of the compass as well as upper and lower (Lamaist) ten travel- <i>tormas</i> for the death <i>chinta</i> : 1 + 9: the shaman and the nine
2	Shiva and Shakti masculine and feminine	11	eleven riceballs for serious <i>chintas</i>
3	the three gods: Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva the three worlds: heaven, earth, underworld the three times: past, present, future the three eyes the drum: Shiva, Shakti, Bindu the sacred family: Shiva Parvati, Ganesha the three techniques: mantra, yantra, and tantra the three <i>phurba</i> blades the three poisons or basic evils: jealousy, hate, and ignorance the feminine three drummers in the Kirati shaman ceremony the three-part arrow the three sacred shaman mountains (<i>phurbas</i>) the three sacred deer (<i>mirga</i>)	12	a twelve-pointed antler as travel protection for the shamans 5 + 7 = 12, the completed circle
4	the four directions the four Vajrayoginis (= <i>brahis</i>) of the Kathmandu valley the four gods and four goddesses of the Kathmandu Valley the masculine the four-spoked <i>vajra</i> the heaven (<i>akash</i>) the four shaman gods: Shiva, Kali, Garuda, and Agni	13	the most important number of all for the shamans this number "provides good information" lucky number ²¹⁶ the 13 sacred birds
5	the center and the four directions the five elements: earth, fire, water, air, and ether (<i>pancha dhattu</i> or <i>panch rattna</i>)	15	symbol for peace and harmony (Kirati)
6	the tantric yantra of the union of masculine and feminine (<i>sri yantra</i>)	16	small millet-balls (<i>kodo</i>) for the <i>chinta</i>
7	the universe: the three worlds and the four directions humanity in the center and the worlds above and below as well as the surrounding worlds in the four directions the ladder to the underworld <i>patal</i> the seven tunnels which lead to the underworld the seven chakras the <i>sat muki rudraksha</i> , the "seven-mouthed" pearl the seven herbs in the incense blend	17	Cleansing in <i>mundum</i> (Kirati)
8	the eight directions of the compass the eight surfaces (or "houses") of the world-disc (<i>astha kanda</i>) the <i>astha naga</i> , the eight snakes of the underworld the "eight mothers of the gods" <i>astha matrika</i> ²¹⁵ the eight magical weapons of tantra the eight (Buddhist) symbols of good luck the eight-spoked <i>vajra</i> <i>astha graha</i> , the seven planets plus one	43	the number of days that the snake bodies are buried for the production of cains (<i>naga mala</i>)
		48	important number in the Tibetan calendar and in Tibetan astrology (4 x 12 years = "four [big] years"); insignificant in shamanism
		108	the positive gods the names of Shiva the beads in the chain (<i>mala</i>) (ideal) ingredients of the shamanic incense magical expression for "many" or "multitude" the complete tantra texts the 108 witches of the "witches' conference" 12 x 9 = 108
		360	the number of buffalos offered during the festival of Indrajatra (360=days of the year minus the five days that are dedicated to the gods who do not accept bloodshed or sacrifices)
		60,000	is a sacred number of the primordial history of shamanism is the beginning of civilization according to Kirati tradition

²¹⁵ The *astha matrikas* only play a very secondary role for the shamans in Nepal. They are important in the lives of the Chettri and the Brahmins.

²¹⁶ Thirteen was a sacred number for the Germans and the Celts of ancient Europe. Friday the thirteenth was a particularly sacred day for the love goddess Freya, from whose name "Friday" derives. The modern superstition of it being a "bad luck day" first came into existence during the demonization of the heathen gods and goddesses. In most ancient cultures (provided they are even interested in numbers), thirteen is sacred. For example, the heavens of the Mesoamerican Mayans consists of thirteen layers (Endres/Schimmel 1984).

shaman who finds himself in the center of them. Thirteen is also formed out of the shamanic cosmology: it is a *phurba*—or rather, the shaman himself—to which are added the four directions and the eight surfaces of the middle world. Maile said: “Thirteen is the shamanic number, the number of *dharti mata*, of mother earth. Because we are on the earth, we live on Mother Earth, we are the center of the earth. We learn from thirteen. It is our number.”

When the shamans travel, they invoke the number thirteen, after which it is broken down into the following segments: in front of every number there is zero, which stands for Ganesha, the elephant-headed god, the first shaman who must always be invoked first. Then comes number one: this is *bindu*, the cosmic-mathematical point of equivalent value to the *phurba* and to the *jhankri*. The number four follows next, which refers to the four directions or four shamanic gods: Shiva, Kali, Ganesha, and Agni (i.e., the shaman himself). After that, prayers are said for a considerable length of time (prayers are not liturgically prescribed, but come from the heart and the tradition of the individual). For the conclusion of the invocation, the eight surfaces of the world disks are invoked: they have the same significance as the eight good luck symbols and the eight shamanic weapons for fighting demons. All surfaces conceal the good gods as well as the vile demons—because everything is a part of our world.



The blossom of this high-altitude flower has the lovely name of *devi phul*, “goddess flower;” and is divided into seven segments which correspond to the seven directions of the shamanic realms. The *jhankris* recognize the cosmic symbolism of numbers in flower stems.

RITUAL INSTRUMENTS: THE TOOLS OF THE TRADE

An antique dealer in Kathmandu who has become a good friend—a Newari from the family of the alleged original Buddha—knows that I collect ritual tools. For this reason he keeps an eye out for things that might be of interest to me. One day I visit him in his store on Durba Marg, the street leading directly to the royal palace in Kathmandu. While we are having tea together, he takes a fantastic phurba from his safe. He has kept it for me for nearly a year. Many dealers, including some Germans, had tried to purchase the object in order to turn a profit by reselling it later. But this piece is too unusual simply to get rid of. It is a wooden Magical Dagger, wonderfully carved and lovingly decorated. I am very surprised when the merchant tells me that this piece came from the Kirati shamans in eastern Nepal or Bhutan. When he hands it to me with the traditional gesture of honor that is so typical of the Nepalis,²¹⁷ I feel a sudden bolt of electricity. He and his wife inform me that it is a bishowrup phurba—a complete representation of the universe. I buy the piece immediately—without haggling over the price (traditional Newaris do not like to do this)—because I have a meeting in the afternoon with Parvati Rai, our Kirati shaman. I must plunder my already overstrained bank account, but this is done “in the name of science,” after all. What is the meaning of money compared to such rare treasures? Later I show the beautiful wooden phurba to the Kirati woman. She looks at it for a while. Then she recites her secret phurba mantra—and immediately falls into an intense, body-shaking trance for about twenty seconds. The Magical Dagger is alive! It is extremely powerful—clearly a Kirati magical tool. A bolt goes through me almost as strongly as it does through her.

Naturally, I am happy that I haven't thrown my money out the window. We are both impressed by the surprising experience. Shamans do not usually go into a trance during the afternoon, but the dagger was so powerful. She said that this phurba bestows happiness, protection, clear thoughts, and health when it is carried next to the heart. During the short vision, she had seen that it is related to a Budhanilkantha phurba. It is a Magical Dagger that is directly connected to the last Kirati king of Nepal (in the seventh century)! I am amazed. Budhanilkantha is usually considered to be a representation of Vishnu dreaming and swimming in the primordial ocean. What does Vishnu have to do with

²¹⁷ The respective object is presented with two hands to an older person, or to someone to whom you pay respect. The right hand holds the object, the left hand holds the right arm from below, supporting it.



a ritual dagger that is otherwise usually connected to Shiva? For the shamans, the answer is very simple. After all, everything and everyone is a manifestation of Shiva. Thus Vishnu, resting on the world snake and dreaming the world into being, is also a shaman who drifts in the nectar, a primordial breath of the universe who remains in visions and in a trance.

Parvati hands the phurba back to me. I quickly wrap it up in rice paper and stow it in my pack. Something like this does not belong in a museum, but rather on an altar. (CR)

The entire shamanic (as well as tantric) cosmology is expressed in ritual tools, altar objects, altar plants, sacred stones, musical instruments, and costumes. Each piece has meaning; each piece represents an element of the shamanic cosmos. As a result, things such as these that are visible to everyone are of great importance. The altar is the interface between spirit and matter.

The shamanic healing ritual (*chinta*) takes places in the normally invisible world and is a drama, a performance, a *tragedia*. It could almost be described as an acting out, à la gestalt therapy, of the events in the other worlds—the reality of which, unfortunately,



Above left: The temporary shamanic altar built upon the base of the rice basket. Above right: The peacock feather on the shamanic altar represents the “art of flying.”

Vishnu, who sleeps and dreams on the snake raft, is the center of the universe according to the beliefs of the Nepalese Hindus. Stone sculpture, 642 C.E. Budhanilkantha, approximately 17 km north of Kathmandu.

The villagers have gathered by dim light in front of a Tamang house in Kirthali to watch a healing ritual (*chinta*), which brings variety to daily life.



The yarn cross or “demon catcher” for the Kirati altar is called *chhatri*, which means “umbrella” or “mushroom.” In front of them, in the bowls fashioned from sal leaves, are three “jewels” made of clay. When these are combined together with the shaman, four sacred stones are created—the consciousness of the shaman is the fourth stone.

remains hidden to most people. Shamanic rituals and shamanic ritual objects make understandable or obvious for the patient and the audience those things that are otherwise accessible only to the specialists through their trances and visions. Every shaman must also be a good entertainer. This is the reason why many ethnologists are under the false impression that shamanism is a form of “symbolic healing” (see, for example, Eigner 1998). Shamanizing is a direct intervention into reality. It is only the performance and tools that have a symbolic meaning—for the audience.

There is a current trend in modern academic ethnology to no longer place any value on the “material culture” of an ethnic group (in the past this was often a very tedious and boring pursuit). Nevertheless, our research has revealed that it is precisely the individual material objects that are of a central cultural significance, and spiritual content is only revealed through the medium of the material. Shamans of all cultures use material objects because they are the connecting link between matter and spirit. The matter has to be filled with the corresponding spirit, otherwise it is useless. Perhaps in order to be able to understand and respect it, one must first experience the material in a trance. The matter (the word means “from the mother”) is the real mystery. Without matter, without the “mother,” life is unimaginable.

The Kirati altar is structured significantly differently from the shamanic altars of all other ethnic groups. In principle, it is divided into three parts, just as the gods, the worlds, and the times are. In the

middle stands a bamboo stick, a reminder of the seven chakras. In front of the “chakra spinal column” stands a calabash, a bottle gourd (*wabub*). Big-bellied like Ganesha, it is considered by the shamans to be a *phurba*. Beneath the center of the universe, i.e., beneath the central *phurba* with the seven chakras, there is a spiritual fence consisting of nine small bamboo twigs (*bandhare*). This is the “fence of the world.”

There are tantric altars that appear to be very shamanic, particularly when a *phurba* has been placed in the middle (cf. Karmay 1988, pl. 43). To the shamans, the altars of the tantrikas are sometimes too dainty.



Unlike all other altars of the Nepalese shamans, the Kirati altar is dominated by bamboo. The number of its tufts embodies the seven chakras, the three worlds, and the four directions.

The Shamanic Ritual Objects

(List compiled according to information from Maile Lama; she "saw" all of these objects in the cave of the Ban Jhankri during her calling. Cf. page 25)

ALTAR OBJECTS

<i>bumbal/kalasha</i>	water pitcher, preferably made of copper or brass
<i>dalo/nanglo</i>	basket/rice basket, made from bamboo
<i>kasethaal</i>	rice plate
<i>setho dhago</i>	white yarn, made from cotton
<i>dhupauro</i>	incense basins, incense bowls, including incense stick holders
<i>diyo</i>	oil lamp
<i>chindo</i>	calabash
<i>totalaka phul</i>	seeds from <i>Oroxylum indicum</i> (L.) Kurz, (= Tatelo) Bignoniaceae (= Indian trumpet flower)
<i>garuda</i>	bird beak
<i>dumsiko kada</i>	porcupine quills

STONES (DHUNGA)

<i>vajra dhunga</i>	Thunderbolt; prehistoric stone ax
<i>saligram</i>	fossil (ammonite)
<i>shila dhunga</i>	rock crystal
<i>kurin dhunga</i>	garnet

TOOLS, INSTRUMENTS, ETC.

<i>phurba</i>	Magical Dagger
<i>denguru</i>	shaman's drum
<i>gaja</i>	beater (for the shaman's drum), from the <i>Smilax</i> sp. called <i>kukur daino</i> , a plant in the Lily family (Liliaceae)
<i>shanka</i>	conch shell trumpet, from <i>Turbinella pyrum</i> or other species
<i>trishul</i>	trident
<i>cimtra</i>	fire tongs
<i>ghanta</i>	bells, made from metal
<i>kapala</i>	skull cap bowl, made from a human skull
<i>barad</i>	horn trumpet, made from the horn of the Tibetan antelope (<i>chiru</i> or

Pantholops hodgsoni); Skt. *mirga*, a symbol of the Lord of the Animals (Pashupati)

<i>kartika</i>	chopping knife
<i>bancharo</i>	ax
<i>hashja/khurpa</i>	sickle
<i>karda</i>	small knife (part of the khukuri equipment)
<i>nalihar</i>	thigh bone trumpet, made from human bone, preferably from buried shamans or lamas.
<i>kucho</i>	broom, made from <i>Amrisau</i> grass [<i>Thysano laena maxima</i> (Roxb) O. Kuntz, syn. <i>T. agrostis</i> Nees; Gramineae]

CLOTHING, JEWELRY, ETC., OF THE (TAMANG) SHAMANS

<i>rudraksha</i>	chain of 108 <i>rudraksha</i> beads (= seeds of <i>Elaeocarpus</i> sp., in particular <i>E. sphaericus</i>)
<i>naga mala</i>	snake-chain, made from the spinal columns of all species
<i>ghanti mala</i>	bell chains (= <i>jhankri mala</i>)
<i>marensi mala</i>	"skull necklace," made from carved bone beads (today most are made from yak bones, earlier ones were made from human bones.)
<i>kauri mala</i>	cowry shell chains (<i>Cypraea</i> spp.; cowry shells, usually the money-cowry which comes from the Indian Ocean.)
<i>rittha mala</i>	chain, made from the black fruits of the <i>Sapindus mukorossi</i>
<i>luinche re</i>	bird feather(s), from the wild chicken (<i>Gallus gallus</i>)
<i>mayur koponkha</i>	feather crown, made from male peacock feathers (<i>mayur</i> = peacock, <i>Pavo cristatus</i>)
<i>jama pagari</i>	costume (<i>jama</i> = dress; <i>pagari</i> = crown/headband/feather crown from [peacock] feathers)

"All shamans are able to fly in the same space together. Only their presentation, their 'performance,' is different and varied according to culture."

"Vishnu sleeps. Like a spider who has climbed up the threads that had once issued forth from its own organism by pulling them back into itself, the god has taken the Web of the Universe inside himself. . . . The Lord of the Cosmos spends the Night of the universe on the ocean of snakes of his own immortal substance."

HEINRICH ZIMMER
(1984, 44)

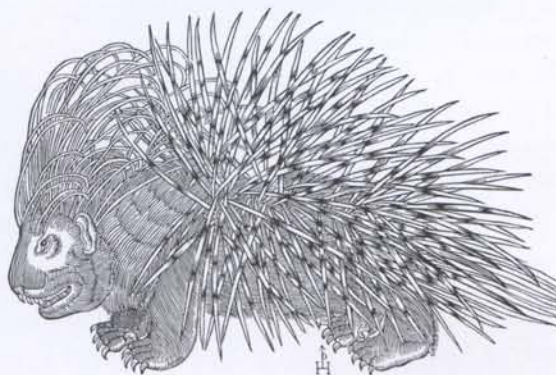
Shamanism cannot be understood without understanding the significance of the shamanic ritual tools, just as the spirit cannot be comprehended without matter.

"The soul is the splendid garden of the higher self, and the flowers with which one decorates its sign, the *linga*, are an expression of what is growing inside. They are the thoughts, hopes, wishes, and dreams that bloom inside of us. Therefore one should sacrifice the most beautiful and the freshest blossoms, preferably from your own garden."

STORL (1988, 194)



There are shamanic figures made from wood and figural castings of brass which are placed on the altars of shamans or tantrikas.



The porcupine (*Hystrix*), the quills of which are used as magical arrows. (From: Gesner 1669)

RIUAL INSTRUMENTS: THE
TOOLS OF THE TRADE



The trident (*trishul*) of Shiva in the temple of Patan.

All altar objects have to be “found” in dream-visions, even if it sometimes simply means finding the right merchant or craftsman. The *jhankris* are led to the respective tree from which the drum should be made or to the location where they will find a crystal, horn, or other important natural material.

“The *trishul* always stands above all other objects.”

(MR)

“The *bumba*, the water pitcher, is a healer.”

(MR)

Why else is the material culture there, if not to reveal the spiritual world?

Altar Objects

In Nepal, every shamanic altar (*than*) can look different in terms of construction and in the placement of objects on it. The variety of the objects on it fluctuates as well. Thus, the Kirati altar looks significantly different from an altar of the Tamang, Gurung, Sherpa, or others. The altars of the Magar, the Brahmins, and the Chettri are also, in turn, composed differently. It is like mathematical set theory: many objects, when classified in different fields, can produce numerous overlapping sums.

An altar is a cosmogram; in other words, it is a depiction or representation of the cosmology. Just like the *tantrikas* and the *gubajus*, the shamans have house altars as well as portable ones for their practice. The portable altars include as many objects as a shaman can carry comfortably through the Himalayas, or as many objects as his or her assistants can carry.

The cotton thread (*setho dhago*) is important for the construction of the altar. With it, the four directions are symbolically bound together. The wicks of the oil lamps (*diyo*) are made with thicker yarn; they are also used for the fire-eating (see the chapter on “Shakti, the Shamanic Energy,” page 118.)

There are often altars depicted on tantric *thangkas*. They resemble shamanic altars in terms of their structure and composition. The visionary altars of the Fifth Dalai Lama, for example, have the appearance of shamanic altars. For the transformation of black, vile ghosts (*gtor-zlog*), he painted an altar showing a *phurba* in its center on a tiger fur inside of a triangle (Karmay 1988, pl. 43). It could be assumed that this might be a typical shamanic altar. Nevertheless, all of the shamans whom we asked immediately said that this image was Lamaist–tantric. (When a person understands one thing, it is all too easy for him to believe that he is therefore able to understand something else.)

The Trident—*trishul*

In European culture, the trident was the symbol of the sea god Poseidon/Neptune. In the early modern era, it became the emblem of the devil, of Satan. In the Himalayas, the trident is a divine symbol because it encompasses the three worlds, the three times, and the three aspects of Shiva (Brahma, Vishnu, Mahadev). What is sacred to one, is diabolical to the other.

Ideally, all shamans should have a trident on their altars. It is seldom seen on portable altars, but it is sometimes seen on house altars. Because all shamans carry a *phurba* with them, all three worlds and times are present, and thus the trident is as well.

The trident is almost always seen in conjunction

with the *tantrikas*. Many *sadhus* also carry a trident with them which is usually large in size. Their *damaru* drum is often hanging from it.

The trident should always be forged from copper, since the red metal is connected to all three worlds (see the chapter “Sacred Metals,” page 242).

The Vessels of the Shamans

Just as the body of a man serves as the vessel for his soul, there are numerous vessels that serve the shamans. Depending on the tradition and individual knowledge, different vessels are used:

Water Pitcher—*bumba*, *kalasha*

In supply stores, adherents of Tibetan Buddhism (= Lamaism) as well as shamans (who presumably make up the smaller portion of the clientele) can obtain *bumba* sets consisting of a pitcher and a fan, the latter being made of peacock feathers and *amrisau* grass. The copper or brass pitcher, with its large opening on top and its curved spout and round body, is identified with big-bellied Ganesha (the spout is his trunk). It is also identified with the lingam of Shiva that is stuck in the pitcher, which is considered to be a *yoni*. The *bumba* obtains a “head” only when a bunch of *titepati*, *rao phul*, *bimsen phul*, or some other herbs and/or peacock feathers are stuck into it. The peacock feathers are the original symbol of shamanic power and of flying and of healing. Even the popular god Krishna still wears a peacock feather in his hair, a vestige of primordial times.

For the Newari, too, the *bumba* represents the important god Ganesha. The Newari *bumbas* (*ante*) are often made out of silver and are richly decorated



Kirati *bumba* made from a gourd with a *phurba* (left) and brass *bumba* with fan-shaped peacock feathers.



Left: A *bumba* is depicted on the wall next to the water spout.

Middle: Maile honors the *bumba*.

Right: The typical Nepalese water pitcher or *bumba*.

or even set with jewels. The neck is somewhat longer, and more often than not it comes out from the mouth of a *makara*.

The *bumba* is also used on the shamanic altar as an incense holder. Three sticks are placed in the water-filled pitcher—one for each of the three worlds. The shaman takes the smoke with him when he flies out of the pitcher.

The Rice Basket, the Basic Element of the Shamanic Altar

The rice basket (*dalo/nanglo*), which is woven out of bamboo and has four small feet corresponding to the four directions, forms the center of the portable shamanic altar. Even the tantrikas and lamas use rice bas-



The rice basket is the foundation of the shamanic altar—just as it is the foundation of life in the Himalayas.

kets on their altars, especially in cases where the protective Magical Dagger should, or must, be placed standing up (either for the patients or the clients).

When a shaman fills the basket with rice (*bhat*), it becomes *prasad*, “offering food.” After it is consecrated, it turns into “sacred food” (*akshyata*). If this rice, used ritually and thus enriched, is cooked afterward, it contains a life-extending and health-generating energy; in other words, it turns into *amrita*.

In Asia, rice means life. When the rice panicles ripen, they give birth to life. Rice preserves the lives of those who eat it daily, and life is brought to a close with kernels of rice. Shamans, tantrikas, or lamas throw mantra-loaded rice kernels over the corpse. The rice is like Shiva himself. For every person in the Himalayas, rice is the very first sacrificial offering. In addition, beer can be fermented from rice (*chhang*, *thun*), or *rakshi*, clear schnapps that Shiva loves, can be distilled from it. The basic food is thus transformed through an alchemical process into *amrita*, the elixir of life.

The rice plate, called a *kasethaal*, is a centerpiece of the altar. It is approximately thirty centimeters in diameter and is customarily made out of brass. It is filled with some rice and on top of this is an oil lamp (*diyo*). Sometimes animal horns or a Magical Dagger are placed on it. The rice plate also serves as a drum during the Kirati ceremonies. In addition, it is the place where the money given to the practicing shaman is offered.

Chindo, the calabash made out of a gourd, is of

Hinduism has inherited the sacred number three from shamanism. This trilogy is still alive in the pantheon of the Hindu world and beyond, in all religions of the world which came into existence long after shamanism.

Hinduism recognizes three color groups: *sattvik*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. *Sattvik*—the color of purity and thus the highest castes includes white, silver, gold, and yellow. *Rajas* (all shades from pink to red to purple) is connected with the feminine, fertility, and the power of the creations. *Tamas* symbolically leads to death, destruction, and transitoriness. Black, brown, and dark blue are included here.

(TAKEN FROM ALLEN 1996)

“If a chemist does not become a mystic, then he is not a chemist.”

ALBERT HOFMANN
(CONVERSATION 1999)

RITUAL INSTRUMENTS: THE
TOOLS OF THE TRADE



Black four-armed Mahakala, one of the many manifestations of Shiva. (No. 27)



Mahakala, a wrathful appearance of Shiva. (No. 39)

Left: The original “incense bowl” (*dhupauro*) is nothing more than a round slab of stone, such as this one here which is used by shamans on Kalinchok.



Right: *Garuda phurba*, bird claws, “Garuda” beak on a shamanic chain, and bronze *Garuda* statue.



“In the beginning everything was made from clay. The *bumba*, too, was first made from clay. Only later did the lamas begin to use metal.”

(ML)

The incense bowl is a kind of funeral pyre for the plants that are sacrificed on it.

“Among the birds, the crow is very important for the shamans, but the *garuda* is the most important.”

(PR)

“The *garuda phurba*, also called the *chachara*, should also never be used while one is eating, pissing, or shitting,” Mohan Rai said explicitly.



The *phurba* is mentioned in the *Garuda Purana*. This *garuda phurba* which was found in Kathmandu is said to be around 180 years old. Informants attribute it with a “Mongolian” heritage.

fundamental significance for the *mundum* of the Kirati shamans.²¹⁸

Dhupauro, the Incense Bowl

There is no shamanic ritual without the incense bowl. Sometimes it is merely a stone plate the size of an LP record, but mostly it is a bowl made from clay, approximately sixteen centimeters in diameter. In these cases, the *dhupauro* belongs more to the realm of shamanism. Sometimes a *dhupauro* of the same size is made out of brass (*li*), in which case it is related more to the *tantrikas* and *lamas*.

The incense bowl is filled with glowing wood coals before the *chinta*; naturally this is done with the fire tongs. After it has been set in front of the altar, the incense chosen for the ritual is strewn over it.

During the ceremony, it may happen that the shaman uses the tongs to take out a wood coal in order to light incense or cigarettes. While in a trance he also reaches into the incense bowl in order to swallow glowing coals.

The incense bowl is a kind of alchemical hearth. Upon it the sacred flora is transformed into divine smoke, which turns into *amrita*. The fire god Agni sits in the *dhupauro*. He is the Vedic god who transforms nature into culture, who supports our digestion, and who makes the distillation of spirits, and of the spirit, possible. For this reason, the generally plain incense bowl is decorated with the *makara*, the giver of *amrita*, or with the salamander/lizard.

The Beak of *Garuda*

Some shamans use the beak of a bird as an object on their altars or as an element of a *mala*. Usually they use the beak of a *danesha* (Nep.), or even one from the great hornbill (*Buceros bicornis*), a bird related to the tucan and which is known as *garuda* (in Kirati). The great hornbill is the most sacred of all birds and lives primarily in the tropical foothills of the Himalayas, for example in Corbett National Park (India)

and in the Terai in Chitwan National Park (Nepal), but it also lives in the higher regions at elevations of up to two thousand meters (Grewal and Pfister 1998, 26). It builds its nest in tall trees and feeds mostly on fish. It is said to eat snakes as well, especially when it sees that someone is being attacked by a *naga*. The great hornbill is immune to poison.

If the head or beak of the great hornbill is added to a *rudraksha* chain, a foot should also be added; *Garuda* is then represented from head to foot, so to speak.²¹⁹ Indra Doj Gurung has also added the feet of a female peacock to his *garuda mala* to establish cosmic and energetic harmony. Because the male peacock is present in his feather crown, the feminine counterpart must be found somewhere in his costume; here again we encounter the formula, “from head to foot.”

There are also *phurbas* that correspond entirely to *Garuda*, with iconography that is wholly based upon it. They are called *garuda phurbas* (= *chachara*). Magical Daggers such as these have a bird head on the grip. The great hornbill itself is already a *phurba*. Sometimes the shamans even say that the *makara* mouth over the *phurba* blade represents *Garuda*.

There are also old or antique rings made from metal alloys corresponding to or resembling the *thog lcag*, and that represent *garuda phurba* or *garudakila*. Both Maile Lama and Parvati Rai have seen such rings on shamans. According to their reports, such iconographically and specifically defined Magical Daggers (whether they are a finger ring or a ritual tool) are particularly appropriate for the healing of snake bites, but also for the treatment of all poisonings (from “all poisons of the earth and the water” MR), for animal bites, or for contact with certain plants.²²⁰

²¹⁹ In Naga-land, the great hornbill is carried by warriors (cf. Jacobs 1990). In other Southeast Asian countries, for example Papua New Guinea, the skulls of the great hornbill are used as talismans and as shamanic tools.

²²⁰ In this context, the tibetophilic catalogue text by Essen and Thingo in the *Die Götter des Himalayas* (1989, 272) concerning a *garudakila* is laughable: “The use of the ancient *phurba* cannot be easily explained. It might be pre-Buddhist.” One need only ask a shaman; the blindness will soon disappear.

²¹⁸ The calabash serves the tribes people, for example the *nagas*, as beer bottles (Ganuli 1993, 22)

Thog lcag phurba, “the First Magical Dagger”

On the high plateaus of Tibet small metal objects called *thog lcag* (Tib., spoken “toksha”) “first iron” are occasionally found. These objects are said to have fallen from the heavens and are very valuable to the Tibetans and the Sherpas (Ronge 1982, 353). Depending on their form—animal figures, rings, belt buckles, or ring fibulas—they serve as amulets and talismans for specific purposes (such as protection for animals and for making bridles; or for humans as good luck charms, disease repellants, and protection against demons). The *thog lcags* considered to contain the most powerful magic are those of the demon-destroying *Garuda*, or those akin to small *phurbas*. Archeologists consider these artifacts to be bronze fragments from prehistoric nomads who probably descended from Scythian tribes that rode on horseback (cf. Franzka 1989; Weihreter 1988, 55).

Garuda phurbas are even said to be used by Brahmans, or were used by them at one time. Unfortunately, the Brahmans of today are more interested in beer, whiskey, and tomatoes²²¹ than they are in the earlier shamanic tradition. Therefore there is little information available about their use in this context.

Porcupine Quills—*Dumsiko kada*

A bundle of porcupine quills wrapped in fabric is found in the middle (*bindu*), the mathematical center, of the altar of the Kirati shaman Parvati Rai. Individual quills, which can grow to be thirty centimeters long, are used for certain diseases and for a certain type of acupuncture. While other jhankris use these sharp “mini *phurbas*” as well, only the Kirati know a divinatory technique using milk and alcohol (which create *amrita*) that is used to determine the potency of the quills. Parvati considers the porcupine (*Hystrix indica*) to be a type of “missing link” between birds and mammals.²²²

The porcupine quills drive away demons and protect the altar. One cannot, however, use just any quills. Only those specimens are suitable that have been found on the forest floor in a dream vision or during other travels. The Kirati fly through the forest and discern immediately whether the quills are alive

or dead. If they are not entirely certain, they place the quills they have collected into a bowl of milk or alcohol. If the quills begin to move, they are “alive.” For talismanic protection, two quills are required. The quills have a rare quality: both ends are equally sharp. Thus they are stuck in the living porcupine in just the same way that they are supposed to be stuck into the demon.

There are some shamans who make their “feather crown”—which should really be made from peacock feathers—out of porcupine quills (*dumsi*), and as a result this looks slightly shabby, like a somewhat chewed up and plucked shaman’s crown.

The bunch of feathers in the bamboo pipe (*bas*) comes from the male *luinche* bird. It is only used by Kirati shamans. Included together with the bamboo pipe (*pohnhat* Kir.), it is regarded by them as a *phurba* and helps them to fly into the heavens.

Plants for the Altar and for the Tools

Plants play a central role on the altar and in the drama of the world. They are extremely important for shamans because they connect them to nature and to the three worlds. Plants serve not only as traveling herbs, but also as protection and as decorations for the altar. Plants are sacred and are inhabited by *devas* (cf. Storl 1997). For the shamans, they are divine creations, just as is every living creature. In combination with shamanic or tantric mantras, plants have the power to transform water into *amrita*.

Mugwort and Other *Amrita* Plants

In German, mugwort (*Artemisia* spp.) is known as *Beifuß*. *Bei* means “by” or “at,” and *Fuß* means “foot”—thus the name describes its habitat: the edge of paths and roads. All varieties of mugwort throughout the world are considered to be guides and traveling companions on the shamanic path.

In Nepal, everyone says that mugwort or *titepati* is the primary shamanic plant. It is practically impossible to erect a shamanic altar without mugwort.²²³ Because mugwort is a very common and widely distributed plant, it is usually not difficult to collect and harvest the herb immediately and at all times, for any purpose.

Through mugwort, everything on the shamanic altar becomes *amrita*, above all the water in the *bumba*, the pitcher, which represents the shaman and Ganesha himself. The grass known as *amlisau* or



The iron figures which are occasionally found on the high plateaus in the mountains are called *thog lcag*. It is believed that they “fell from the heavens.” They probably, however, have to do with artifacts from Mesopotamian cultures which found their way to the far reaches of the “roof of the world” during earlier trading routes. Those who carry them are protected from bad luck.



A *thog lcag* in the form of Garuda from the high plateau of Tibet. The depiction is ancient and is strongly reminiscent of Mesopotamian images of bird-people.

²²¹ Brahmans have a peculiar fear of plants in the nightshade family, similar to that of the Anthroposophists. Potatoes do not make you dumb, but rather they have saved the lives of millions of people!

²²² This view contains a paleontological understanding that corresponds with the scientific pioneers Charles Darwin and Ernst Haeckel, who at present are so strongly criticized. It is indeed bewildering when esoterically oriented authors (Eichelbeck 1999) speak of an “error of the century,” meanwhile it is especially this which the shamans are not taken in by. That Uwe George, the science editor of *GEO*, fostered this idea is thoroughly understandable, since unfortunately scientific pioneers did not always only rarely develop long-lasting belief systems.

²²³ *Artemisia nilagirica* (Clarke) Pamp., syn. *Artemisia vulgaris* auct. non L., *Artemisia vulgaris* var. *nilagirica* C.B. Clarke, contains thujone, “the concentration of compounds varies according to the elevation at which it appears.” (Cf. Guha Bashi et al. 1999, 129.)



The flowering *amlisau* grass (*Thysandaena maxima*) shows its erect profile; it represents the primordial ocean out of which all life was churned, as well as the elixir of life (*amrita*). It is the grass used by the witches for handicrafts, and is the grass which transforms the water in the pitcher into *amrita*. It is a sacred broom and a divine plant as well. It assists healing and profane cleansing.



amriso *Thysandaena maxima* [Roxb.] O. Kuntze, Gramineae) serves the same purpose when the flower panicles or the fresh leaves are stuck into the *bumba*. This is apotropaic (it protects) against witches and also transforms water into the elixir of life.

If there is no mugwort on hand, or if it is the right time of year, the *rato phul* (Nep.), the “red flower,” called *deu nigalo* in Tamang, “bamboo of the gods” (*Lobelia pyramidalis* Wall, Lobeliaceae), is stuck into the *bumba*. In an emergency, the worm plant in the Goosefoot family (*Chenopodium ambrodioides* L.) can be used as a substitute. In the mountains, juniper *Juniperus* spp.) is often used in place of mugwort. A few hemp leaves and thorn apple fruits are commonly seen as altar plants. They are supposed to bring Shiva or Mahakala happiness. The psychoactive night jasmine or *hasana* (*Cestrum noctrum*) is also placed into the *bumba* as an *amrita* plant; this is especially the case among the Kalinchok shamans.

Sometimes other flowers or fruit are placed on the altar, for example elder flowers. The elder is a sacred plant in all cultures where it grows wild. In Germanic areas it was sacred to the love goddess Freya or Holle, which is why it is also called *Hollerbusch* (the bush of Holle) in German. It is the bush behind which “certain things” are done. The same is true in Nepal, where it is called *kanika phul*, “fox flower” (*Sambucus canadensis* L.). It is a protective plant of the gods. It is said that the gods, above all the *devis* and Kali, come and sit on the leaves of the branches on the altar.

Grasses (primarily *amlisau*), the night jasmine (*Cestrum nocturnum*), and *rato phul*, the “red flower,” are used as *amrita* plants.

Red is the color of Kali and the color of women. The feminine element is represented on the altar by the blood-red plant (*Lobelia pyramidalis*). “It is always blooming, like life, which always renews itself. We plant them therefore around our houses and offer them to the goddess. Because they are so small and unassuming, they represent everything that we would often neglect in life” (ML). Other red flowers could also be used to show respect for the feminine principle.

Kera, the Banana

The banana bush (*Musa paradisiaca* L.) is the world tree, and thus it is the *phurba*. (See the section “Cutting the Threads of Fate,” page 43.)

Bamboo, an “Herb for All Worlds”

The bamboo represents the world tree, the *axis mundi*, and the cosmic *phurba*. Its segments show the nine steps to heaven and the seven steps to the underworld, or the seven chakras that pulsate with life energy through human beings. This plant is most indispensable for the altars of Kirati shamans. “We can make many things out of bamboo: mats for the house walls and roof and tools for daily or ritual use. We can build scaffolding or decorative objects with bamboo. We need bamboo for every kind of ceremony—for death ceremonies as well. The flexible and quickly growing shoots symbolize the energy of life. Even when the plant is dead it serves the people who make enduring things out of it.” (PR)

As we hike through the mountains, the exceedingly important function of the bamboo becomes apparent. All of the objects that make daily life possible are made from its wood: baskets, mats for insulation on the exterior walls and floors of houses, tongs for wood coals, serving spoons, and altar objects. The



“Evolution is too important to simply leave it up to the Darwinists.”

EICHELBACK (1999, 21)

“Without the sacred plants the Great God Mahadev is not happy.”

(MR)

young shoots of many of the bamboo species are edible.

The high-altitude bamboo *nigalo* (Nep.; *Arundinaria* sp.) also serves as a shamanic traveling herb because it produces psychoactive effects. This species of bamboo, which produces new shoots at its joints, does not grow in the Kathmandu Valley. As a symbolic substitute, the shamans use other species and shred the exterior bark to make the bushy fringe.

The Kirati altar can be traced back to the fireplace in traditional houses. It is found in a central location, and consists of three stones representing the three worlds. On this fireplace all raw ingredients are prepared and transformed into food for humans. Because fire is necessary for cultural achievements, every shaman in Nepal (and in India as well) who is conscious of tradition offers the first drop or bite to the Vedic god of fire, Agni. Only authorized people are allowed to stir the Kirati fire. The belief remains firmly anchored in the Kirati mind that a person will become ill if a stranger or an unauthorized member of the household touches the fireplace.

The altar is also a place where human beings are able to nourish themselves spiritually, and through the altar they experience healing. The central elements in *mundum* are the three bamboo poles that are stuck upright into a long piece of bamboo. The thin bark of the middle and longest pole is shredded into seven tufts—the seven chakras, or the four directions and the three worlds. This pole is called *suptulung*²²⁴ and symbolizes the upper world, *akash*. The bamboo pole on the left is called *taralung*, the middle world; the one on the right is called *mialung*, underworld.²²⁵ Each of them has one tuft at the end. Together with the seven middle tufts, this results in the sacred number nine—the eight directions and the center. These nine nodes accentuated by tufts—which are further present in nine small bamboo bunches—are called *samkha* in Kirati. The three altar poles, which refer to the three fire stones, appear in the Kirati term for trance, with reference to the possibility of shamanic flying: *man chhama kurima*. The first two words denote the three fire stones, and the last word means “place of blessing.” The three poles are bound with three horizontal white *setho dhago*, threads of yarn—a further symbolic marking of the three worlds. In between them are stuck the two feathers of the wild chicken called *luinche* (Nep.; Lat. *Gallus gallus*). It lives at middle elevations. Its long tail feathers symbolize the shamans’ ability to fly. Finally, these three bam-



boo poles are together a symbolic image of the trident of Shiva.

Shikiphob is the name of two bamboo poles with tufts at both ends made out of the delicate exterior bark. They are a kind of binoculars that are picked up repeatedly during the *chinta* in order to get a better look into a patient. They stand to the right and to the left of the central altar made from bamboo poles. Finally there are also small bamboo tufts that are used during the ceremony to sprinkle purified water around the room, in order to cleanse the house and its inhabitants and to connect everything with a kind of “spiritual glue.”

Totalaka phul—Seeds of the Indian Trumpet Flower

We were unable to determine why it is precisely the seeds, called *totalaka phul*, of the *Oroxylum indicum* (L.) Kurz, (= *tatelo*; Bignoniaceae.) that are so essential to the shamans, especially for their altars. The seeds (misleadingly described as *phul*, “flower”) come from a tree that is quite commonly found in Nepal, mainly growing in the Terai.

On the portable shamanic altar the seeds are placed on the poles that mark the four directions. The seeds of a lowland tree are used to mark the heavens. Does this mean: as below, so above?

Parvati Rai looks into the other reality through her spiritual “binoculars” which have been fashioned from two bamboo sticks.

“The [*tatelo*] wood is only used as incense. The bark and the fruit pods are used for tanning leather and for pigments. Medicine is made from different parts of the tree as well. The young leaves and shoots can be eaten as vegetables.”
STORRS (1988, 200.)

“The Kirati are born with ginger, they live with ginger, and they leave with ginger.”
(MR)



The “flying” seeds of the bean-shaped *totala* fruit are glued with butter to the spear point of Kali. Once a year during the Shiva moon, the spearpoint is carried by the “King of Kalinchok” to the peak of the mountain.

RITUAL INSTRUMENTS: THE
TOOLS OF THE TRADE

²²⁴ *Lung* (Kir.) = stone. It is reminiscent of the stones in the fireplace.

²²⁵ The Kirati describe the three bamboo sticks on the altar, and the three worlds as well, as the “three elements.”



In the Kali Gandhaki Valley are found black, conchlike inclusions of ammonites. In rare cases they are pyritic and are particularly valuable. Above all, they play a large role in the Vishnu cult because the coiled snake represents the unfolding of creation. (Cast of *Blanfordiceras*)

Throughout the entire Indian subcontinent, as well as deep into the high Tibetan plateaus of the Himalayan regions, are the famous black river rocks from the Kali Gandaki Valley (Thakkhola) that contain ammonites. They are called *saligrams*, *shaligrams*, *salagrama*, *shaligrama*, or *salgrams*, and are worshipped as the natural manifestations of various deities.

There are *saligrams* called *chhatra*, “umbrella/mushroom,” because they look like the spore prints of the fruiting body of a mushroom.

Ginger, the Shamanic Root

For the Kirati, ginger (Kir. *yari*) is of central significance. For them, a jhankri who lacks a ginger root is unimaginable. For a long time they have used this aromatic and heat-generating culinary root medicinally²²⁶ to treat, for example, joint pains and nausea. “Ginger cleanses the blood and the body, and brings clarity to the spirit.” Parvati eats a piece of ginger before every *chinta* in order to more easily enter into a trance and travel in the three worlds. For her *jokhana*, she cuts off pieces with her sickle while in a trance. (See the chapter “Shamanic Healing,” page 42.)

Stones (*Dhunga*)

The *vajra dhunga*, “thunder stone” or “lightning stone,” is a prehistoric stone ax.

Throughout the world, prehistoric Stone Age axes made from flat stones, or from stones shaped like axes, are described as thunder axes, thunderbolts (*vajra* or *dorje*), lightning axes, lightning stones, and so on. The widespread belief was (or is) that these stone axes are forged in the heavens: through this process, thunder and lightning come into being. Throughout the world, in a variety of cultural contexts, such objects are treasured. Nearly everywhere they serve to assist shamans in battling and destroying negative or harmful demons, as is the case in Nepal. “With luck” stone axes from the Stone Age can be found there which have been made from a variety of materials, often from iron ore, and more seldom from flint, the symbol of the Stone Age. Prehistoric axes of this sort, sometimes hardly any bigger than four to five centimeters, are called *vajra dhunga*, “thunderbolt stone.”²²⁷ They are considered to be very valuable because they stem directly from the Vedic thunder god, Indra. He hurls axes such as these to produce thunder and lightning.

Because shamans originated in the Stone Age, all other Stone Age objects are of great significance to them, for through them shamans are able to connect with their origins. In addition, the thunder ax is one of the most primordial weapons used to destroy demons.

It is said that when thrown, the *vajra dhunga* returns to Indra, just as in the Germanic world, the hammer of Thor the thunder god returns to him. During powerful storms sometimes one hundred such thunder axes fly through the middle world and hit the earth. Most of them fly back to Indra, but one

²²⁶ The German word for culinary spice is *Gewürz*. It comes from *wurz* (= *Wurzel* [= root], herb, [medicinal] plant). Roots were the most important medicines of the healers.

²²⁷ In Kirati, the thunder ax is called *ban theng lung*. *Ban* means “lightning” or “Indra/thunder god”; *theng* means “break down or “kill”; and *lung* means “dragon” or “black stone.”

or two remain on the earth for the shamans. A tantrika or lama is also happy when he finds a thunder ax. He can then forge it into a blade for his tantric battle ax (*bancharo*).

The *vajra dhunga* is directly connected to the plant *vajra bhang*, the “thunderbolt agent of intoxication” that is directly related to henbane (*Hyoscyamus*). Both are able to split open consciousness or fill it with light. Many shamans possess a thunder ax that they keep on their altar for personal protection, usually in the cosmic rice bowl.

Jhankris use the *vajra dhunga* to master the power of lightning and fire. The thunder ax forms a spiritual wall or “fence” that acts as protection against evil forces.²²⁸

The *vajra*, the Vedic-tantric “thunderbolt,” derives from the prehistoric battle ax. The shamans value this tool as well, but never (or almost never) use it. It relates entirely to tantrism and is the true sign of the lama, the religious healer and teacher.

Saligrams, the Black Fossils (Ammonites)

The shamans use the *saligram* to travel in the mountains of the Himalayas, or to fly in a spiral upward into the sky, or to likewise descend in a spiral into the underworld.

In the so-called spiti shale layers (Jurassic/Cretaceous) of the Kali Gandhaki Valley or Thakkhola, the black concretions called *saligrams* are found that contain one or more ammonites in their nucleus remains. The most common ammonites in these slate layers come from the family of the *Perisphinctacea*.²²⁹ Rarer than ammonites are the fossils of nautilus, the ancestors of the chambered nautilus (*Nautilus pompilius*), and those of the “thunderbolts” of the *Belemnopsis gerardi*, usually preserved as a pyritized tip of its rostrum (interior skeleton). Various mollusks (*Inoceramus*) and other fossils are also found near here.

The *saligrams* from the Kali Gandaki (Thakkhola) region were first mentioned in the ancient Indian Puranas. The Puranas are texts of religious and mythical content which were written in Sanskrit. They stem from the post-Vedic era. Customarily there are eighteen Puranas differentiated and described. The

²²⁸ Otherwise “spiritual fences,” made of bamboo (*Caesalpinia decapetala*) or other plants are “planted.”

²²⁹ The most common genus is *Blanfordiceras*. The genus *Mayaites* is considered to be the main fossil for the Upper Oxfordian and is commonly found in the *salgrams* (Sharma 1990, 100). Species of the genera *Uhligites*, *Prograyicera* (Hagen 1959, 714), and *Aulacosphintiodes* (Hagn 1977, 83) are also found. Among the more rare fossils belong some of the undescribed species in the genus *Haplophylocera* (Ryf 1962).

texts mostly concern stories of the creation and the destruction of the universe and of gods and heroes (Mani 1974). The origin, meaning, appearance, and use of the *saligrams* is described in the *Devi Bhagavata*, and in the *Agni Purana* (chapter 46).

Because these stone are associated with life and death, they are sacred to shamans and tantrikas as well.

Tulsi Puja

The *saligram* is bound together with the *tulsi* plant by a cotton thread (just like the patient in the ceremony of “cutting the threads of fate”) that is wrapped around it exactly nine times—the shamanic number and symbolic of the nine steps on the ladder to the heavens. From a tantric point of view, the ribbed and spirally coiled ammonite is also a “ladder to the heavens.”

Shila dhunga, the Rock Crystal

For many shamans throughout the world, rock crystal or quartz is an important and central object for shamanizing. Just as the shamans of the Amazon and Central America see quartz as a crystal gate into the other worlds or realities, the Nepali *jhankris* regard them and use them as a portal into other realities.

Quartz is found throughout the Himalayas. The largest and most beautiful specimens come from the region around the Ganesh Himal, the mountain dedicated to the elephant-headed son of Shiva. This corresponds exactly because Ganesha is the guardian of the threshold and the crystal is the gate.

In Nepal, the rock crystal is usually called *shila dhunga*, “radiant, shimmering, shining stone.” This holds true for all of the crystals that the shamans carry with their portable altar when they hike through the Himalayas. If it is a large and heavy crystal, it is deposited on a spot, usually at home, and then it is called *shila pathar*, “radiant set stone.” In the more remote areas of Nepal, the term *dhami dhunga* is also often heard, meaning “shamanic stone” or “healer stone”—in other words, the crystal is directly connected to the shaman or the healer (cf. Rättsch 1997). It belongs to Shiva in the same way the thunder ax belongs to Indra. “The rock crystal is very important to spiritual vision. It has a special *shakti*” (IG). “The *shila dhunga*, the shimmering stone, is used by the shamans as a mirror to aid in recognizing the patient’s problem” (MR).

The rock crystal functions for the Nepali shamans in the same way our traffic lights do for us. If a green light appears in the crystal, the shamans know that they can fly on; they will be able to do something useful and can help the person. If a red light

appears in the stone, this indicates a rather bad sign for the patient. The shamans are brought to a halt at this red light, just like being stopped cold at a traffic light. It means they should return from their trance and end the healing ceremony. There is no helping the patient—a regrettable situation, but it cannot be altered. Shamans are only healers and preservers of culture; they are not magicians, miracle workers, or superheroes. Every creature in this universe has its own Achilles’ heel.

If the light in the crystal flows up and down and glides around, this tells the shaman that all will be well and that there is a way out of the situation for the patient.

The crystal is also a messenger for the shamans: if someone is following them—for example, a witch or a black shaman—the crystal flutters or sparkles with flashes of light.

“In order to be able to travel, we have to open nine or seven doors to the other world, but only the *shila dhunga* can indicate and open the correct door. In the crystal, a fiery light appears that is like a detector or scanner indicating the correct door. It has to be a green light, however, and not a red one” (IG). The rock crystal itself represents the seven gates to the underworld, which is a crystal world. Although it is mineralogically defined as a trigonal crystal system, it has six crystal surfaces and a point, thus making exactly seven aspects and therefore forming the shamanic cosmos.

Garnet—Kurin dhunga, the “Copper Stone”

From a mineralogical perspective, the Nepali garnet is an almandite. They are mostly found in the pegmatite (mineral and crystal veins in the rocks) in the area of Phakuwa (Kirati territory), and quite plentifully so. There are even garnet mines in Swachi. Garnets the size of corn can be found in the stream beds and the gem mines. In the famous garnet mine



“Every crystal is a yantra because it comes from nature. Only the rock crystal is a permanent yantra, it is the oldest door of the shamans.”

(IG)

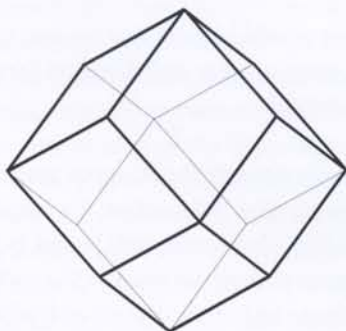
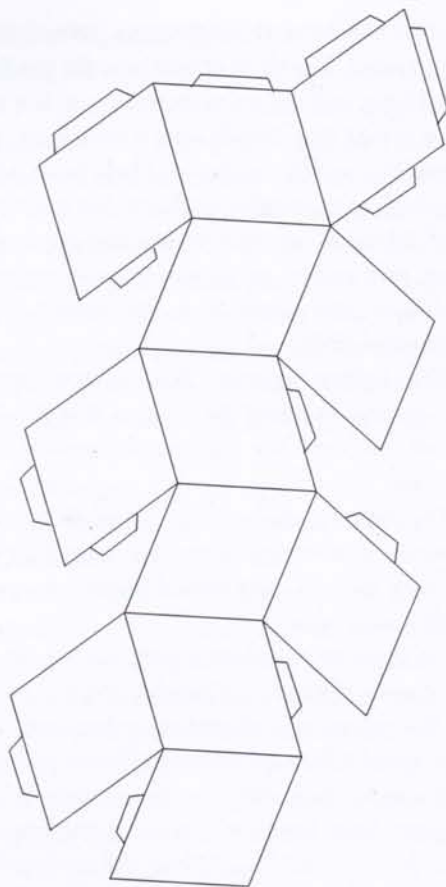
The merchants in Kathmandu no longer know the native names and speak only of “garnet.”

Parvati Rai enthusiastically looks at her new piece of quartz which will show her the way through the three worlds while she is in a trance.



The "red cross" is a very bad sign for the shamans. If they "see red," they give up their healing work on their patients because it means that the patient has been ordained by death. "We shamans were here a million years before the cross and other symbols were discovered by humans. The cross is the opposite of shamanism."

(IG)



The crystal model of almandite (a form of garnet) shows the very symmetrical rhomboid dodecahedron, the twelve-sided crystal with the rhomboid "gates." The exploded view or unfolded pattern is an important diagram of the geometric magic in shamanic healing rituals and in tantric meditation.



Sunamla, garnet crystals are extracted that are as big as a fist and in the form of rhomboid dodecahedrons (cf. Niedermayr 1990, 36).

Not all shamans have a garnet on their altar, at least not on their portable altar, although it is possible they have one at home. On her house altar, Parvati Rai has an almandite that is bigger than a fist. The crystal is enormous and is too heavy for her to take with her anywhere. For this reason she goes to a nearby stream bed when she requires a garnet. The garnet—or *tama*, the "shit of copper"—symbolizes copper, which must be present on the altar in some form. Copper is "most closely connected to Shiva," said Mohan. It is the sacred metal of the shamanic god (see "Sacred Metals," page 242).

Tools, Weapons, Instruments, etc.

Shamans are warriors, not faith healers. They must fight for life and death. To do this, they need weapons. In Nepal there is an arsenal of shamanic weapons. There are animal horns, Magical Daggers made from various materials, chopping knives, daggers, arrows, fire tongs, and so on.

Phurba, the Magical Dagger, and its Substitutes

"The *phurba* was discovered 60,000 years ago by the Kirati shamans in a dream vision," explained Parvati Rai. It is the primary tool of the Nepali shamans.

Although the *phurba* is also used by the tantrikas of the Vajrayana path, this is usually only for secret rites. Even the Dalai Lama must use this powerful shamanic weapon once a year.

If there is no *phurba* or *thurmi* (Kir., Tam.) at hand, in its place can be used a *khurumbi*, a sickle, a khukuri knife, a dagger, or a natural object such as an animal horn.



Above: A *kartika* with a quartz crystal blade.

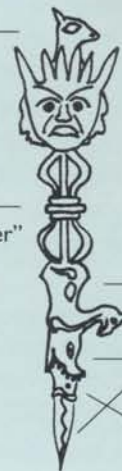
Right: A natural Magical Dagger from the spindle of the conch *Turbinella pyrum* (called a *shanka phurba*).

The iconographic elements of a *phurba*, which unites within itself the four *dorjes* (= *malah*); (Newari meaning):

Hehegriva
"Horse"

Bhairab

Vajra
"Thunderbolt scepter"



Gongamalah
"Rooster"

Pamalah
"Blade"

Mimalah
"Fire"



A Tibetan tantra battle ax with a crystal blade on mustard seeds (presumably late nineteenth century).

Related to the Magical Dagger is the *kartika*, the *phurba*-shaped chopping knife, as well as the *bancharo*, the ax. Both instruments are very rarely used by shamans, but they are of great significance to the tantrikas. They are really only modifications of, or variations on, the *phurba*. They, too, help in the destruction—or better said, the repelling or transformation—of demons. Usually demons are dispersed with these instruments—their component parts are destroyed so that they may arise in a changed form, just as the shamans must now and again in their vocation.

Animal Horns, the Original Magical Daggers

In the display of a Tibetan woman on the stairs to the shrine of Svayambunath, I spy an animal horn between the cheap plastic Buddha figures. It feels sleek. It must have been in use for a hundred years, I think, for it is totally smooth and has been totally polished to a shine from so being so well handled. It is an old horn of the Nilai antelope (*Boselaphus tragocamelus*), the “blue cow,” a sacred animal from the forests in the southern lowlands of the Terai. Excited, I buy the piece. I am certain that this horn is connected to shamanism. It has two notches, and therefore it had been carried on a belt.

When I show the horn to Indra Doj Gurung a few days later, he says immediately that it is an original *phurba*. He senses right away that this exact horn had been used for generations by shamans as a Magical Dagger. It is a good piece. Indra advises me always to keep the horn in such a position that the point aims

toward the heavens. After all, that is the way of nature. He investigates the horn with mantras and in brief trances. He tells me that I must have it set in silver and hung from a silver chain around my neck. I should also store ginger pieces—which are never absent from the Kirati ceremonies, and which so accurately tell the future—inside it. I should also put some tobacco in it, preferably the especially strong *kachopat* (*Nicotiana rustica*). After all, the nomadic highland peoples liked to use these horns as snuff tobacco containers.

The next morning I bring the horn to the man who over the years has come to be “my” jewelry dealer. He is amazed by the old horn and by my request. I explain to him that we should never ignore the command or the advice of a shaman. After all, they know more than we do. The Tibetan asks me if I wanted to use the horn as a snuff case, as it had previously been used. No, I require it for my sacred ginger pieces. Despite the fact that he no longer understands at all what I’m talking about, he knows what I want.

Three days later I go into the jewelry store with mixed feelings. The friendly Tibetan presents the piece to me. What a relief! It is a thousand times more beautiful than I had ever expected it would be. I wear the mala around my neck. The horn immediately hangs as it should, as if of its own accord, in the biologically correct position. (CR)

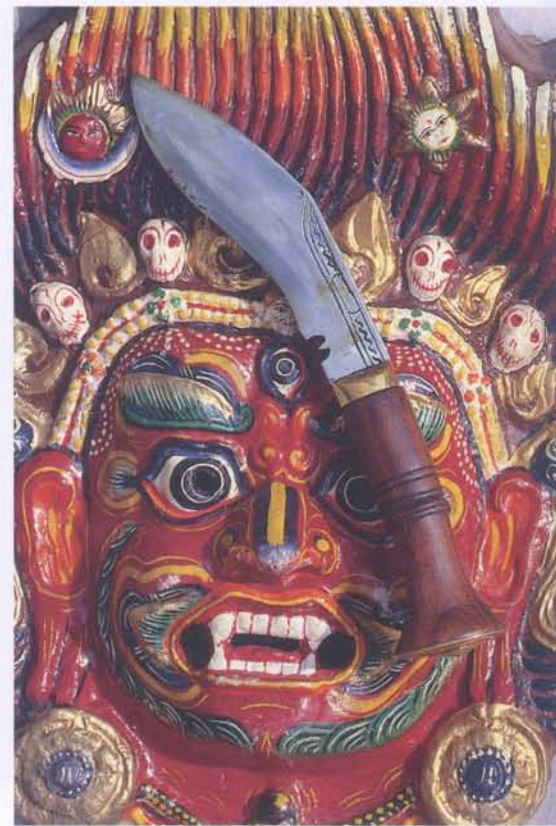
Maile has three Magical Daggers stuck into her rice basket. One is cut from wood, very old and well



The original shamanic ritual tools are animal horns, bones, and bird beaks, as can be seen here on the altar of a Magar shaman.

The horns of all wild animals, antelopes, stags, deer, gazelle, and goats, are sacred to the shamans and can serve them as a Magical Dagger or power object.

Left: Parvati Rai demonstrates the similarity between a horn and a carved wooden *phurba*. Right: The notching on the khukuri blade is the third-eye of Shiva, as can be seen by the mask that lies underneath the knife.



“All animal horns are important for traveling. All horns are used as ‘arms’ of the shamans.”

(PR)

“Twelve-pointed antlers are the perfect guide, and the spiritual arms for the protection of the shamans, particularly while flying in the other worlds.”

(MS)

The shamans run or ride with the nimble *chital*, the spotted deer (*Axis axis*), on their quest for demons through the other worlds, and above all through the middle world.

handled, another one is made from metal, with an iron and a brass handle. The third *phurba*, which actually should have been the first one named, is the horn of the barking deer (*Muntiacus muntjak*), called Muntjak, *mirga* or *milgai* (Skt.), *ratua* or *ratay*, the “red deer.” With this, her consortium of spirits en-

compasses the three steps of cultural development: the hunter-gatherer, the carver of wood in the “wood age,” and the smith of the Iron Age.

The horns of all other wild animals are used as well. Sometimes they are bound into the shamanic *rudraksha* necklace, as often as possible so that they hang with the points aiming up. The thick horns of the wild water buffalo or *arna* (*Bubalus bubalis*) are used this way, for example. Above all, they are of significance in *mundum*, the most natural shamanic way. The animal horns are also very much beloved by the Tamang, although they use only the specimens collected in nature and not those of animals that have been killed.

Wild Animals with Horns That Are Used by Shamans

<i>jarayo</i>	Sambar deer	<i>Cervus unicolor</i>	Terai
<i>tate mirga</i> (= <i>chital</i>)	spotted deer	<i>Axis axis</i>	Terai, Gokarna
<i>mirga</i>	red deer or barking deer	<i>Muntiacus muntjak</i>	Terai
<i>arna</i>	wild buffalo		eastern Terai
<i>gauri gai</i>	wild cow	<i>Bos gaurus</i>	
<i>krishna sagar</i>	black antelope	<i>Antelope cervicapra</i>	Terai, northern India
<i>nilgai</i> (= <i>sheng</i>)	blue bull	<i>Bosephalus tragocamelus</i>	Terai
<i>chiru</i>	Tibetan antelope	<i>Pantholops hodgsoni</i>	Tibet
<i>gajal</i>	Tibetan gazelle	<i>Procapra picticaudata</i>	Tibet
<i>junguli bakhra</i>	wild goat	<i>Capra hircus</i>	Nepal
<i>thar</i>	mainland serow	<i>Capricornis sumatraensis</i>	Terai
<i>ghoral</i>	mountain goat	<i>Nemorhaedus ghoral</i>	Himalaya
<i>jharal</i>	Himalayan wild goat	<i>Hermitragus jemlahicus</i>	Himalaya
<i>nayan</i>	Tibetan sheep	<i>Ovis ammon</i>	Himalaya
<i>argali</i>	Tibetan sheep	<i>Ovis ammon hodgsoni</i>	Himalaya
<i>ban bheda</i>	blue sheep	<i>Pseudis nayaur</i>	Himalaya ²³⁰

²³⁰ This wild sheep is depicted on the *sirpech*, the typical Newari decorative borders of deities on thangka and door frames.

Khukuri, the Gurka knife

The *khukuri* is an invention of the Kirati. The art of forging it has been especially cultivated by the Rai. As a result, the best examples come from the eastern territories of Nepal. The finest quality knives are produced in Chainpur, the picturesque, medieval, and graceful mountain region near Tumlingtar. Like the *phurba*, the khukuri dagger keeps away demons.

The *karda*, the small knife that is part of the khukuri equipment, is also placed on the altar for defense. In rare cases the *karda* has a genuine shamanic appearance: the wooden handle is carved, for example, with depictions of *nandi*, the steer of Shiva, and of the three faces of Bhairab. The blade



Danashing Tamang performs the mudras of the animal horns (of the *gajal* or Tibetan gazelle, *Procapra pictuadata*). The horn of this animal, which is particularly sacred to the shamans, is invoked with the *shikari mantra*, the "hunter's spell," and is used to ask for help during the journey to *akash*, into the heavens. The animal horn is placed on the altar, or more precisely, in the rice basket in the same position that it sat on the head of the animal; the notches are like the ladder of the ammonites. In the background is a thorn apple (*Datura metel*).



The khukuri knife with its two accompanying tools, the fire knife *chachamak*, and the small knife *karda*. The three pieces represent the divine trinity: Shiva, *shakti*, and *bindu*; Shiva, Ganesha, and Kumar.

The skull of the wild goat is wrapped with thread by the *home*—the shamanic witch who is able to do good or bad—and is the basis of his art.

In the tropical lowlands of the Terai there is a snake called the banded khukuri (*Oligodon arnensis*). The small, black and brown reptile got his name because his teeth look exactly like the Gurkha knife.

The “hardening” of the red hot metal in cold water also signifies “repelling demons”—it frightens them as well.



may also have three holes symbolizing the three worlds and the three times. The shaman can activate any khukuri set with his *phurba* mantra and use it for shamanizing. Then the khukuri itself becomes a *phurba*. The “eye” of the blade, the small round curve or notch that allows the blood to flow out in animal sacrifices, is considered by the Kirati to be the third eye of Shiva.

The knife is the lingam of Shiva; the sheath is naturally the yoni of the great goddess. Everything that can be fit inside something else is a shrine of *lingam-yoni* or *yab-yum*, and of cosmic-sexual union.

The dagger itself is a representation of the three worlds: the blade is the heavens, the handle is the earth, the end is the underworld. The blade is considered to be Shiva as well, while the handle is *shakti* and the end is *bindu*. The khukuri is therefore the ideal sacrificial knife. With it, man cuts the life of the sacrificial animal and connects it with the cosmos, and with himself. Our life is likewise on the razor’s edge.

In a khukuri there should ideally be three metals present: iron or steel, brass, and (a little) copper. The khukuri is associated with warriors and soldiers, with the body guards of the divine king, and so on. It is associated with the Gurkhas, the most intense soldiers. Today, Gurkhas are considered by many people in Nepal, natives as well as tourists, to be a special caste of warriors. However, they do not make up any ethnically or linguistically definable group. The

Gurkhas were originally unscrupulous legionnaires who were trained for war and defense, and who have been used or misused since the period of English colonial rule.²³¹

The Sickle

The sickle has almost entirely disappeared from modern life. In earlier times it was important mainly for use in the hemp harvest. Most Europeans know it only from the Asterix comics, in which the Druid Miraculix cuts mistletoe with his golden sickle for his magic potion. Today there are still (or more precisely—there are once again) secret druidic orders whose members play at being “Druids” dressed in white robes, carrying golden sickles on their belts. There are even followers who believe that these post-modern “Druids” are present-day shamans.²³²

The sickle is still, however, an important tool in Nepal. In the countryside, women who use this hand tool for almost every agricultural task can be seen everywhere. The sickle is very important for the *jhankris* as well. On many altars it represents the feminine element (the khukuri knife represents the masculine). However, it should not be made from gold. Gold is the metal of alchemy and religion, not of the worship of nature (cf. Storl 1993a).

The sickle, called the *hashja*, *khurpa*, or *khurumbi*,

²³¹ For comparison, it would be a little like the U.S. Army Special Forces or British SAS being defined in the ethnological literature as an independent ethnic group after a few decades or centuries.

²³² Recently in the literature it is increasingly remarked that the Druids were Celtic shamans, while at the same time being priests of a very traditional sort (Matthews 1998).



The sickle is indispensable to the Kirati shamans. On the altar, it represents the feminine counterpart to the masculine khukuri. The crescent moon and the boar tooth also represent the feminine aspects.

is of central significance most of all to the Kirati shamans. It is virtually their insignia, their symbol, and it is indispensable for divination using the ginger root (see “Divination and Oracle,” page 229).

Every Kirati shaman requires (naturally) three sickles. They symbolize Shiva, *shakti*, and *bindu*. Ideally, the handle should be made from three different materials (this is the case with Parvati’s equipment). The sickle that has a handle made from the horn of the species of deer called *mirga* or *ratay* is exclusively, or shall we say predominantly, used for *jokhana*, the ginger root divination. The handles of the other two sickles should be carved from the wood of *payung*, the wild Himalayan cherry (*Prunus cerasoides* D. Don), or *sal* (*Shorea robusta*). These two are used for personal protection or for death ceremonies; however, Parvati uses exclusively the tool with the horn handle for death ceremonies.

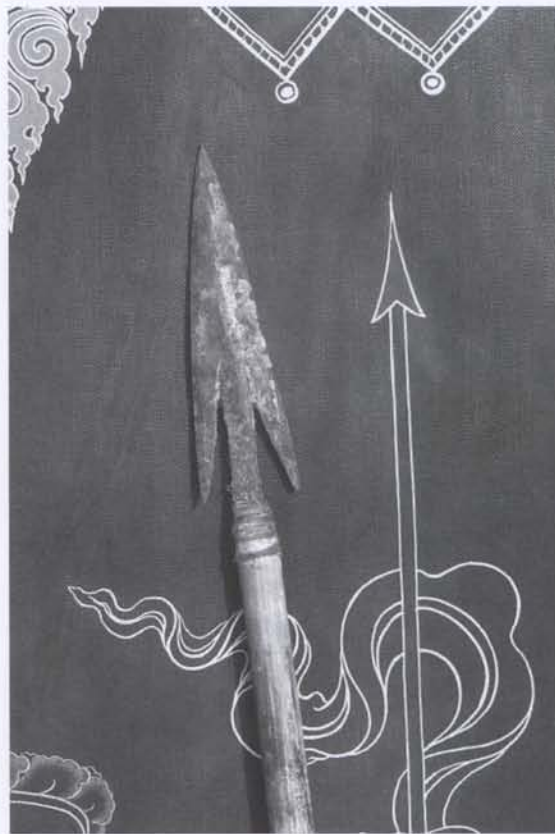
The Kirati shamans do not purchase their sacred sickles at the marketplace; instead, they go to a *kami*, a blacksmith. They explain to him the details of the length and the curve of the blade, and he must forge the metal accordingly. The shamans observe the entire process. When the red hot blade is hardened, the shaman puts into the cool water a few rice kernels that have been blessed with mantras.

The sickle blade can be forged from any kind of iron. During the hardening, all the demons, and especially the *bokshi* and *boksha*, are chased away. Though out of respect or fear the *kami* asks for no money from the shaman for his service, Parvati Rai tosses a rupee (in the form of an aluminum coin) into the cooling bath. The *kami* is not permitted to forge and harden the sickle blade inside the house, but can do so only outside. It is not clear why this is the case.

When Parvati Rai is on the road, she usually brings only one sickle with her—the one with the handle made from *payung* wood—for her personal protection and for emergency treatment of sick people.

Dhanus kar, “Arrow”

Only the Kirati shamans use arrows (Kir. *dhanus kar*) as magical weapons against demons. For this purpose, the hunting arrows of the Tharu are used. The Tharu speak a Kirati language and have been able to preserve their very ancient culture in the forested lowlands of the Terai. Like other Kirati tribes, they have no religion, but worship Shiva and Parvati. Their sacred tree is the “flame of the forest,” the fiery orange-red blossoming *palas* tree (*Butea monosperma* syn. *B. frondosa*, Leguminosae), which grew from the drops of soma that fell from the parrot as it flew by. The Tharu culture is purely shamanic and is rooted in a hunting (*shikari*) tradition. In their traditional houses,



which are lavishly painted with magical yantras and images, stand wooden shamanic figures, the good house spirits.

The hunting arrows of the Tharu are eighty to ninety centimeters long. The shaft is made from bamboo—the feathered end usually contains the flying feathers of the sacred jungle chickens and the tips are forged from iron. For this reason they also help shamans to overcome demons. The arrow is only one of the many forms of the *phurba*.

The arrow(s)—one to five in number—can be stuck into the rice basket on the portable shamanic altar, always with the points facing down. If five arrows are used, one is placed as a *phurba* in the middle, with the other four around it, corresponding to the four directions.

The magical arrows can also be seen on altar images of the Tibetan tantrikas, such as those of the Panchen Lama (Karmay 1988). Many tantric representations of gods on the thangkas show a single arrow in one of the many hands of the deity (i.e., in depictions of Kali or Ganesha). On typical Newari thangkas we see Kurkula Devi, the shamanic goddess who shoots a bow and arrow.

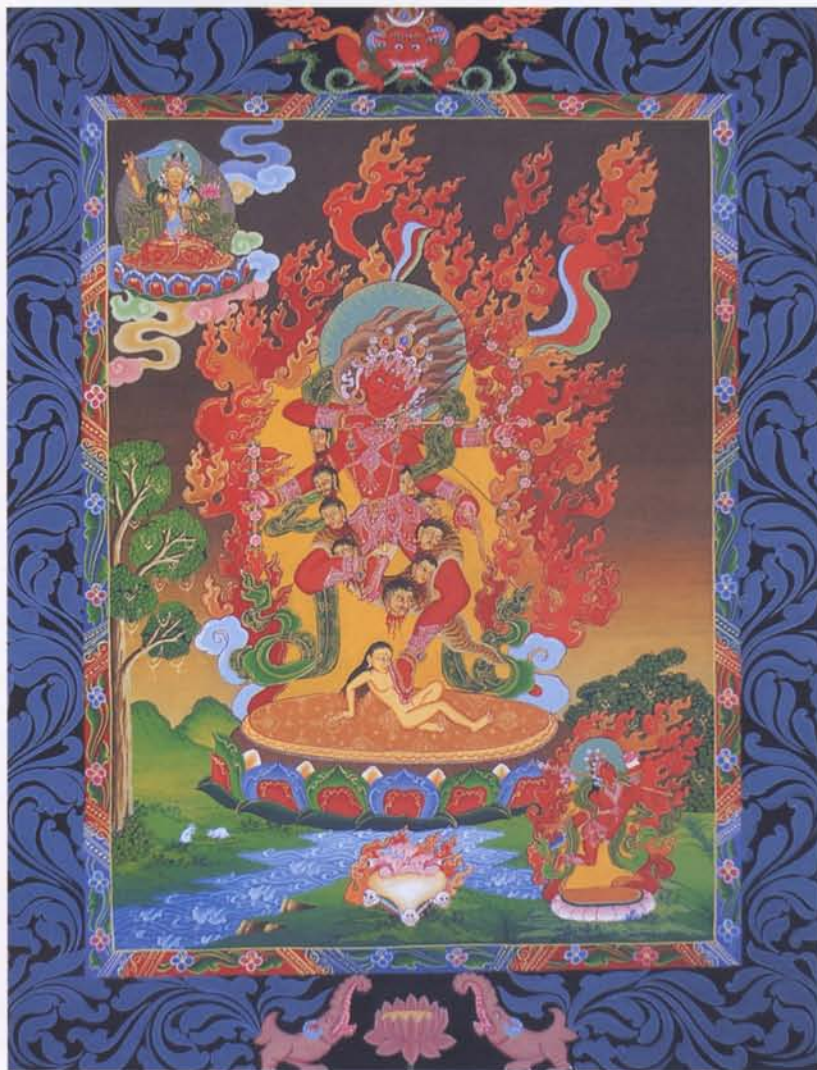
Wild Boar Teeth from the *Sus scrofa* L., *Bandel* or *Yangbag*

It is beneficial for shamans to possess the curved fangs of the wild boar and to place them on the altar, or to

Poison is spread on the iron tips of the hunting arrows, which in earlier times were battle arrows as well (Bisset and Mazars 1984, 19). The arrow poisons (*vikh* or *bikh*), like all other active *pharmaka*, were discovered by the shamans. The shamans discovered the effective antidotes (*bikhuna*) as well. In Nepal, these are classified in the category of *amrita*, the elixir of life. The arrow poison, which is mainly used by the Tharu, is made from the roots of *Aconitum spicatum* (Brühl) Stapf (Ranunculaceae), a species of monkshood. It is a very swift and effective poison and is therefore always stored in a two-part box. The poison is in the left side; the antidote (*bikhuna*) is on the right, usually opium.

“No human has ever fallen from the heavens or sprouted from a bamboo shoot. We all descend from the animal family. We belong to the relatives of the wild boar. Therefore we are not permitted to eat the meat of wild boar. The wild boar is one of our greatest teachers.”

(MR)



This red Vajrayogini dressed in bones is a true native goddess of the Kathmandu Valley, where she also has her temple. She shoots demons and negative energy with her magical arrows, which are covered in blood. Originally, she was a Kirati shaman, but today is considered a "wrathful" appearance of the (green) Tara and is called Kurkula Devi (Tib. *kurkuli*). This very typical Newari thangka (from SBS) is used by shamans as well as tantrikas. It belongs to the category of the healing thangkas. The painted border depicts the *amrita-giving makara* and its elixir of life. (No. 24)

wear two teeth—like those of the wild boar—as an integral part of a *rudraksha mala*. The shamans consider the wild boar (*Sus scrofa* L.) to be the secret King of the Forest. Usually it is the tiger who bears this title. But since the tigers are lone animals, and the wild boars live in herds, the latter are much more dangerous. For this reason teeth such as these are considered to be protective objects. The highly intelligent and very keenly perceptive nature of the wild boar makes it an important guru of the shamans.

Shamans use the large teeth of the wild boar, curved like Shiva's crescent moon, to find certain roots, underground plants, and medicinal plants. When placed in a watering can, a wild boar tooth encourages the growth of plants, and keeps vegetables fresh.

It is also beneficial for "normal" people to carry wild boar teeth with them if they have a toothache or are plagued by nightmares. The Kirati shamans can also bless the wild boar teeth (Kir. *yangbag*) with a mantra in order to treat toothaches or dental problems.

Musical Instruments

One evening the possibility arises to fly with Maile. That afternoon we purchased a new denguru, a shaman's drum stretched with a goat skin. The shaman wants to test us, and we want to test the drum. Off we go. Maile spits her traveling mantra on us. I immediately begin to synchronize with the drum beat. After a few beats my inner vision opens up. I see my vibrating spinal column, and have just enough time to think: Oh, that again. I shoot out of my body and charge through endless tunnels. Actually, I had just wanted to try out the drum, but as usual, the unexpected arrives. Besides, I wanted to allow Maile to heal an old wound of mine. Suddenly I see myself twitching wildly. Maile bites into my leg like a tiger, and in an almost horrifying agitated wildness, she rips out something. I see my drum. I have wrecked its skin during the trance—at least, one side of it. (CR)

Drums

Shamanism devoid of some form of music is probably unknown, perhaps even unimaginable. Shamans throughout the world drum, rattle, whistle, pipe, and blow on trumpets. In the West, the image of the drumming shaman is well-known. But not all shamans have drums, nor do all shamans place any special value on drumming. The image of a drumming shaman has been mainly influenced by the seductive book *The Way of the Shaman* by Michael Harner, as well as by the many travel reports about Siberia. In the esoteric scene in particular, the belief reigns—primarily held by those who fear and who malign psychoactive substances—that one must simply drum correctly (according to the "Michael Harner method") and the shamanic trance will come.

Drumming can be helpful—it can even be very helpful—but the doors to the shamanic cosmos are never opened by it. More is required than a simple boom-boom. Most of the great Amazonian shamans don't even have a drum. They prefer to sing, but they do that while they are on Ayahuasca.

In Nepal, though, every shaman has a drum. Only once did we encounter a shaman who was down-and-out and who had to sell his drum in order to simply survive. He used a brass plate and a stick for drumming.

Many different drums are used in Nepali shamanism for different purposes or situations.

In the Himalayas, the most widely spread shaman's drum is the *denguru*.²³³ It has a Magical Dagger handle and on both sides is stretched with skin that is struck with a curved, Gurkha knife-shaped or snake-shaped *gaja* (= beater).²³⁴ The tambourine-like,

²³³ Also written as: *dhangro*, *dhengro*, *dhangor*, *dhyanguro*, and so on.

²³⁴ The drum beater is fashioned from the root of the thornbushes (*Smilax* spp.) which are called *kukur daino* (Nep.). It is a symbol of the *nagas*, the snakes that live between the roots of the thorny vines.



The roundly curved wild boar tooth is the primordial crescent moon of Shiva. It is the sickle of the Kirati shamans, and above all the female ones. The fang is a *phurba* and a *trishul*. It is a symbol for the Shiva moon, and thus for soma and *amrita* as well.

In all shamanic cultures wild boar teeth are used as talismans and amulets, and worn as necklace pendants, for example by the Nagas in Naga-land and by other "tribes" as well (cf. Jacobs 1990, 218).

Music can lure you away into a trance or even put you in ecstasy. Music can be visionary as well.

"The ear is the antenna of the brain, the part of the brain which reaches out into the world, always receiving and always searching for information modulations. What we call sound is just the limited spectrum of sound pulsations that the ears can hear."

MICKEY HART (1991, 41)

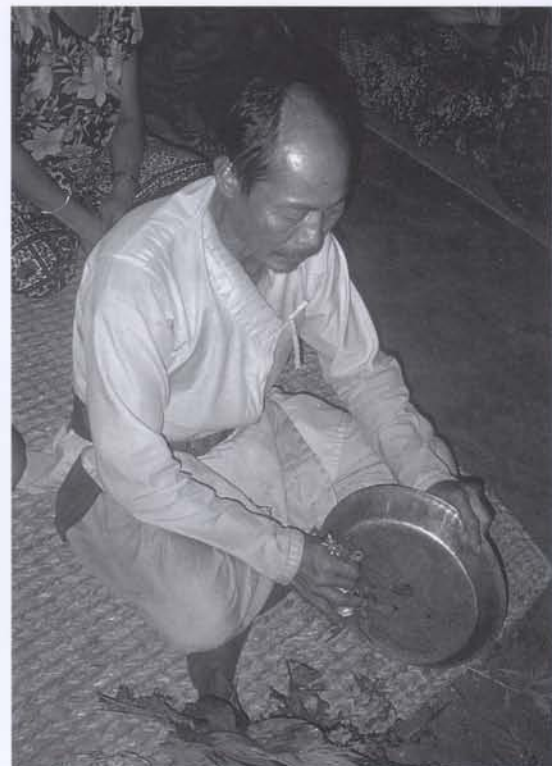
"The drum keeps you awake; the drum helps you to find the way."

(MR)

The drumming shaman Yonjon on Kalinchok. The shamans' drum *denguru* has a fundamental importance for the shamans of Nepal.

Left: The Kirati, Sukar Makcha Rai, has painted the shaman's drum with the symbols of Shiva for the trip to Kalinchok. All drum skins should be rubbed once a year with tika pigment, and painted with the Shiva insignias (OM, trident, *damaru* drum). The painting of the drum is especially important for dedicating new drums.

Right: Kirati and Magar shamans also use rice plates forged out of brass as shamans' drums.



The artist and ethnologist Elisabeth Luchesi comes to terms with the drum. (*Joker III*, 1995, 55.6 x 41.5 cm., acrylic on paper)

Today, the *damaru* is primarily a ritual tool and insignia of the sadhus, yogis, and Shaivites. On Tibetan thangkas it is an attribute of the *yoginis*. Tantrikas use it in their secret meditations. They are only very rarely used by shamans.

one-sided drum (*re*) is used by only one of the three Magar groups: the Kham Magar (see Oppitz 1991).

Drum skins are preferably taken from a bear (*balu*), the highest animal shaman; from the barking deer (*mirga*); from the "blue cow" (the lowland antelope known as the *nilgai*); from the mountain goat (*ghoral*); or from Hanuman, a monkey. However, today the shamans are aware of the fact that these animals are endangered and that they must be protected. For this reason the drum skins are almost always made from a domestic goat or a sheep that has been sacrificed to Kali.

"Lamas and tantrikas are not permitted to use the *denguru*. This drum pulsed at the beginning of *mundum*. This drum was first seen by the Kirati shamans in their visions and then it was made by them for the first time. All the shamans of the other peoples learned from the Kirati the way to make it and use it" (PR).

The drum known as the *damaru* (Nep.) or *dasaye* (New.), is sometimes described in the European literature as the "hour-glass drum" or the "sandhur drum." It is made from two large bowls that were originally human skull caps or the upper halves of ape skulls. Today it is usually made from wood styled in the form of a skull cap.²³⁵ It is always a hand drum

played with only one hand. The sticks are tied with thread onto both sides of the skin, which is usually goatskin or sheepskin. When the drum is turned back and forth with a swift hand movement, a fast rhythm is created. Both of the skins usually have a diameter of ten to twelve centimeters.

The *damaru* is associated exclusively with Shiva. It is part of his trident and is usually hanging from it. It is the symbol of Baba or Yogi. This drum has a significance for the shamans as well. The two skins symbolize Shiva and Shakti; the sticks are *bindu*, the mathematical point, the origin of the universe. The drum is the rhythm of the divine copulation between Shiva and Parvati. Therefore the *damaru* drum is also used by sadhus of all persuasions, by tantrikas, and even by the Nepali and Tibetan lamas. However, this small drum is not used for shamanic traveling, but rather for *puja*.

The *madhal* drum is dedicated to Mata Sarasvati, the loving goddess of science. Although it is also used by shamans, it is not used for shamanizing. Like everything, at least according to Parvati Rai, it comes from the *mundum* tradition. It promotes happiness and is therefore an instrument of Shiva. It is beaten with both hands to encourage a festive atmosphere, ecstatic dancing, love, sex, and good cheer. It is the drum for *Shiva Ratri*, the birthday of the great god.

Within itself, of course, the *madhal* drum also conceals the shamanic cosmology. The tube-shaped wood is *bindu*, the slightly larger skin is *shakti*, because "*shaktis*, or women, have bigger behinds" (MR).

²³⁵ Two trees are called *damaru* in Nepal: *Benthamidia capitata* (Wall.) Hara, Comaceae, and *Machura cochinchinensis* (Lour.) Corner, Moraceae (Shrestha 1998, 20).

The smaller skin is designated for Shiva. The three worlds of the shamanic universe can always be seen, recognized, and traveled through.

The construction of the drum is not as important to the Kirati, Tamang, Gurung, and Sherpa shamans whom we asked as it is to the Kham Magar of western Nepal or the shamans of Siberia. Many jhankris order themselves a drum from a knowledgeable craftsman, or buy one. The material it is made from is important, though, as is that it be found “in a dream”—even if this simply means the right craftsman has been indicated. Like all ritual objects, a drum consists of three zones: the *phurba* handle, the drum frame, and the stretched skin (see number “3” in the section on “Number Symbolism,” page 191). The wood has to come from the most sacred tree in Nepal, which is the oak (Nep. *shamp sung*; Kir. *oisi tanu*). The drum should ideally be stretched with two different skins: the skin of the musk deer (Nep. *mirga*), and the skin of a bear (Nep. *bahn*), monkey (Nep. *bandar*), or the great antelope of the Himalayas (Nep. *Ghoral/nilgai*). But because these animals cannot be killed, and naturally deceased animals are rarely found, the shamans pragmatically make do with the easily obtained skins of domestic goats and sheep.²³⁶ There are three objects that can be heard clattering inside each drum; these are usually a talisman, a cowry shell (*Cypraea* sp.), and a small stone.

The Magical Contest

There are numerous versions of a popular story about a magical competition between a Bonpo and the Tibetan saint Milarepa (Crossley-Holland 1982, 26).

At one time the shaman Na-ro-bo-c’um and the yogi Milarepa sat together and wanted to compare their *siddhis*, their amazing powers. This test concerned who could fly faster to Kailash, the holy mountain and throne of Shiva. The shaman began to drum, went into a trance, and “rode” on his drum through the air to the peak of Kailash. Milarepa sank into meditative silence and found himself immediately on Kailash. Some say that Milarepa was there faster than the shaman, and for that reason tantra is better than Bon. Probably what happened was that the shaman flew to the external reality of Kailash, while Milarepa traveled to the interior realm of Kailash.

In connection with this, the modern interpretation that Milarepa was a shaman is astonishing (Winged Wolf 1994).

²³⁶ Only the Kirati shaman Parvati Rai has a drum made with the skin of a musk deer. All of the shamans told us that bodies of monkeys have never been found. They have not even been found in the vicinity of the so-called monkey temple, Svayambunath. The shamans are of the opinion that the monkeys bury the fellow members of their species, underscoring their profound conviction that we humans are direct descendants of the monkeys.



Sili, the Rhythms

The shaman’s drum is an “airplane,” a “rocket,” or a kind of “Starship Enterprise.” It is a rhythm instrument, an “instrument for travel out of time. It is the guiding star for the shaman who has left his body” (Hart 1991, 234). The rhythm is not only a marking of time, it also serves as a navigational tool for the shamans during their travels into the other worlds. Every shaman whom we were able to ask, and whose rhythms we were allowed to record, had their own rhythms for traveling into the different worlds. With regard to this, it is possible that individual rhythm tastes are just as different as they are for food or for psychoactive substances. What is pleasant and useful to one person is horrible to another. Some people fly when they hear or see the “Flying Dutchman” by Richard Wagner, others do so when the triumphal march is sounded from Giuseppe Verdi’s “Aida.” It is not a matter of which music or which rhythm is “better,” but only of how each can be dealt with meaningfully or how each can give pleasure.

Monotone drumming can indeed engender states of altered consciousness (i.e., daydream-like twilight states, associative fantasies, feelings of security, and other emotional states); it is not, however, enough for traveling—even if it is helpful for the trance (cf. Hart 1991, 232)—because it is rhythmically suited to and serves other techniques of states of consciousness, or vice-versa. The traveling is made possible through a combination of incenses, alcohol, psychoactive traveling herbs, traveling mushrooms, hyperventilation, singing, dancing, and drumming. The gates into the other worlds are opened only through the travel mantra. Not all shamans use each of these techniques. Each one has their own effective combination.

As a rule, the Nepali shamans have three rhythms

Like a horse, the drum transports the shaman through the three worlds. He goes into a trance with the travel mantra.



The shaman uses the drum to “unhex” the evil-eye to which his patient has fallen victim.

“There where the drum-beat carries the shaman into the heights with the movements of its rhythm, the drum is experienced as a magical horse or a magical stag. The idea that the shaman rides on his drum, on the being that it becomes during the animation, is widely spread.”

GEHRTS (1983, 134)

There is hardly any other drummer who has unified so broad a palette of musical directions as Mark Nauseef, the American musician of Lebanese descent. He began his career with an association with Deep Purple, played with Thin Lizzy and Gary Moore (G-Force), and has drummed in many other bands. Later he dedicated himself to avant-garde jazz with the pianist Joachim Kühn (for example on *Let's be Generous*). In addition, he has studied the rhythms of indigenous peoples and has played with native master percussionists (in Java, Bali, Japan, India, Turkey) throughout the world. In recent years he has recorded numerous CDs of experimental music (Edward Vesala, David Torn, L. Shankar, John Bergamo, Glen Velez) as well as toured repeatedly with the Lebanese group Rabih Abou-Khalil.

that relate to the three worlds. They form the pulsating streets in the other realities. Not only were we able to record them—we were also able to have a specialist, the drummer and percussionist Mark Nauseef, transcribe them.

Transcription of Mark Nauseef (facsimile)

Mark Nauseef offered these remarks on the following transcriptions: “With all of these transcriptions it must be kept in mind that they are merely approximations and could be written down only in skeletal form. Of course, every drummer who can read music will be able to play these rhythms immediately. They will not, however, be able to do so with the same intentions or strong variability. In addition, the notes do not reflect the reactions to the trance state. We are not dealing here with classical music, but with an interactive drum beat that accompanies the trance.

My notations are merely hints. Some lines are very subtle. I think that the shamans consciously change the tone and the pitch of the drum sounds, either with their hands or by hitting the drum in different ways. The different pitches—in principle, high, middle, and low—are indicated with the notes going up or down. Often the tones can also have “echo beats,” that are caused by the drum stick falling briefly on the drum skin again after the tone. The tempo can be altered and played with variations in the same rhythm and beat. I have measured each tempo metrically and provided it as best I could. Sometimes the tempo gets faster or slower, which might correspond to the shamanic journey.

There are two lines each for the notes of the Kirati rhythms. The rhythm of the first line is played throughout while the second is added when the trance begins. There are not really any end notes. The shamans somehow simply stop drumming at some point.”

Transcription of the Rhythms of the Kirati Shamans

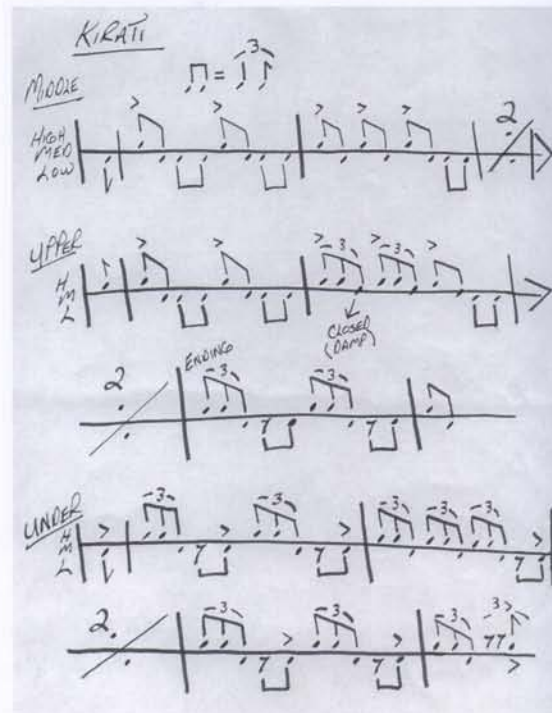
The shamans begin beating the drum themselves at the start of their *chintas*. As soon as the trance starts,



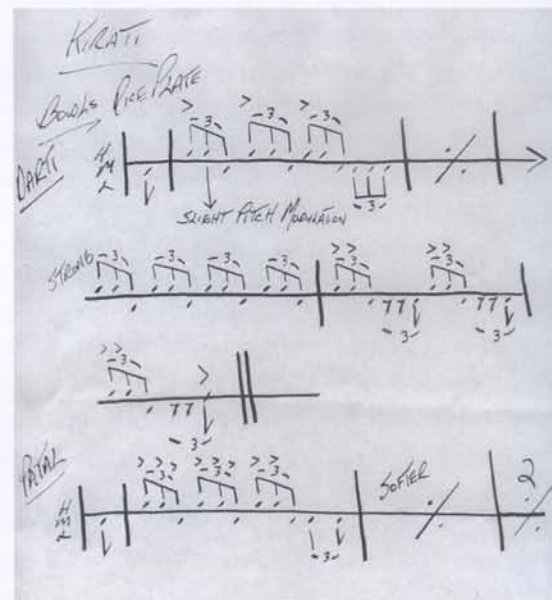
Kirati drummers.

the drum is taken by another person and stood on its Magical Dagger on the floor, held in such a way that two other people can continue to beat the rhythm on its two animal skins.

The Drum Rhythms



The Rice Plate Rhythm



Accompanying the drum are usually two other shamans, apprentices, or assistants who play on brass rice plates with bamboo sticks.

MYINGMAR 8/9/99

MM! = 140

HIGH MED LOW

MANY TIMES

RETARD

w/ SLIGHT PICK PROLUNGATION

DYNAMIC = SLIGHT

SLIGHTLY SLOWER

SOMETIMES

* = CHANGE OF VOCAL

Myingmar is known not only in the Himalayas as a good drummer—Mark Nauseef, as well, was impressed with the metric precision and the fiery intensity of his rhythms. Myingmar beats the drum in this world as well as in the world beyond. He is often accompanied in his drumming by one of his students, particularly by his master student. His shifts in rhythm mark the beginning of shamanic traveling. His chanting changes drastically with the oncoming trance and the shifting rhythm.



The singing bowls belong directly to *mundum*, the way of the shamans.

BELUTUM

MM! = 43

UP

OPEN TONE

DOWN

MM! = 120

HAPPINESS

MM! = 60

WORSHIP

EVEN DYNAMIC (NO ACCENTS)

AGAINST NEGATIVES

MM! = 115

VERY AGGRESSIVE

Mark Nauseef determined that the rhythms of the Tamang shaman are rather variable in expression, phrasing, tempo, and beat. We think that she plays in “unison” with her trance. In shamanic consciousness everything is possible, including setting the pace of the drumbeats to suit the flight.

Kanse dabuko, Singing Bowls

Meditation with singing bowls—which are believed to be “Tibetan”—has become very popular in Europe. There are numerous CDs available of these calm sounds, which at the same time contain powerful overtones.²³⁷

Singing bowls are brass vessels that are made in various sizes. Sometimes they look like plates, other times like salad bowls, and sometimes, though rarely, they appear like high-rimmed vessels. When hit with a wooden stick,²³⁸ they produce a sustained tone. If the bowls are rubbed with the stick, or rather, stroked around the rim, many overtones are created that overlap one another.

The singing bowl was discovered by the Kirati shamans and used for the first time by them. The sound helps to put them into a meditative state. Once in this state, they are able to obtain hidden information.

When someone is unconscious or speechless or,

²³⁷ For example, Christian Bollmann, *Tibetan Bells II*; Alain Presencer, Klaus Wiese, etc. (see Discography, page 293).

²³⁸ Of course, a wooden Magical Dagger works for this purpose as well.



Indra Gurung claps his cymbals ecstatically on his way into the trance. Recently, in a very deep and intense trance, he has even smashed them apart. The cymbals are man and wife; the hand grips are the rainbow.

"The bells are blown by the wind . . . and the wind speaks the truth. Always. . . He heard, then, the fairy bells. They echoed distantly; many bells, small bells, not church bells, but the bells of magic. It was the most beautiful music he had ever heard. . . the bell sounds wake you up."

PHILIP K. DICK
THE DIVINE INVASION
 (1991, 152)

RIEVAL INSTRUMENTS: THE
 TOOLS OF THE TRADE

in other words, when someone suddenly becomes mute, the shamans, regardless of ethnicity (Kirati, Tamang, Gurung, etc.), immediately establish direct contact with the patient via the sound of the "singing bowl" and its vibrating overtones. Through this they are able to touch, "scan," and ascertain the condition of the disturbed spirit. The sound also facilitates contact between the heavens and the underworld. In addition, it aids the shamans in purification, meaning it also assists them in the emptying of their own mind. The sounds of singing bowls are also employed during the Tibetan Buddhist rites.

It has been determined that the sounds of singing bowls played in the presence of a person who is in a trance or in a substance-induced state of altered consciousness (e.g., from ketamine), can lead them to very profound, cosmic, and far-reaching experiences. It is apparently the overtones that powerfully or profoundly resonate with the subject's consciousness; they and the consciousness vibrate together, so to speak.

Jhamtar (Kir.), Cymbals

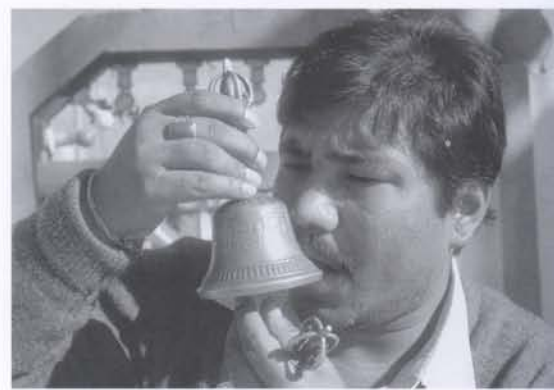
If you visit a *puja* in a Tibetan Buddhist monastery, you will notice the crashing sound of the large cymbals, which the murmuring monks strike against each other like the double cymbals used in orchestras. The loud sound and the metal objects themselves are usually considered to be associated solely with the world of Lamaism. But: "We Kirati discovered the cymbals. The lamas and the Brahmins borrowed them from us," Parvati Rai assured us. Nevertheless, we rarely see the shamans using the cymbals. They are usually too poor to be able to buy such valuable metal objects. As a substitute they drum on the brass rice plate.

The two cymbals are "man" (right) and "woman" (left), Shiva and Shakti. The sound is *bindu*. Different colored fabric is knotted on the handles of the shamanic cymbals, just as it is on the Magical Dagger. In doing this the shaman has breathed life into his instrument and connected it with the rainbow.

Ghanti, the Bell

The bell is a symbol of Kali and the yoni. It sometimes appears on the grip of the *phurba*, and in this way it also becomes a symbol for the cosmic mushroom and for the arch of the heavens. In tantra, it belongs together with the thunderbolt, the *vajra*, the symbol of the tantric way: masculine and feminine.

Positive energy is attracted by the sound of the bell or bells. The ringing also makes the shamanic journey easier. In the truest sense of the words, the ear-numbing sound of the bells divides the ego; it



Surendra Bahadur Shahi holds the bell and *vajra* in the meditation posture.

shatters the blockage encountered when we slip out of the body.

All bells were first used by the shamans in their *ghanti malas*, their bell necklaces. It was only later that the tantrikas adopted the bell as a symbol for the feminine part of the universe in their rituals. For all tantrikas and lamas, the bell is the feminine counterpart to the masculine *vajra*. For this reason they hold both objects simultaneously, one in each hand; the bell is naturally in the left hand, the feminine side, the *vajra* is in the right hand. When the bell rings, the sound of the ubiquitous mantra *OM MANI PADME HUM*, the "crystal in the lotus flower," i.e., the thunderbolt, vibrates (*hum*) in the yoni. Together the bell and *vajra* create the world of appearances (*maya*).

Trumpets—*Shanka*, *Barad*, and *Nalihar*

It is 4:30 A.M. The sound of the shanka, both rueful and joyous, rings through the night. I am torn from my confusing dream—Kathmandu seems to strengthen dream activity considerably. It is still dark. As soon as the first light shines through the window, the conch shell trumpets begin sounding their long, incessant tones; they cut through the dawn. The Brahmins are awake. According to ancient regulations, they are supposed to begin a puja, a worship, every morning. The trumpet is an obligatory part of this. As with the sounding of church bells, it is too early in the morning for most people.

The Brahmins (= Brahmans) are actually the priest caste. They are supposed to dedicate their lives to the good of humanity. Nevertheless I ask myself, why do I have to be woken up at this hour on account of that? The tooting sound is now accompanied by the noise of awakening civilization. The damned dogs are yapping out there, too. But the sound of the conch shell is unusual; it's like an oceanic wave.

A Brahmin in our neighborhood can really play the conch trumpet. He does not just blow into it any old way, but rather coaxes very infectious, yet dark, resonant melodies out of it. With these tones, the day awak-

An artistically decorated conch trumpet (*shanka*), which is mainly used by Brahmins. It is only represented symbolically on shaman altars. Next to it is a bone trumpet made out of a human thigh bone.



ens. The mantras ring from various quarters, above all OM NAMAH SHIVAYAH. Shortly afterward the *shruti* (an Indian wind instrument) in the neighboring school begins. Sorrowful sounds are supposed to make the schoolchildren sing in the morning. The cooing doves, symbols of peace belonging to the group of sacred birds of the world, are sitting on the windowsills. The sacred crows are screeching along with everything else. On the street a horn honks; a passing moped sputters along. The city awakens. And along with it awaken the good demons who have been called by the conch shell. (CR)

The conch trumpet (*shankha*) is made from the shell of a conch (*Turbinella pyrum*) by sawing or sanding off the tip. The conch trumpet has been a sacred instrument for centuries. It is used as a signal horn to begin meditation, or for the invocation of the good spirits. It comes from the regions around the Indian Ocean and is especially found throughout the Gulf of Bengal. Its hard, thick-walled housing is snow white in color and is also used for making jewelry (cf. Vokes 1963). Every morning at around four o'clock, the melodic tones of the *shankha* can be heard throughout the neighborhood. The Brahman Yaga Prasad Khanal explains: "When the *shankha* sounds, the hearts of the enemies beat quickly and they become afraid. The spirits and the enemy forces run away from it. The poisonous snakes and all kinds of poisonous animals stay away as well. Blowing the *shankha* also trains and conditions the breath. We use only pure white, naturally abandoned *shankhas*. When we put them aside, we invoke their many names and ask for

²³⁹ According to the saga, the Brahmins received the *shanka* from Shiva himself. In order to wake Shiva up from his states of intoxication, Parvati uses the 108 conch shell trumpets, which—together with 108 types of other instruments—are played by the musicians of the heavens.

protection for the family and the house. Shiva loves this sound and protects us all.²³⁹ The ones decorated with luxurious gold or silver and with coral and turquoise are used only by the Tibetan lamas."

A *shankha phurba*, a magical weapon (*shastra*), is obtained from the spindle of the sacred conch shell. This Magical Dagger, a natural *phurba*, is an aid to the shamans. Otherwise, the conch is considered to be related more to the tantric tradition; it is part of the weapons arsenal of the gubajus. The conch *phurba* is naturally loaded with energy. The spindle should stand on the altar with the tip facing up—for this *phurba* the rule that applies to the animal horns has been inverted. In addition, small *shankas* are threaded into the *rudraksha* chain (we have seen *Babylonia* sp., *Turbinella*, the giant African snail [*Achatina* sp.],²⁴⁰ and oysters [*Ostrea* sp.], among others).

Nalihar, bone trumpet

A young Magar visits us. He is about twenty-three years old and is the son of a police officer in the neighborhood. He enjoys the nightly shamanic rituals and has nothing against *charas*. He wants to show us, the ethnologists and the master shamans who are present, that he is able to do it. The Magar are bound together with shamanism like flesh and bone.

The young shaman goes into a trance fairly quickly. Indra Gurung jumps up excitedly and sits down next to him. He wants to support the trance of the young man, but also to test it. He makes a satisfied expression and goes along with him right away. He pulls out his bone trumpet and pours some water and rakshi through the "gruesome nostrils." The amrita pours out the other end.

²⁴⁰ The relatively large snail shells (6–10 cm in size) are also used as amulet holders (*ga'u*).



Conch trumpet with a rare depiction of an ithyphallic Vishnu. (Kathmandu, sixteenth century)

The *shanka*, or conch shell trumpet, is a part of the tantric path. Shamans occasionally use them as a symbol. The bone trumpet is mainly used by shamans, tantrikas, and lamas. Out of fifty shamans, however, only three use the bone trumpet.

Brahman prayer to the conch trumpet: "Panchajanyam Rishikesh, Devedattam Dhanajaya, Paudham Dadamo Mahashankha, Bhim Karma Brigodara, Aanant Biyayam Raja, Kunti Putra Yudhisthira, Nakul Sahadevsaya, Subhash Mani Pushpakan." (Dictated by Yaga Prasad Khanal, transcribed by Shusma Shahi)



Myingmar Sherpa blows the forearm trumpet (*mashan*) while in the deepest trance. He lets the sound of death ring.

With his very old and worn forearm trumpet, Indra Gurung blows himself into the middle world and underworld. Afterwards, he gnaws on it like on a dog bone—like spiritual shaman-food.



Indra is obviously surprised that the young shaman has a bone trumpet made from human bone and a second one made from tiger bone. He has never seen that before. As always, there is something new. The Magar has proved himself to us. We are proud.

Shamans, as well as tantrikas and lamas, use trumpets made from human bone for their invocations, healing ceremonies, and meditations. The thigh bone trumpet, for instance, is made out of human bones (*mashan*), preferably those from a buried shaman or lama. While the lamas prefer the thigh bone, the shamans use the forearm. Why this is the case was difficult to ascertain. Indra said that the shamans must take the forearm of the right arm for their trumpets. When the bone trumpet is blown—creating what is an eerie sound to many who hear it—the shaman recites in his mind the *mashan mantra*, the bone spell.

Horns, Trumpets, and Shamans

For many shamans, the horn of the high-altitude antelope of the Himalayas, the *barad* or *krishna sagar* (also known as the Tibetan antelope, *Antelope cervicapra*) is of inestimable value.²⁴¹ The horn, which

²⁴¹ Although this antelope is connected to Krishna by virtue of its name, this new Hindu god, who is the seventh manifestation of Vishnu, has no significance to the shamans. Nevertheless, the shamans also pray on the day of the Krishna festival—for after all, every godhead can be ultimately traced back to Shiva and Parvati.

grows as long as sixty centimeters, is twisted, ribbed, and very heavy. The shamans use it as a *phurba* and a horn trumpet, as they do with all wild animal horns. It is considered to be equal to human bone, and serves the shamans as an instrument for protection and invocation. It is a sacred link to nature, to the origins of the shamans, and is an endless spiral pathway and ladder into the heavens, to *akash*. The shamans travel through their horns into the other world, exactly like Shiva who also uses only animal horns for his travels. The sound of the antelope horn is an “elevator,” a medium for traveling upward.

Although the animal horns are well suited for making *chilams*, or smoking pipes, they do not have a particularly good taste. Shamans, yogis, and sadhus used animal horns as smoking implements in earlier times. Images can still be seen of Shiva with a crooked horn in his hand: it serves as both a *chilam* and trumpet at the same time. With the “progress of civilization,” methods were discovered to keep the horn from burning and stinking, and to equip them with metal bowls for the sizzling ganja or hashish (*charas*).

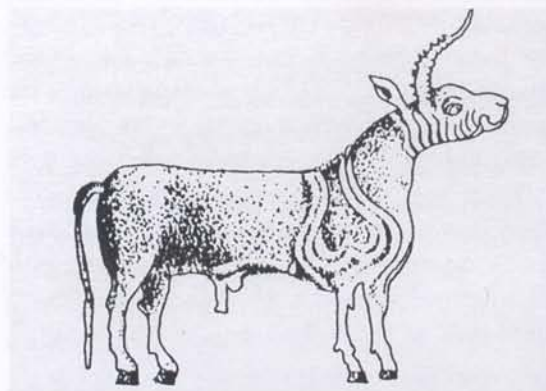
Many anthropologists, archeologists, and scientists of prehistory believe that the Stone Age depictions of horned human beings represent shamans



The horned Celtic or Germanic stag god presumably named Cerunnos. (Redrawing from a prehistoric kettle from Gundestrup, Denmark)



Horn pipe for smoking hashish from the horn of the high-altitude antelope (*chiru* or *Pantholops hodgsoni*).



The long-horned antelopes, the sacred animals of the shamans, were already depicted on the petroglyphs on the Aryan Indus civilization of Mohenjdaru.



The stag-horned god on a yarn painting made by the Huichol Indians of Mexico.

(Clottes and Lewis-Williams 1997). The shamans know this to be the case.

The horned ones, the stag gods and the wearers of the horned ritual Viking helmets, are the shamans of prehistory. (Despite the pervasive cliché, the stylized horned helmets of the Vikings were used by them only for ritual purposes.) For the last hundred years, Western scholars have discussed what the horned creatures depicted on rock walls in Ice Age period caves might signify. In this regard, we need only consult the shamans and the Indians, the inheritors of the Stone Age culture. Yet people prefer to believe a

highly awarded professor rather than a native, even though a Zuñi Indian, for example, can read the petroglyphs like a newspaper (Patterson-Rudolph 1990).

The *ghoral* horn (*Nemorhaedus goral*, called mountain goat or goat antelope) is an important symbol of the Lord of the Animals (Pashupati) and a shamanic spirit guide. Shiva (= Pashupati) carries an antelope in his left upper hand; a white antelope (*Antelope cervicapra*) pulls the wagon of the moon (= soma, *chandra*; cf. Majupuria 1991, 135).

The horn of the antelope is a kind of proboscis for soma or *amrita*. For this reason some shamans allow water from the *bumba*, which represents Ganesha, to flow through the horn into their hands. This transforms the “normal” water into *amrita*. With this, patients and others present can be blessed and fortified. The horn connects the shamans to the sacred mountain of Kalinchok, to the moon, and to the elixir of life. The shamans spiral themselves up into the moon through the twisted horn—they do not need a rocket for their space travel, just a simple animal horn. They do the same for a psychonautical journey.

Danashing Tamang has three horns that serve him as *phurbas* and represent the three worlds. He always fastens the long horn of the Tibetan antelope (*Pantholops hodgsoni*) to his cloth belt and ties it with a loop so that it does not fall off during his powerful ecstatic work. It is placed directly on the spinal column, pointing upward. The horn is not only the

“The horn *itself* is already a shaman. It is already filled with spirit, because it is formed through spirit.”

(IG)

The ancient yogis, or more precisely the primordial yogis, used antelope horns as trumpets or, when filled with *prasad*, as talismans.

To blow the horn means to invoke the spirits and demons; to suck the smoke out of the horn means to extract diseases and to gain *shakti*.

“In all shamanic cultures, the horn is a symbol of growth and renewal . . . ‘The power of the spirits enters me through the horn.’ ‘The horn became a clear pillar of light which bound me to the universe.’ ‘My cells dance.’”

GOODMAN AND NAUWALD (1998, 109)



Left: The 62-centimeter-long horn of the Tibetan antelope called *chiru* (*Patholops hodgsoni*) corresponds in length and form to the human spinal column—the location where body and spirit split from one another in a trance.

Right: The horn of the most sacred Tibetan gazelle is called *gajal* (*Procapra picticaudata*) and is a natural Magical Dagger for shamans. It is also present on shamanic, and even Lamaist, dance masks. The horn represents the skillful high-altitude animals, and helps the shamans to ride on their backs through the mountainous world of *akash*.

The Moon with its cooling light nourishes the gods in the lighted fortnight, the *pitras* (ancestors) in the dark fortnight. He also nourishes vegetation with the cool, nectary, aqueous atoms.

TRILOK CHANDRA
MAJUPURIA
SACRED ANIMALS
OF NEPAL AND INDIA
(1991, 135)

“I think the understanding and knowledge of the spinal column is of immeasurable help for all spiritual work with one’s own body and nervous system. It is above all the smallest movements of the spinal column which can be unbelievably sensitizing, deeply relaxing, and harmonizing to the nerves and blood vessels.”

EBERHARD SCHMITT-FEIN,
PHYSICAL THERAPIST
(PERSONAL COMMUNICATION, SEPTEMBER 26,
1999)

A skull bowl with a steaming brain and the eyes popping out of the skull—gruesome, but edifying in terms of transitoriness and transformation. (Detail of a thangka)

central cosmic Magical Dagger, but it is also the spinal column of humans, and the sacred Naga.

The animal horns should always be placed on the shamanic altar with the tips pointing up, corresponding to how they appear in nature; they are stored this way as well. If it is going to be used as a Magical Dagger though, the horn is taken in the hand with the tip facing downward and the shaman proceeds, performing the mudras associated with the horn, if they are known and he is able to do so. The horns are most often used by Kirati shamans, but the Tamang use them as well. They are a symbol of the worship of nature and of closeness to nature.

For the shamans, all three species of the deer called *mirga*²⁴² are very important because of their horns, which belong among the primordial *phurbas*. These *thurmis* assist the Kirati to have a safe journey into the other world. “Horns have great power. The shamans receive great energy from them” (MR). The more primordial a shaman is, in other words, the more deeply the shaman is connected with the source and the more he makes use of animal horns.

Cimtra, the Fire Tong

The fire tongs—an implement that was familiar to us—are still among the shamanic weapons and altar objects used in Nepal. They are made either from a curved stick, a split piece of bamboo, or metal, usually iron.

The fire tongs not only assist the shamans in grasping wooden coals for their incense bowls or lighting a cigarette, but also serve as a soul catcher and a demon repulser. With them the shamans “twist the demon’s ears.”

The fire tongs are also a symbol of the cosmic three. The ring at the joint is a symbol of Shiva’s hairknot as well as of *bindu*. The two halves of the tongs are Shiva and Shakti. Thus, the fire tongs are like a drum: *bum—bum—bum* = Shiva—Shakti—*bindu*.



Tantric skull bowl decorated with yogis.

The sadhus, especially the extreme sects such as the Naga Babas and Aghoris, use the fire tongs as a kind of musical instrument (*chimta-cum*; cf. Majupuria and Majupuria 1996, 199) as well. They can be clacked together like Spanish castanets while the eternally repeating mantras are murmured in rhythm with the metal’s sounds.

Kapala, the Skull Bowl²⁴³

There are a few delightful comics from the outbreak of the psychedelic period in the sixties and the seventies—for example *Dope Comix* or Robert Crumb’s *Voll auf die Nüsse* [a German anthology of Crumb comics], as well as a number of animated films—in which people are depicted opening up their skull caps and exposing the brain, so far as it exists, in order to plant something directly into it. In making these drawings, the brilliant illustrators, who have been completely unrecognized and overlooked by official art history, probably understood more about the shamanic and tantric *kapala* rituals than most of the Tibetologists.

The skull is opened so that cosmic wisdom can be received. The Sanskrit word *kapala* means nothing more than skull bowl. The use of this object means a great deal more, though: one feeds the wounded brain, which lies open like a snake pit or a viper’s nest, with new information.

²⁴² 1) *Tate mirga*, the spotted deer (*Axis axis*), 2) *ratu mirga*, the red deer (*Muntiacus muntjak*), and 3) *ghoral mirga*, the goat deer (*Nemorhaedus goral*).

²⁴³ Occasionally it is also called *patra*, “bowl” (cf. Majupuria and Kumar 1996, 197).



The two house brooms: one of the shamans and one of the witches.'

The skull bowl is the upper skull cap that comes from a shaman or a high lama. We usually see specimens that are decorated with silver and grinning death heads. Sometimes the bone is carved with figures of siddhas or yogis, or more rarely with the Vajrayoginis of the Kathmandu Valley.

According to the statements of the shamans, the use of the skull cap is very, very ancient. It is no longer plainly visible in present day shamanism because the shamans use a spiritual skull bowl for their invocations and meditations. The skull cap is very important to the tantrikas for destroying demons, and likewise to the Kapalikas, the "skull carrying" sadhus:

"In the oldest literature on this sub-sect [the Kapalikas], it is written that they were widespread but have almost disappeared today. Kapalikas are tantrikas who carry garlands of roses made from bones. They live, totally naked, in the vicinity of graveyards. They eat flesh and drink wine. Their tribal god is Kala Bhairav, an incarnation of Shiva" (Majupuria and Majupuria 1996, 109).

Shamans' Brooms and Witches' Brooms

The broom known as *kucho*, the "shamans' broom," is made from *amrisau* grass [*Thysanoloena maxima* (Roxb.) O. Kuntze, syn. *T. agrostis* Nees; Gramineae], and is used to sweep out areas of illness and negative energies. Its primary use is also as a house broom for cleaning.

The "real" witches' broom is the broom called *thankro*, which is made from the leaf stalks of the species of date palm *Phoenix acaulis* Roxb. ex Buch.-Ham., Palmae (Shrestha 1998, 152) named *takul* or *khajuriya* ("centipede" or "millipede").

The hard stems are forty-five centimeters long and are bound together with fiber from the same plant. While this hand broom is also used to sweep the house, it is usually reserved for heavier work or for wet floors. It is said that the witches use this as a *bokshi thankro*, a "witches' broom," for riding and flying.

Clothing, Jewelry, etc.

Malas, Chains

Lalit Bahadur Rai—a Kirati shaman who ingests flying mushrooms, his "assistants," once a year to acquire power—performs a ceremony on the evening after the *naga puja*: he is to determine whether the location or the house has accumulated negative energy or old ghosts and disturbed, restless souls.

During his trance, the shaman, who is shuddering and vibrating intensely, begins to bless the people present in the room. He spits out his protective mantras, and one after another he throws around the neck of each person one of his many chains that lie on the altar. We are to wear the chains until the end of the ritual, at which point the shaman takes leave of his protective gods and we give them back to the chain thrower.

The use of shamanic chains or *malas* traces back to the Stone Age. In the Neolithic grave at Mehrgarh a *mala* has been found that dates from the seventh century B.C.E. (Franz 1990, 52).

The chains serve not only for funerary rites, but also for maintaining the trance and aiding in healing. In some *chintas* a chain that had been hanging on the altar is placed around the neck of the patient by the shaman, the sick person must step through a chain, or the person is "cleansed" with a chain.



Religious Tibetan Buddhists, who have found a new home thanks to the tolerance of Nepal, are often encountered at the sacred sites of Svayambunath and Bodnath, and they always have *malas*. They let the 108 beads glide through their fingers and murmur the mantra *OM MANI PADME HUM*.



Necklace of 108 *rudraksha* beads (= seeds from *Elaeocarpus sphaericus*).

Leaves and seeds of the *rudraksha* tree *Elaeocarpus sphaericus*. The red leaves are considered to be Shiva's eyes, the seeds are the symbol of shamans, yogis, and sadhus.



The snake chain (*nag* or *naga mala*) symbolizes the poison (*bis*) of the primordial ocean which Shiva drank.

Through these actions the illness or the negative energy is removed.

There are many materials used for the beads of the chain: seeds (*rudraksha*, *rittha*) or carved beads, preferably from white sandalwood, yak bones, or from the conch shell, the *shanka*, *Turbinella pyrum*; more rarely the beads are carved from human bones, but these are only for tantrikas.

From the shamanic chain are derived the Buddhist prayer chain, the Catholic rosary beads, and the insignia of the followers of Baghwan/Osho. The good spirits have unfortunately often become lost to the epigones.

Rudraksha mala, the Chain of the "Wild" God Rudra
Rudra, the "wild one," is none other than Shiva in his form as a horned god, a counterpart to the Celtic Cernunnos. His earliest image comes in the form of a petroglyph from the Indus valley. It is the first image of a yoga posture found on the Indian subcontinent. Rudra, the wild Vedic god, has a sacred tree, as does every deity in all of the worlds. It is the tropical tree called *rudraksha*, which as a rule is the *elaecarpus sphaericus* (Gaertn.) K. Schum. in the *Elaeocarpaceae* family. It is related to the Ceylon olive tree, a very tall tropical tree that grows in Nepal at elevations of up to one thousand two hundred meters.

Naga mala, the Snake Chain

The *naga mala* is a chain made from the vertebrae of any sort of snake species. It is a symbol of the sacred Nagas and Naginis, the necklace or garland of Shiva, the cosmic poison, the psychoactive effects of hemp, the spinal column of man, and the kundalini snake.

The *naga mala* is worn only by shamans. Cus-

tomarily, shamans are not allowed to kill snakes because they are their gods. This job has to be done by someone else. After the snake is captured and killed, a piece of bamboo about the same length as the snake is split lengthwise into two halves. The upper and lower nodes of the bamboo remain in place, the ones in the middle are removed. Now the body of the snake is placed in the tube of the bamboo. The two halves of the tube are fit together and are tightly bound. The bamboo must now be buried horizontally in the earth, approximately thirty centimeters underground. After forty-three days the tube is dug up, the string is loosened, and the bamboo is carefully opened. Only the vertebrae of the snake are found in it. These are threaded on a string, and the *mala* is finished. It is not important whether there are exactly 108 joints on the chain of a *naga mala*. The natural length of the snake decides the length of the chain. It is only important that the spine is complete and that it has been threaded in the vertebrae's original sequence.

Ghanti mala, the Bell Chain

The bell chain or *jhankri mala* consists of the usual 108 *rudraksha* beads, which have been threaded in between with bells. Sometimes the shamans use the bell chains of the horses, for they ride upon them.

Shamans use only the round bells with three or four slits. The simple split bell symbolizes the yoni; the tri-split bell symbolizes the feminine, the quarter-split bell symbolizes the masculine.²⁴⁴

Some shamans also carry a skull chain, or *marensi mala*, made from carved bone beads, usually from yak bones, but it is said to be better if made from human bones. The *kauri mala*, the shell chain made

²⁴⁴ In the Mayan culture of southern Mexico, the three symbolizes the feminine as well, because this number corresponds to the three stones of the cooking fire. The four is associated with the four directions, the corners of the permaculture field (*milpa*), and thereby with the masculine. Consequently, three and four result in the universe, which can be traced back to both sexes.



The bell chain shows the three most important number symbols in the three central bells: one, three, and four.

"When one wears the *naga mala*, one absorbs the poison of the snake. It is the garland of Shiva, our god."

(PR)

When it chimes or rings, the shaman is coming.



from the shells of the cowri (*Cypraea* spp.), which were used around the world as currency in earlier times, is rarely seen. On the other hand, the typical shaman chain, the *rittha mala*, is very significant.

Rittha mala, the Soapnut Tree

To welcome me to Kathmandu right after my arrival at the airport, Indra Gurung places a consecrated rittha mala around my neck. They are worn only by shamans, but on account of my work as a mediator, I am to wear one as well. I am supposed to wear it every day if possible—it is only during the four or five days of my wife’s menstruation that I am supposed to place them on my altar. Luckily I have an altar on which I can honor the shamanic objects and am not at the mercy of having to stare at them in a museum. (CR)

The *mala* is a chain of 108 black, nutlike fruits (1.2–1.5 centimeters in diameter) from the *rittha* tree (*Sapindus mukorossi* Gaertn., Sapindaceae, soapnut tree). Shamans use *malas* made only from these seeds because they are considered the “purest fruits” and bestow *shakti*, shamanic energy. They are consecrated on the altars and blessed with mantras. Through the presence of this chain around their necks, it is easy to recognize the living and working shamans who appear incognito during the day. The fruits are a symbol of the three shamanic worlds: white skin, black nut, yellow seed.



The light-yellow seeds beneath the dark hull are used as a natural soap; it is for this reason that the tree also belongs among the soap plants. The seeds are also used as fish poison and are used medicinally as an expectorant (cf. Storrs 1998, 250) and for the treatment of jaundice. The soap tree naturally belongs among the sacred trees of the shamans. Its wood is even useful as a building material and yields the best firewood.

Feathers, Headdresses, and Headbands

Feather headdresses are usually associated with the chiefs of North American Indian tribes. Feather headdresses called *mayur ko ponkha*, which are usually made with peacock feathers, are still used by most shamans. With them, the shamans are better able to fly.

In general, feathers and bird skins are of great significance to the local shamans. The feathers symbolize traveling, contact with nature, and respect for animals. The shamans collect feathers and bird bodies from certain species—they would never kill an animal for its feathers. The peacock simply drops them—so they may be picked up, so to speak.

If a shaman does not have a real bird skin from the sacred animals, he can also carry a wooden figure with him, which is often what Gurung shamans do.

In the Kirati tradition there are thirteen birds: *danphe*, the tragopan; the Himalayan monal; the wild chicken, *kalij* (*Gallus sonneratii*); the peacock, which

The feathers are an asset to the shaman in just the same way they are to the bird: with them, both are able to fly.

“The peacock was once sacred in Europe as well. It was the natural symbol of the star-studded heavens, as the eyes of the peacock’s tail were compared with the stars. The peacock was the sacred bird of the sky queen and the wife of Zeus, the goddess Hera. According to the legend, she had the hundred-eyed giant Argos, the guardian of Io, killed and his eyes placed in the tail of her favorite bird.”

ERNST AND LUISE GATTIKER
DIE VÖGEL IM VOLKSGLAUBEN
[THE BIRD IN FOLK
WISDOM] (1989, 553)



Left: Maile Lama’s feather headdress is crowned by peacock feathers, the symbol of the flight of the shamans and the enlightenment.

Right: Throughout the world the eagle is considered to be the King of the Birds, an emissary of heaven, and an ally of the shamans. (From: Gesner 1669)

The Most Important Shamans' Birds in Nepal²⁴⁵

<i>danesha</i> (= <i>garuda</i>)	great pied hornbill	<i>Buceros bicornis</i>
<i>mayur</i>	peacock	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>
<i>munal</i>	Himalayan monal	<i>Lophophorus imejanus</i>
<i>danphe</i>	trigopan	<i>Trigopan melanocephalus</i>
<i>luinche</i>	wild chicken	<i>Gallus gallus</i>
<i>parewa</i>	mountain dove	<i>Columba rupestris</i>
<i>kag</i>	raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>
	crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>
<i>chiladeva</i>	eagle	
<i>giddha</i>	eagle	<i>Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus</i>
	hawk	<i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>
	predators	
<i>lampuche</i>	magpie	<i>Urocissa erythrorhyncha</i>
<i>bandera</i>	flycatcher	<i>Ficedula superciliaris</i>
<i>hamsa</i>	swan	<i>Cygnus sp.</i>

²⁴⁵ There should really be thirteen sacred birds, but as is always the case in ethnography: no one knows everything.

The *luinche* re (Kir.) = *junguli kukura* (Nep.), “[sacred] jungle chicken” (*Gallus gallus*), the ancestor of our worldwide domestic chicken, is an important shamanic bird, but it is not a “chicken shaman.” It is considered a particularly good omen for one to find a *luinche* feather. Finding a complete bird skin, however, is of the greatest significance to the shamans.



Bird claws, particularly those of eagles and other predators, belong to the ritual tools of shamans throughout the world. (From: Gesner 1669)

Red and white are the symbols of shamanism, just as the shamanic flying mushroom is likewise red and white.

is sacred to all; the *luinche* (wild chicken; *Gallus gallus*); the small, black *klchuna* or *mawa* (*Myiophobus caeruleus*), which lives on rivers; the wild dove, *piura*, which lives only on the plains; the *koel* (*Eudynamis scolopacea*), which is found throughout the lowlands as well as the highlands; the great pied hornbill, *danesha*; the mythical bird *garuda*; the Brahman bird *besare* (Kir. “shake”) or *baj* (*Haliastur indus*); the *jhiwa* or *ranishari* (= “dance”), considered to be the guide bird of *mundum* (*Copsychus saularis*); and finally, the raven and the crow (*Corvus* spp.)

Some of the important shamanic birds can be seen on the thangkas as well: *garuda*, peacock, trigopan, swan, and dove.

Jama pagari, the Costume

Jama means “dress”; this designation describes the essential part of the shamanic costume. The shaman dresses for his *chinta*, for his “congregation,” his community. Because he steps out of time and space and



Tamang shamans (left is Yonjon) prepare the headband which represents the three worlds for the *chinta*, the healing ceremony.

becomes Mahakal or something else for a short while, he steps outside of his sociocultural structure. He drums himself right out of normal time, so to speak.

The most important part of the shamanic costume is the dress (*jama*). Every shaman, whether male or female, should wear a dress for the healing ceremony—they dress themselves in Kali, so to speak, in *shakti*. The dress shows the great goddess the necessary respect. As the shaman abandons his normal societal role, this exceptional state of consciousness is marked visually.

But the dress alone is not sufficient; it is only complete when it is put together with the headband (*pagari*), just like man and wife, Shiva and Shakti. The *shakti* is already activated and increased through wearing of the “divine” dress.

The dress is usually white because for the shamans white is not a color. Often the seams of the dress are banded in red. Red and white is the color combination of Kali. The white fabric belt is called *patuki*; it is bound around the middle of the person and is related to the headband as the upper world is to the middle world. It symbolizes peace, because it is bound exactly in the middle.

Pagari, the Crowning Headband

The headband of the shaman symbolizes the rainbow, the path into the other reality. The Tamang and Sherpa usually have headbands that have been braided from three colors of fabric. Some are made of white, red, and blue; others from white, red, and green. They symbolize the three worlds: blue (Nep. *nilo*) is the heavens, green (*hariyo*) is the plant energy, white (*sueto*) is the middle world, and red (*ratu*) is the underworld.²⁴⁶ Green connects the shamans with nature, with the plants, and with their plant teachers. The white scarf in the headband and the belt in the shaman's costume stand for peace, harmony, love, and compassion. Putting on the headband activates the shaman, just as the Magical Dagger is vivified with the three colored bands.

Masks

In the summer of 1998 I led an expedition for the well-known magazine *Geo*. They sent a team out to get a good story about the shamans. (And this they received—it can be read in the issue number 9/99; Büscher 1999). When we began to climb Kalinchok, the most important shamanic mountain and sacred site, we made a stop in the village of Karthali. As we prepared ourselves

²⁴⁶ Even the band for the skull crown of the tantrikas is braided from red, white, and blue fabric.

for the encounter with the super-shamans, something unexpected—but typically shamanic—happened. We sat in the only pub in the tiny village and drank beer. A Sherpa family came in, dressed entirely in traditional Sherpa clothing and carrying a few sacks of rice. The head of the family, Myingmar Sherpa, armed with a giant khukuri, ordered a chhang beer. Chhang is indeed the favorite drink of the yeti and other wild characters, but it is very dangerous for those who are not from the Himalayas. One glass and you'll have diarrhea for three days. While Myingmar happily emptied his glass, Mohan Rai began to talk with him. Suddenly Mohan-dai—that means “Mohan, my older brother,” a very friendly name—turned around and said to me, mesmerized, that this inconspicuous man was the greatest shaman in the entire Kalinchok region; he is even known as the “King of Kalinchok.”

I was electrified: a genuine Sherpa shaman. (One does not see or encounter them very often. It should be mentioned, incidentally, that Sherpas are not porters for Western mountain climbers but are a tribe with their own language and culture). I immediately remembered that one legend about the Sherpa shamans tells of masked dances that they perform where they transform themselves into Mahakala, the great shamanic god himself. After numerous glasses of chhang I had the courage to ask him, through my spokesman, Mohan-dai, if he had ever heard of such a thing. Visibly surprised by my question, Myingmar answered right away that he is the last of all Sherpa shamans, perhaps even all Nepali shamans, who has an ancient Mahakala mask. He is the only person who has mastery of the Mahakal dance and the purification ritual connected to it. Our French photographer became very excited, having high hopes for a variety of colorful photos for his photo essay. With his strong French accent he immediately asked if he could photograph the mask dance. Mohan made a rather unhappy face about having to translate the question. Myingmar looked back in dismay. Then he evaded the answer and said that he and his family were on their way to Dudh Kunda,²⁴⁷ the sacred sea of milk-white water that is dedicated to Shiva. We should come back next year. Myingmar was not on the way to Kalinchok, but to a different sacred site that a shaman must visit at least once a year during the Jhankri Mela. Then he fell into a light trance and startled us all with the following story: In front of the entrance to the village of Karthali, there lay an enormous and apparently poisonous snake. Myingmar immediately pulled his dagger out to kill it and protect his family from harm. Before he could strike, a kind of spiritual lightning seized him,

²⁴⁷ Tib. Chhomen.



causing him to ask himself how he could want to kill his snake god, the sacred Naga. It was as a result of this scare that he had desired to go into “our” pub. He was of the opinion that the Naga had given him a sign that he should meet up with us, and that he should be as honest as possible with us. After a long minute he said, “If you really need me for your story, I will come with you to Kalinchok. If you really want, I will also show you the Mahakal dance.”

The photographer was in seventh heaven; I

Myingmar Sherpa performs the Mahakala dance with his ancestral mask that has been passed down to him through generations. He is only able to perform this dance in a trance.



The Newari dancer from Bhaktapur wears a mask for the Indrajatra festival (on September 21, 1999, Hanuman Doka, Kathmandu).



The mask of the mythical being *Jatayu*, which is very reminiscent of Garuda and has a horned appearance like a Stone Age shaman. (Kirati style, Bhutan, early twentieth century)



Mohan Rai demonstrates the most important protective mudras and dance postures of the Kirati shaman dance called *dhumche*.

It is the same for Tibetan tribes as it is with the shamans of other ethnic groups: "Whatever is represented by the masks is made present in reality, and has a visible body (Tib. *sKu*). Thus, the Tibetans consider the masks to be a kind of support (Tib. *rTen*) or a carrier, which helps a deity, another being, or transcendent reality to become vividly present. It is a magical medium."

(HUMMEL 1970, 181)

trembled in anticipation of the ethnological sensation. As far as I know, this ritual has never been photographed or documented in a detailed way. Myingmar sent his family home and joined our procession of researchers, journalists, photographers, and dancing shamans.

On the next evening we arrived at his house. His son pulled the mask out of a rather greasy bag and handed it to me. I hesitated to touch it (typical ethnologist fear!) Myingmar stuck out his tongue (a sign of respect!) and said, laughing, that all the tools of the shamans can be touched; they are merely material objects, the power they contain comes from the mantras.²⁴⁸

Myingmar placed the mask between the giant bundles of mugwort on his altar, put on his robe, placed his chain around his neck, and began to drum, sing mantras, and pray to Shiva. The photographer began to grow impatient when the Sherpa sang for an hour. But Mohan explained that Myingmar must ask Shiva for forgiveness for performing his sacred ritual outside

of the ritual calendar. He had the impression that it was important for this to be demonstrated to the strangers.

Then Myingmar fell into a very deep trance. He jumped up, put the mask on over his glistening face which was covered in beads of sweat. It was an overwhelming vision. Mahakala had never appeared so lively to me. The photographer jumped around the transformed god, fumbled with his three Leicas, and complained that Myingmar wouldn't stand still for the pictures. But shamans are difficult to control when they are in a trance. This can be a rude awakening for a photographer.

Myingmar left his hut drumming, followed by his shaman students. He danced through the few huts, and frightened away the demons who were lurking there. Returning to his hut, he took the mask off and placed it with great respect back on the altar. He sat in front of it and sang for another hour, in order to appease his transgression against Shiva. Shiva was merciful to him and to us as well. (CR)

²⁴⁸ This attitude is not shared by all shamans and traditional healers on other continents. The South African Sangomas have a panicky fear about their ritual objects being touched. They do not even want to be touched by other people (how does that work during procreation?). There are even shamans to whom protection is more important than healing.

This story demonstrates that ritual objects are not allowed to be used merely for show. They belong to a specific space-time continuum. They are bound to a cosmological-temporal order of events that cannot be changed arbitrarily.

For their yearly ritual of expelling demons, the Kirati shamans use wooden masks that differ greatly from those of the Sherpas. During the festival called *dhumche*, which is equivalent to the “witches’ festival” (*boksi puya = ghanta karna jatra*) of the Newari and is celebrated on the same day, the shamans wear the masks of the *Jatayu*, the mythical bird which looks like a combination of Garuda and *nilgai*, the “blue cow” or great antelope (*Boselaphus tragocamelus*). In reality, this hybrid creature is said to have preceeded both of them. Its beak is sharp like Garuda, its horns are pointed like the Magical Dagger. This mask is reminiscent of the primordial shamanic ritual objects, the horns and beak of animals that are the natural origins of the art.

The Newari also wear Mahakala masks during their dance to honor the dark local god of Kathmandu. During the Indrajatra festival (which usually falls in September) there are large “bull fights” with water buffalo that have been raised in darkness their entire life for this purpose. The dancer—who becomes Mahakala via the mask—should be a gubaju, preferably one that still possesses the ability to trance and can shift over into this altered state of consciousness.

The goat skulls hung on the walls to protect the house and land are related to the masks used for dance and dramatic performances. These skulls are often found in combination with spirit catchers (= “god’s eyes,” yarn crosses; Kauffmann 1960). The goat skull is supposed to frighten off demons and causes of disease.

DIVINATION AND ORACLE

Divination (*jokhana*) and oracle play a large role in shamanic diagnosis. Even taking the patient’s pulse is understood as “divination.” “When we take a patient’s hand in order to feel their pulse, we enter into a connection of one heart to another where we are able to receive the first important information about a person whom we do not know,” said the shamans whom we consulted.

In principle there are two kinds of divination: *tharu jokhana* and *guru jokhana*. The first is short and does not require a trance. As a rule it is used for less serious illnesses. But if they are dealing with a serious illness, or if the *tharu jokhana* reveals no information about the origins or type of disease at hand, then the *jhankris* turn to the *guru jokhana* in which they go into a trance and question their *guruji* or *guruma*.

Divination and oracle are performed with various materials from nature—depending on the availability of material and the ethnic origins of the *jhankri*. With rice kernels, the numbers determine the



answer: even (= yes) or odd (= no). With ginger, the answer is dependent upon whether or not the piece that is cut off falls with the cut side facing up (= yes), or down (= no).²⁴⁹

The question is repeated three times: “Is the illness caused by *bhutas*, by *grahas*, or by karma?” In terms of *mundum*, the shamanism of the Kirati, also shown here is the importance of number three. It refers to the three worlds—and the three causes of disease.

The “return of the soul” (Nep. *shato bolaune*) is also included as a divination technique. For this, the *jhankri* holds his *denguru* horizontally, bows down, and drums on the drum skin from below. Another person throws a small handful of rice on top of it. The rice kernels vibrate from the drumming and either collect in one place, or a few kernels separate from the others. Depending on the groupings of even or odd numbers of kernels, the signs of good or bad for the affected soul are indicated. The *jhankri* performs the procedure until the good omen outweighs the bad one. Sometimes shamans perform this oracle following the conclusion of a healing ritual, when they give the patient an amulet for protection to take with them on their way. In this case, the yarn amulet with the geometric mandala motif is placed on the skin, and it is filled with *shakti* via the drumming.

²⁴⁹ When it does not concern a diagnosis, but rather a general question about the condition, a *jokhana* is performed. The first piece is sacrificed to the gods, the second one reveals good or bad luck, and the third piece determines yes or no.

A Sherpa shaman counts out the rice kernels in order to determine what is going on with the patient.



The Kirati shaman cuts a piece from a ginger root with her sickle in order to inform herself about the condition of the patient.



Mahakala with the Egg of Life. (From Noel, *The Magic Bird of Chomo Lung Ma*, New York 1931)

RITUAL INSTRUMENTS: THE TOOLS OF THE TRADE

“The egg represents
the world.”

(MR)



The Tamang shaman Yonjon
blesses the egg on his
drum for the healing
ceremony.



The egg which has been
cracked open reveals the
condition of the patient
and shows the shaman
whether or not he will be
able to extract the disease,
or more precisely the
negative energies,
from the patient.



Many shamans use chicken eggs simultaneously for the *jokhana* and for healing, which leads us directly into the next chapter. In the egg yolk there are lighter places, darkened areas, and flecks that appear. From these signs the *Dhami Jhankri* is able to recognize which and how many seeds of disease are in the patient, and how the chances look for “pulling” them out of the patient. In order to diagnose the disease of the patient, and in order to pull negative energy out of his body, the jhankris stroke the patient’s body with the egg. This method can also be observed among the *brujos* in Central and South America (Sepulveda, 1983). There, they crack the egg open on a plate and are able to see how serious the disease is by way of the flecks in the yolks. In cases of serious illnesses, numerous points or flecks can be clearly seen in the egg yolks.

A brass bowl filled with water is also used for divination. At the conclusion of a *chinta*, the jhankri—with the help of a consecrated *rudraksha* chain—pulls any burdens from the soul and seeds of sickness from the patients, who expose their back or stomach for this purpose. The jhankri attacks like an animal—with powerful movements he pushes the chain against the patient’s skin and sucks and blows everything negative out of the patient’s body. The chain is then dipped into a flat brass bowl. The success of the treatment is shown by the resulting muddiness of the water.

The fields of significance in divination and oracle are fluid, but as a rule the wisdom of divination concerns the individual. Oracles not only concern an individual person who is seeking help, but also relate to the family, the community, or to cosmic occurrences. Those who know how to interpret or read the oracle of nature—for example, the flight of birds or the screeching of crows—receive information about future events or answers to questions that have been asked concretely.

Although jhankris deal with cosmic relations, and are even able to see coming wars, strangely enough no politician has ever turned to a jhankri, either to recognize the first signs of war, or to avert danger. “We don’t know of any politician ever coming to a jhankri for this reason,” was the comment we received when we brought up this issue. As with healings for individuals, shamans are unable to address this on their own initiative. It is only when they are asked for help that they are able to put their mental capacities to work to avoid crisis and to usher in peace.

SHAMANISM AND MEDITATION

Many people meditate and do so for many different reasons, with many different goals in mind.

Much like the word *tantra* and other terms that are commercially viable and offer promises of success, the word *meditation* (in Nepali, *dhyān*) has become enveloped by an esoteric aura. In the present day, the word has actually lost its meaning. Nevertheless, meditation techniques are very meaningful for those who follow them, and sometimes they are even useful. In the West, the view has generally gained acceptance that the purpose of meditation is self-discovery, self-improvement, and self-development. The practices that are associated with it vary widely. In addition to establishments that can be taken seriously, there are “schools” that sell meditation techniques like spiritual supermarkets. In one of these, years of sitting motionless on cold floors and “emptying” the spirit may be required; the next may require—in contrast—that a person move until his body finally reaches a state of exhaustion, as in the dynamic meditation of Bhagwan/Osho; the third school may have breathing techniques at the center of their teaching; in the fourth, awareness comes about from walking—and so on. Each technique can be of help, and each one can do harm. There are forms of meditation that may be useful for certain people

but may cause problems for others. And there are people who become dependent on certain methods, like junkies addicted to the “beneficial” tablets produced by the pharmaceutical industry or to “diabolical” black market heroin.

In Nepal and India, when a group of people retreat to meditate, a sign is often posted by the organizer directing the session: “*Meditation course—do not disturb.*” The students require quiet in order to be able to concentrate on the thought-processes of their own mind and, ultimately, to let these move past like clouds, without judgment and attachment.

If we observe a shamanic ritual, we can notice that for a brief period of time the jhankris undertake an inner journey. They take their *rudraksha* or *rittha mala* in hand, and for about three minutes they focus on invoking the gods and helping spirits. The din of daily life rages on all around them, calls go back and forth, drinks are brought in, children shout, and those who are present in the room talk loudly and joke over the head of the concentrating shaman. The path of meditation leads inside. The path of the jhankri leads outside. For jhankris there is no division between interior and exterior. At the moment of the trance, both worlds melt together to a point: to *bindu*, the moment of creation in which balance can



Sign for a meditation course.

“Meditation is the act of wandering through one’s own interior realms. Shamanism means outward; meditation means inward.”

(CR)



A jhankri sinks only briefly into meditation before a healing ceremony in order to call on the 108 gods and goddesses, the 108 demons, the 108 protective and animal spirits, the 108 healing herbs, etc. This is done with the help of the 108 beads.

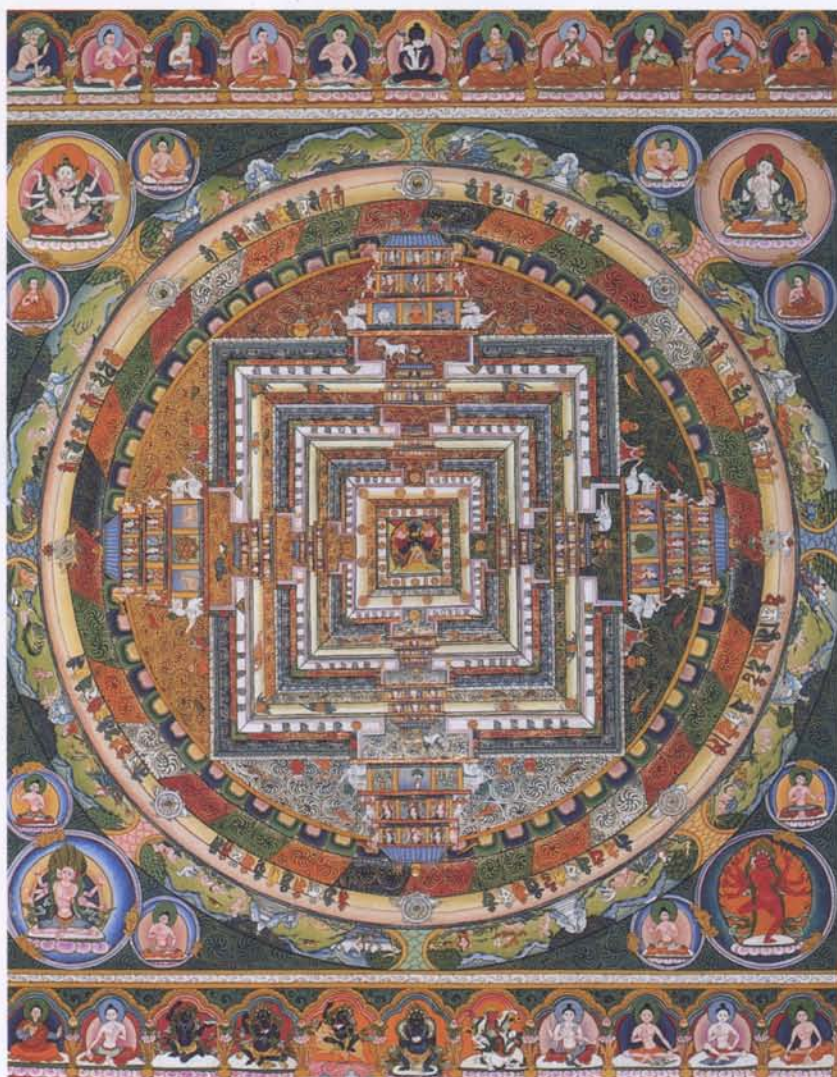
be reestablished out of disorder. No one would ever think of asking for quiet during a jhankri *chinta*. To the contrary, loud participation in the events is desired, as it supports the process of bringing health to the patient. The ritual flows seamlessly into a “family or village party.”

Sometimes the shamans go into the forest for a while, or retreat into a cave to meditate. Such an event is called a *gupha*. It serves to enrich the *shakti* in the interior of the shaman; in other words, it gives them more energy for gaining visions and trance journeys and for connecting with the cosmic powers. “Sometimes the jhankris retreat on a *gupha* for one day, two days, a week, or even a month. The meditation of a shaman has nothing to do with the meditation of a yogi. A yogi meditates on the nothingness of existence and the wholeness of it. He makes his thoughts free from permanent reflection. The jhankri, however, is connected with nature during the *gupha*. He visualizes all the helping spirits, intensifies his contact with the gods, and strengthens his abilities for trance in order to recognize the causes of disease. He

collects the energies that he will use during the *chintas* for trance journeys. Trance and meditation are not necessarily reciprocal. A person who meditates a lot is unable to fall into a trance. But a person who has the gift of falling into trance is able to meditate, though they may see no reason for doing so” (MR).

The Kirati shaman Parvati Rai confirmed that she has no time to meditate during the healing ceremony: “When I sit in front of my altar, I call all of my personal protective deities. This takes about two minutes. You can call it ‘meditation,’ or ‘prayer.’ That’s all. I must travel quickly through the three worlds and the three times and find the helping spirits who are responsible for the disease, otherwise the person will die. I connect with nature—and with nothing else. Everything happens very quickly. *Pffoom!* I have to recognize with terrific speed what I need to do in order to help the patient. Otherwise I am not a shaman” (PR).

Meditation is a deepening into the individual’s interior world, a journey within the interior realms, not a journey into the cosmos. Meditation has practically nothing to do with shamanism. Meditation turns inward, shamanic traveling goes outward—even if Westerners do not wish to believe this fact. Psychological theories and interpretations of shamanism prefer to overlook reality. Also, it is more often than not forgotten that shamanizing is done for others; it is done for those who belong to the outer world. Meditation is done for the individual himself, for inner peace, or for gaining knowledge about the self. Shamanizing is service to humanity; meditation is service to ourselves. For this reason, some shamans meditate on themselves, but they do so in order to forget themselves, in order to gain more energy for their self-sacrifice so that they might better serve the world.



SACRED NATURE, ALSO A MANDALA

The truly sacred thing is nature. With every step we take on the earth, we can feel the great goddess. We can see the great god every time it rains, when the sky thunders and lightning flashes, and when the sun shines. In gazing upon each flower we can perceive the mystery of the world. For the Kirati shamans, the worship or honoring of nature is the true spiritual way. For the Newari, too, nature is sacred. “We all come from nature and we are all a part of nature. Thus, everything is sacred. All humans—all of them—are therefore sacred. Thus, we worship the women as goddesses of happiness, as Lakshmi and the women worship us as Vishnu, the preserver. My wife is my life. Without her, nothing is possible. She is the center of the house” (SBS).

SACRED PLANTS

Every plant is sacred, but some of them are especially sacred, or are culturally of central significance. One example is rice, the basic food of Nepal. Sacred rice is



The kapok tree (*Ceiba pentandra*) called *khote simal* can be found in many Nepalese villages as a kind of world tree, an *axis mundi*, a shade giver for the human life, and it is therefore sacred. In the Mexican Mayan culture the same species is worshiped as a sacred tree, planted in the village centers and used as a visionary aid in their cosmology.

called *akshyata*; cooked rice is called *bhat*. The people in Nepal eat enormous heaps of rice. (For this reason we humorously introduced the expression *himal bhat*, “rice mountains,” to the world.)

Also of special importance are the trees whose wood—once they have been sacrificed by being cut down—is used for the production of the most important shamanic ritual tools, the *phurba* and the drum.

Another tree in particular, called the *jhankri kath* or “shaman’s tree,” holds special significance. In the folk taxonomy it is classified among the chestnuts known as *katus*. It is a small tree in the laurel family with the pretty botanical name of *Phoebe lanceolata* (Nees) Nees (cf. Shrestha 1998, 152). While it plays no role in rituals, it is invoked in the mantras of the shamans.

The sacred oak tree (*Quercus* spp.) is invoked in the same way. “The oak (Kir. *chasum*) is the most sacred tree of the shamans,” our Kirati informants explained. “If we don’t dance on its branches, we can’t fly.” It is for this reason that oak wood is the best material for the production of Magical Daggers and the handles of shamanic drums. Through this wood the shaman is always connected to the world tree.

Thorn Apple

The triple bell-shaped blossoms on the violet-stemmed thorn apple plant at the great Shiva temple of Khajuraho are said to represent Shiva, Parvati, and Ganesha.

The Banana

The banana—a Shiva lingam, naturally—is sacred to Shiva as well as Kali, Brahma, and Vishnu. The lingam rises up directly in the center of the banana bush, it is the life-center of the plant. The knotty root of the banana plant is the yoni.

SACRED ANIMALS

All ethnic groups in Nepal trace their evolutionary origin to certain animals. This “primordial animal spirit,” as we would like to call it here, is based upon observations of the mannerisms, the language, and the eating habits of the respective tribes.

The reason the Kirati trace themselves back to snakes is not because of their quick temper. Rather, snakes were among the first creatures that settled in Nepal and Bhutan. “If we go back to the beginning of the evolution of human and animal, then it’s possible

Thus all creation gives thanks, all that here blooms and soon fades, now that nature, absolved from sin, today gains its day of innocence.

RICHARD WAGNER
“KARFREITAGSZAUBER”
{GOOD FRIDAY MAGIC}
{PARSIFAL, ACT III}



The triple-blossomed thorn apple (*Datura metel*) represents the sacred family: Shiva, Parvati, and Ganesha; the thorn apple belongs to the origins of shamanism.

“Before we are able to shamanize, we invoke everything from nature. We invoke the plants, the flowers, the streams, the rivers, and the rocks. We invoke the whole of nature; the chili peppers as well, the beans, everything that can be eaten. For this we have a mantra.”

(PR)

“We don’t believe in god; we worship nature.”

PAUL RÄTSCH

SACRED NATURE,
ALSO A MANDALA



The crow- or raven-shaped god is depicted throughout the world, not only in antiquity (Egypt), but also in modern comics. (From: Enki Bilal, *Die Frau in der Zukunft*, [The Woman in the Future] © Stuttgart: Ehapa, 1996)

that, ultimately, all humans can be traced back to snakes. Just as humans today have settled in all regions and all climatic zones of the world, the snakes can be found everywhere too: in the water, in the ocean, in the trees, high in the mountains, on the steppes, and in the deserts and forests of all continents” (MR).

Primordial Animal Spirits of the Nepalese Tribes

Brahmans and Chettri	ape family
Gurung	ram family
Kirati	snake or wolf family
Magar	wild boar family
Newari	duck or frog family
Tamang	horse family
Sherpa	yak family

An animal is sacred to the shamans when it plays an essential symbolic role (it can be a living animal, such as the raven, or a mythical one, such as *Garuda*), or when its fur, quills, feathers, bones, horns, or other material remains are used for ritual tools. In addition, according to the Hindu explanation, these are hybrid creatures that can be traced back to the crow myth in the Ramayana. Their upper body represents Shiva, the lower body represents Parvati. On the other hand, the Buddhist tradition recognizes in them one of the thirty-six figures of Bardo Thodol that form a mandala. Every dying person encounters these hybrid creatures composed of both human and animal. Those who fear them end up in “hell.”

This meaning is naturally dependent upon geographical, economic, and cultural factors. The Tamang, Gurung, or Kirati shamans give very different answers to the question of which are the three sacred shaman animals.

The Tamang live throughout Nepal today, but they were once inhabitants of the higher mountain regions. For this reason it is the animals of the mountains that are sacred to the Tamang shaman Maile: the musk deer *mirga* (Lat. *Moschus moschiferus*), the wild goat *jungali bakhra* (Lat. *Capra hircus*) and the *muna* bird, the “nine-colored Himalayan pheasant” (Lat. *Lophophorus impejanus*).

The musk deer is not allowed to be killed. If this should happen by mistake, the legs of the animal have to be kept and an apology must be made to the Lord of the Animals for breaking this taboo. This animal is the guide of the upper world. If a person who has become lost in the mountains follows a *mirga*, they will find their way back to the right path. “On the other hand, following a mountain sheep is a bad idea, for it will lead directly to the abyss” (MR). On their altar some shamans have a horn from the musk deer that they found while they were on the road.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the hide of the wild goat is the preferred material for making the shamanic drum. The animal produces milk, and its horns symbolize the energy of growth and life.

The Himalayan pheasant—which is magnificently colored all over, but very shy—lives on the edges of the forests at elevations of up to five thousand meters. This bird may not be killed under any circumstances. Those who do so intentionally can expect a jail sentence of many years. Parvati, the daughter of the Himalayas and the divine wife of Shiva, is occasionally depicted riding on the pheasant. Feathers that have been found by chance are used by shamans on their altars.

Meat Taboos of the Tribes of Nepal

Gubajus	eat neither pigs nor cows
Gurung	eat neither wild boars nor pigs
Kirati of the <i>Chamling</i> line (the shamans)	eat no goats
Newari	eat no cows
Newari of the Shakya caste	eat no buffalo
Sherpa shamans	eat neither pigs nor buffalo
Tamang	eat neither pigs nor wild boars

In the period of so-called prehistory the Kirati/Rai provided the first rulers in the Kathmandu Valley for a period of approximately eight hundred years. Today, they live in small villages and settlements scattered throughout their original territory in eastern Nepal and Bhutan.

The list that the Kirati shaman Parvati Rai made of her sacred animals coincides with the Tamang shaman Maile only with respect to *mirga*, the musk deer. Otherwise she names *danesha* (Nep.; Lat. *Buceros bicornis*), the great pied hornbill with its spectacularly large yet very slightly hooked beak, and the porcupine, *dumsi* (Nep.; Lat. *Hysterix indica*).

The vulture-sized hornbill feeds itself astonishingly sparsely on scavenged berries, fruits, and seeds. When shamans are in a visionary state, the hornbill helps shamans find the plants that are important for a healing ceremony. The great bird is identified with *Garuda*, the vehicle of Vishnu in the shamanic cosmology. Its importance is also demonstrated by the fact that found beaks are incorporated into the bell chains of the shamans.

Parvati Rai described the porcupine originally as an animal that is “neither a bird nor a mammal—it is half of each.” As stated earlier, the sharp quills of this animal play an important role on the Kirati shaman altar.

The Buddhist and shaman Myingmar Sherpa explained, “Normal people do not see these creatures with human bodies and animal heads since they are not so familiar with visions and consciousness. But we encounter these creatures in our travels through the three worlds. We have no fear of them. For us, they are allies.”

In addition, Parvati describes Hanuman (the monkey king of the Ramayana), the tiger, and the horse as the most powerful animals whose energy the jhankris take in during their journeys through the three worlds.

Crow Mythology

Unlike the previously mentioned animals, the crow (Lat. *Corvus monedula*) *kag* (Nep.; Kir. *lobalung*), with its grim screeching, is found throughout the Kathmandu Valley. It screeches at the arrival of dawn and of dusk, calls down from telephone poles, and swarms upon the many garbage heaps in Kathmandu.

Parvati Rai and Myingmar Sherpa told us the following rather dramatic crow myth. It describes how humans were created and how the crow got its voice and appearance.

When the god Shiva created humans, a few attempts failed. First he made them out of pure gold. When the creation was finished, he said: "Speak now!" But the finely engraved gold figure produced no sound. Then the god Shiva thought: "Perhaps I have chosen the wrong material," and he tried using silver. Again he formed a beautiful figure. When he demanded: "Speak now!" it responded again with silence. Growing impatient, he took some ashes from the fire and some chicken excrement. To his astonishment, when he was finished, the figure began to speak: "Many thanks to you, god, now I am a human." Then the god became very angry: "Damn, I made you out of gold, then out of silver, but now you finally talk. You must die, for I have made you out of this inferior material," and he destroyed the figure in a fiery rage. When the lifeless heap lay in front of him, he regretted his deed. He had swept away the fruit of his long endeavor. "It has taken me hundreds of thousands of years to create you. I must bring you back to life somehow."

Then the white-feathered crow came and Shiva spoke to it: "I know of a medicine. It is made from the crow mushroom, *amrita*/ambrosia, and the sacred *amala* tree. Fly away and bring me the mushroom, a branch from the *amala*, and ambrosia so that I will be able to reanimate this pathetic little heap." The crow flew off and soon found the mushroom *kakhuti chyau* (Nep., "raven/crow mushroom," *Coprinus* sp. or *Psathyrella* sp.), ambrosia, and a branch of the *amala* tree (*Phyllanthus emblica*). But the crow was so greedy that it ate everything on the flight back. In order to eat every last scrap of the tasty meal, the crow whetted its beak on the ground. On these places the delicate *amrita* grass *dubhotar* (*Cynodon dactylon*) grew. It grows everywhere and contains a large amount of the life energy that Shiva



Crows, *kag*, are omnipresent in Kathmandu. On the *kag puja* the Newari sacrifice food to them.

had given to the crow. When the crow returned, the god asked it: "Did you give the medicine to the little human heap?" The crow lied and said yes. But Shiva recognized the lie immediately and grabbed a sooty torch. "You have lied to me. Where is the medicine? You shall be punished for your dishonesty. You are white, but your heart is black. As punishment, you shall appear on the outside as you are on the inside," and he took the torch and hit the crow in such a way that its white feathers became completely black. "Fly away right now and bring me the medicine that will reawaken my human creature, or else I will kill you!" The crow flew far and wide in order to find the medicine. When it was found, the crow flew directly back to Mount Kailash where Shiva was waiting. The crow sprinkled the medicine on the heap. The human came to life. Shiva was thankful to the crow and spoke: "I am not able to change your color, but I can bless you with a gift to show you my gratitude for bringing me this medicine. I will make you into the emissary of humans. You will bring them news from all directions, both bad news and good." Since that time, we can discern by the screeching of the crows whether they

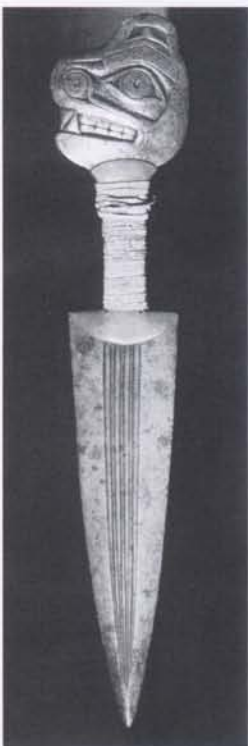
"In the beginning were the animals, then came the humans,"

(PR)

According to the shamanic explanation, these crow figures remind the human being that they are a part of the family of the animals. (Crow figure *kakshoari*, Nepal, mid seventeenth century).



Bear claws from the Himalayas.



A dagger of the Haida Indians from the Northwest coast of North America.

This object is strongly reminiscent of the Magical Dagger of the Himalayas. In particular, the bear head is reminiscent of shamanic ritual tools. (From: Bancroft-Hunt and Forman, 1980, 42, © Orbis Publishing Ltd., London; original title: *People of the Totem*)



Throughout the world, toads are considered to be among the shamanic animals and a part of the pharmacopoeia of witches' medicine, as well as being one of the sacred creatures of archaic and heathen religions. (From: Gesner 1669)

SACRED NATURE,
ALSO A MANDALA



bring good news or bad. This is determined by the tone and time of day of their screeching and by their movement. Sometimes they bring good luck, sometimes misfortune.

The *amala* tree has been sacred ever since. No ceremony is complete without a branch of its delicate pinnate leaves. It is included in the daily *puja* of devotional Hindus. The tree is in the Euphorbiaceae family and grows throughout India and Nepal. It provides many different medicines—above all against gallbladder problems.

Crows are considered to be ambassadors of the god of death, Yama, which is why food is brought to them during *shraddha*, the Festival of the Dead. But they are also ambassadors of the goddess of prosperity and happiness, Lakshmi, and for this reason are honored within the context of *tihar* or *dipawali*, the Festival of Light. The festival of *kak tihar* is celebrated in September/October in honor of crows.

Animal Hallucinogens

For some years it has been known that toads not only land in the cauldrons of witches, but they also excrete entheogens. The psychedelic toad from Arizona, the Colorado River toad (*Bufo alvarius*), has "poison" in its glandular secretions consisting of 15 percent 5-Methoxy-*N,N*-Dimethyltryptamine (5-MeO-DMT). When the dried secretions are sniffed or smoked, the user experiences extreme visions.

There is very little known about the traditional use of toads. The fact that the shamans in Nepal have heard about it is sensational. But even more sensational is the fact that they know it and make use of it! In newspapers and magazines (*Der Spiegel*, etc.) there have been repeated reports about "toad licking." The scientists amused themselves over this, and probably rightly so. Yet a number of shamans have now reported to us about the licking of toad poison (from the *Bufo melanostictus*). The secretions, which are squeezed onto the palm, are licked up; this serves as a shamanic traveling substance.

There are hundreds of known psychoactive

plants, but hardly any known psychoactive drugs deriving from animals. The Nepali shamans only use toad secretions or cobra venom, because then it is not necessary for them to kill the animal.

The shamans are indeed aware of the psychoactive use of geckos (*Hemidactylus* spp., Eublepharidae), but they do not use them. Geckos are able to climb on walls and on ceilings, but why this is so is not really understood (Daniel 1992, 33). They are beloved houseguests everywhere because they eradicate unpleasant insects and blood-sucking leeches. They make noises that we would not expect from such small animals. A few species are able to "fly"—in other words, they jump and soar through the air like gliders.

There are sadhus who take the tails from living geckos. (The tails grow back again, but in a different color and pattern [cf. Daniel 1992, 34].) The gecko tail is then dried and pulverized. The powder can be smoked (in combination with ganja) or mixed with *rakshi* and then drunk. The sadhus travel with this. The Kirati are familiar with gecko tail, but they do not make use of it themselves (presumably because they already have enough traveling plants and mushrooms).

Many people in Nepal believe that the gecko's bite or its skin is poisonous.²⁵⁰

²⁵⁰ It is reported in the scientific literature that no gecko is poisonous (Daniel 1992, 34).



In Kathmandu, formless stone idols are honored as much as precious figures (Padmasambhava cave).

Balu, the Bear

Balu, the good-natured bear, is known to us from Rudyard Kipling's *Jungle Book* as the nice and friendly protector of humans.

Indeed, the bear is actually called *balu* in some Himalayan languages; *ba* means "harvest," *lu* means "giving." The bear is the protector, guardian, or bringer of the harvest. He is considered in general to be the protector and teacher of the shamans. The Kirati also call him "God of the Gate," a kind of Stone Age Ganesha. The Kirati use bear paws, claws, and/or teeth in their healing ceremonies, especially in the case of chest problems. For this they speak the *balu mantra*. The bear parts are not taken from live bears or from those that have been killed by hunting. The shamans must find them while in a trance; only then are they effective.

SACRED STONES

If you stroll through Kathmandu and—out of necessity—keep an eye open for all of the worn spots, sudden bumps, and deep potholes on the streets, you will find on the edges of the every street and alleyway stones that are unshaped yet very sacred, and that are honored with flowers, *tika* colors, and incense. These stones are usually considered to be Shiva lingams. Their veneration stems from the Stone Age. It was only later that these natural stones were replaced by manmade artifacts. The stones point back to the original amorphous matter that then poured itself into the channels of cultural development.

Fossils and Ladders to Enlightenment

In the Himalayas, the experienced geologist and the sharp-eyed shaman can find numerous fossils of varying quality and varying levels of expression. The geologists and the paleontologists see the remains of prehistoric life forms in these fossils; the shamans recognize in them the mystery of nature. The paleontologists explain that these material objects were transformed into stone (fossilized) through the depositing of past "worlds" in such a way that their forms were preserved. The life that once was there is frozen in stone. The shamans believe that the fossils, especially the ammonites, were created through Shiva's kundalini meditation. Where he sat on the rock stratum of the mountains, the energy of the meditating yogi-god burned spirals into the stones.

In the Kathmandu Valley, fossilized mollusks and snails from tertiary freshwater deposits (see "Mañjushri and the Valley of Kathmandu," page 95) can be found at some sites. On the north faces of the marble bridges of Godawari on the mountain Phulchoki, located to the south of Kathmandu, the stems of sea

lilies (Crinoids) emerge like small white stars from the rock stratum plate. In the Kali Gandhaki Valley there are fossilized muscles, oysters, brachiopods, and a large ammonite fauna on various layers. The most famous are the so-called *saligrams*, the black knots that are more often than not spirally twisted ammonites or Ammon's horns, the "horns of the oracle god Ammon-Jupiter."

The *saligram*, insofar as it has to do with an ammonite, is also connected to the churning of the primordial ocean. Just as the ascending spiral was created in other worlds, the spiral nature of the ammonites became manifest. For this reason, the ammonites assist shamanic traveling.

"The saligram represents the Shiva lingam. It is not found by lamas, gurus, or others. It is only found in the mountains, not by the ocean. The mountains are the realm of Shiva, and therefore the saligrams belong to the realm of the great god Mahadeva. Through the power of their consciousness the shamans are able to discover useable saligrams." (MR) (See "Ritual Instruments: The Tools of the Trade," page 193).

Fossils connect shamans with the endless eons of time; they are the echoes of extinguished lives and by virtue of this they are sacred. For the tantrikas, sadhus, and Kali worshipers the spiral-shaped ammonites are also ladders, the path of consciousness that slowly but surely winds its way into the heights, just as kundalini slithers up the spinal column. For this reason, these stones serve as an aid for meditation. Through them, *shakti* can be increased. "Saligrams create abundant energy inside of you" (MR).

Crystals

Crystals are natural geometry, sacred geometry.²⁵¹ They are the most lucid expression of geometry in nature. "They are complete natural yantras" (MR). They are the mirror images of the other reality and the gates that lead into it. If a crystal is unfolded or spread out two-dimensionally, a yantra, a sacred symbol will be created. In shamanism, and even more so in tantra, every geometric form has a multifaceted significance and possibly also healing energy (cf. Lawlor 1992).

Garnet, the Shamanic Stone

"The garnet crystal is called *kurin dhunga*, the "copper stone," and is used exclusively by the jhankris. The tantrikas, yantrikas, and lamas are not able to do anything with the garnet because it is a part of nature, because it is formed naturally" (MR).

²⁵¹ Many cultures since ancient times have developed sacred forms of geometry, which are in connection with magical and occult systems as well (cf. Lawlor 1992).

"Demons are afraid of all metals," say all of the shamans.

In Europe, copper is the sacred metal of Aphrodite.

“Copper is connected to earth and water. Without copper you are not able to see the light.”

(MR)

“The earth is iron, iron is the earth.”

(MR)



Crystal Magical Dagger.
(Kathmandu, twentieth century)

The Himalayan garnet has twelve rhomboidal shaped surfaces. Its yantras were found by shamans through visions in primordial times and are still used today by some of them.

The garnet is a sacred stone for Shiva and his shamans (cf. the chapter “Ritual Instruments: The Tools of the Trade,” page 193).

SACRED METALS

Metals have served man since the beginning of cultural history. They have influenced his behavior and enhanced his culture, but they have also destroyed and poisoned him. Metals, like everything in the shamanic universe, have two sides. A metal knife can spread butter on bread, but it can also be used to kill another being. In order to live long and stay healthy, humans use many metals in mineral form, among them potassium, sodium, calcium, and magnesium, as well as a few heavier metals such as iron. However,

most of the heavy metals, such as cadmium, cobalt, and uranium, are destructive to the human organism.

For shamans, gold plays no role; silver is acceptable; and the most sacred metal is copper, because after the Stone Age came the Copper Age (followed by the Bronze Age, and finally the Iron Age).

Copper (*kurin*) is closely connected to Shiva in the same way that garnet (almandite) and *tama*, the “shit of copper,” belong to Shiva. Shiva always sat on

METAL	NEWARI NAME	NEPALI NAME	MEANING
Gold	<i>lu</i>	<i>sun</i> (“sun”)	Vishnu/Lakshmi, center
Silver	<i>wah</i>	<i>chadi</i> (“moon”)	East
Bronze	<i>keh</i>	<i>pital</i>	South
Iron	<i>na</i>	<i>phalam</i>	North, <i>phurba</i> blade
Brass	<i>li</i>	<i>taba</i>	West



Copper double-ax from Cyprus.

a garnet crystal on the peak of Mount Kailash. The *shakti* of the crystal probably worked through the sexual chakra of Shiva and nourished his kundalini as he meditated for millions of years.

When shamans travel, they must recite their copper mantra so that they are protected from the bokshis and the blacksmiths (*kamis*).

On the basis of their spiritual power, the shamans sometimes find pure copper, which they then place on their altar. Because copper is the metal of Shiva it is also the metal of the moon. It is used as a medicine: Copper water is drunk as a remedy for menstrual problems. It is made by placing a copper vessel filled with (sacred) water under the night sky during the full moon and blessing it with the *kurin mantra*. The water can be drunk the next day.

Iron is the most powerful apotropaic metal for defense against demons.

On *ajuyei* (New.), the day of “Great-grandfather Bhairab,” all the people, or at least many of the Newari, wear an iron ring (*nayamyou anlou*), because this day is dedicated to the witches; it is the day of Ganthakarna and the *bokshi puja*.

Iron rings protect their wearers against ghosts. Therefore they can always be worn. The demon-destroying or demon-repulsing *phurbas* of the tantrikas are made either entirely of iron or they have an iron blade.

For the tantrikas and gubajus, the “five metals” (*pancha dhatu*) are of outstanding significance. Gold stands for the center of the universe and it stands for Vishnu and Lakshmi; therefore, every Newari person wears at least a necklace or a ring made of gold. The Newari wear bracelets made out of the five metals because they not only represent the universe and the four directions, but they also symbolize good, protective magic against everything negative as well as against vile demons. For this reason, tantric Newari *phurbas* are made from the “five metals” that are also called *banch ratna* (Skt.), “five jewels.”

For the alchemists and the ayurvedic chemists, quicksilver is a sacred metal.

Meteoric iron and the ancient alloy called *thog lcag* are sacred to the Tibetans and Sherpas. For this reason, the Sherpa shamans also use such “objects that have fallen from heaven” as sacred items for their altars. Myingmar told us that he himself can fly through the different worlds like *thog lcag*, and that this occurs often enough.



An old Newari *phurba* made from copper.



An archaic Magical Dagger made out of a horn and metal. (Circa eighteenth century)

NEPALI SONG OF THE SHAMAN'S PILGRIMAGE TO KALINCHOK

*Hamro jhankri nachdai ayo ramai ramai
Rakshyagara chhyamagara kalinchoke mai
Jorilagna parilagia devideuta rakshyagara
Semebhume naganagini kupagara rakshyagara
Kalinchoke mai rakshyagara chhyamagara
Yesaithauniko devideuta chhyamagara chhyamagara.*

Refrain (after every line):

Saiho le bumba, saiho saiho, saiho le bumba saiho saiho.



*The shamans arrive dancing and full of joy
Protect them from demons, bless them, Kalinchok Mai
Protect them, oh gods and goddesses, from becoming jealous enemies.
Your snakelike Nagas, be so kind as to protect them, in the
Streams, ravines, and moist lowlands
Kalinchoke Mai, protect them from the demons, bless them
On this spot, protect them, gods and goddesses, bless them.*

Refrain:

Here go the shamans/bumbas, they go, they go.

KALINCHOK: JOURNEY INTO THE HEART CHAKRA OF SHAMANISM

On every Shiva Moon, shamans travel from all regions of Nepal to Kalinchok. They come to this towering round mountain in order to receive energy, *shakti*, from the *amrita* that pours out of the full moon during the morning hours. Shiva Moon²⁵²—*Jhankri Mela*—is the “day” of the first full moon in midsummer, which according to the Nepali lunar calendar,²⁵³ takes place in July/August. This month is the notorious *saun*—a time in which the gods “take a vacation,” so to speak.²⁵⁴ They retreat and leave their rule in the

²⁵² In the techno music scene in northern Germany, “Shivamoon” is also the name of a festival which has been taking place for around ten years. However, only a very few of the techno enthusiasts, who put themselves into a trance every night with the arousing monotone rhythms, know what it is all about. Even the date has nothing to do with that of the original Shiva Moon which is celebrated in India and primarily in Nepal.

²⁵³ The Nepalese year is based on the lunar cycle and begins in May/June: *boizagh*. The further months in Nepali are: May/June: *zeth*, June/July: *asar*, July/August: *saun*, August/September: *bodo*, September/October: *ossoj*, October/November: *katikh*, November/December: *mangsir*, December/January: *paukh*, January/February: *magh*, February/March: *falgun*, March/April: *zoith*.

²⁵⁴ Now and again information is received that the goddesses have their yearly menstruation during this time. Like the women of the Newari and other ethnic groups in Nepal, they are released from their daily duties and do not leave their house. *Jhankris* are not able to enlist the help of the goddesses during this four-week period.

hands of Nagaraja and Nagarini, a divine couple of the underworld. During this time the *nagas*, having been deserted by all of the gods, cannot be controlled. As if coming from high-pressured hoses, the torrential waters of the monsoons—both passionately yearned for as well as feared—are released by them over the land. During this month, the spirits of death and disease come into their own and torment many people with colds, circulation problems, and feelings of weakness.

*Jhankri Mela*²⁵⁵ is the beginning of the shamanic year. With this festival, the “breather” for the gods comes to a close and the *chintas* that had been interrupted for four weeks (excluding healing ceremonies performed at night) are again performed.

Kalinchok rises like a breast out of a plateau. On its peak is a grotto and there is a spring that never runs dry. Locations such as this are visited in India as *stana kundas*.²⁵⁶ “Breastlike hill springs,” such as the

²⁵⁵ The Nepalis call the festival *Janai purnima*. It marks the day on which the Brahmins ritually renew the cotton thread that they wear diagonally across their chests.

²⁵⁶ Skt. *stana* = “breast, spring”; *kunda* = “from the universe” (see Mookerjee 1988, 32)

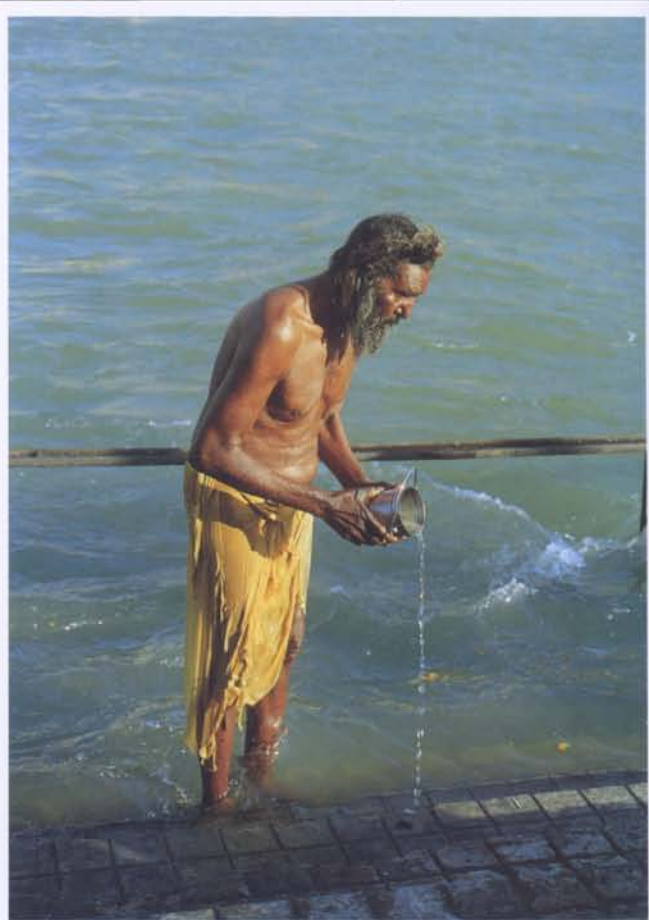
Darsnagara (Nep.; Kir. *lajimjhar*)—a small creeping shrub with a very intense aroma—is placed in front of the house at the beginning of the month of *saun* in order to keep away negative influences.

For the shamans in Nepal there are three sacred mountains that symbolize the *phurba* and thus the three worlds, the three times, the three divine manifestations, etc. These are the triangle-shaped mountain called Machapuchare, or “Fishtail,” which lies to the west near Pokhara (6,993 m); Kalinchok (4,000 m), which lies in the middle; and the Phurba Seto Himal (6,770 m), which is shaped like a triangle and stands to the east, right next to Mt. Everest.



With clear weather the view from Kalinchok (with piles of *trishuls*) extends over the entire Himalayan range.

KALINCHOK: JOURNEY INTO THE HEART CHAKRA OF SHAMANISM



Amrita also flows into the Ganges at Haridwar. Every twelve years pilgrims come from all over Asia to Haridwar (northern India) for *kumbha mela*, in order to bathe in the cool and raging waters of the most sacred of all Indian rivers. During a period of time which has been precisely determined astronomically (in spring), *amrita* (ambrosia)—an elixir that brings health and releases sins—flows into the upper reaches of the Ganges or at other historically important sites on the river (Allahabad, Ujjain, Sasik).



The shamans consider the Machupuchare to be a manifestation of the Magical Dagger.

one on Kalinchok are sought out (also according to tantric interpretation) in order to bathe in the *yoni kunda*. The shamans make their pilgrimage to Kalinchok in order to respectfully receive the *yonitattva*—the sublime essence of the divine yoni.

We have the Kali shrine, high up on the mountaintop, before our eyes. The heart of the goddess lies beneath a giant mountain of iron and copper *trishuls*. There is also the spring that never runs dry, which can hardly be explained geologically. Next to it is the image of Parvati/Kali, smeared with blood exactly on the spot where her clitoris is. Imagine for a moment if European pilgrims would come—let's say for example to Mount Verità (Mountain of Truth) in Tessin—in order to worship the nipple of the Mother Mary. Because the goddess is inseparable from Shiva, the Nepalis—and especially the shamans—see in the shrines of Kalinchok the most sacred site of Shiva, the cosmic *phurba*, and the world pillar in which the three most important chakras are unified: the root chakra, the heart chakra, and the cosmic consciousness that floats over the mountain and gives them their shamanic energy, *shakti*.

We climb out of the bus in Barabise. The hike that lies ahead to the over four-thousand-meter-high Kalinchok during the humid monsoon season will be very strenuous for us. On the most difficult days we will have to make a continual ascent of about 50 percent and gain one thousand meters in altitude, followed by a descent from an elevation of four thousand meters down to two thousand meters. The nine-day hike will be more pleasant for the Nepalis.

We set one foot in front of the other in a steady rhythm through this captivating, rice-terraced landscape of Tamang and Sherpa villages draped with heavy clouds. We climb the mountain to its peak in order to descend, dropping down into the deep valley below (for high-altitude ridge trails are unknown in Nepal). Our thoughts turn to the shamanic family of gods that blesses us during this ritual trek. (CME)

The shamanic family of gods consists of Shiva Mahadev; his first wife Sati (from Skt. *sati*, “being”); her reincarnation, the second wife, Parvati Mahadev; and Ganesha, the son of Shiva and Parvati.

Suddenly it becomes clear to us why the shamans consider them to be their sacred family. Like the *jhankris* who have experienced death during their period of invocation and in trance traveling, and who have been dismembered by demons and reborn again, these gods of the Hindu pantheon—a pantheon that has its primordial roots in the shamanism that is thousands of years older—have likewise experienced death



On this Indian miniature, both deities are depicted in traditional idealized style in one person with their animals—the steer and the lion. Like in modern photos of married couples, the goddess Parvati is on the left side of her divine husband Shiva (on the right side, from viewer's perspective).



On Friday morning, the Chettri, Brahmin, and Newari women come to the “little Pashupatinath” temple on central Durbar Square in Kathmandu in order to make offerings to Shiva. On the interior there is a faithful copy of the central Shiva lingam sculpture at the great Shiva shrine of Pashupatinath, the sight of which is reserved for Hindus only. Besides incense, fruit, and baked goods, there are also thorn apples and hemp among the offerings.

and rebirth. The story of Ganesha has already been discussed in detail at the outset of this book. During the churning of the milk sea Shiva drank the corrosive poison that the armored Vishnu incinerated in his incarnation as a tortoise. Even though Shiva Mahadev turned blue (“Bluethroat”), he was the only one of all the gods, goddesses, and demons whom the poison was not able to overwhelm. Since that time, he sees to it that the poison of poisonous snakes, scorpions, spiders, and millipedes (as well as the poison “in dark and degenerate hearts,” as Storl has added) comes into the world in a dosage that does not destroy every living thing on the spot. Since then, all poisonous plants (Nep. *bis*) are sacred and on his festival days Shiva is offered hemp, thorn apple, henbane, and other plants that bring enlightenment when received in the right dosage.

Sati went to her death willingly. She incinerated herself²⁵⁷—profoundly sickened by the fact that her father did not show any respect for her husband. Shiva swung the charred corpse over his shoulders and ran through the world, mourning and raging with pain. Vishnu, who could no longer bear to watch this, divided up the body parts of the heavy burden. Everywhere the pieces fell, a pilgrimage site for Sati was created. Shiva spent centuries in acts of penance in order to overcome the loss of his beloved. He smeared

²⁵⁷ In India, *sati* is the name for the incineration of widows. The Indian newspapers report repeatedly on individual instances of this practice, which has been officially banned.

“The image of the churning of the primordial ocean can also mean the sinking into the depths of one’s own soul. Centered on the mountains of the world (spinal column) which rests on the scaly armour of the tortoise (the oldest, reptilian consciousness) the meditating one churns the oceanic depths of his being (in collective unknown).

After the poison of the ancient karmic layers, which threaten to destroy us, is churned out, the spiritual gifts (*siddhis*) float to the surface.

WOLF-DIETER STORL
(1988, 75)

himself with ashes and retreated as an ascetic into the solitude of the Himalayas.

This gruesome ending to the love story between Shiva and Sati can be read everywhere. But how did the heart chakra and the clitoris of Kali—a manifestation of Parvati—end up on Kalinchok? Did she die as well, this immortal goddess and primordial mother of all living beings?

During the trek, our expedition grew to about fifty people, including eight shamans. We heard the following astonishing story, which was told to us by the jhankris while at a rest stop. All of them excitedly took part in telling it, and added their own details:

“Yes, Parvati died as well. One day she said, ‘I want to leave *mastyalok*²⁵⁸ and go to *devalok*. I want to dissolve myself in the invisible.’ The gods at the primordial beginning of time had made an oath to retreat from the *akash* pantheon into invisible realms when the era of the Kali Yuga begins. Now Parvati saw that time approaching. At first, Shiva attempted to keep his beloved, beautiful wife from making this decision. He shed rivers of sorrowful tears that drowned the world in violent monsoon rains at the beginning of the Kali Yuga. Then he came to his senses. All of the intoxicating plants and incenses—which are still sacrificed to him as they were before—flowed through his consciousness, and he remembered the oath made by the gods to retreat to the invisible realms at the beginning of the Kali Yuga. ‘Yes, I agree . . .’ he finally said. ‘I bless you Parvati. I will bring you into the four directions, to *chardham*, where parts of the physical manifestation of your consciousness will be worshipped at future pilgrim sites.²⁵⁹ These will remain with the humans. They can continue to worship you there.’

As he had done before with Sati, Shiva took the lifeless body of his beloved wife Parvati on his shoulders and wandered throughout the worlds, lamenting and mourning. Wherever decaying pieces of the body of the goddess fell to the ground, natural places were created resembling these body parts. Thus, her clitoris is recognized in the tiny spring that lies in a cave on Kalinchok. Ever since Parvati dissolved herself in the Kali Yuga, she is worshipped in her manifestation as Kali at pilgrim sites where pieces of her body are manifested in nature.

When all of her body parts fell on *dharti*, the middle world in which we humans live, Shiva dissolved himself. He became invisible and followed his

²⁵⁸ *Mastyalok* (Nep.) means human world (*masta* = “human beings”; *lok* = “location, world”). It is another designation of *dharti* (also Skr. *samsara*), the middle world in which live the humans, animals, and plants.

²⁵⁹ *Chardham* is not a single location, but a general term used for sacred sites: *char* = “here and there”; *dham* = “pilgrimage site.”



On their way to Kalinchok, the shamans are requested by the inhabitants of the surrounding settlements to bless their houses. It is mainly *rakshi*, *chhang*, milk, and vegetables that are sacrificed.

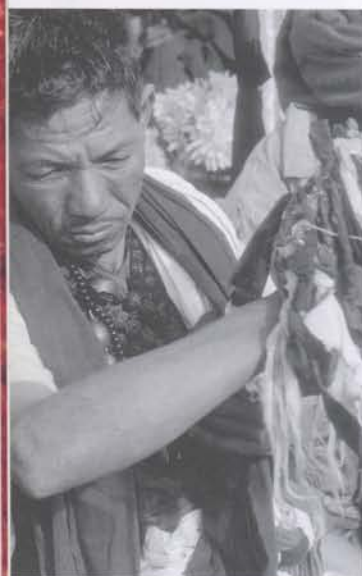


A girl walks in front with the *bumba*.



Leeches are ubiquitous during the monsoon season. They attach themselves to anything alive and leave behind dramatic traces of blood, though the lesions they leave behind hardly itch. The leeches are removed with a kind of "chemical club."

Left: During the early morning dawn, countless jhankris stream to the peak of Kalinchok with their procession.



The jhankris ally themselves with the help of the *phurba mudra*.

wife to *devalok*, to the realm of the heavens where the most important of the gods live.²⁶⁰

Before Shiva dissolved himself, he said to the jhankris: "I am going now. Your assignment will be to heal the humans as I have healed them. You are my offspring. Conduct yourselves like Shiva! When you are searching for knowledge, when you have forgotten certain mantras, healing rituals, medicinal plants, or ritual tools, then go deep into the forests. There you will find your Ban Jhankri, your primordial ancestor. He will give you everything that I have taught him."

At each rest stop on our expedition, we encounter more shamans.²⁶¹ They are in full regalia and dance in pirouettes, spinning and drumming, up the mountain ridge that we are able to climb only with much huffing and puffing. In front of every house, the inhabitants have placed a board upon which is found the bumba with titepati or flowers, vessels filled with rakshi, chhang, dud (milk), or other local drinks and food that are offered to the shamans and pilgrims as prasada, sacrificial food. The pilgrimage circles around the boards, singing. The jhankris leave behind blessings for the house and its inhabitants. The large amount of alcohol consumed is not apparent in looking at the shamans. Before they take a swallow, they speak mantras that help them to stay sober.

Every night we are witnesses to healing sessions that are sometimes very elaborate. No sooner has the word gotten out that jhankris are in the area than the mountain people come with requests to help heal the sick. In mild cases this is quickly done. Using an egg, they pull the cause of disease out of the body, or they suck and blow it out with mantras and songs. Those who are acutely ill can only be treated at night. They are carried into the dim houses in boxes and bamboo baskets (Nep. doko), which are secured with tump-lines to the forehead (Nep. namo) and brought to the central fireplace. Also taking place at night is the nava graha rekhi (Nine Planet Yantra, see page 182), the healing session that had been recommended for the German doctor who accompanied us on one leg of the journey.

The higher we climb, the harder it is because of the increasingly thinner air, the continuous rain, and the cold. A particularly "pleasant" activity is the search for the leeches that lurk by the hundreds on the edges of the

path, and that bore determinedly through shoes, socks, shirtsleeves, and collars. These leeches are more often than not unnoticed and produce streams of blood.

The most difficult passage that comes before our next-to-last night is a landslide with a 75 percent grade. For twenty minutes we place each step cautiously, one after another, on the rock scree that plunges relentlessly and vertically down into the depths. The iron hands of the Sherpas keep us on track and tow us up to the steep final ascent, which we conquer, puffing and panting, in the drizzling rain.

*We made it! Before the rain sets in, we arrive at a tiny hut and, with soaking wet shoes and clothes, we gather around the warming fireplace. Butter tea and rakshi immediately start to flow. About fifty people find refuge from the massive rains of the monsoons in the hut made out of bamboo mats, piled-up stones, and evergreen boughs (*Abies spectabilis*, Nep. *gobra salla*) that give off a refreshing aroma and repel demons. First we examine ourselves for any leech passengers that might have been brought in. We then dedicate ourselves to drying our shirts, socks, and shoes. After the evening meal, protected from the pouring rain like the mice that crawl around on the rice and corn supplies behind our heads, we fall asleep.*

A six-hour trek awaits us the next morning. Then we will find ourselves in the snowy, cold, thin air on the high ridge of Kalinchok.

In the early morning fog, a crowd of at least 150 shamans along with the members of their entourage jostle and make their way, drumming, singing, and dancing, to the Shiva and Kali shrines on the other side of the vertigo-inducing bridge. The shrine is circled three times. Then plentiful amounts of blood flow from the goats and chickens, spraying the shrine of Kalinchok Ma, the goddess of the mountain. Without sacrifices—both of animals and of our personal physical efforts—no increase in healing power is possible, and the search for greater healing power is the reason why shamans from all regions of the country take this exhausting journey upon themselves.

Following a one-day descent in which we had to cover two thousand meters of elevation during a

GOT TOAD MILK?

The jhankris sacrifice three kinds of milk to *Kalinchoke Mai* (or *Ma*): the milk of the white cow, the milk of the white goat, and the milk of the "white toad." The latter is to be understood as an allegory, for there are no white toads in Nepal. When they arrive at the destination of their pilgrimage, the shamans ask the gods for this last, third ingredient from the sacred spring of the mountain. Master shamans know that it concerns a whitish, psychoactive glandular secretion of a toad (*Bufo melanostictus*). The glands of the toad are squeezed until the secretions squirt out, the hand is then licked, and one goes on a shamanic journey.²⁶² A curry that causes flying for ten to fifteen minutes in the other worlds is prepared from the chopped off heads—which include the glands—of the toad called *paha* (Nep.). It is known that this toad contains bufotenine and other tryptamines. "Therefore the toad is a kind of travel agent," said Mohan Rai playfully.

²⁶⁰ *Yamalok* is the celestial kingdom of the God of Death; *Indralok* is the celestial realm in which the elemental gods are found, for example the gods who embody thunder, lightning, or the five elements.

²⁶¹ By the end, our pilgrimage was comprised of 55 people, with 11 shamans among them. Our cook, Sange, told us that the porters had carried 160 kilos of rice in order to be able to prepare the daily *dhal bhat* meal for the Nepalis.

²⁶² In the psychedelic scene it has been known for years that smoking the dried secretions of *Bufo alvarius*, the Colorado river toad which is native to the area around Tucson, causes very powerful but short-lived visions. The strength and depth of the hallucinations were confirmed for us by the jhankris of Nepal, for example by Myingmar Sherpa and Parvati Rai, who have tried it themselves. Up until this point it has only been speculated in the context of iconographic indications (Weil and Davis 1994) that the toad poison has visionary significance in Indian culture. Nothing was known about a use of these substances in Nepal until now. Our field research revealed for the first time the proof that the jhankris know about and use toad poison (Nep. *paha bis*).

Once in a while the shamans sacrifice their own blood to Kali, Mahakali, the great goddess. To do this they prick themselves in their finger with a porcupine quill or a needle—but under no circumstances do they prick the offering finger (= ring finger). More seldomly, they make a sacrificial wound in the tongue (like the ancient Mayans in Mexico). Against any possible pain they recite the *Indrajal* mantra, the rainbow spell.



The roasted liver of the sacrificed goat is eaten on an empty stomach. Then fruit, crackers, and rice are distributed.

downpour, more than once falling down on the slippery clay slopes, we asked the shamans about their experiences. All of them reported fleeting, short, yet intensive visions. (CME)

Animal Sacrifice in Nepal

In earlier times, the sacrifice of animals was widespread. It was an element of the cultic practices of the ancient Germanics as much as for the Greeks. Nearly everywhere in the world this spiritual or religious practice has been suppressed or superseded by others. The practice of sacrificing animals and the religious concepts and social significance that are connected to it have been maintained in no other country as strongly as they have in Nepal.

In Nepal, the sacrifice of different animals—such as birds, goats, or buffalo—is part of nearly every form of religious worship, and it is a specific component of daily life. Along with the cognitive, socio-dynamic, nutritional-political, and culinary aspects of sacrifices,

in Nepal they have shamanic, magical, and consciousness-altering intentions. The sacrificing of animals has not degenerated into a mere slaughtering ritual, but rather assumes a meaningful position in the thoughts and feelings of the Nepali peoples. Through conscious contact with death, the participant in the ritual more fully recognizes his exact place in the universe and better understands his own life. With the sacrifice the participant shows respect for the animals who give up their lives for humans.

I have been able to experience and document many sacrificial ceremonies over the past ten years in Nepal. What has especially impressed me about them is the respect held for the sacrificial animal and the inner spiritual meaning of the sacrifice. Because of this, I do not see the practice of animal sacrifice as a “primitive” slaughter of animals that is worthy of condemnation, but instead as a spiritual path that leads to a deeper understanding of the complex relationship of life and death, giving and taking, disease and health, and ultimately, man and the universe. (CR)

Maile Lama: “The Kalinchok is the only place to which every jhankri must make a pilgrimage once in his life. I am lucky that this was made possible for me, for only a few have the money, time, and energy needed to undertake this exhausting trek in the middle of the rainy season. When I arrived at the shrines I saw mirrors all around me. I became lost in the multifaceted images. I was very surprised at the accumulation of good energy at this place. I do not know if anyone with bad thoughts and black hearts came there. Then I heard a voice: ‘My little daughter, I am Kalinchoke Ma. You must come to me, if you have a wish. [Her wish is of a private nature and we didn’t press her to betray it.] I will always help you.’ In one of the many mirrors I suddenly saw a beautiful woman riding on a lion: Durga. I did not know what to expect, but I sensed that a great amount of energy and knowledge was flowing into me.”

Indra Doj Gurung: “Without question, this is a very sacred and powerful place. I would like to come here every year. This year is the second time I have climbed Kalinchok. All of the *trishuls* that are carried by pilgrims and shamans to the peak represent the apex of Shiva’s power. No Shiva shrine is more powerful. I have received my power from Shiva and feel as though I am at the source from which I can create new abilities. I thanked Shiva for my healing power. With my sore leg,²⁶³

²⁶³ Gurung has suffered from acute pain ever since a bullet hole was left in his calf—an injury from his time in the military. The descent took visibly less effort than the ascent, when he sometimes had to be supported by porters.

it was possible to ascend and descend only with difficulty, and for that reason I was only able to go into a short trance. But I briefly saw a pouring rain, ascending bubbles, and a few lotus flowers when Christian sacrificed his goat. I asked Kalinchoke Ma for more energy and health. I would like to come every year to Kalinchok, for this is the only place where I can truly renew my energy. This is the most sacred place for shamans.”

Parvati Rai: “I did not feel anything until we came to the ladder leading over the chasm. As I stood in front of the shrine, however, I shuddered. I felt that someone was holding me aloft. Usually I am very slow. I am not able to charm anybody with dancing or singing, but I felt how the energy I had received from Shiva as a gift was renewed. In a fleeting second I saw a lake. Over it swayed three figures: a snake, a pretty girl, and Shiva. Then it disappeared again. As I sacrificed my *trishul*, I felt a shock, as if I were struck through with a bolt of electricity. Someone spoke to me: ‘Do not be afraid, this is my blessing for you.’ Five times I went around the shrine. I saw many women, men, and animals in the blood flow from the sacrificed animals. I thanked Kalinchoke Ma for her blessing. Then I came back again. There are no shrines that can compare to this one. Only a few succeed in coming here. I am very thankful that I have had this opportunity to renew my energy here.”

WEATHER-MAKING AND WEATHER-MAKERS

It has been pouring continuously for four days. The paths have become streams, sometimes even torrential rivers. Here and there a landslide occurs. The ascent to Kalinchok becomes increasingly more difficult and more dangerous. We walk with umbrellas. It is pointless to put on a rain hat or rain coat: as a result of the heat, we would quickly become more wet on the inside than on the outside.

Finally we come to a place a short distance from the peak: Kidorje, “Wild-dog Thunderbolt.” There is a house there with many rooms; you might also call it a hut. We are able to sit down by the fire right away and dry our clothes. I am shown a place to sleep, next to the calf. I can’t help but think about the story of Jesus and the manger. Humans and animals under the same roof. Someone gives me a plate of dhal bhat rice with lentil soup and some curry.

While I am eating in the dim room—of course there is no electricity here—two shamans in the next room begin to sing and drum. With every bite the rhythm intensifies, with every swallow the song grows stronger. I hand back my plate and dash to the other room. Myingmar Sherpa and his principal student are sitting there, both in a trance. I sit down cross-legged behind

Myingmar so that my knee touches his hip. Immediately a bolt surges through me. I begin to shake and tremble. Whoosh, like lightning I am in a trance myself. My consciousness shoots out of my body directly into the heavens. I fly with Myingmar through the heavens to the realm of Indralok. Beneath me I see the peak of Kalinchok, above me I see wormlike bands in different colors, primarily red, blue, and white. They are twisted around one another. Myingmar descends upon them and unknots them; he puts them back in order. Whoosh—and I am back in the dim house, covered in sweat.

I ask Mohan whether or not Myingmar had said or sung anything during my journey. “Yes, he changed the weather.”

Indeed, that is what he did. We have beaming sunshine for the Kalinchok Jatra, which lasts from six in the morning to about twelve in the afternoon. The cloud cover lifts as we walk to the shrine. A bewitching view of the Himalayas is revealed. The cloud curtain pulls closed once again following the brotherhood rituals at the end of the festival. It begins to rain once more. (CR)

One of the places where Vajrayana Buddhism is said to have been created is Nagarjun, near the area of Balaju, which lies somewhat north of Kathmandu. Since the earliest times, the tantrikas and gubajus have been going there to meditate. Once there was a long dry spell that threatened to destroy the entire valley. A great gubaju went there to Nagarjun and meditated for a period of time until it finally rained again. The valley and its inhabitants were saved. Unfortunately no one knows which ritual and meditation the gubaju performed.

It is said the tantric gubajus keep a book in the locked temple of Shantipur (directly below Svayambunath) which is used for rain-making. The pages are written in the blood of snakes and filled with secret



The secret tantra Temple of Shantipur (above and below in the background), which lies directly at the shrine of Svayambunath. Only the high tantric priests are allowed entrance. No one knows exactly what goes on inside there.



mantras for weather-making—and for what else besides, no one knows. A portable mandala that conjures the rain is kept in the secret chambers of Shantipur. When it has been too dry outside for too long, the mandala is taken out by initiated gubajus and brought into the sunlight. Then they murmur their mantras over it, and shortly thereafter it begins to rain, as was confirmed by the eyewitnesses whom we asked.

Weather Magic

The magical influence or regulation of the weather belongs to the repertoire of shamans and witches throughout the world. Weather magic is also well known in the Himalayas. It can bring “healing” rain or it can unleash destructive hail upon the enemy during warlike conflict.

The Nepali tantrikas use, among other things, *phurbas* for rain-making. They drive the *phurba* into the earth, sit (in a lotus position) in front of it, beat the drum (often a small lama drum or *damaru*) and, while in a trance, recite the mantra with which rain is invoked.²⁶⁴ This practice is said to be performed even today, as was repeatedly confirmed to us in Nepal. It is possible that the *nagini phurbas* of the Newari are preferred for weather magic, for the *nagini* has power over the weather, and especially over the rain. At the

²⁶⁴ In Tibet *phurbas* are used by the Tujen Bo, “the exorcisers of hail,” and by Bonpo for weather making (Hermanns 1954, 284; Rättsch 1997, 112).

same time, this ritual imitates the generation of rain by the Vedic thunder god, Indra, and his “thunderbolt.”

The Bon have command of weather magic as well. For this purpose they also use *phurbas* and/or—as is seen depicted on medicine *thangkas*—the thigh-bone trumpet (Baker and Shrestha 1997, 83).

In Tibet *phurbas* are used as magical weapons not only against the demons of the air, but also against enemies and for influencing the weather.²⁶⁵ The Newari and the Nepali share the conviction that shamans are able to influence the weather at will by using *phurbas*.²⁶⁶ The Newari also believe that tantrikas are able to plunge the Magical Dagger into a cliff and make water flow from it. For this reason the masters of tantra, who usually live an ascetic or hermetic existence, will never suffer from thirst.

THE BLOOD SACRIFICE

The act of offering sacrifice has disappeared from our world. We no longer hunt and we no longer slaughter. We go to the supermarket and buy a piece of frozen meat or a rock-solid frozen soup chicken. We are what we eat: “hygienically packaged soup chickens.” Or, in any event, this is the diagnosis of the Lakota shaman Lame Deer (Lame Deer and Erdoes 1979).

We have lost the knowledge of beginning and end, the knowledge of where something comes from, and where it is going. We serve only ourselves now. Because we have lost or forgotten the understanding of ever-present cycles, we produce fatal situations such as air pollution, water pollution, and massive animal feedlots. Even human fetuses are thrown into the garbage by hospitals (our dead are so “poisonous” that they are considered “hazardous waste”). As the headlines about “mad cow disease” demonstrated, we even force herbivores to eat their own kind; we make cannibals of them). We have lost our respect for life. For the shamans of Nepal, these facts are an expression of a horrible disease that has befallen many (but luckily not all) people. They call this disease the “loss of humanity.” Any person who has ever wandered through the outlying regions of this mountainous land is struck by the omnipresent generosity and humanity. The inhabitants of mountains have few possessions, but a great deal of heart. In their way of living, only what they themselves have farmed and harvested—

²⁶⁵ “Mastery over the rain is a commonly distributed power of the shamans and sorcerers.” (Eliade 1988, 319)

²⁶⁶ There is a class of Tibetan shamans (Tujen Bo and Bonpo), who can conjure or ward off a “dragon storm” at will. The shamans are just as ambivalent as the celestial dragon which blows the storm. They can bring fertility, but they can also inflict harm. Their most important instruments for warding off and invoking hail storms (hail is called “stone rain”) are *phurbas* made from the iron of the heavens (Hermanns 1954, 284).

The Siddha Thuch'en Yungtonpa (“the magical teacher of Yung”) is considered a successful master of the Dzogchen path. He performs a protective mudra with the *phurba*. From a shamanic perspective he creates rivers of water, or in other words, weather magic. (Woodblock print, Nyngmapa style)



or slaughtered—appears on the table. As a final conclusion, we would like to return to this source of life:

I had wanted to do it, I did it, and I learned from it. I asked Myingmar whether I could be permitted to do it myself this time. I wanted to finally experience what it was like to make my own blood sacrifice, not of myself, but of a sacrificial animal. Myingmar, the King of Kalinchok, the supreme master shaman, gave only a curt reply, as always: "You must!" He would arrange everything with the priests who guard and care for the Kalinchok shrine. I am to be the first Westerner allowed to make a blood sacrifice.

The white goat, the offering for Kalinchoke Mai, has been accompanying us for days. She has been blessed with red tika pigment many times by all of the shamans. Now she is to surrender her life so that I may ask for health for myself and for those who are important to me. Three times I must circumnavigate the shrine of piled-up trishuls. Then Myingmar takes my hand. I stagger to Kali's clitoris. It is there that I must execute the task. Our friend Bandari leads me to the goat. I fall upon the animal, grip it between my legs, and draw the khukuri that I have bought and kept a "virgin" specifically for this occasion. I lose any reflective thinking. I had been awake half the night contemplating how I would best be able to swiftly kill the animal with a focused grip. Now, like a sleepwalker I position the murder weapon, pull it, and strike the right point. The blood sprays. The dying heart pumps it out of the jugular vein. The red stream lands exactly on the third eye of the Kali statue, which has been splashed again and again

with blood. My shaman guides cheer. I have done it right. I have been successful. All I still have to do is to cut the head off of the goat and place it on the altar. Now all of our friends come forth except for the Kirati, who are not permitted any contact with goats. As tika and as an offering I must smear the fresh blood on the foreheads of my wife, my heart brothers, and all our friends. I am totally exhausted and moved. Tears fall from my eyes.

All of the pilgrims are surprised. Nothing like this has ever happened before. A foreigner making a sacrifice with his own hand. Then Danashing takes me into a trance. The Kalinchoke Mai, the Mother of the Shamans, radiates within me in the golden light. (CR)

Sacrifice is not superstitious nonsense, but a consciousness technique conveying the realization to the human being that without death, there is no life. Only after such a realization can we experience profound respect for the foundations of existence.

It is said that the Bonpos killed the chosen one with *phurbas* for human sacrifices in earlier times. Because human sacrifice has been banned in Nepal since the nineteenth century, this practice is assumed to have died out. Theoretically it is thoroughly possible that it is still practiced under very hidden conditions. After all, there are numerous Bon monasteries and nothing is known regarding those who live in them and the rituals that are practiced there.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁹ An impression of such secret monastic practices is conveyed by Alexandra David-Neel in the autobiographical novel *Love Magic and Black Magic*, which is supposedly based on fact (1983).



A pilgrim with *trishuls* on the way to the peak.

Pilgrims on the peak with towering *trishuls*.



THE FUTURE OF SHAMANISM

As we prepare to leave for Kalinchok, a great tension prevails among Mohan's family. The younger of his two wives had been taken to the hospital during the night because she had been suddenly overwhelmed by unbearable abdominal pain. She has been operated on during the night. I ask Mohan if he wants to postpone the beginning of the journey or stay at home with his wife. "No, we must go. That was a promise, a vow. There is nothing I can do anyway. It is the way it is. But let us stop at the hospital on the way and check on my wife."

Our bus is filled with porters, cooks, scientists, journalists, photographers, and shamans—a real expedition. Bags, equipment, provisions, and shamanic utensils are piled up on the roof. We depart at eight in the morning and head first to the university hospital. Mohan's wife, Kumari, is lying in the intensive care unit there. Following the determined lead of Indra Doj Gurung, we cut a path straight through the crowd of waiting hospital visitors. For visitors, the doors to the clinic don't open until nine o'clock. When the guard at the entrance recognizes Indra, he opens the iron gates with respect. All of the guards and nurses—all of the personnel whom we encounter—pay respect to Indra. "Namaste!"—everyone greets the divine in him. Everything happens so quickly. Suddenly Indra is standing in front of us, clothed in green doctor's scrubs, and he walks into the operating room. I remain behind for whatever reason, even though a green smock was also held out to me. After a few minutes, a stretcher carrying Mohan's nearly comatose wife is pushed out the door. Indra not only helps to push it along, he holds the IV like a "real" doctor. I follow the stretcher into the hospital room. Maile is already standing there, ready. Kumari is moved into the bed. Maile immediately begins throwing protective and healing mantras on the patient. While doing so, she falls into a short trance during which she sucks out the negative energies and destroys them with her power. She tells us later that everything should be all right. There is no need for us to worry. The woman would certainly survive and become healthy. Indra, who is busy with the installation of the IV drip, agrees with her. Thus we are able to depart with a sense of relief.

Now a few doctors enter, mostly Americans and Germans. I am very surprised by the respect with which they speak to Gurung, and how naturally the Western doctors and the Mongolian shaman work together. "Indra Gurung is the hospital shaman," Mohan explained to me, visibly relieved. "He is constantly called when the doctors don't know what to do. He often comes here to visit. Sometimes he performs hospital bed ritu-



The shaman Indra Gurung, here in leisure clothes, goes in and out of the university hospital of Kathmandu. He is called on when scholarly medicine does not know what more to do for a patient.

als at night and dances around the beds drumming. And just as the doctors send patients to the shaman, Gurung also sends some of his clients to the hospital."

What a world, I think. In earlier times the different guilds would have fought; here and now they finally work together. (CR)

In Nepal, the future of shamanism has already begun, as we can see by this example of mutual cooperation. Recently there has also been an initiative put forth in Europe to bring shamans from around the world together in order to encourage their exchange of knowledge entirely free of any commercial intentions. During our research in Nepal, we benefited repeatedly from the intercultural exchange of shamans from the different tribes. From the earliest times shamanism has been oppressed, forbidden, and destroyed by expanding, hierarchically organized peoples who have acted in an imperialistic manner. In ancient Rome, the shamanic cult of Dionysus was fought to the death, and any of its followers who were discovered were brutally slain. It was exactly the same in

"We Kirati were the first shamans. Many people have learned from us. Many people have us to thank for their knowledge, their symbols, and their rituals."

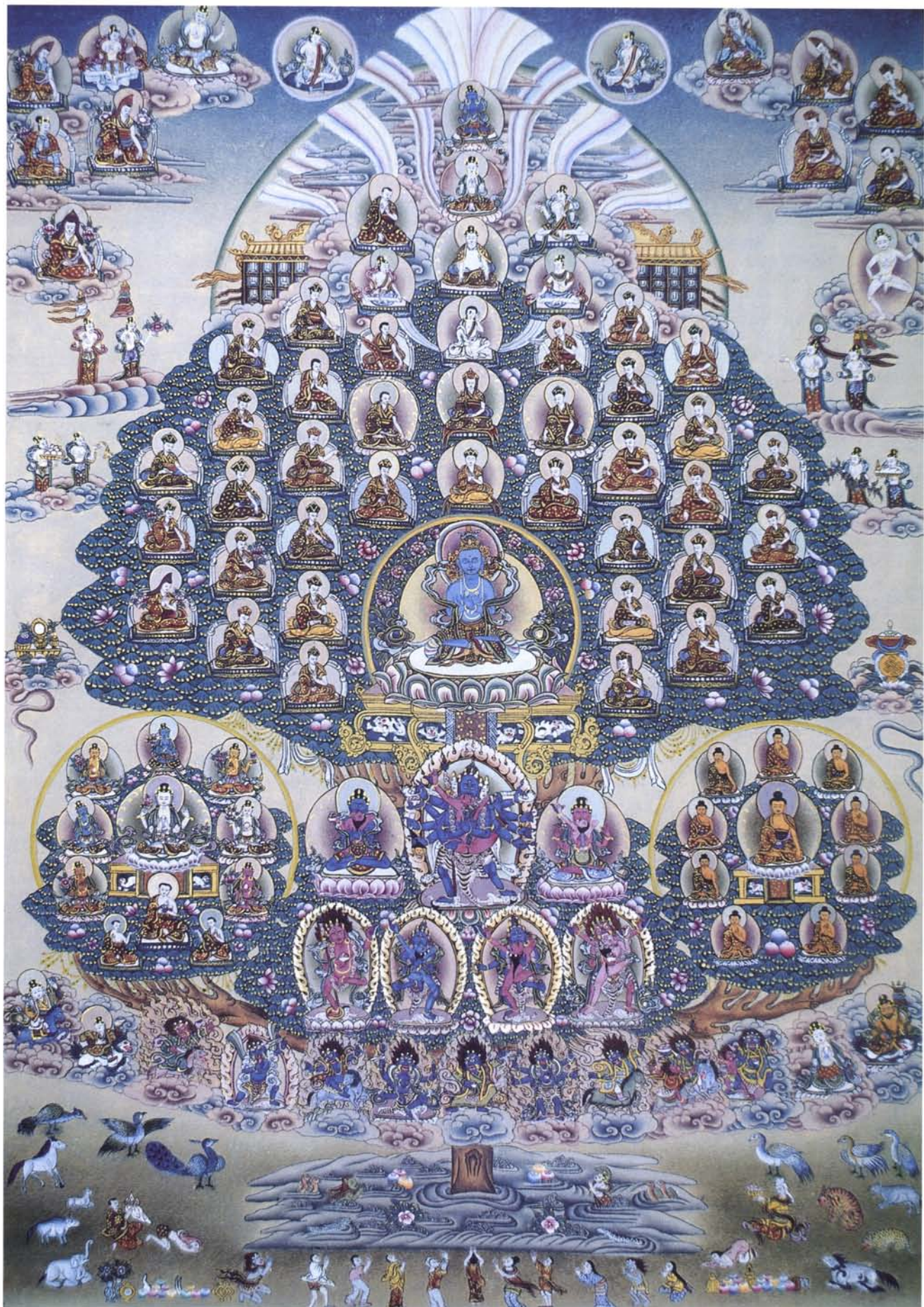
(PR)

the ancient Germanic areas. The seeresses and the priests of Wotan were killed. Later, the “witches” who had remained heathen were persecuted and burned during the Inquisition because of their shamanic knowledge. When the Americas were conquered, all shamanic practices were forbidden, persecuted, and destroyed on the spot by actions of the church. In Asia communist regimes that were centrally governed by the Soviet government initiated a campaign of destruction against shamans and their practices, which unfortunately achieved a considerable degree of success. But the communists were not the first ones to do so. In Tibet, the Lamaist religion suppressed the Bon tradition, and along with it every form of shamanic activity. In Mongolia in the seventeenth century, the lamas forbade the practice of shaman-

ism. In Korea, the Confucianists have made hellish the lives of the shamans.

We need a new model. We do not require separation and oppression, but rather tolerance and wholeness.

In earlier times, the shamans had to heal everything. Today in Nepal, as a result of Western developmental assistance projects and other factors, there are Western doctors and pharmacists. Today shamans there mainly treat diseases caused by spirits or that result from spiritual problems. When the shamanic diagnosis reveals no spiritual cause, the patient is sent to the doctor. This is very pragmatic. It has nothing to do with ideology, and definitely nothing to do with religion—it has to do with the life and the health of human beings.

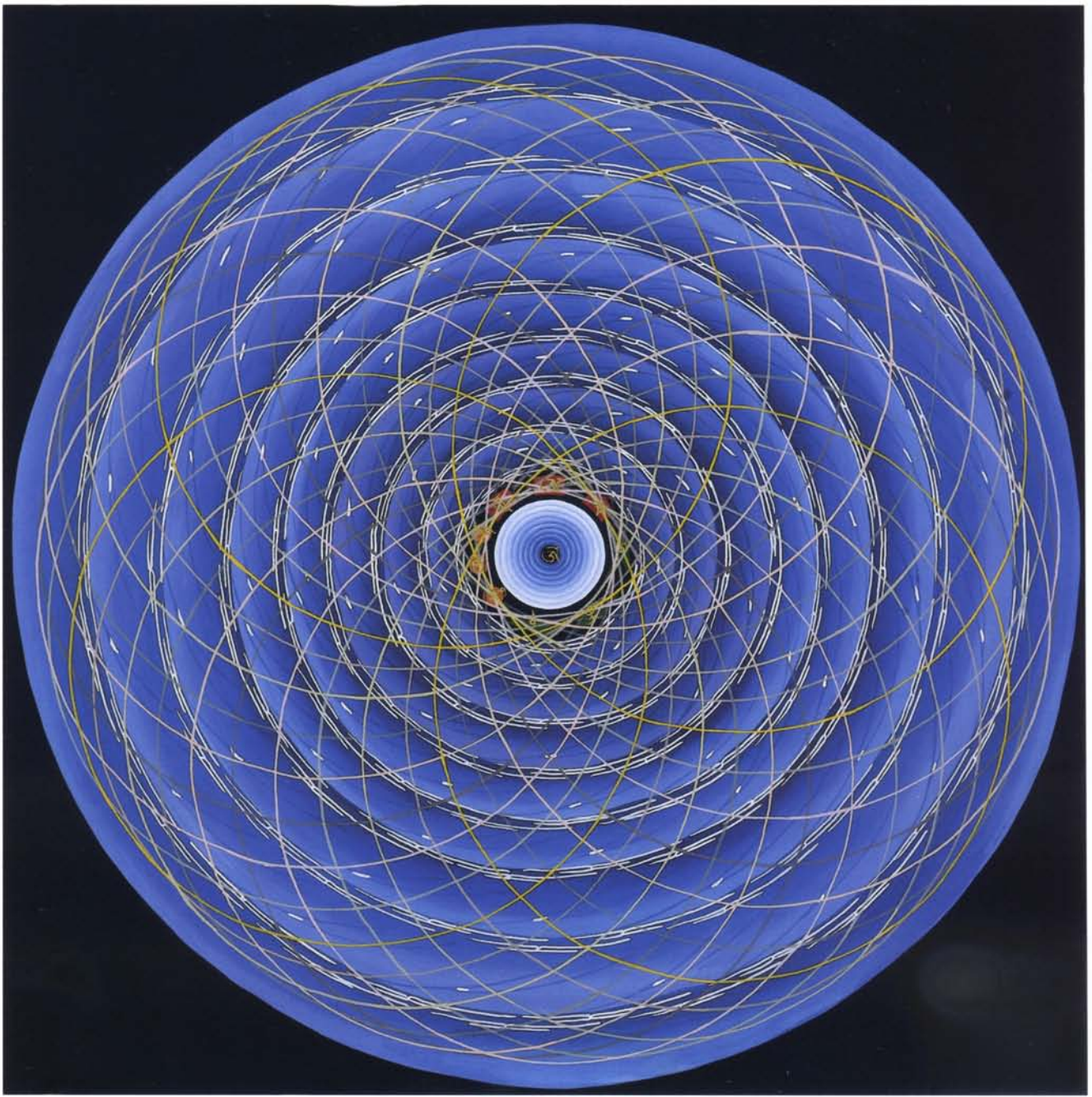




The cover of the King Crimson album, "In the Court of the Crimson King" (1969) reflects the expression of the wrathful Khal Bhairab.

Left: A detail of his manifestation as Haegriva. (No. 38, detail)

Opposite: The family tree of the Kagyupa tradition.



Bhutanese cosmogram of the creation. (No. 49)

INDEX OF THE THANGKAS

All thangkas pictured originate in the workshops of Surendra Bahadur Shahi.²⁷⁰ Some were painted by him, others were painted by artists of different ethnic backgrounds, following detailed instructions from Surendra regarding the iconography. In some instances, Surendra completed the scroll painting himself by lending expression to the faces and eyes. In contrast to contemporary Western art, the quality and value of a thangka is essentially dependent upon the amount of time put into the detailed work. In order to reflect this artistic value, the approximate time required to complete the painting is given.

The initial technical specifications contain very detailed and concise stylistic information. If only the style is mentioned, then the artist is from the tribe that influenced the style. "Newari work" means that a Newari artist created the painting, but not necessarily that he followed the style of his own tradition. Following this information, the corresponding style that has been imitated is given in order to show the complexity of the stylistic network, and to offer a more ethnically differentiated picture of the thangka art of Nepal than is usually provided. The dimensions given always refer to height by width. (CME)

1) **Mahakala Bhairab, six-armed Chettupa.** Newari work in Tibetan manner, in imitation of Newari style. Mineral colors, liquid gold and silver on black background (= Nakti design), 82 × 62 cm, Surendra Bahadur Shahi, Kathmandu, 1994. The painting took four months of work to complete.

In Tibet, Mahakala Bhairab, one of the many

wrathful manifestations of Shiva, was "tamed" to be a Dharmapala—a protector of the teachings. Chettupa belongs to the Gelugpa tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. The numerous small clouds, and the way the water surrounding the skullcaps below is depicted are typical elements of Tibetan style. The decorative border contains dragons and predators, a deviation from the example set by Newari style. In the lower center is Garuda. These shamanic animal spirits protect and enclose the powerful deity. (Reproduction on page 87)

2) **Ganesha.** Typical Newari style, mineral colors and liquid gold, 80 × 64 cm. Surendra Bahadur Shahi, Kathmandu, 1998. The painting took four and a half months of work to complete.

The style can be traced back to the fifteenth century and has been preserved since that time without interruption. In this painting Ganesha is depicted in the tantric tradition of the Newari, with the usual corresponding red body color and the twelve arms in which he carries weapons definitively for use in tantric rituals for the banning of demons. Framed by the typical Newari decorated bow, the *sirpech*, he sits on his vehicle, the rat, which has been represented naturalistically in gigantic dimensions. This picture concerns a healing thangka. (Reproduction on page 2)

3) **Avalokiteshvara.** Newari work in Tibetan style, mineral colors, liquid gold and silver, 92.5 × 67.5 cm, Surendra Bahadur Shahi, Kathmandu, 1998. The painting took four months of work to complete. (Reproduction and description on pages 96 and 97)

4) **Jhankri thangka, mandala with dragon.** Tamang style, mineral colors, liquid gold, 70 × 50.5 cm, Nawang

²⁷⁰ The rights for those paintings designated as "Shahi Workshops" belong to Surendra Bahadur Shahi. The copyright of the other thangkas is with Ratsch/Müller-Ebeling, unless otherwise indicated.



1)



2)



3)



4)

Dorje, Kathmandu, 1996. The painting took four and a half months of work to complete. (Reproduction and shamanic description on pages 72 and 73)

5) **Samadhi.** Typical Newari style, mineral colors, 74.5 × 39 cm, Shahi Workshops, Kathmandu, 1988. The painting took one and a half months of work to complete.

The stylized depiction of a human shows the seven chakras. The mythical animal Bosala, which comes from the gubaju tradition of the Newari, can be seen on the lower left side. (Reproduction and description on page 116)

6) **Sanctuary of the Kagyupa school of Tibetan Buddhism.** Tibetan style, mineral colors, 47.5 × 33.5 cm, Shahi Workshops, Kathmandu, 1994. The painting took six months of work to complete.

The painting shows the gods, goddesses, and protective spirits of the Kagyupa tradition. Kagyupa—one of the four main schools of Tibetan Buddhism—has its roots in the six doctrines attributed to Naropa. In the eleventh century this tradition was conveyed by Marpa from India to Tibet. Gampopa, a student of Naropa, is the organizer of these traditions. The Kagyupa teachings have their origins in Vajradhara. The Vajradhara Dorje Chyang can be seen in the center of the genealogy. Below him Chakrasambhara, a manifestation of the protector of the Kagyupa lineage, can be seen and around him different aspects of the protectors of this lineage are depicted. (Reproduction on page 258)

7) **White Tara.** Newari style, mineral colors and liquid gold, 55 × 46 cm, Surendra Bahadur Shahi, Kathmandu, 1994. The painting took five and a half months of work to complete.

The white form of the “Mother of Buddha of the three times,” who embodies “all enlightened deeds of all Buddhas,” is said to have sprung from the tears of

Avalokiteshvara. The white Tara sits in the *vajra* position as a young woman in full bloom on a lotus throne. In her left hand she holds the stem of a lotus flower in front of her breast; its blossom opens over her shoulder. The right hand demonstrates the *vajra* mudra, a position which embodies supreme generosity. The faithful pay homage to this peaceful Buddhist deity for the purpose of healing and for a long life.

Surendra Bahadur Shahi rendered the scene in the lower part of the painting in a very naturalistic style. Many painters from Kathmandu have copied the sculptural dew drops on the leaves of the lotus based on this example. (Reproduction and a further white Tara on page 81)

8) **Yamantaka/Yamaraj/Yama in union with Yamarani.** Tamang work, theme and style are typical Newari, mineral colors and liquid gold, 44.5 × 37 cm, Panchen Lama Tamang, finished by Surendra Bahadur Shahi, Kathmandu, 1994. The painting took five and a half months of work to complete.

The Lord of Death is shown with his many arms and heads in all three worlds surrounded by a flaming aureole. He embraces his consort Yamarani. The manifestations of Bhairab around him multiply his power. Tibetan good luck symbols provide this powerful manifestation of the Lord of Death with inner and outer protection.

According to the person who completed this painting, Yamantaka is a wrathful form of Mañjushri. The thangka is based on the Newari tradition. The jhankris whose opinions we asked for recognized typical shamanic elements: the seven horizontally arranged heads of Yamaraj indicate the three worlds and four directions; the three vertical heads indicate the three realms of Yamalok in the middle, lower, and upper worlds. For the shamanic observer, however, the number of the surrounding Bhairabs being eleven is an alien element, as is the head of Buddha crown-



5)



6)



7)



8)

ing the figure in the center: “If a shaman had painted this picture, there would be a *phurba* or a trishul there” (IG). (Reproduction on page 119)

9) **Tibetan, medicinal teaching thangkas**, all 1994, Kathmandu, Shahi Workshops:

9a) Medicinal plants, Tibetan style, mineral colors, 71 x 50.5 cm. (Reproduction on page 236)

9b) Animal elements, Tibetan style, mineral colors, 69.5 x 43.5 cm. (Reproduction on page 237)

9c) Mineral elements, Tibetan style, mineral colors, 63.5 x 50 cm. (Reproduction on page 239)

9d) Forms of therapy, Tibetan style, mineral colors 73 x 51 cm. (Reproduction on page 238)

10) **Two-armed Mahakala with Yamantakas**.

Tibetan style, mineral colors with liquid gold and silver, 150 x 85 cm, Shahi Workshops, completed by Surendra Bahadur Shahi, Kathmandu, 1998. The painting took four months of work to complete.

In the middle of licking flames stands Mahakala with his typical leg posture and wrathful facial expression. When shamans take up the fight with demonic powers during the trance, they adopt the same posture. The representation is strongly influenced by shamanism. Therefore finely decorated green snakes slither through the luxurious hair and the tiger fur of the wrathful manifestation of Shiva, into the realm of the *nagas* symbolizing the journey to the underworld. He tramples on a human body that embodies the three basic evils of hate, envy, and ignorance, and he stands on a *phurba*, which defines the lower space of the picture with its three-pointed blade. The blade is drowning in a sea of blood out of which the skull cap bowl with the five senses is lifted. The artist crowns this *kapala* with brocade fabric out of which sticks a feather—the symbol of the cosmic flight of the shamans. With sweeping gestures he holds the *kartika* and the skull cap bowl in order to transform the de-

monic powers and basic evils. Mahakala, the Lord of Time, is surrounded by four manifestations of the all-ruling Lord of Death, Yamantaka. The shamans to whom we showed this were very impressed with this expressive and elaborately painted picture. However, they considered the Buddhist elements in the upper area to be superfluous. (Reproduction on page 150)

11) **Guru Rinpoche, tantric**. Tibetan style, mineral colors and liquid gold, 80.5 x 50.5 cm, Chhiring Tashi, 1998, Kathmandu. The painting took five months of work to complete.

This picture concerns a very rare depiction of the dancing blue Guru Rinpoche with two *phurbas*, who resembles Shiva in his blue manifestation as Nilkantha. Below the central figure is a shamanic dancer wearing the mask of the Kal Bhairab and surrounded by a ring of small blue incarnations of Padmasambhava. A palace similar to the Potala rises out of a hill in a flooded landscape. According to tantric genealogical tradition this rare depiction is called “Paradise of the Guru Rinpoche.” (Reproduction page 93)

12) **Medicine mandala**. Tamang work in Tibetan style, mineral colors, liquid gold and silver, 70.5 x 60 cm, Karma Sango Tamang, Kathmandu, 1995. The painting took four and a half months of work to complete.

This is a typical teaching thangka. It depicts in a variety of ways the correspondences among doctors, medicinal plants, and energies; the founders of the medicinal teachings; and with the cycle of life. The white Buddha Bhairochana is seen in the center of the mandala enthroned over a skull cap bowl. He is bound with rays to the medicine Buddha (above him to the center right), to protective deities, and to representatives of the teaching system. Horizontally to his left is a depiction of the cloistered life and tantric healing practice; directly beneath are the arts and sciences that influence the teachings and treatments;



11)



10)



9a)

9b)

9c)

9d)

below this are two scenes from the everyday life of different castes. Two *makaras* and one *garuda* pour sparkling water out of the mandala into the world. On the right side a person stews in a hellish cauldron, which is a reference to diseases caused by karma; connected to this image is the world of the animals as well as a scene of warriors, upon which a powerful and protective Bhairab treads, stamping out the powers of disease and destruction. Below on the right is a further representation of the medicine Buddha. (Reproduction on page 49)

13) **Kali Chinnamasta (New.), Mulkata (Skt.)**. Typical Newari theme, painted in Newari style, mineral colors, liquid gold, 52.5 × 45 cm, Bise Surga, Kathmandu, 1993. The painting took two and a half months of work to complete.

The blood-red Rakta Kali is shown in a double manifestation, both as the self-sacrificing Aria Tara, standing on Shiva and Parvati/Kali and in sexual union with Shiva as Smashana Kali. This posture, known as *viparita-rati*, in which the female partner is on top, expresses non-duality, “in which there is no separation, no lineal flow, but wholeness and completion instead” (Mookerjee 1988, 63). The blood spurting out of her neck is caught by female students, who in turn are identified with the great wrathful goddess; on the lower right side is Rakta Kali, on the left side is the blue Mahakali. On the upper right is the Buddha Rathnasambhava (the personification of the wisdom of equality in Vajrayana Buddhism), below on the left is Vajrayogini (also Vajravaraahi). This representation belongs to the tantric tradition. (Reproduction on page 88)

14) **Samsara, black Wheel of Life, Wheel of Rebirth**. Newari style, Nakti design, mineral colors, liquid gold, 48.5 × 36 cm, Dewa Lama, 1994, Kathmandu. The painting took one and a half months of work to complete.

The motif of the wheel of life comes from the

worldview of Tibetan Buddhism. As a teaching thangka, it relates to the viewer how the world is strangled by the three basic evils of hate, envy, and ignorance, which drive the wheel of rebirth and existence. The evils are represented in the center as a snake, a rooster, and a pig. The viewer is able to be absorbed in the picture and practice the Buddhist virtues, which is why a *samsara* thangka is also a meditation thangka. The wheel of life is held by the mythical tortoise Mara, who carries the world—a shamanic concept which flowed into Hinduism and later into Buddhism. The wheel of rebirth is constructed out of six segments. At the top is the world of the gods, which symbolizes contentment and deceptive immortality. Pride is a result of this world, but those who sink into meditation will be able to escape it. In the upper right is the world of the demigods; by strengthening one’s moral fortitude the dangers that lurk in this realm can be resisted and defeated. In their jealousy, the demigods and titans fight against the gods. In the upper left is the world of the humans, who are driven on by desire that results in suffering. With perseverance, a strong will, and the teachings of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, the individual will be able to overcome it. Below left is the world of the animals, who are ruled by instinct and lethargy. Those who practice wisdom will be able to gain insight into the cosmic law. Below right hungry spirits can be seen. Their envy and selfishness depart when generosity is cultivated. Hell is depicted at the very bottom. Here the flames of the fire are fanned by hate and anger. Patience allows the fire to be extinguished. (Reproduction and animal symbolism on page 101)

15) **Rahula (Tib.), Bishu Bhairab (New.), Protector of the South**. Newari work with a mixture of Tibetan and Newari stylistic elements, mineral colors, liquid gold on black background, Nakti design, 104 × 79.5 cm, Surendra Bahadur Shahi, Kathmandu, 1998. The



12)



13)



14)



15)

painting took four months of work to complete.

Rahula, the powerful manifestation of the god of the South, rides on blood-red waves; beneath them is the crystalline realm of the underworld. He draws his bow and arrow. On his stomach an additional wrathful face can be seen. The entire body is covered with eyes. (Rahula, who watches the world, demonstrates similarities to the eye of Argus.) His tiger body agitates the waters. A dragon and *Garuda* are found above him; they are for strengthening the protection of this healing thangka in the heavenly sphere. (Reproduction cover and page 67)

16) **Vajrayogini**. Newari style, mineral colors and liquid gold, 66 × 45.5 cm, Umis Shakya, Kathmandu, 1988. The painting took five months of work to complete.

The red Vajrayogini is one of the many manifestations of Parvati/Kali. Together with her six sisters depicted here, she plays an important role in the Kathmandu Valley as protector of the cardinal directions and as a fertility deity. She wields different protective weapons and tantric ritual objects in her eighteen arms. In a typical pose she stands on a lotus flower in which a skull cap bowl can be found surrounded by snakes. Her foot rests on a perchlike fish. It represents the underworld, which is ruled by Vajrayogini among others. (Reproduction on page 34)

17) **Three Mahakalas on red background (Marti design)**. Surendra Bahadur Shahi—the Newari creator of these three thangkas—was the first painter to reintroduce the ancient traditional black and red background to modern thangka art (Nakti and Marti design). The Marti design with a red background is also understood by the artist to be a kind of *puja* for the mineral world. Kathmandu, 1994. Each painting required three and a half months of work to complete.

17a) **Tika Bhairab (Nep.)**, Chanadorje (Tib.) **Vajrapani (New.)**. Mixture of Tibetan and Newari stylistic elements, ground coral, liquid gold and silver, lapis azuli, and white pigment from the stone *tuja lhong*, 73 × 54.5 cm.

Tika Bhairab is a wrathful manifestation of Shiva, who brings good luck. In his right hand he holds the *vajra*, in his left the sling with which he catches demons, but which he also uses to save the drowning. (Reproduction page 158)

17b) **Barnajin Bhairab (Tib.)**, Ganthemahakal (Nep.), **Buthu Mahakala (New.)**. Tibetan style, ground coral, liquid gold, ground lapis lazuli, malachite, and white pigment from the *tuja lhong* stone, 71.5 × 50 cm.

The sturdy, clothed form of Mahakala has its roots in the Tibetan painting of the Kagyupa tradition. He holds the *kartika* and the skull cap bowl in his two hands with long fingernails. Karmapa can be seen above him. To the right and left of his flame aureole are stylized *giddha* birds that carry demon's eyes in their beaks. In Tibet they are identified with the vultures that eat corpses in regions where dismemberment is part of the funeral rites. (Reproduction on page 159)

17c) **Mahakal Bhairab (Tib.)**. Tibetan–Nepalese style, ground coral, liquid gold and silver, lapis lazuli, malachite, and white pigment from the *tuja lhong* stone, 69.5 × 51.5 cm.

This depiction also belongs to the Kagyupa tradition. The “great black one” wields insignias that refer to Shiva in his six hands: the trident (*trishul*) and the double drum (*damaru*). In the distance are skull chains and slings. In front of his chest he holds a *kartika* and a skull cap bowl. Garuda and two dragons can be seen in the heavens above him. (Reproduction on page 159)



16)



17a)



17b)



17c)

18) **Padmasambhava, Guru Rinpoche enlightened.** Tamang work in Tibetan style, mineral colors, 87.5 × 68 cm, Gana Lama, Kathmandu, 1992. The painting took two months of work to complete.

Padmasambhava is shown in the state of enlightenment. His rainbow-colored body with aureole sways in a trance over a delightful hilly landscape with trees, rivers, and waterfalls. This depiction has its origins in Tibet and comes from the shamanic-tantric tradition. Above the enlightened guru who brought Buddhist knowledge to Tibet are, from left to right, the embodiments of wisdom and compassion as well as a protective Bhairab; beneath him is the embodiment of prosperity. (Reproduction on page 110)

19) **Cakrasamvara (New.), Vajrayogini (Nep.), Dem chok (Tib.)**²⁷¹ Tibetan work in Newari style, mineral colors and liquid gold, 74 × 54.7 cm, Karma Dorje, Kathmandu, 1988 (Shahi Workshops). The painting took three and a half months to complete. (Reproduction and description on page 84)

20) **Bhutung Ming Wang (Chin.), Yamaraj (Emaraj, Nep).** Newari work in Mongolian Chinese style, mineral colors, liquid gold and silver on black background (Nakti design), 102 × 19 cm, Surendra Bahadur Shahi, Kathmandu, 1998. The painting took four and a half months of work to complete.

The tantric master of Mongolian-Chinese heritage sits with a blue body on his rock throne, surrounded by a flame aureole. With his fangs that jut both upward and downward, he is defined as an archaic demon who has been made into a Dharmapala—protector of the teachings—by the Tibetan Buddhist tradition that spread out through China.

²⁷¹ The Newaris describe the painting as Cakrasamvara; Tibetans as Dem chok; for the shamans it is a representation of Shiva in union with Parvati.

In his hands he holds a sword and a sling. At his feet are two students and the colorful mineral realm of the underworld. In the middle, one of the seven tunnels that pierce through *patal* can be seen. A dragon protects him in the sky.

For Surendra, a Newari, this is a shamanic thangka. But the Kirati shaman Parvati Rai attributes it instead to the tantric tradition. In her interpretation the sword represents the lingam around which is wrapped the kundalini snake—the magical energy source of the tantrikas: “Tantrikas are, among other things, artists who create objects. They are no longer able to travel or see. They create yantras, but no longer know how to awaken them with mantras.” (Reproduction on page 133)

21) **The family tree of Padmasambhava.** Tamang work in typical Tibetan Nyingmapa style, mineral colors, 50.5 × 40 cm, Cho Wang Tamang, Kathmandu, 1998. The painting took four and a half months to complete. (Reproduction and detailed description on page 32)

22) **Garuda, gold.** Tibetan style, mineral colors and liquid gold, 71.5 × 42.5 cm, Neema Dorje, 1998, Kathmandu. The painting took three months of work to complete.

A yellow-golden depiction like this of Garuda, the transport animal of Vishnu, is rarely found in thangka art. The hybrid nature of the animal is especially apparent in the rounded breasts, which allude to a shamanic connection between man and animal. The mythical bird stands frontally to the viewer, generating the effect that his eyes are fixed on the person facing the scroll painting. This painting is a thangka of protection. Garuda is surrounded by his shamanic animal spirits, who protect him in all directions. For the people who sink into this mandala, the translucent



18)



19)



20)



21)

colors reinforce the impression that support materializes out of nothing. (Reproduction on page 69)

23) Sri Yantra, Astha Mudra (Skt.), Vajrakila (Skt. for phurba). Typical Newari style, mineral colors and liquid gold, 61 × 52.5 cm, Nawang Dorje, Kathmandu 1988. The painting took three and a half months to complete.

This is a graphic illustration (yantra) of the penetration of the polar energies that create the cosmos, with the gates to the four heavenly directions. In this thangka tantric elements are combined with the Newari tradition and the shamanic origins of the motif. In typical Newari style the mandala is protected on the top and bottom by dragons and *garudas*. The polar energies are shown “as the powers of enlightenment” (SBS) not only graphically but also in the small figures populating the two lotus leaf circles of enlightenment and the outermost points of the Sri Yantra. The Newari lay down this yantra on the ground during the month of *sunti* (September/October) for *tihar*, a festival where all brothers are respected by the rest of the family members with *puja*. (Reproduction and shamanic and tantric description of the painting on page 184)

This illustration has its roots in the tantric worldview. The triangle with the point facing down represents the female gender. When it is pierced through with a lingam (the point facing up), the micro- and macrocosm are created. Those who comprehend the truth of this graphic translation of the primordial principle of the creation—not only intellectually, but with all-encompassing vision—will be able to attain samadhi, the state of the dissolution of the polarities that are illustrated here.

For shamans, this picture concerns an *astha mudra yantra*. If the points are counted from top to bottom in both directions, two times eight (1 and 8

are covered up) is the result. For the shamans, eight is a “good number,” because it symbolizes the eight directions, or the shaman in the center and around him the four directions and the three worlds: 1 + 4 + 3 = 8. “It is curative for people to contemplate this yantra” (IG). He considers it not only to be a meditation and teaching thangka, but also a healing thangka.

For jhankris the triangle pointing down is a *phurba*—the center of Nepalese shamanism. They also use graphic depictions (in a simplified form) during the ritual of “cutting the threads of fate” (see page 43), in which the yantra is ritually traveled through from the outside to the inside in clockwise direction.

24) Vajrayogini with bow and arrow, Kurukula Devi (New.). Typical Newari style, mineral colors and liquid gold, 41.5 × 32 cm, Surendra Bahadur Shahi, Kathmandu, 1994. The painting took three months of work to complete.

The decorative border, with a *makara* at the base and a *Garuda* in the apex, is a typical stylistic element of the Newari. The red, four-armed protective deity dances in her flame aureole with a chain of human skulls. She holds a bow and arrow in two of her hands. Above to the left Mañjushri can be seen; below on the right is another Vajrayogini. This thangka is used by shamans and tantrikas for healing ceremonies. (Reproduction on page 212)

25) Yüntün Dorje (Tib.), oath of Akash Bhairab. Tamang work in Tibetan style, mineral colors and liquid gold, 74 × 55.5 cm., Gyani Lama, Kathmandu, 1996. The painting took two and a half months of work to complete.

The painting comes from the tantric tradition of the Kagyupa, Gelugpa, and Sakyapa sects of Tibet. Yuntun Dorje is a siddha, a master with magical



22)



23)



24)



25)

abilities. Making the shanti mudra, he vows to the manifestation of Akash Bhairab that he will protect all living creatures. (Reproduction and shamanic description on page 75)

26a) **Mahakala with shamanic paraphernalia, Bardo thangka, wrathful manifestation.** Tibetan style, mineral oil and liquid gold, 63 × 45.5 cm, Wang Chu Lama, Kathmandu, 1994. The painting took five and a half months of work to complete.

The six-armed Mahakala with three wrathful faces and his blue consort Vajrayogini in the flame aureole lords over the painting. Surrounding the pair are five manifestations of this powerful tantric protective deity who also rules the air with his wings. They hold tantric ritual objects in their hands.

The Tamang and Tibetans hang up thangkas like this one when a relative dies. According to Buddhist interpretation, the many small figures with the small heads confront man on his journey through the realm of the dead. The thangka is supposed to protect him from an overwhelming fear of these creatures, and provide a safe passage.

26b) **Mahakala with yab-yum.** Bhutanese style, mineral colors, 60 × 39 cm, Dawa Dorje, Kathmandu, 1999. The painting took four months of work to complete.

As in 26a, the six-armed Mahakala is depicted in union with his Shakti. Four figures of the “Bardo Thodol” represent the four directions. However, the composition is much more quiet and focused. This aspect, along with the style of the clouds, indicates a typical Bhutanese work. (Reproduction on page 73)

27) **Black, four-armed Mahakala.** Tamang work in Tibetan style, mineral colors and liquid gold, 98 × 71.5 cm, Gyani Lama, Kathmandu, 1992. The painting was created in four months.

The trident (right) indicates that it is connected to Mahakala, one of the many manifestations of Shiva. With his sword, the chopping knife, and the skull cap bowl, he offers protection from enemy forces. The emphasis on the essential elements, the clear proportions, and the realistic and riveting facial expression correspond to the highest criteria of quality in a good thangka. It is painted in the Nakti design (= on black background) and belongs to the tantric tradition (Reproduction page 198)

28) **Ulmata Mahakala, Ulmata Bhairab, Haegriva.** Tibetan style, mineral colors and liquid gold, 64.5 × 47 cm, Sonam Sherpa, Kathmandu, 1994. The painting took four months of work to complete.

All powers of all Bhairabs are unified in this black, eight-armed Mahakala, who slices through the air and scares the demons with his bone chain. In contrast to convention, in this painting he is depicted without the usual horse head (which appears in the flaming aureole). Instead, Garuda helps by reining in the poisonous forces. Ulmata Bhairab holds tantric weapons in his hands. The Nakti design strengthens the expressive character of this healing thangka, which provides protection from negative energies. (Reproductions page 148)

29) **Kalachakra mandala.** Tamang work in Tibetan style, mineral colors and liquid gold, 80.5 × 62.5 cm, Karchun Tamang, Kathmandu, 1992. The painting took five months work to complete.

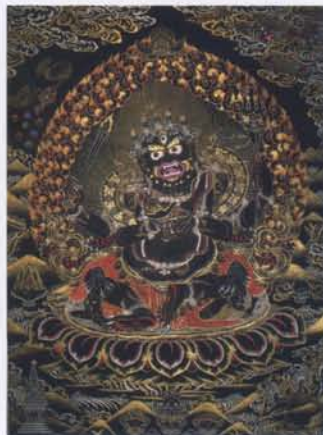
This mandala was made according to the instructions of the fourteenth Dalai Lama for the great Kalachakra sand mandala. The mandala is surrounded by peaceful manifestations above and wrathful ones below; protection and strength are created only when both are combined. The multi-layered, four-cornered structure with the four gates is crowned (from



26a)



26b)



27)



28)



29)

rior to exterior) by the thousand-leaved lotus of awareness, the elementary forces, the spiritual zone of the Buddhist teachings, and finally by the material world in which humans and animals live. In the middle, the masculine and feminine energies dance their eternal dance of time. In the upper row are representations of the four schools of Tibetan Buddhism (Gelugpa, Kagyupa, Nyingmapa, and Sakyapa); in the lower row are the protectors of the teachings. (Reproductions on page 232)

30) **Sarasvati, Hamsabaini.** Tamang work in Newari style, mineral colors and liquid gold, 56 × 43.5 cm, Amar Lama, Kathmandu, 1988. The painting was created in eight and a half months.

Sarasvati, the goddess of art and science, flies on her swan with a sitar through a blue, nearly cloudless sky. Below her a peaceful landscape spreads out. Above her is the moon and sun. “Sarasvati flies from Lhasa to Nepal. Hinduism also existed in Tibet in pre-Buddhist times in addition to the Bon religion. People who have difficulties with learning make *puja* in order to improve their spiritual strength” (SBS). (Reproduction on page 14)

31) **Black Calendar.** Tibetan-Chinese style, mineral colors, liquid gold, 43.5 × 35.5 cm, Shahi Workshops, 1998, Kathmandu. (Reproduction and description on page 103)

32) **Samsara, wheel of life, wheel of regeneration, traditional.** Tibetan style, mineral colors, liquid gold, 67 × 50.5 cm, Karma Lama, 1993, Kathmandu. The picture was painted in four months. Collection of Wolfgang Kundrus. (Reproduction on page 104. For more about the wheel of life see thangka 14.)

33) **Tara Mandala, Saptalochem mandala.** Tibetan work in Newari style, mineral colors and liquid gold, 65.5 × 53.5 cm, Karma Lama Kathmandu, 1993. The painting took five months of work to complete.

A typical teaching thangka which represents the protection of the Vajrayoginis, who are shown in the four corners of the mandala. The decorative border with the dragons, Garuda at the apex, and the two snow lions in the lower half are based on Newari tradition, which has been taken up by the Tibetans and Tamangs over the course of time. The outer circle of the mandala represents the material world, the center represents elementary powers, and the inner circle is the thousand-petalled lotus of enlightenment. The center with the white Tara and the lotus petals of the eight directions is bordered by the structure of the four gateways; the surrounding is of divine powers and protectors of the teachings. (Reproduction page 35)

34) **Kali.** Newari style, tempera, 43 × 40.5 cm, Shinkwa, Kathmandu, 1999. The painting took two and a half months to complete. (Reproduction on page 91)

35) **Padmasambhava flying on the dragon.** Bhutanese style, mineral color and liquid gold, 59.5 × 43.5 cm, Nawang Demchuk, completed by Surendra Bahadur Shahi, Kathmandu 1999. The painting was completed in two and a half months of work.

This depiction of Guru Rinpoche is an iconographic innovation of Surendra Bahadur Shahi, who commissioned this painting from a Bhutanese painter. It shows the typical stylistic elements of Bhutanese painting, where simple, clear, and peaceful subjects are preferred. Surendra’s description of the thangka is as follows: “Padmasambhava was a tantrika with strong *siddhis*. He was also a shaman. Because he never found himself in only one place, but instead could step through time and space with the aid of unusual



35)



34)



30)



31)



32)



33)

intestrength, I have had him painted flying on a dragon: *drukpa*. In the one hand he holds a skull cap, in the other a *vajra*. That is the mudra of flying. In front of him in the landscape lie the *narbu* jewels, which are sacrificed to him.” According to the view of Mohan Rai, the Kirati shaman from Bhutan, it has to do with the mudra of compassion, love, harmony, and peace. (Reproduction on page 110)

36) **Green Tara.** Newari style, mineral colors, 50.5 × 43 cm, Nuche Bajracharya, Kathmandu, 1999. The painting took five and a half months of work to complete.

The thoroughly detailed, well-proportioned, expressive, and realistic depiction of the green Tara is an excellent copy of the original currently kept in Cleveland. (Reproduction and description page 78)

37) **Buddhist Guardians of the Four Cardinal Directions.** Newari work in Chinese-Mongolian style, mineral colors with liquid gold and silver, each one 60.5 × 45.5 cm, Surendra Bahadur Shahi, Kathmandu, 1999. Each painting took six and a half months of work to complete.

The faithful pay respects to all four thangka paintings of the guardians of the cardinal directions. The worship of these four guardians was introduced in the eighth century in China by Amogh Vajra the *pandit* (wise one). After the Newari painter was finished, Surendra expressively rendered the shamanic qualities of the guardians, particularly those of the yellow ruler and guardian of the North.

37a) **The white Dhritarastra (Skt.), Guardian of the East.** “Dhritarastra is one of the four great kings who protect the mythical continent of Jambudvipa in all four directions. He is the only living son of the river mother Ganges. He lives in the glorious city of supreme wisdom, which can be found east of Mount Meru. He is the Guardian of the East. Because he pro-

TECTS life forms and land in this direction, he is called ‘heavenly lord.’ In accordance with the Mahasanghata sutra, Buddha Shakyamuni asked Dhritarastra, the Lord of Gandharvas, to protect with tremendous care—along with the help of his ninety-one sons—the Dharma and his followers on the mythical continent of Jambudvipa in the East. It can be read in the Dharani sutra that the king wears different types of divine clothing. With two hands he holds the musical instrument, *vina*. Therefore, in Nepalese Buddhism he is usually known by the name Vinaraj and is placed on the eastern side of roofs. He is depicted as white. To the right below him two animals can be seen which are the symbol for peace: Mirga the ‘singing deer’ and the heron Panehamsa” (SBS). (Reproduction on page 63)

37b) **The blue Virudhaka (Skt.), Guardian of the South.** “Virudhaka is the great King of the South. He rules in the center of Mount Meru. He governs a city named Sudarsana, which lies south of the world mountains. This city is of great beauty and covers approximately six thousand square *yosanas*. Virudhaka ordered the lord of Kumbhandas to protect the Dharma in the southern direction. The commander of the mythical land Kumbhandas promised to do this. He is shown as blue in a wrathful manifestation. In his right hand he holds a sword ending in a *trishul*. His left hand rests on his knee. In Nepalese tradition he is called Khadgaraja and is found on the corners of temple roofs, and on the entrance of cloisters” (SBS). (Reproduction on page 64)

37c) **The red Virupaksha, Guardian of the West.** Virupaksha is the Lord of the Nagas and protects the world in the western direction. He also rules the city Sudarsana. He is shown as red and wrathful. In his right hand he holds up a *chorten*; his left hand holds a snake. Virupaksha watches over the snake deities and invokes the sun and moon to protect all



36)



37a)



37b)



37c)

living beings and to preserve the *dharma*. (Reproduction on page 65)

37d) **The yellow Vaisravana, Guardian of the North.** Vaisravana is shown as yellow. He rules over the northern city of Meru, the mountain of the world. He protects the Dharma from the North. He is the commander of Yaksha's army and is also invoked for prosperity and growth. He rules over five principles and twenty-eight emissaries. As with the others, he has been asked by Buddha to protect the land and guard it from the North. As with the depiction of the white Dhristarastra, he is shown in a peaceful manifestation. In his right hand he holds a *mungo*—an animal that is a natural enemy of the venomous snake; in his left hand he holds the finely drawn handle of a Buddhist umbrella (Skt. *danda*), which unfolds over his head. He is very popular in the Nepalese tradition and is worshipped individually. Newari women prepare a likeness of him out of rice meal during the Yomaripunhi festival in December/January; they are similar to the rice balls on the shamanic altars of the Sherpas, Tamang, and Gurung. It is also common to find his image on jewelry or coins. As in the thangka of the white Lord of the East, two *miras* are depicted, to the right and left—symbols of peace. (Reproduction on page 66)

38) **Yab-Yum of Haegriva and Shakti.** Tamang work in typical Newari style, mineral colors with liquid gold and silver, 77 × 50cm, Asaya Lama, completed by Surendra Bahadur Shahi, Kathmandu, 1999. The painting took four and a half months of work to complete (Shahi Workshops).

In the center is a Haegriva (one of the many wrathful manifestations of Shiva) in union with his Shakti, a wrathful aspect of Parvati. The image belongs to a group of sacred and Bardo thangkas which are hung up in the house when someone dies. The peaceful representation of Vajrasattva is in the upper

center. Around the central group are shown hybrid animals from the in-between realm of death—the Bardo creatures: one has the head of a wolf, another the head of a lion, another a horse's head, and the last the head of a snake (from left to right). (Reproduction on page 259)

39) **Black, four-armed Mahakala.** Tibetan style, mineral colors, Tibet, nineteenth century. Within a flaming aureole sits a wrathful manifestation of Shiva on a lotus throne. In his four hands he holds, from left to right, a sword, *kartika*, *kapala*, and *trishul*. Above him can be seen, among other things, further manifestations of Bhairab; beneath him are the wrathful Tibetan manifestations from left to right: Chinthong, Palden Lamo, and Chingamukka. (Reproduction on page 199)

40) **Medicine Buddha.** Tamang work in Tibetan style, mineral colors such as lapis lazuli, with liquid gold, 76.5 × 54 cm, Wang Chu Lama, Kathmandu, 1999. The painting took three months of work to complete (collection of Olaf Rippe).

The central image of Buddha demonstrates similarities with Shiva Vishpan (the poison drinker) due to his blue body color. This body color symbolizes his ability to take up all the suffering and disease of living beings inside himself. "Bhaisajya Tathagata is called a healing or medicine Buddha. He can heal illnesses that visit people at their birth, during their life, and at their death. His body radiates from the blue of the lapis lazuli (sometimes it radiates golden as well). He resides in the eastern world of pure lapis lazuli. His two bodhisattvas, Suryaprabha and Candraprabha, help him to instruct the living beings and to guide them to the right teachings. In his right hand he holds a branch of the Myrobalan (*Terminalia chebula*) in the varada mudra position. His left hand rests on his lap and holds an alms bowl (Skt. *pindapatra*). According to the Bhaisajyaguru Buddha sutra,



37d)



38) Detail



39)



40)

he made twelve great vows before he attained his Buddhahood—for example, to free living beings from disease, catastrophe, and difficulties and to help them achieve happiness and lightness so that they too might achieve Buddhahood. It is said that his country is one of purity and clarity and that it is made of pure lapis lazuli. The cities, palaces, and buildings found there are made out of the seven jewels. There living beings commit no bad deeds. Therefore, it can be compared to the pure heavenly realm, Sukhavati, of the Buddha Amitabha. In Tibetan medicine, Bhaisajya Buddha is the source of all medicinal knowledge. He is invoked to banish catastrophes and diseases” (SBS). (Reproduction on page 59)

41) **Sing Thoma on a donkey.** Newari work in Tibetan style, mineral colors, with liquid gold and silver, 68 × 52 cm, Surendra Bahadur Shahi, Kathmandu, 1999. The painting took six and a half months of work to complete (Shahi Workshops).

Sing Thoma is a Tibetan deity similar to the one on the Bhairunga thangka, which is described on page 77. She is also a mixture of the wrathful manifestations of Shiva and Parvati—in other words Bhairab and Kali. She has a lion’s head and gallops on her donkey through the bloody sea of human suffering in order to bring comfort to living beings and free them from disease and dangerous enemies. Like the Bhairunga thangka, this is a very powerful healing thangka. The artist lent a radiant and expressive appearance to the painting with the use of gold and silver. (Reproduction page 130)

42) **Sintong, Sing Thoma (Tib.), Sangamukha (New.).** Newari work in Tibetan-Newari style, mineral colors, with liquid gold, 87.5 × 59.5 cm, Surendra Bahadur Shahi, Kathmandu, 1999. The painting took three months of work to complete.

The lion-headed tantric Vajrayogini is also referred to as Dakini and plays an important role in the tantric tradition of the Newari. Here she is surrounded by further Vajrayoginis, who protect from dangers in all four cardinal directions. This protective function was and is of vital significance for the small land which is surrounded by the enormous neighbors of China to the north and India to the south. In this thangka Sintong is less martial and dynamic than in thangka number 42. She stands on a lotus flower with the typical leg posture and with protective gestures holding the *trishul* of Shiva. (Reproduction on page 112)

43 a and b) **Yamantaka.** Painted on both sides. Newari style of the fifteenth century, mineral colors, with liquid gold and silver, 158 × 130 cm, Surendra Bahadur Shahi, Kathmandu, 1999. The painting took more than a year to complete.

This thangka (a), which imitates the style of the fifteenth century, is an extremely valuable and rare work. The entire red background, in front of which and upon which stands the blue god of death, is painted throughout with fine ornamentation; the black surrounding border is saturated with innumerable skeletons. The very broad, besieged Yamantaka has nine heads. The upper one is Mañjushri. He holds all shamanic ritual tools in his thirty-four arms. For example, in his lower right hand he holds a bamboo pipe used by Kirati shamans that symbolizes a tunnel into the other world.²⁷² To our knowledge, this ritual object has never been depicted on a thangka before. As always, with two central hands he chops up the demons held in the skull cap with the *kartika*.

²⁷² In turn, the bamboo pipe is a symbol of the *phurba*. All tube-like objects are used by the Kirati to improve their orientation. They are like “binoculars.” The Kirati shamans stick a feather of the sacred wild chicken *luinche* in it order to improve their flight and make it a swift one.



41)



42)



43a)



43b)

Beneath his numerous feet are gods, demons, and animals because the god of death (who is also a manifestation of Shiva) is the energy penetrating everything. This is also demonstrated by the erect penis (of the ox Nandi) that draws attention to itself. Here Shiva is again shown as the destroyer and re-newer. Below him are manifestations of Mahakala corresponding to his temples in the Kathmandu Valley. Above him, Buddhist deities are lined up.

In this thangka (b) the black background of the painting (*nagbo*) contains gold and silver outlines of shamanic ritual tools. In the center above is a large drawing of the *phurba*—the central object of the shamanic altar. In the corners are suffering demons, whose negative effects on health can be banished with the depicted tools. They have only five chakras (in contrast to the healthy person, who has seven). In the center, Mahakala—the ruler of all times—is inside a mandala, surrounded by the four Vajrayoginis, the shamanic gods of the directions, also important to the Newari (who are influenced by Hinduism). In addition to the ritual tools, there are also symbols for the shamanic flight and the powers, such as the two horses with which the *jhankri* travels into the other worlds. A *mungo* spits out a jewel that is associated with the nine planets and healing powers. Of particular interest are the drawings of mushrooms on the left and the right—the “cosmic umbrella” of the shamans. The complete shamanic ritual has been laid out in this painting. (Reproduction on pages 134/135)

44) **Guru Rinpoche.** Newari work in Tibetan style, mineral colors, with liquid gold and silver, 116 × 83 cm, Surendra Bahadur Shahi, Kathmandu, 1999. The painting took six and a half months of work to complete.

The depiction of the meditating Guru Rinpoche (Padmasambhava) has a splendid effect due to the

lavish use of gold. Delicate layers of colors, embellished by unusual gold filigree designs, cover his costume. This thangka is a very labor-intensive and precious work. (Reproduction on page 113)

45) **Yamantaka.** Tibetan style, mineral colors, with liquid gold and silver, 15.7 × 105.5 cm, completed by Surendra Bahadur Shahi, Kathmandu, 1998. The painting took eight months of work to complete.

Yamantaka, the buffalo-headed Lord of Death, is the embodiment of the power that leads everything and everyone to an end. Therefore he represents an aspect of the all-penetrating god Shiva, who gave him the order to bring the living into the realm of the dead. With his nine heads he penetrates all regions and layers. With his shamanic weapons he confronts everyone. This painting provides powerful protection. (Reproduction on page 56)

46) **Kali.** Typical Newari style of the fifteenth century, mineral color, with liquid gold, 43 × 33 cm, Shahi Workshops, Kathmandu, 1999. The painting took many months to complete.

Kali is shown stylized, facing front and sitting on a white lion. She carries all shamanic insignia in her ten arms, such as the white *phurba* with a blade and three peacock feathers (lower left)—a typical Newari representation of the ritual dagger—and the bone apron. (Reproduction on page 91)

47) **Blue Tara (Bon Tradition), Sherap Chamma (Tib.)** Tibetan style, mineral colors with liquid gold, 54.5 × 43 cm, Shahi Workshops, Kathmandu, 1999. The painting was completed within fourteen days.

The seated wrathful goddess has a very androgynous and archaic appearance. This rare blue Tara stems from the pre-Buddhist Bon tradition. In her right hand she holds an emblem with a swastika with



44)



45)



46)



47)

each pair of arms facing in an opposite direction.²⁷³ The Bon priestess uses the swastika as a weapon. The tiger fur wrapping around her indicates the shamanic background of the motif as well as the fur-clothed ascetic Shiva. The box-shaped clouds are stylistically unusual. (Reproduction on page 80)

48) **Phurba**. Tibetan style, mineral colors with liquid gold, 90 × 68 cm, Yonyan Lama, Kathmandu 1998. The painting took two and a half months of work to complete.

The god Phurba sees into all three worlds. In his four hands he holds the sword, the *vajra*, a scorpion, and the *trishul*, which is welded together with a *katvanga*. He is the embodiment of the shamans, who must take up the *phurba* against the energies of illness and destruction in their search for health. The *vajra* serves the unification of the masculine and the feminine; the poison of the scorpion also symbolizes healing energy. In the shamanism of Nepal the *phurba* is the world axis, the world tree. It is the vertical, active power of destruction and creation. For the Newari he is a wrathful manifestation of Padmasambhava. (Reproduction on page 11)

49) **Cosmogram**. Bhutanese style, mineral colors, 59 × 59 cm, Shahi workshops, Kathmandu, 1998. The painting took twenty days of work to complete.

²⁷³ The history of the different swastikas is very complex and is based on a worldwide tradition that reaches back to the prehistoric era. It is a symbol of the five elements. (Kvaerne 1995, 11). The swastika with one arm deviating from the main direction is known from the archeological finds at Troy. (Lechler 1921, plate IX). Because of the inglorious memory of the swastika during the time of Hitler, the blue Tara is only very rarely found on the market.

The moment of creation is shown: the “big bang” (to use the popular term for just one of the countless hypotheses). In the middle of the concentric circle is the primordial sound *OM*. This vowel can be seen on the shaman’s drum beneath the Shiva *trishul* and the *damaru*. This representation has its roots in Tibetan tradition and is used for meditation and sinking into the cosmic powers of creation. (Reproduction on page 260)

50) **Dancing Garuda**. Newari style, mineral colors with liquid gold and silver, 128 × 94 cm, Surendra Bahadur Shahi, Kathmandu, 1998. The painting took thirteen months to complete.

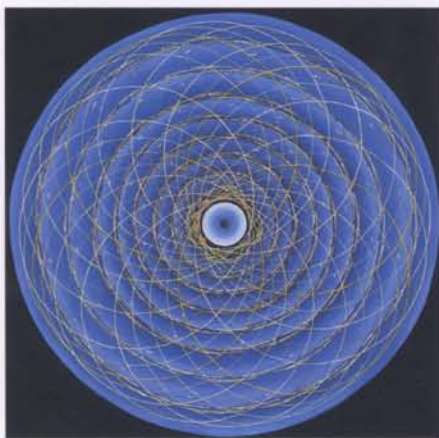
This depiction of the dancing Garuda who attacks demons is and has been rarely found on the market. It stems from a shamanic concept. The shamans to whom we showed this thangka said: “This is exactly how we see Garuda when we are in a trance. However, the wings are a little too green. In reality they are more blue. And the artist has painted too many things around him that don’t belong there.” By this they are referring to the religiously influenced god figures. (Reproduction on page 71)

51) **Phurba God**. Tibetan style, in imitation of Newari style, mineral colors, 62 × 42 cm, Shahi Workshops, completed by Surendra Bahadur Shahi, Kathmandu, 1994. The painting took three months of work to complete.

It shows the four-armed and three-headed god of the *phurba* in the *yab-yum* posture with his Shakti in Nakti design. The god holds two *vajras* in his hands, the snake, the *trishul*, and the *phurba*. (Reproduction on page vi)



48)



49)



50)



51)

GLOSSARY

Abbreviations:

Gur.	Gurung
Kir.	Kirati
Nep.	Nepali
New.	Newari
Skt.	Sanskrit
Tam.	Tamang
Tib.	Tibetan

Agama (Skt.): sacred texts, revealed by Shiva (the same meaning as tantra)

Aghori: sadhu (cf. entry for sadhu) who treads the "left-hand path," a very extreme way of spirituality; characterized by immodest public behavior, excessive consumption of all possible psychoactive substances (including cobra poison, monkshood, and whiskey) in the service of Kali

Ajima (Nep./New.): "grandmother"; usually name of the smallpox goddess Harati

Akshyata (Nep.): "sacred rice"

Amchi (Tib.): "doctor"

Amji (New.): "doctor"

Amṛta/Amrita (Skt.): "nectar" or "elixir" (= ambrosia); drug of immortality, psychoactive substance.

Aushadhi (Skt.): "drug," "psychoactive plant"

Ayurveda (Skt.): "the teachings or science of [long] life"; formed in ancient India. Developed through today, a scientific healing art (not a folk medicine!)

Baba: "dad"

Badjra (New.): "thunderbolt" (also New. *malah*); (= *vajra*)

Baishakhi: "flying into the vision"

Banya (New.): caste of incense and medicinal plant merchants

Barahi (Kir.: (= Vajrayogini)

Bardo Thodol: the Tibetan Book of the Dead; it is read aloud to the dying so that their consciousness is able to find the way to Nirvana or into another incarnation (*bardo*, Tib. "intermediate condition")

Bdud (Tib.): "demon"

Bhairab (New.): name of the wrathful manifestation of Shiva

Bhairava [= Bhairab] (Skt.): "the terrible"; name of the absolute

Bhakta (Skt.): "adoration," "admirer"

Bhakta jan: follower of Shiva; sect of the sadhus

Bhakti (Skt.): "devotion"

Bhang:

- 1) hemp
- 2) drink made from the pressed hemp leaves with milk and other ingredients
- 3) "intoxicating substance," "intoxicating plant"

Bhasma (Skt.): "destroy, pulverize," a tactic of the gubajus

Bindu (Skt.): "point"; the mathematical or abstract point, out of which the universe unfolds

Bis (Skt.): "poison"; general name for the monkshood species (*Aconitum* spp.)

Boksha (Nep.): "warlock"

Bokshi (Nep.): "witch"

Bomara: "honey-licker," one of the names of Shiva

Bombo (Tam.): "shaman, magician"

Bomboh: Sherpa shaman

Bómbóh (Tam.): "shaman"

Bon: pre-Buddhist religion in Tibet and neighboring areas with strong shamanic influences

Bonpo (Tib. *bon po*): practitioners of the ancient Tibetan Bon religion

Brahmin: Nepali form of the word Brahman, member of the highest Hindu caste

Btsan (Tib.): "protective god"

Cakrasamvara: highest deity (*Yidam*) of the Nepalese Tantrika (Vajracharya)

Chachara: Garuda *phurba*

Chakra (Skt.): literally "circle"; the term is also used for disc-like weapons, round amulets, and the energy centers in the subtle astral body of humans

Charas: the resin rubbed off the female hemp flowers (*Cannabis*)

Chettri (Nep.): "warrior," members of the second highest caste

Chhang (Tib.): "rice beer"

Chhatra (Kir.): "umbrella" or "mushroom [hat]"; also yarn cross (= demon-catcher)

Chicken shaman: the usual name in Kathmandu for a charlatan who markets himself as a "shaman"

Chilam (in most of the languages): smoking pipe

Chinta: shamanic healing ceremony performed at night

Choli (New.): "witch's broom"

Dakini: literally "sky-walker," goddess of initiation (Tib. *mkha' 'gro ma*); tantric goddess who protects the Vajrayana and the practitioners (cf. Vajrayogini); also "fairy" or "magician"

Damaru (Skt.) [= *dhamaru*]: name of the small double drum (tantric skull-drum) or hourglass drum (= Shiva drum, sadhu drum); a small tree [*Benthamedia capitata* (Wall.) Hara] in the Conaceae family is also called by this name

Dasaye (New.): "hand drum" (= *damaru*)

Denguru (Nep.): "shaman's drum"

Deva (Skt.): "god," especially "plant deity"

Devalok: the three realms of the heavens

Devi (Skt.): "goddess"

Dhâmi (Nep.): "shaman," specializes in possession; or simply "healer"

Dhanvantari (Skt.): the doctor god who came into being during the churning of the primordial ocean

Dharma (Skt.): "teaching" (Tib. *chos*), especially the [tantric] teaching of Buddha

Dharmapala: protector of the teaching, usually wrathful deities (cf. Draggio); in Nepal Mahakala is usually considered a wrathful Dharmapala. Yamantaka is also considered a Dharmapala. In Nepal, the Dharmapalas also belong to the Vidyadhara, the "lords of knowledge"

Dhu (New.): "incense"

Dhung (Nep.): "stone"

Dhüp (also *dhupa*, *dhoo*): incense, especially: *Juniperus* spp.

Dhup wala (Hindi): "incense dealer"

Dhupauro (Nep.): "incense bowl"

Dhyan (Nep.): "meditation"

Dio baju (New.): "divinely filled teacher"

Diomaiju (New.): "divinely filled female healer/teacher," she is one of the Newari tantric healers possessed by deities who uses methods similar to those of the jhankris; she is clothed in red

Dorje (Tib; also *dorzhe*): "thunderbolt"; compare to *vajra*. Symbol for a tantric practitioner

Dorje phurba: god of the Magical Dagger

Drago (Tib.): "wrathful/grim god(s)"

Dribu (Tib.): "bell" (cf. *ghanta*)

Druk: "dragon"

Dzogchen: a secret Tibetan tradition of tantra (lit. "simplicity"; cf. Dowman 1994)

Elá (New.): "Schnapps" (= *rakshi*)

Fakira: a sect of sadhus

Gangá: name of a goddess, who flowed out of the Himalayas as the river Ganges and brings fertility to the lowlands

Ganja (Skt.): "hemp," especially marijuana

Garuda:

- 1) divine bird, shaman animal
- 2) great pied hornbill (*Buceros bicornis*)

Garuda phurba: garuda Magical Dagger

Garudakila (Skt.): "bird-nail"

Gau/ga'u (Tib): "amulet holder"

Ghanta (Skt.): "bell"; ritual bell; also a symbol for "wisdom," for the feminine, and for the vulva

Ghūrni (Skt.): “mystical intoxication”; one of the five symbols or goals of yoga
 Gonpo (Tib.): name of Mahakala
 Graha (Skt.): “demon,” also “negative planet”
 Gubaju (New.): “healer” (also Gubhaju); Newari tantrika
 Gumpa: Lamaist monastery
 Gupha: shamanic meditation in the woods or a cave
 Guru (Skt.): “teacher”; in Nepal also “shaman”; many jhankris consider their quartz to be a guru, because they receive teachings through it
 Guru Rinpoche: literally “precious master” or “noble teacher” (= Padmasambhava)
 Guruju: tantric priests of the Newari
 Guruma: “teacher-mother”; a Newari woman with healing powers, but which are less than those of a Diomaiju
 Gurumaju (New.): the feminine gubaju
 Gurung: Mongolian tribe in Nepal

Hakim: Muslim doctor
 Harati [Mata]: the smallpox-goddess of Svayambunath
 Hayagriva (Skt.): “horse neck” (Tib. *rta mgrin*, also *tamdin*; New. *heyegriva*); considered to be a wrathful manifestation of Avalokiteshvara
 Herku (Skt.): lit. “blood drinker” (Tib. *khrag thung*); grim or wrathful deity in tantra
 Home (Kir.): “intermediate shaman”; a shaman who heals and destroys

Jaal: negative shaman who lures people into falling
 Janne (Nep.): someone who is able to do some healing and perhaps knows a few spells
 Jāne Mānche (Nep.): “shaman”
 Jhakari (New.): “shaman”
 Jhakrini (Nep.): “female shaman”
 Jhāngāki: Magar “shaman”
 Jhankri (Nep.): “shaman”; also jhakri
 Jhankri Mela (Nep.): “shaman festival”
 Jharphuke vaidya (Nep.): “possessed doctor” (= medium)
 Jokhana (Nep.): “astrological healer”; someone who uses the shamanic oracle method

Kali: from Skt. *kala*, “time”; the main goddess of the Kathmandu Valley
 Kalinchok: name of the central shaman mountain in the Himalayas, from Skt. Kali, “place of the black [goddess Kali]”
 Kami (Nep.): “smith,” member of one of the lowest castes
 Kampa (Nep.): “shake,” trance technique
 Kanglin: thigh-bone trumpet
 Kapala/kāpāla (Skt.): “the skull carrying”; extreme tantrikas, whose attribute is the Kapala

Karda: the small knife which accompanies the khukuri
 Karma (Skt.): “do, act”; in particular the knowledge or awareness of personal deeds; also: responsibility for one’s own behavior
 Kartika (Nep.): “chopping knife”
 Kartikā (Skt.): “sacrifice knife” (also *kartika*)
 Kaula: sect of the Brahmins or Chettri
 Khan (Nep.): “Muslim healer”
 Khanphatta (Nep.): “bone carrier”; particularly tantrikas or yogis
 Khatvanga (Skt.): tantric stave; three-pronged magical stave; attribute of Padmasambhava as well as Bhairab; symbol of the supernatural abilities (siddhis)
 Khukuri (Kir.): “knife,” also known as a Gurkha knife, the national knife and the symbol of the Kingdom of Nepal
 Kila (Skt.): “nail”; also means “Magical Dagger” (*phur-bu*)
 Kilaya: *phurba*
 Kirati: family of Mongolian language and peoples (including the Rai, Limbu, Tharu, etc.)
 Klu (Tib.): snake gods of the underworld (cf. Naga)
 Kukuri see Khukuri
 Kula (Skt.): “family”;
 1) Shaivite tantrism for which the sexual ritual is of particular importance
 2) family god (usually shamanic)
 Kuinyama (Kir.): “witch”
 Kundalini (Skt.): “snake energy”
 Kurin: copper
 Kurkula Devi (New.): the archer Vajrayogini
 Kurkuli (Tib.): the archer Vajrayogini

Lama: Buddhist monk of a Tibetan school; in Nepal also a high-caste priest-doctor or a folk-doctor with a Vajrayana background
 Lathi (New.): quills (= *nagini phurba*)
 Limbu: ethnic group of the Kirati
 Linga (Skt.): “sign, symbol”; also “phallus” (as an incarnation of Shiva); demon image
 Lingam (Nep./New.): “phallus”
 Lok: realm in the heavens
 Lu: “snake/dragon” (cf. klu)

Madhal: long drum that is stretched on both sides like a table
 Magar: Mongolian tribe in Nepal
 Maha (Skt.): “big”
 Mahadeva (Skt.): “great god” (= Shiva)
 Mahakala (Skt.): “the great black one/the great time”; manifestation of Shiva; also considered to be “protector of the teachings” (Tib. *nag poch’empo*); death
 Mahakali (Skt.): “great goddess/the black one”
 Mahanta: a sect of sadhus

Makara (Skt.): “crocodile”; also symbol of the goddess Gangā (= Ganges river); probably a representation of the *garwal*
 Mala (Skt.): “chain”
 Mandala (Skt.): “circle” (Tib. *dkyil’khor*, literally “center and surroundings”); sacred or ritual images with a central, symmetrical, circular basic structure; often oriented toward the four cardinal directions; foundation for tantric cosmology and meditation
 Mangpa (Kir.): “shaman”
 Mantra (Skt.): syllables, words, or sentences that are repeated rhythmically; also “spells” or “magical formulas” (Tib. *sngags*); sacred vowels
 Mata (Skt.): “mother/mother goddess”
 Mauni Baba (Hindi): “silent master”
 Maya: superficial appearance of reality
 Mâyā (Skt.): “illusion/appearance”
 Mdos (Tib.): “yarn cross” or “demon trap”
 Mudra (Skt.) “hand gesture” or “body shape”
 Mudum (Kir. = mundum): “shaman,” “shaman’s energy,” “shaman’s way”
 Muni: “wise-one, seer, inspired one,” Vedic shaman, magician, or sadhu; anyone who has taken a vow of silence, who possesses magical abilities, and who has transcended all earthly desire (Stutley 1998, 95)

Nag kanya (New.): “snake thorn” to heal stomachaches
 Naga (Skt.): “snake” (Tib. *klu*); “water spirit”
 Nagini: “snake goddess” or female snake-being; also designates the female Nagas, a group of sadhus
 Ngakpa; (Tib. *sngags pa*, “mantra practitioner”) tantric adept (= tantrika)
 Nirvan (Nep.): “Nirvana”
 Nisa jhar (Nep.): “intoxicating plant” = traveling herb
 Nyingmapa: one of the four schools of Tibetan Buddhism which began in the eighth century with the foundation of the Samye monastery at which Padmasambhava is said to have worked

Ojha: North Indian shamans, also in the Terai of Nepal
 OM: primordial tone, syllable for mantras

Parashu (Skt.): “ax”; battle ax, symbolizes the rejection of all worldly things
 Parvati: the daughter of the Himalayas and the wife of Shiva; in Nepal she is mostly worshipped in her wrathful form as Kali
 Pashupati (Skt.): “lord of the animals” or the souls; a name of Shiva
 Pathar (Nep.): “erected stone”
 Pati/pate (Nep. and others): “incense herb,” especially mugwort

- Paubha (New.): for thangka (= "scroll painting")
- Pausha (Skt.): "hatchet or ax": magical weapon in the family of the Magical Dagger
- Phur kha (Tib.): "magical action"
- Phurba (New.; also *phur bu*, *phurdjug*, *phurmjug*, *phurpa*, *phurpu*): "Magical Dagger"
- Pitra: Shiva as a family god
- Pophor (Tib.): "incense holder" (= *spos phor*)
- Prāna (Skt.): "breath"
- Pranayama: yogic/tantric method(s) of breath control or breath discipline
- Prasad (Hindi/Nep.): "sacrificial food"
- Puja (Skt.): "ritual prayer"; devotional acts, consecrations, religious worship
- Purpa (Tam.): "Magical Dagger"
- Rai: ethnic group of the Kirati
- Raksha (Skt.): "demon"
- Rakshasa (Skt./Nep./Hindi): "demons"
- Raksheshni (Skt./Nep.): "demonness"
- Rakshi (New./Nep.): "schnapps," especially when made from millet distilled at home
- Rasa (Skt.): "juice, essence, taste"; elixir
- Rasayana: "teaching of the elixir"; tantric alchemy; also term for pharmaceutical and ayurvedic preparations (tonics, aphrodisiacs, elixirs of life, etc.)
- Rtsis (Tib.): "horoscope"
- Sadag (Tib.): scorpion-tailed Earth Spirit who causes diseases
- Sadhu (Skt.): "[naked] saint, ascetic"
- Sakra (Nep.): name for Indra
- Sal: *Shorea robusta* Gaertn. f. (Dipterocarpaceae); the largest forests are found in the Terai; a large forest is near Trisuli Bazaar
- Saligram (Nep.; from Skt. *shalagrama*): term for fossils, especially ammonite in black stone knots
- Samadhi (Skt.): "sinking" (into the absolute); highest step of yoga; particular state of consciousness; in Nepal it designates mainly the state of consciousness attained through the awakened kundalini in which all chakras "bloom"
- Samsara (Skt.): cycle of rebirth
- Sapera: "snake charmer"
- Sati Devi: the great goddess, who was reborn as Parvati (figure from the Ramayana)
- Shakta (Skt.): "partner"; this term is not used in Nepal
- Shakti: tantric goddess (also *paredra* Skt. "mystical partner"); also "feminine energy"; also "shaman's energy"
- Shalgrama (Skt.): "ammonite"
- Shankha (Skt.; Tib. *dun*) "sacred conch" (symbol of Vishnu, also one of the eight luck symbols in Vajrayana); usually the species *Turbinella pyrum* from the Gulf of Bengal
- Shankara (Skt.): "the one who brings health, who bestows peace, the charitable: name for Shiva, particularly in his function as smoker"
- Shanta jan: sect of sadhus
- Sherpa: ethnic group with their own culture and language (related to Tibetan), who live mostly in the higher elevations of Nepal
- Shikari (Nep.): "hunter"; also the name of a brand of cigarettes
- Shila dhunga (Nep.): "lightning-bolt stone": name for the mountain crystal
- Shiva: the primordial god, founder of shamanism, tantra, and yoga
- Shiva Ratri: Shiva's birthday party, particularly important in Nepal
- Shivalingam: Shiva in his form as a phallus
- Siddha: 1) (Skt.; Tib. *grub thob*, *grub pa*), an adept, who has attained siddhi; "half-divine being that lives between Earth and Sun"; Shaivite healers
- Siddhi: 1) (Skt.; Tib. *ngos grub*): "supreme abilities" (through yoga, meditation, herbalism) 2) (Skt.): "hemp" (= *Cannabis*)
- Sili: drum rhythm
- Soma: the Aryan-Vedic wonder drug
- Sotang (Kir.): "dragon"
- Srung ba (Tib.): "amulet"
- Stupa (Tib. *mchod rten*, literally, "object of adoration"): three-dimensional construction (reliquary shrine) or ritual object characterized by a tower; symbolized by Shivalingam (lingam) in tantric Hinduism and by Buddha's flame of enlightenment in Vajrayana Buddhism
- Sumbak (Kir.): "banana leaf"
- Tabla: typical Indian kettle drum
- Tamang: "those who descend from horses": Tibetan-Burmese mountain people of Nepal
- Tantra (Skt.): "teachings" (Tib. *rgyud*); name for the sacred texts (especially those revealed by Shiva)
- Tantrika (Skt./Nep.): "magician" (Tib. *rgyud pa*); an initiated tantra adept; cf. *ngakpa*
- Terma: "treasures" (Tib. *gter ma*); secret tantric teaching texts hidden by Padmasambhava
- Than (Nep.): "altar"
- Thangka [= thanka]: cf. Paubha
- Thapana (Kir.): "[psychoactive] snuff powder"
- Tharo (Nep.): "palm wine"
- Tharu: a shamanic people
- Thog lcag (Tib): "first iron"
- Torma (Tib.): dough figure
- Trishuli (Nep.): "trident" (from Skt. *trisula*); emblem or attribute of Shiva; tantric weapon used to kill demons
- Tschorten (from Tib. *mchod rten*): stupa
- Tulsi [also tulasi]: the sacred herb basil *Ocimum sanctum*
- Uccara (Skt.): "breath practice"
- Vahana (Skt.): the riding animal or vehicle of a deity; the vahana symbolizes the deity
- Vaidya (Skt.): "doctor"; ayurvedic doctor/healer
- Vaidyanatha (Skt.): "lord of the doctors"; a name and aspect of Shiva
- Vajra (Skt.): "thunderbolt" or "diamond" (Tib. *dorje*, *rdo rje*); also symbol for "method"
- Vajracarya (Nep.): "tantrika"
- Vajracharya (Skt.; Tib. *rdo rje slob dpon*): "master of tantra," ruler of the tantric rituals and techniques
- Vajrakila (Skt.): "thunderbolt"
- Vajrakilaya (Skt.): "thunderbolt-nail" (Tib. *dorje phurba*)
- Vajrapani (Skt.): "he with the thunderbolt-nail"; another name for Indra (Tib. *phyag na rdo rje*); one of the eight Bodhisattvas, also known as "lord of the secrets"
- Vajravarahi (Skt.; Tib. *rdo rje phag mo*): tantric goddess (dakini) with the head of a wild boar
- Vajrayana (Skt.): "diamond vehicle" (Tib. *rdo rje theg pa*); name of the tantric Buddhist teachings that are above all practiced in the Himalayas; also "secret mantra" (Tib. *sang sngags*)
- Vajrayogini [Vajra Dakini]: "diamond goddess of initiation"
- Veda: Ancient Indian text(s)
- Vedic: the cultural era of the Aryans in which they wrote the Vedas
- Vikh (Tam.): "poison"
- Vis (Skt.): "poison"
- Vishvavjra: double vajra
- Yamaraj (Skt.): "lord of death" (Hinduism)
- Yamantaka (Skt.): "lord of death" (Buddhism)
- Yang khang (Kir.): "nirvana"
- Yantra (Skt.): "diagram"; sacred geometric figure used for tantric purposes (meditations, rituals etc.)
- Yoga (Skt.; Tib. *rnal 'byor*): methods used to integrate the body and consciousness
- Yogi (Skt.; Tib. *rnal 'byor pa*): tantric practitioner of yoga; in the nineteenth century magicians of the Nepalese *kanphatta* who wore ritual bone jewelry were also called "yogis"; Milarepa, Naropa, Marpa, and Tilopa are famous tantric yogis; also a sect of sadhus
- Yogini (Skt.; Tib. *rnal 'byor ma*): female tantric practitioner of yoga (cf. Vajrayogini)
- Yoni (Skt.): "lap, vulva"; symbol of the goddess Parvati
- Zunu (Gur.): "nirvana"

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A few remarks about the literature

An overview of the literature about shamanism (cf. Passie 1999) leaves us with the impression that most authors who offer a definition of shamanism have never encountered a shaman. If this were not the case, assumptions about shamanism—such as that they are outcasts of society and schizophrenic, or that they are faith healers or their treatments are symbolic—would not have such a tenacious hold.

In European history the concept of the “standard work” has been developed. These are the books that contain all available knowledge about a particular subject at a given point in time. With regards to shamanism, the book published in 1975 [English edition published 1958] by Mircea Eliade with the promising title, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* is considered the “standard work.” Every author, regardless of whether he or she is an ethnologist, psychologist or travel journalist, quotes Eliade when writing about shamanism. This so-called standard work shows the least amount of understanding of the phenomena of shamanism. We have the distinct impression that the late Eliade has done more damage than good with his work. Eliade was an historian of religion and a novelist. He had apparently never in his life met a shaman, to say nothing of having had a true shamanic experience (trance, ecstasy, etc.). His book is nothing more than a compilation of texts and reports from old literature that was available to him: early travel reports, various articles, and texts from Christian missionaries (which cannot be trusted in the slightest in this context—after all, they are meant to be propaganda). For example, Eliade not only overlooked or ignored the central meaning of the psychoactive substances, he dismissed them as a form of “degenerated shamanism.” If only he had just once had ayahuasca to drink, for example, we would have been spared this destructive proclamation. The anthropologist Peter T. Furst wrote that Eliade recanted this statement during a meeting they had close before his death, and that he regretted his misjudgment.

Another book that is currently celebrated as a standard work about shamanism, especially in New Age circles and the esoteric scene, is a much reprinted book that has been translated into many languages around the world, *The Way of the Shaman* by Michael Harner (1990). The author was once a good ethnologist (for example Harner 1973); after all, unlike Eliade he had met authentic shamans and even ingested ayahuasca and other strong substances that have an

effect on consciousness. Unfortunately (perhaps with his sight on a larger market?) he has gone astray. His popular book suggests to the reader that everyone who takes up a drum can become a shaman and go into a trance.

We are sorry to say that in our opinion Michael Harner's book is dangerous. It plays down shamanic techniques and makes them into a pastime that has nothing to do with the actual mission of the shamans: to travel in the three worlds, to confront death, and to be dismembered by demons during the battle over the soul of the patient. Shamans do all this in addition to their daily jobs, without days off and without set office hours. We doubt that well-meaning and sincere adepts of shamanism from our affluent culture who participate in a weekend course with Harner are capable of fulfilling this mission.

But there are also wonderful books about our subject—even when the word “shamanism” is not in the title. For example, the book about Shiva by the ethnobotanist Wolf-Dieter Storl, *Fire and Ash—Dark and Light* (1988) vividly portrays the multifaceted dimensions of the Hindu god Shiva. Another inspired understanding of Hinduism is found in the books of the Indologist Heinrich Zimmer (1890–1943). He knew better than anyone else how to cloak his rich knowledge in poetic words in order to foster the understanding of Hindu mythology, which remains misunderstood by the West.

Other recommended titles are the lavishly illustrated publications by Ajit Mookerjee. Above all, his numerous books about tantra and his study of Kali have explored unimagined dimensions of awareness in these usually misunderstood themes.

The tantric world of images was revealed in exemplary fashion by the English orientalist and art historian Philip Rawson, who curated a highly regarded exhibition of tantric art for the Hayward Gallery. Finally the ethnologists and Tibetan specialists Detlef Lauf and Martin Brauen should be mentioned, as their work was essential for the completion of our book—even though we trace purely Nepali ways in this book.

In more recent times good publications about shamanism have finally seen the light of day in the ethnographic world. The beautiful and lavishly illustrated book *Shamans at the Roof of the World* by Amélie Schenk (1994) as well as the photography book *Shamans in a Blind Land* by Michael Oppitz (1981) present very authentic and, above all, ethnographically oriented depictions.

“Those who have nothing to say should remain silent.”

GALAN O. SEID (1999)

“Gloria unfolded a panorama of total and relentless madness, lapidary in construction. She had filled in all the details with tools as precise as dental tools. No vacuum existed anywhere in her account. He could find no error, except of course for the premise, which was that everyone hated her and was worthless in every respect. As she talked, she began to disappear.”

PHILIP K. DICK, *VALIS* (1991, 12)

A groundbreaking understanding of shamanism came from the writings of the late Austrian ethnologist Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff, who lived in Colombia. His book *Amazonian Cosmos* (1971) and his article "Brain and Mind in Desana Shamanism" (1981) first revealed shamanism to be a system of treatments and concepts that should be taken seriously.

Profound insight and excellent literary depictions of shamanic themes can also be found in a number of books by science fiction authors. The *Valis*²⁷⁴ trilogy by Philip K. Dick (1984) is based in shamanic realms of consciousness. And there are other "classics" of the New Wave genre of science fiction writing that are enlightening and captivating. One example is *Stranger in a Strange World* by Robert Heinlein (1980).

Pearls of shamanic insight can also be found in modern cyberspace literature, such as Eric Brown's *Nada Continuum* (1998).

Those who are not personally able to spend a few months with shamans in the Himalayas should watch the film *The Matrix* (1999). It is a film that should be required material for all budding ethnologists.

Ackmann, Hildegard, and Gerd G. Koenig. 1982.

"Mittelalterliche Einflüsse aus Zentralasien: Die Rolle archäologischer Kleinfunde." In Claudius C. Müller and Walter Raunig (ed.), *Der Weg zum Dach der Welt*. Innsbruck: Pinguin-Verlag, pp. 321–322.

Aldrich, Michael R. 1977. "Tantric Cannabis Use in India." *Journal of Psychedelic Drugs* 9(3): 227–233.

Allen, Michael. 1996. *The Cult of Kumari: Virgin Worship in Nepal*. Kathmandu: Mandala Book Point.

Appleton, Richard Edward. 1988. "Laetiporus sulphureus Causing Visual Hallucinations and Ataxia in a Child." *CMAJ* 39: 48–49.

Aran, Lydia. 1978. *The Art of Nepal*. Kathmandu: Sahayogi Prakashan.

Ardussi, John A. 1977. "Brewing and Drinking the Beer of Enlightenment in Tibetan Buddhism: The Doha Tradition in Tibet." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 97(2): 115–124.

Aris, Anthony (ed.). 1992. *Tibetan Medical Paintings* (2 vols.). London: Serindia Publications.

Arndt, Ulrich. 1996. "Der Herr der Steine." *Esotera* 5/96: 64–69.

Arora, David. 1986. *Mushrooms Demystified*. Berkeley: Ten Speed Press.

Asshauer, Egbert. 1993. *Heilkunst vom Dach der Welt: Tibets sanfte Medizin*. Freiburg/Basel/Vienna: Herder.

Atkinson, E. T. 1989. *Economic Botany of the Himalayan Regions*. New Delhi: Cosmo Publications.

Avalon, Arthur [= Sir John Woodroffe]. 1972. *Tantra of the Great Liberation (Mahānirvāna Tantra)*. New York: Dover (Reprint from 1913).

Avery, A. G. 1959. "Historical Review." In *Blakeslee—The Genus Datura*. New York: Ronald Press, 3–15.

Baker, Ian A., and Romio Shrestha. 1997. *The Tibetan Art of Healing*. New Delhi: Timeless Books/London: Thames & Hudson.

Bancroft-Hunt, Norman, and Werner Forman. 1980. *Totempfahl und Maskentanz: Die Indianer der pazifischen Nordwestküste*. Freiburg/Basel/Vienna: Herder.

Banerjee, Sures Chandra. 1980. *Flora and Fauna in Sanskrit Literature*. Calcutta: Naya Prokash.

Bangdel, Lain S. 1987. *2500 Jahre nepalesische Kunst*. Munich: List.

Bauer, Wolfgang. 1992. "Der Fliegenpilz in Zaubermärchen, Märchenbilder, Sagen, Liedern und Gedichten." *Integration* 2/3: 39–54.

———. 1995. "Ein Versuch mit 'Zwergenwein.'" *Integration* 6: 45–46.

Bauer, Wolfgang, Edzard Klapp, and Alexandra Rosenbohm. 1991. *Der Fliegenpilz: Ein kulturhistorisches Museum*. Cologne: Wienand-Verlag.

———. 1999. *Der Fliegenpilz: Traumkult, Märchenzauber, Mythenrausch*. Aarau: AT Verlag (expanded and revised edition).

Bäumer, Bettina. 1992. *Abhinavagupta—Wege ins Licht: Texte des tantrischen Sivaismus aus Kashmir*. Zürich: Benziger.

Bedi, Rajesh. 1991. *Sadhus: The Holy Men of India*. New Delhi: Brijbasi Private Limited.

Beyer, Stephan. 1978. *The Cult of Tara: Magic and Ritual in Tibet*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Bharati, Aghananda. 1977. *Die Tantra-Tradition*. Freiburg: Aurum.

Bhattacharjee, Supriya Kumar. 1998. *Handbook of Medicinal Plants*. Jaipur: Pointer Publisher.

Bhattacharyya, N. N. 1992. *History of the Tantric Religion: A Historical, Ritualistic, and Philosophical Study*. New Delhi: Manohar.

Birnbaum, Raoul. 1982. *Der Heilende Buddha*. Bern/Munich/Vienna: O. W. Barth/Scherz.

Bisset, N. G., and G. Mazars. 1984. "Arrow Poisons in South Asia, Part I: Arrow Poisons in Ancient India." *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* 12: 1–24.

Bista, Dor Bahadur. 1987. *People of Nepal*. Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar.

Biswas, K. 1956. *Common Medicinal Plants of Darjeeling and the Sikkim Himalayas*. Alipore: West Bengal Government Press.

Blom, M. L. B. 1989. *Depicted Deities: Painters' Model Books in Nepal*. Groningen: Egbert Forsten.

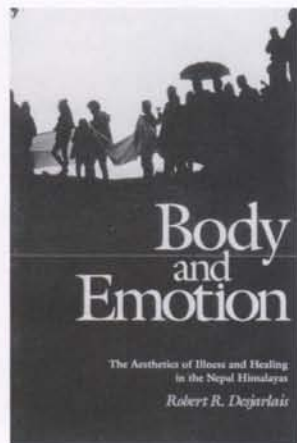
Bokhare, Narendra. 1997. *Religion and Magic in Urban Setting*. Jaipur: Illustrated Book Publishers.

Bourke, John Gregory. 1891. *Scatalogic Rites of All Nations*. Washington D. C.: W. H. Lowdermilk & Co. [Translated into German with an introduction by S. Freud, Leipzig: Ethnologischer Verlag, 1913.]



The film written and directed by the Wachowski brothers *The Matrix* (1999) is a science fiction cyber version of the shamanic path. The hero is killed and dismembered in a different reality, then put back together with machine parts, revived, and sent on a trip through the other dimensions. He slowly creates a new reality and state of consciousness. He dies again to be awakened by the kiss of the loving goddess. Finally he is free from fear, an invincible warrior who protects his world. (CD Cover, *The Matrix: Music from the Motion Picture*, Maverick Records, Warner 1999)

²⁷⁴ The acronym for Voluminous Active Life Intelligence Systems.



- . 1996. *Der Unrat in Sitte, Brauch, Glauben und Gewohnheitsrecht der Völker*. Frankfurt/M.: Eichborn.
- Brauen, Martin. 1992. *Das Mandala: Der Heilige Kreis im tantrischen Buddhismus*. Cologne: DuMont.
- Bristol, Melvin L. 1969. "Tree Datura Drugs of the Colombian Sibundoy." *Botanical Museum Leaflets* 22(5): 165–227.
- Brown, Eric. 1998. *Das Nada-Kontinuum*. Munich: Heyne.
- Brunton, Paul. 1983. *Von Yogis, Magiern und Fakiren: Begegnungen in Indien*. Munich: Knaur.
- Bubriski, Kevin, and Keith Dowman. 1995. *Power Places of Kathmandu: Hindu and Buddhist Holy Sites in the Sacred Valley of Nepal*. Rochester, Vt.: Inner Traditions.
- Burkolter-Trachsel, Max. 1981. *Der Drache: Das Symbol und der Mensch*. Bern/Stuttgart: Haupt.
- Burroughs, William S. 1976. *Electronic Revolution/Elektronische Revolution*. [English and German text] Bonn, Germany: Electronic Media Editions.
- Büscher, Wolfgang. 1999. "Schamanismus II: Unterwegs in magischen Welten." *Geo* 9/99: 22–46.
- Byams-pa, 'Phrin-Las, Wang Lei, and Cai Jingfeng. 1987. *Tibetan Medical Thangka of the Four Medical Tantras*. Lhasa: People's Publishing House of Tibet.
- Campbell, June. 1997. *Göttinnen, Dakinis und ganz normale Frauen: Weibliche Identität im tibetischen Tantra*. Berlin: Theseus.
- Camphausen, Rufus. 1996. *The Yoni: Sacred Symbol of Female Creative Power*. Rochester, Vt.: Inner Traditions.
- Cantley and Hodgson. 1990. *Reptiles and Mammals of Indian Sub-Continent—With Special Reference to Nepal and Himalayas*. New Delhi: Cosmo Publications.
- Chand, Devi (trans.). 1990. *The Atharvaveda: Sanskrit Text with English Translation*. New Delhi: Mushiram Manoharlal Publishers.
- Chapuis, Jean-Robert. 1985. "Die Verwendung von Pilzen als Arzneimittel (1)." *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Pilzkunde* 63(5/6): 110–114.
- Chaturvedi, G. N., S. K. Tiwari, and N. P. Rai. 1981. "Medicinal Use of Opium and Cannabis in Medieval India." *Indian Journal of History of Science* 16(1): 31–35.
- Chawdhri, L. R. 1996. *Secrets of Yantra, Mantra and Tantra*. New Delhi: Sterling Paperback.
- Chazot, Eric. 1994. *Jhankri: Chamane de l'Himalaya*. Kathmandu: Mandala Publication.
- Cho, Hung-Youn. 1982. *Koreanischer Schamanismus: Eine Einführung*. Hamburg: Hamburgisches Museum für Völkerkunde.
- Choden, Kunzang. 1997. *Bhutanese Tales of the Yeti*. Bangkok: White Lotus Press.
- Clarke, Robert Connell. 1981. *Marijuana Botany, an Advanced Study: The Propagation and Breeding of Distinctive Cannabis*. Berkeley: And/Or Press.
- . 1998. *Hashish!* Los Angeles: Red Eye Press.
- Clottes, Jean and David Lewis-Williams. 1998. *The Shamans of Prehistory: Trance and Magic in the Painted*

- Caves*. Translated from the French by Sophie Hawkes. New York: Harry N. Abrams.
- Cosack, Ralph. 1995. "Die anspruchsvolle Droge: Erfahrungen mit dem Fliegenpilz." *Jahrbuch für Ethnomedizin und Bewusstseinsforschung* 3 (1994): 209–244. Berlin: VWB.
- Couliano, Joan P. 1991. *Out of This World: Otherworldly Journeys from Gilgamesh to Albert Einstein*. Boston: Shambhala.
- Cramer, Friedrich. 1994. *Der Zeitbaum: Grundlegung einer allgemeinen Zeittheorie*. Frankfurt/M.: Insel.
- Crossley-Holland, Peter. 1982. *Musical Instruments in Tibetan Legend and Folklore*. Los Angeles: UCLA (Monograph Series in Ethnomusicology, No. 3).
- Dagyab Rinpoche, L. S. 1995. *Buddhist Symbols in Tibetan Culture*. Foreword by R. Thurman. Translated from the German by Maurice Walsche. Boston: Wisdom Publications.
- Dang, Rupin. 1993. *Flowers of the Western Himalayas*. New Delhi: Harper Collins Publishers India.
- Daniel, J. C. 1992. *The Book of Indian Reptiles*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Bombay Natural History Society.
- Daniélou, Alain. 1964. *Hindu Polytheism*, Bollingen 73. Princeton: Pantheon.
- . 1984. *Shiva and Dionysus: The Religion of Nature and Eros*, trans. by K. E. Hurry. Rochester, Vt.: Inner Traditions.
- . 1992a. *Gods of Love and Ecstasy: The Traditions of Shiva and Dionysus*. Rochester, Vt.: Inner Traditions.
- . 1992b. Las divinidades alucinógenas. *Takiwasi* 1(1): 25–29.
- . 1994. *The Complete Kama Sutra*. Rochester, Vt.: Park Street Press.
- . 1995. *The Phallus: Sacred Symbol of Male Creative Power*. Translated from the French by Jon Graham. Rochester, Vt.: Inner Traditions.
- Das, Sarat Chandra. 1894. "Naga or Serpent Demi-Gods." *Journal of the Buddhist Text Society* 1: 2–5.
- . 1896. "A Short Description of the Phur-pa or the 'Enchanted Dagger.'" *Journal of the Buddhist Text Society* 4: 5–7.
- Dash, Vaidya Baghwan. 1994. *Pharmacopeia of Tibetan Medicine*. Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications/Indian Books Centre.
- David-Neel, Alexandra. 1932. *Magic and Mystery in Tibet*. New York: C. Kendall.
- . 1983. *Tibetan Tale of Love and Magic*. UK: Neville Spearman.
- De Visser, M. M. 1908. "The Tengu." *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan* 36(2): 27–32.
- Devereux, Paul. 1992. "An Apparently Nutmeg-Induced Experience of Magical Flight." *Jahrbuch für Ethnomedizin und Bewusstseinsforschung* 1: 189–191. Berlin: VWB.
- Devoe, Dorsh Marie. 1981. "An Introduction to Tibetan

Folk Medicine." *Curare* 4: 57–63.

Davis, E. Wade. 1983. "Notes on the Ethnomycology of Boston's Chinatown." *Botanical Museum Leaflets* 29(1): 59–67.

Dick, Philip K. 1982. *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

———. 1991. *Valis*. New York: Vintage Books.

———. 1991. *The Divine Invasion*. New York: Vintage Books.

Dietrich, Angela. 1998. *Tantric Healing in the Kathmandu Valley*. Delhi: Book Faith India.

Dittrich, Adolf. 1996. *Ätiologie-unabhängige Strukturen veränderter Wachbewusstseinszustände* (2nd ed.). Berlin: VWB.

Dixit, Kanak Mani. 1996. *Bhakties Nepalreise: Die Abenteuer eines Frosches im Himalaya*. Lalitpur: Rato Bangala Kitab (and German-Nepalese Society, Cologne).

Dorie, K. Tendzin. 1994. *Soma, Amrita, and Dutsi: Psychotropic Plants in Indian Religions from the Vedas to Vajrayana*. Manuscript.

Dowman, Keith. 1988. *Masters of Enchantment: The Lives and Legends of the Mahasiddhas*. Illustrated by Robert Beer. Rochester, Vt.: Inner Traditions.

———. 1994. *Der Flug des Garuda*. Zürich, Munich: Theseus.

Downs, Hugh R. 1996. *Rhythms of a Himalayan Village*. Delhi: Book Faith India.

Druden, Sirene H., Friederun Pleterski (eds.), and Renate Habinger. 1998. *Verzaubern und Verführen: Die kleine Hexenküche für zwei*. Vienna: Christian Brandstätter Press.

Drury, Neville. 1996. *Shamanism*. Shaftesbury, Dorset, U.K.: Element.

Duerr, Hans Peter. 1976. "Können Hexen fliegen?" In *Unter dem Pflaster liegt der Strand*, vol. 3. Berlin: Kramer, pp. 33–82.

———. 1978. *Traumzeit*. Frankfurt/M.: Syndikat.

Dunsmore, Susi. 1993. *Nepalese Textiles*. London: British Museum Press.

Dutt, M. N. 1983. *The Agni Puranam* (4 vols.). Delhi: Cosmo Publications.

Eichelback, Reinhard. 1999. *Das Darwin-Komplott*. Munich: Rieman Verlag.

———. 1999. Der Jahrhundert-Irrtum. *Esotera* 6/99: 14–21.

Eigner, Dagmar. 1993. "Imagination und Symbol drama bei traditionellen Heilmethoden." *Ethnologische Mitteilungen* 2: 99–110.

———. 1994. "Schamanische Therapie in Zentral-Nepal." *Curare* 17(2): 217–228.

———. 1998. "Struktur und Dynamik schamanischer Heilrituale in Nepal." In Christine Gottschalk-Batschkus and Christian Ratsch (eds.), *Ethnotherapien—Ethnotherapies*, Curare Sonderband 14. Berlin: VWB, 66–69.

Eigner, Dagmar, and Dieter Scholz. 1990. "Das Zauberbüchlein der Gyani Dolma." *Pharmazie in unserer Zeit* 19(4): 141–152.

Eliade, Mircea. 1938. *Metallurgy, Magic, and Alchemy*. Paris and Bucharest.

———. 1958. *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*. New York: Pantheon Books.

———. 1964. *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Emboden, William. 1977. "Dionysos as a Shaman and Wine as a Magical Drug." *Journal of Psychedelic Drugs* 9(3): 187–192.

Enderli, J. 1903. "Zwei Jahre bei den Tschukstschen und Korjaken." *Petermanns Mitteilungen* 49(8): 183.

Endres, Franz Carl, and Annemarie Schimmel. 1984. *Das Mysterium der Zahl: Zahlensymbolik im Kulturvergleich*. Cologne: Diederichs (DG 52).

Erhard, Franz-Karl, and Ingrid Fischer-Schreiber. 1993. *Das Lexikon des Buddhismus*. Bern/Munich/Vienna: O. W. Barth/Scherz.

Essen, Gerd-Wolfgang, and Tsering Tashi Thingo. 1989. *Die Götter des Himalaya* (2 vols.). Munich: Prestel.

———. 1991. *Padmasambhava: Leben und Wundertaten des großen tantrischen Meisters aus Kaschmir im Spiegel der tibetischen Bildkunst*. Cologne: DuMont.

Evans-Wentz, Walter. 1987. *Geheimlehren aus Tibet: Yoga und der Pfad des Mahayana-Buddhismus*. Basel: Sphinx.

Fantin, Mario. 1976. *Mani Rimdu, Nepal: The Buddhist Dance Drama of Tengpoche*. New Delhi: The English Book Store.

Findeisen, Hans. 1956. *Das Tier als Gott, Dämon und Ahne*. Stuttgart: Kosmos.

Findeisen, Hans and Heino Gehrts. 1983. *Die Schamanen*. Cologne: Diederichs.

Fischer, Roland. 1971. "A Cartography of the Ecstatic and Meditative States." *Science* 174: 897–904.

Fisher, James. 1975. "Cannabis in Nepal: An Overview." In V. Rubin (ed.), *Cannabis and Culture*. The Hague: Mouton, 247–255.

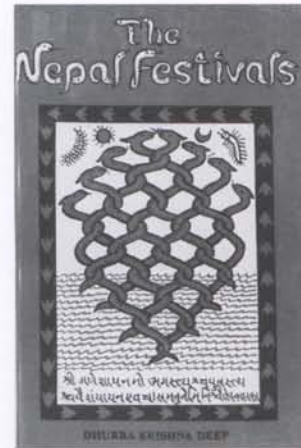
Fisher, Robert E. 1993. *Buddhist Art and Architecture*. London: Thames & Hudson.

Fister, Pat. 1985. "Tengu, the Mountain Goblin." In Stephen Addiss (ed.), *Japanese Ghosts and Demons: Art of the Supernatural*. New York: George Braziller, 103–112.

Flattery, David S. and Martin Schwarz. 1989. *Haoma and Harmaline, The Botanical Identity of the Indo-Iranian Sacred Hallucinogen "Soma"*. Berkeley: University of California Press (Near Eastern Studies vol. 21).

Fouce, Paula and Denise Tomecko. 1990. *Shiva*. Bangkok: The Tamarind Press (2nd ed. 1996: White Orchid Press).

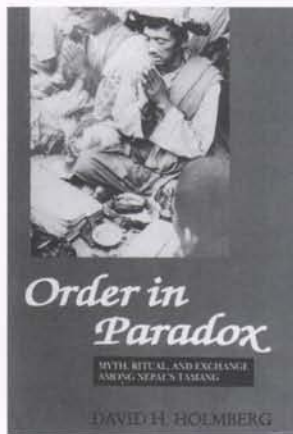
Franz, Heinrich Gerhard, et al. 1990. *Das alte Indien: Geschichte und Kultur eines Subkontinents*. Munich: C. Bertelsmann.



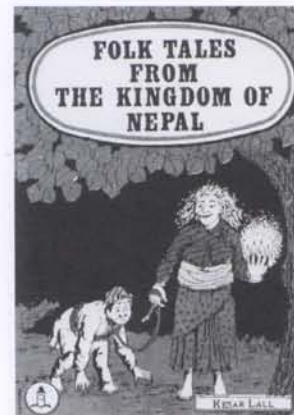
- Franzke, Walter. 1989. "Thog Lcag—Metall aus dem All." In *Sternsteine*. Munich: MMT, 61–63.
- Franzke, Reinhard. 1999. *Was ist Schamanismus*. Lage: Logos Verlag.
- Frerkes, Wilhelm. 1982. "Schamanen oder Pseudo-Schamanen bei den Sherpa und ihren Nachbarn." In Friedrich W. Funke et al., *Die Sherpa und ihre Nachbarn*. Innsbruck: Wagner University Press, 77–170.
- Frey, Edward. 1991. *The Kris: Mystic Weapon of the Malay World*. Singapore: Oxford University Press.
- Funke, Friedrich W. 1982. "Kultischer Knochenschmuck aus dem Nepal-Himalaya." In Friedrich W. Funke et al., *Die Sherpa und ihre Nachbarn*. Innsbruck: Wagner University Press, 13–76.
- Furst, Peter T. 1990. "Schamanische Ekstase und botanische Halluzinogene: Fantasie und Realität." In G. Guntern (ed.), *Der Gesang des Schamanen*. Brig: ISO-Stiftung, 211–243.
- . 1998. "Die Wurzeln des Schamanismus in Asien und Amerika." In Jan Van Alphen (ed.), *Schamanismus in Tuva*. Vienna: Museum für Völkerkunde, 24–35.
- Ganguli, Milada. 1993. *Naga Art*. New Delhi, etc.: Oxford & IBH Publishing.
- Ganzelewski, Michael, and Rainer Slotta (ed.). 1996. *Bernstein—Tränen der Götter*. Bochum: Deutsches Bergbau-Museum.
- Gartz, Jochen. 1986. "Nachweis von Tryptaminderivaten in Pilzen der Gattungen *Gerronema*, *Hygrocybe*, *Psathyrella* und *Inocybe*." *Biochem. Physiol. Pflanzen* 181: 275–278.
- Gattiker, Ernst, and Luise Gattiker. 1989. *Die Vögel im Volksglauben*. Wiesbaden: AULA Verlag.
- Gehrts, Heino. 1983. "Die Schamanentrommel." In Hans Findeisen and Heino Gehrts, *Die Schamanen*. Cologne: Diederichs, 126–136.
- Gellner, David N. 1992. *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest: Newar Buddhism and its Hierarchy of Ritual*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 1994. "Priests, Healers, Mediums and Witches: The Context of Possession in the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal." *Man* (N.S.) 29: 27–48.
- Gelpke, Rudolf. 1967. "Der Geheimbund von Alamut—Legende und Wirklichkeit." *Antaios* 8: 269–293.
- George, Uwe. 1999. "Die Feder: Höhenflug der Evolution/ Die Lehre der Feder." *Geo* 5/99: 16–52.
- Gerhardt, Ewald. 1996. *Taxonomische Revision der Gattungen Panaeolus und Panaeolina (Fungi, Agaricales, Coprinaceae)*. Stuttgart: Schweizerbart'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung (Dissertation).
- Giese, Claudius Cristobal. 1989. "Curanderos," *traditionelle Heiler in Nord-Peru (Küste und Hochland)*. Hohenschäftlarn: Klaus Renner Press.
- Glauche, Johannes W. 1995. *Der Stupa: Kultbau des Buddhismus*. Cologne: DuMont.
- Golas, Thaddeus. 1979. *Der Erleuchtung ist es egal, wie du sie erlangst*. Basel: Sphinx Verlag.
- Gonda, Jan. 1978. *Die Religionen Indiens: I Veda und älterer Hinduismus*. Stuttgart, etc.: W. Kohlhammer.
- Goodman, Felicitas and Nana Nauwald. 1998. *Ekstatische Trance*. Bad Bevensen: Edition Nada.
- Gottwald, Franz-Theo, and Christian Ratsch (eds.). 1998. *Schamanische Wissenschaften: Ökologie, Naturwissenschaft und Kunst*. Munich: Diederichs.
- Govinda, Lama Anagarika. 1975. *Grundlagen tibetischer Mystik*. Bern/Munich/Vienna: O. W. Barth (10th ed. 1997).
- Greve, Reinhard. 1981. "A Shaman's Concept of Illness and Healing Rituals in the Mustang-District, Nepal." *Journal of the Nepal Research Center* 5: 35–49.
- . 1989. "The Shaman and the Witch: An Analytical Approach to Shamanic Poetry in the Himalayas." In Mihály Hoppal and Otto von Sadovszky (eds.), *Shamanism: Past and Present* (Part 2). Budapest: Ethnographic Institute, Hungarian Academy of Sciences/Los Angeles, Fullerton: International Society for Transoceanic Research, 225–232.
- Grewal, Bikram. 1995. *A Photographic Guide to Birds of India and Nepal*. London: New Holland.
- Grewal, Bikram and Otto Pfister. 1995. *A Photographic Guide to Birds of the Himalayas*. London: New Holland.
- Grieder, Peter. 1990. *Tibet—Land zwischen Himmel und Erde*. Olten: Walter-Verlag.
- Griffith, Ralph T. H. (trans.). 1976. *The Hymns of the Rig Veda*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass. (See also Hillebrandt 1913, Mylius 1981, and Thieme 1964.)
- Grof, Stanislav. 1997. *Kosmos und Psyche: An den Grenzen des menschlichen Bewusstseins*. Frankfurt/M.: Wolfgang Krüger Verlag.
- Gross, Robert Lewis. 1992. *The Sadhus of India: A Study of Hindu Asceticism*. Jaipur, New Delhi: Rawat Publications.
- Gruber, Ulrich. 1991. *Nepal*. Munich: Prestel.
- Gruschke, Andreas. 1996. *Mythen und Legenden der Tibeter*. Munich: Diederichs.
- Guenther, Herbert von. 1974. *Tantra als Lebensanschauung*. Bern/Munich/Vienna: O. W. Barth/Scherz.
- Guha Bakshi, D. N., P. Sensarma, and D. C. Pal. 1999. *A Lexicon of Medicinal Plants of India*. Calcutta: Naya Prokash.
- Guisan, Isabelle and Walter Imber. 1990. *Der Ganges: Indiens heiliger Fluss*. Lausanne: Mondo-Verlag.
- Gupta, Shakti M. 1991. *Plant Myths and Traditions in India* (2nd ed.). New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers.
- Guru Padmasambhava. 1998. *Die Geheimlehre Tibets*, edited, annotated and with instructions for practice provided by Karl Scherer. Munich: Kösel.
- Haag, Stefan. 1995. *Hanfkultur weltweit: Über die Hanfsituation in fast 100 Ländern rund um den Äquator*, complete revised edition. Löhrbach/Solothurn: Edition Rauschkunde.
- Hagen, Toni. 1959. "Geologie des Thakkhola (Nepal)." *Eclogae geologicae Helvetiae* 52/2: 709–719.

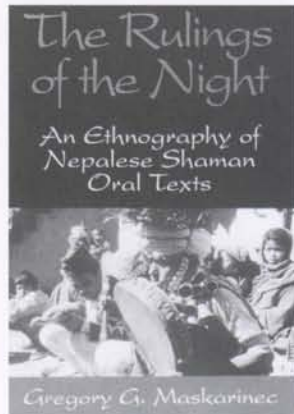
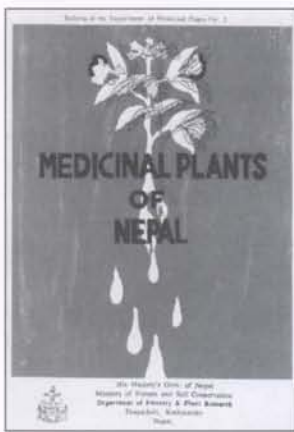
- . 1980. *Nepal—Königreich am Himalaya*. Bern: Kümmerly & Frey.
- Hagn, Herbert. 1977. "Saligram—Gerölle von Malmkalken mit Ammoniten als Kultgegenstände Indiens." *Mitt. Bayer. Staatsslg. Paläont. hist. Geol.* 17: 71–102.
- Hajicek-Dobberstein, Scott. 1995. "Soma Siddhas and Alchemical Enlightenment: Psychedelic Mushrooms in Buddhist Tradition." *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* 48: 99–118.
- Halcour, Dieter. 1991. *Das Lebensrad der Tibeter*. Weingarten: Hanke-Verlag.
- Halifax, Joan. 1979. *Shamanic Voices: A Survey of Visionary Narratives*. New York: E. P. Dutton.
- Hall, Richard C. W. et al. 1978. "Intoxication with Angel's Trumpet: Anticholinergic Delirium and Hallucinosi." *Journal of Psychedelic Drugs* 10(3): 251–253.
- Halpern, Georges M. 1999. *Cordyceps: China's Healing Mushroom*. Garden City Park, N.Y.: Avery Publishing Group.
- Harner, Michael (ed.). 1973. *Hallucinogens and Shamanism*. London, etc.: Oxford University Press.
- . 1984. *The Jibaro: People of the Sacred Waterfalls*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- . 1989. "Was ist ein Schamane?" In Gary Doore (ed.), *Opfer und Ekstase*. Freiburg: Bauer, 20–31.
- . 1990. *The Way of the Shaman*. Revised new edition. San Francisco: Harper.
- Hart, Mickey and Frederic Lieberman. 1991. *Planet Drum: A Celebration of Percussion and Rhythm*. San Francisco: Harper.
- Hart, Mickey with Jay Stevens and Frederic Lieberman. 1990. *Drumming at the Edge of Magic*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.
- . 1991. *Die magische Trommel: Eine Reise zu den Quellen des Rhythmus*. Munich: Goldmann.
- Hartlaub, G. F. 1940. "Mythos und Magie der Schlange." *Atlantis*, Number 10 (Oct.) 1940: 362–374.
- Hartlaub, Johannes. 1980. *Das Kräuterbuch des Johannes Hartlieb*. Graz: Akademische Druck und Verlagsanstalt.
- Hartsuiker, Dolf. 1993. *Sadhus: Holy Men of India*. London: Thames & Hudson.
- Haseneier, Martin. 1992. "Der Kahlkopf und das kollektive Unbewusste: Einige Anmerkungen zur archetypischen Dimension des Pilzes." *Integration* 1/2: 5–38.
- Hawking, Stephen. 1997. *Die illustrierte Kurze Geschichte der Zeit*. Reinbek: Rowohlt.
- . 1998. *A Brief History of Time*. New York: Bantam.
- Hecker, Ulrich. 1995. *Bäume und Sträucher*. Munich: BLV.
- Heim, Roger and R. Gordon Wasson. 1970. "Les Putka des Santals: Champignons doués d'une âme." *Cahiers du Pacifique* 14: 59–85.
- Heinlein, Robert A. 1961. *Stranger in a Strange Land*. New York: Putnam.
- Heinrich, Clark. 1992. "Amanita muscaria and the Penis of God." *Integration* 2/3: 55–62.
- . 1995. *Strange Fruit: Alchemy and Religion, the Hidden Truth*. London: Bloomsbury.
- . 1998. *Die Magie der Pilze*. Munich: Diederichs.
- Heinze, Ruth-Inge. 1991. *Shamans of the 20th Century*. New York: Irvington.
- Heißig, Walter. 1962. "Ein mongolisches Handbuch für die Herstellung von Schutzamuletten." *Tribus* 11: 69–83.
- Heller, Gerhard. 1985. *Krankheitskonzepte und Krankheitssymptome: Eine empirische Untersuchung bei den Tamang von Cautara/Nepal*. Frankfurt/M.: Peter Lang.
- . 1993. "Tiergeister als Heilgehilfen nepalesischer Schamanen." In C. Ratsch (ed.), *Naturverehrung und Heilkunst*. Südergellersen: Verlag Bruno Martin, 147–164.
- Hermanns, Matthias. 1954. *Mythen und Mysterien der Tibeter*. Stuttgart: Magnus.
- . 1970. *Schamanen—Pseudoschamanen, Erlöser und Heilbringer* (3 vols.). Wiesbaden: Steiner.
- Hertel, Johannes (ed.). 1996. *Indische Märchen*. Reinbek: Rowohlt.
- Hillebrandt, Alfred. 1897. *Ritual-Litteratur, Vedische Opfer und Zauber*. Straßburg: Karl J. Trübner (Reprint Graz: ADEVA, 1981).
- . 1913. *Lieder des Rgveda*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht.
- Hitchcock, John T. and Rex L. Jones (eds.). 1994. *Spirit Possession in the Nepal Himalayas*. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House.
- Hobbs, Christopher. 1987. *Medicinal Mushrooms: The History, Chemistry, Pharmacology and Folk Uses for Modern Times*. Capitola, Calif.: Botanica Press.
- . 1995. *Medicinal Mushrooms: An Exploration of Tradition, Healing and Culture*. Santa Cruz, Calif.: Botanica Press.
- Hofer, A. 1974. "Is the Bombo an Ecstatic? Some Ritual Techniques of Tamang Shamanism." In C. von Führer-Haimendorf (ed.), *Contributions to the Anthropology of Nepal*. Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 168–182.
- Hoffmann, Helmut. 1950. *Quellen zur Geschichte der tibetischen Bon-Religion*. Mainz: Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur.
- . 1956. *Die Religionen Tibets: Bon und Lamaismus in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung*. Freiburg/Munich: Karl Alber.
- . 1967. *Symbolik der tibetischen Religionen und des Schamanismus*. Stuttgart: Anton Hiersmann.
- Hofmann, Albert. 1980. *LSD, My Problem Child*. Trans. by Jonathan Ott. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- . 1989. *Insight, Outlook*. Trans. by Jonathan Ott. Atlanta: Humanics New Age.
- Holmberg, David H. 1996. *Order in Paradox: Myth, Ritual, and Exchange Among Nepal's Tamang*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

- Homstedt, Bo. 1965. "Tryptamine Derivatives in Epená, an Intoxicating Snuff Used by Some South American Indian Tribes." *Archives internationales de Pharmacodynamie et de Thérapie* 156(2): 285–305.
- Horn, Klaus P. 1997. *Die Erleuchtungsfälle*. Niedertaufkirchen: Connection Medien.
- Hopkins, Jeffrey. 1994. *Tantra in Tibet*. Munich: Diederichs.
- Hoppál, Mihály. 1994. *Schamanen und Schamanismus*. Augsburg: Pattloch.
- Höfler, Max. 1994. *Volksmedizin und Aberglaube in Oberbayern Gegenwart und Vergangenheit*. Vaduz/Liechtenstein: Sändig Reprint (from 1888).
- Huber, Richard. 1981. *Treasury of Fantastic and Mythological Creatures*. New York: Dover.
- Hummel, K. 1959. "Aus welcher Pflanze stellten die arischen Inder den Somatrank her?" *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Pharmazeutischen Gesellschaft* 29: 57–61.
- Hummel, Siegbert. 1952. "Der lamaistische Ritualdolch (phur-bu) und die altvorderorientalischen 'Nagelmenschen.'" *Asiatische Studien*: 41–51.
- . 1953. "Der lamaistische Donnerkeil (Rdo-rje) und die Doppelaxt der Mittelmeerkultur." *Anthropos* 48: 982–987.
- . 1958. "Der Ursprung des tibetischen Mandalas." In *Ethnos* 2–4: 158–171.
- . 1970. "Die Maske in Tibet." *Antaios* 11: 181–191.
- Huntington, John C. 1975. *The Phur-Pa, Tibetan Ritual Daggers*. Ascona: Artibus Asiae Publishers (Supplementum 33).
- Hvaikof, Søren and Peter Aaby. 1980. *Ist Gott Amerikaner?* Göttingen.
- Ingerman, S. 1991. *Soul Retrieval*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.
- Jackson, David P. and Janice Jackson. 1984. *Tibetan Thangka Painting, Methods and Materials*, ill. by Robert Beer. London: Serindia Publications.
- Jacobs, Julian. 1990. *The Nagas: Society, Culture and the Colonial Encounter*. London: Thames & Hudson.
- Jaggi, O. P. 1979. *Yogic and Tantric Medicine*. Delhi/Lucknow: Atma Ram & Sons (History of Science, Technology and Medicine in India, vol. 5).
- Jain, Jyotindra. 1997. *Ganga Devi: Tradition and Expression in Mithila Painting*. Ahmedabad: Mapin Publ./Niigata: The Mithila Museum (Japan).
- Jain, S. K. 1965. "Medicinal Plant Lore of the Tribals of Bastar." *Economic Botany* 19: 236–250.
- Jain, S. K., V. Ranjan, E. L. S. Sikarwar, and A. Saklani. 1994. "Botanical Distribution of Psychoactive Plants in India." *Ethnobotany* 6: 65–75.
- Jansen, Eva Rudy. 1990. *Das kleine Buddha-Buch: Buddhas, Gottheiten und rituelle Symbole*. Diever (NL): Verlag Binkey Kok.
- Jenkins, John Major. 1998. *Maya Cosmogogenesis 2012: The True Meaning of the Maya Calendar End-Date*. Santa Fe: Bear & Company.
- Jha, Dr. H. K. "Shaman and Psychology." *Kathmandu Post* 22. 11. 1998. (Discussion by Peters 1997).
- Johari, Harish. 1986. *Tools for Tantra*. Rochester, Vt.: Inner Traditions.
- Jones, Kenneth. 1997. *Cordyceps: Tonic Food of Ancient China*. Seattle: Sylvan Press.
- Kakar, Sudhir. 1984. *Schamanen, Heilige und Ärzte: Psychotherapie und traditionelle indische Heilkunst*. Munich: Biederstein Verlag.
- Kalweit, Holger and Amélie Schenk. 1995. "Der Doppelkörper als Grundlage der Trance in der tibetischen Psychologie." *Curare* 18(2): 467–495.
- Karmay, Samten. 1988. *Secret Visions of the Fifth Dalai Lama: The Gold Manuscript in the Fournier Collection*. London: Serindia Publications.
- Kashikar, C. G. 1990. *Identification of Soma*. Pune, India: Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth (Research Series No. 7).
- Kauffmann, Hans E. 1960. "Das Fadenkreuz, sein Zweck und seine Bedeutung." *Ethnologica* N. F. 2: 36–69.
- Kaul, M. K. 1997. *Medicinal Plants of Kashmir and Ladakh: Temperate and Cold Arid Himalaya*. New Delhi: Indus Publishing Company.
- Keeney, Bradford. 1996. *Crazy Wisdom Tales for Dead-heads: A Shamanic Companion to the Grateful Dead*. Barrytown, N.Y.: Station Hill Arts.
- Khanna, Madhu. 1980. *Das große Yantra-Buch*. Freiburg i.B.: Auum.
- Kienle, Gunver Sophia and Helmut Kiene. 1997/98. "Der Placeboeffekt—ein hartnäckiges Gerücht." *raum & zeit* 90/97: 63–70 and 91/98: 67–72.
- King, Francis. 1974. *Sexuality, Magic, and Perversion*. Secaucus, N.J.: Citadel.
- Klapp, Edzard. 1985. "Rabenbrot." *Curare* Sonderband 3: 67–72.
- Klein, Cecelia F. 1982. "Woven Heaven, Tangled Earth: A Weaver's Paradigm of the Mesoamerican Cosmos." In A. Aveni and G. Urton (ed.), *Ethnoastronomy and Archaeoastronomy in the American Tropics*. New York: *Annals of the New York Academy of Science*, vol. 385, 1–36.
- Knecht, Sigrid. 1971. "Rauchen und Räuchern in Nepal." *Ethnomedizin* 1(2): 209–222.
- Knödel, Susanne. 1998. *Schamaninnen in Korea: Heilrituale und Handys*. Hamburg: Hamburgisches Museum für Völkerkunde.
- Kossak, Steven and Jane Casey Singer. 1998. *Secret Visions: Early Paintings from Central Tibet*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art.
- Kramrisch, Stella. 1981. *The Presence of Siva*. Delhi, etc.: Oxford University Press.
- . 1986. "The Mahāvira Vessel and the Plant Pūtika." In R. G. Wasson et al., *Persephone's Quest: Entheogens and the Origins of Religion*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 95–116.
- Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik GmbH (ed.). 1997. *Mythos Tibet: Wahrnehmungen, Projektionen, Fantasien*. Cologne: DuMont.



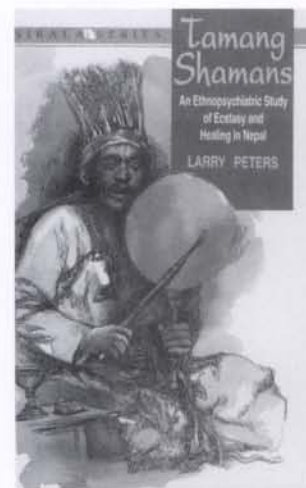
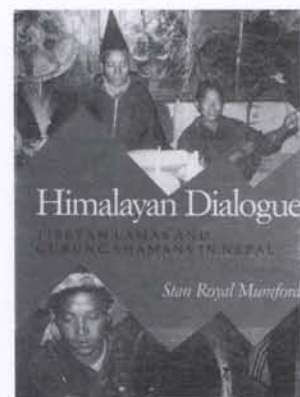
- Kutalek, Ruth. 1995. "Ethnomykologie des Fliegenpilzes am Beispiel Nordamerikas und Sibiriens." *Curare* 18 (1): 25–30.
- Kværne, Per. 1995. *The Bon Religion of Tibet: The Iconography of a Living Tradition*. London: Serindia.
- Lall, Kesar. 1991. *Folk Tales from the Kingdom of Nepal*. Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar.
- Lame Deer and Richard Erdoes. 1972. *Lame Deer: Seeker of Visions*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Langen, Dietrich. 1963. *Archaische Ekstase und asiatische Meditation*. Stuttgart: Hippokrates.
- Langsdorf, G. H. von. 1924. "Einige Bemerkungen, die Eigenschaften des Kamtschadalischen Fliegen-schwammes betreffend." *Wetterauische Gesellschaft für die gesamte Naturkunde, Annalen* 1(2). Frankfurt/M.
- Lauf, Detlef-Ingo. 1976. *Verborgene Botschaft tibetischer Thangkas: Bildmeditation und Deutung lamaistischer Kultbilder*. Freiburg i.Br.: Aurum.
- . 1979. *Eine Ikonographie des tibetischen Buddhismus*. Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt.
- Laufer, Heinrich. 1991. *Tibetische Medizin*. Ulm: Fabri Verlag (Reprint from 1900).
- Lavizzari-Raeber, Alexandra. 1984. *Thangkas: Rollbilder aus dem Himalaya, Kunst und mystische Bedeutung*. Cologne: DuMont.
- Lawlor, Robert. 1992. *Sacred Geometry*. London: Thames & Hudson.
- Le Bon, Gustave. 1986. *Voyage to Nepal*. Bangkok: White Orchid Press (Original: *Voyage au Nepal*. Paris 1883/1886).
- Lechler, Jörg. 1921. *Vom Hakenkreuz, Die Geschichte eines Symbols*. Leipzig: Curt Kabitzsch.
- Leslie, Charles (ed.). 1998. *Asian Medical Systems: A Comparative Study*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publisher.
- Lewis-Williams, J. D. and T. A. Dowson. 1988. "The Signs of All Times: Entoptic Phenomena in Upper Palaeolithic Arts." *Current Anthropology* 29 (2): 201–245.
- Li, Hui Lin. 1978. "Hallucinogenic Plants in Chinese Herbals." *Journal of Psychedelic Drugs* 10 (1): 17–25.
- . 1974. "The Origin and Use of *Cannabis* in Eastern Asia: Linguistic-cultural Implications." *Economic Botany* 28: 293–301.
- Lilly, John C. 1976. *Das Zentrum des Zyklons: Eine Reise in die inneren Räume—Neue Wege der Bewusstseins-erweiterung*. Frankfurt/M.: Fischer TB (New edition Aarau: AT Verlag, 2000).
- Lilly, John C., and E. J. Gold. 1995. *Tanks for the Memories*. Nevada City, Calif.: Gateways/IDHHB Publishers.
- Lincoff, Gary. 1995. *Simon & Schuster's Guide to Mushrooms*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Lindequist, Ulrike. 1992. "Datura." In *Hagers Handbuch der pharmazeutischen Praxis* (5th ed.), vol. 4: 1138–1154. Berlin: Springer.
- Lindhorst, Raimund. 1997. *Darstellungen des Buddha und ihre symbolische Bedeutung im tibetischen Buddhismus*. Berlin: Simon & Leutner.
- Lindner, Paul. 1933. "Das Geheimnis um Soma, das Getränk der alten Inder und Perser." *Forschungen und Fortschritte* 9 (5): 65–66.
- Lockwood, Tommie E. 1979. "The Ethnobotany of *Brugmansia*." *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* 1: 147–164.
- Loeb, E. M. 1929. "Shaman and Seer." *American Anthropologist* 31: 60–84.
- Lommel, Andreas. 1980. *Shamanen und Medizinmänner* (2nd revised ed.). Munich: Callway.
- Luck, Georg. 1990. *Magie und andere Geheimlehren in der Antike*. Stuttgart: Kröner.
- Ludwig, Klemens. 1999. "Die Kampagne gegen den Dalai Lama: Falsches Feinbild." *Esotera* 6/99: 78–79.
- Luna, Luis Eduardo. 1985. "Das Konzept der "Pflanzen als Lehrer" bei vier Mestizo Schamanen in Iquitos, Nordost-Peru." *Curare Sonderband (Ethnobotanik)* 3/85: 178–192.
- Macdonald, A. W. and Anne Vergati Stahl. 1979. *Newar Art: Nepalese Art during the Malla Period*. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House.
- Madejsky, Margret. 1997. "Schlangen in Mythos und Heilkunst." *Naturheilpraxis* 11/97: 1852–1858.
- Mahdihassa, S. 1963. "Identifying Soma as Ephedra." *Pakistan Journal of Forestry* Oct. 1963: 370.
- . 1991. *Indian Alchemy or Rasayana*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publisher.
- Majupuria, Trilok Chandra. 1991. *Sacred Animals of Nepal and India*. Bangkok: Craftsmen Press.
- Majupuria, Trilok Chandra and D. P. Joshi. 1988. *Religious and Useful Plants of Nepal and India*. Lalitpur: M. Gupta.
- Majupuria, Trilok Chandra and Indra Majupuria. 1990. *Erotic Themes of Nepal*. Lashkar: S. Devi.
- Majupuria, Trilok Chandra and Rohit Kumar Majupuria. 1994. *Gods and Goddesses, An Illustrated Account of Hindu, Buddhist, Tantric, Hybrid and Tibetan Deities*. Lashkar: Gupta.
- . 1996. *Sadhus and Saints of Nepal and India*. Bangkok: Tecpress Books.
- Malla, Samar Bahadur, et al. (ed.). 1976. *Flora of Langtang and Cross Section Vegetation Survey (Central Zone)*. Kathmandu: His Majesty's Government, Dept. of Medicinal Plants.
- . 1982. *Wild Edible Plants of Nepal*. Kathmandu: Ministry of Forests.
- . 1986. *Flora of Kathmandu Valley*. Kathmandu: Dept. of Medicinal Plants (Bull. Dept. Med. Plants Nepal No. 11).
- Manandhar, N. P. 1980. *Medicinal Plants of Nepali Himalaya*. Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar.
- Mani, Vettam. 1974. *Puranic Encyclopaedia*. Delhi/Patna/Varanasi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Marcotty, Thomas. 1987. *Dagger Blessing—The Tibetan Phurpa Cult: Reflections and Materials*. Delhi: B. R. Publishing Corp.





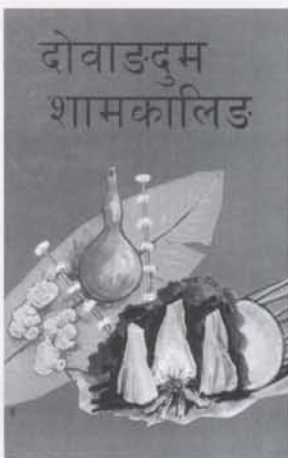
- Maskarinec, Gregory G. 1989. "A Shamanic Semantic Plurality: *dhāmis* and *jhākrīs*." In Mihály Hoppál and Otto von Sadovszky (eds.), *Shamanism: Past and Present* (Part 2). Budapest: Ethnographic Institute, Hungarian Academy of Sciences/Los Angeles, Fullerton: International Society for Transoceanic Research, 203–218.
- . 1995. *Rulings of the Nights: An Ethnography of Nepalese Shaman Oral Texts*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.
- . 1998. *Nepalese Shaman Oral Texts*. Harvard University Press.
- Matthews, John. 1998. *Keltischer Schamanismus*. Munich: Diederichs. Available in English as *The Celtic Shaman*. London: Rider (2001).
- McDonald, A. 1978. "The Present Status of Soma: The Effects of California *Amanita muscaria* on Normal Volunteers." In B. H. Rumack and E. Salzman (eds.), *Mushroom Poisoning: Diagnosis and Treatment*. West Palm Beach: CRC-Press, 215–223.
- McLean, Adam. 1989. *The Alchemical Mandala: A Survey of the Mandala in the Western Esoteric Traditions*. Enfield, Middlesex, U.K.: Phanes Press.
- Mehra, K. L. 1979. "Ethnobotany of Old World Solanaceae." In J. G. Hawkes et al. (eds.), *The Biology and Taxonomy of the Solanaceae*. London, etc.: Academic Press, 161–170.
- Meletinskij, E. M. 1997. *Das paläoasiatische mythologische Epos: Der Zyklus des Raben*. Berlin: Schletzer.
- Meredith, Georgette. 1966. "The *Phurbu*: The Use and Symbolism of the Tibetan Magic Dagger." *History of Religions* 6: 236–253.
- Messiha, Khalil. 1982. "Plant Mummy." In Abdallah Adly (ed.), *The History of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants*. Pakistan: Hamdard Foundation Press, 166–170.
- Messner, Reinhold. 1998. *Yeti—Legende und Wirklichkeit*. Frankfurt/M.: S. Fischer.
- Metzner, Ralph. 1970. "Mushrooms and the Mind." In Bernard Aaronson and Humphry Osmond (ed.), *Psychedelics*. Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books (Doubleday), 90–107.
- Meyer, Kurt, and Pamela Deuel. 1998. *Mahabharata: The Tharu Barka Naach, a Rural Folk Version*. Lalitpur: Himal Books.
- Meyrink, Gustav. n.d. *Das grüne Gesicht: Ein okkultes Schlüsselroman*. Munich: Knauer.
- Mierow, Dorothy and Tirtha Bahadur Shrestha. 1987. *Himalayan Flowers and Trees*. Kathmandu: Sahayogi Press.
- Miller, Casper J. 1987. *Faith-Healers in the Himalayas*. Kathmandu: Sahayogi Press.
- . 1997. *Faith Healers in the Himalayas* (new revised ed.). Delhi: Book Faith India.
- Mishra, Hemanta R. and Margaret Jefferies. 1991. *Royal Chitwan National Park: Wildlife Heritage of Nepal*. Seattle: The Mountaineers.
- Mishra, Kamalakar. 1993. *Kashmir Saivism: The Central Philosophy of Tantrism*. Portland: Rudra Press.
- Mishra, Hemanta R. and Dorothy Mierow. 1997. *Wild Animals of Nepal* (2nd ed.). Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar.
- Mittre, Vishnu. 1981. "Wild Plants in Indian Folk Life—A Historical Perspective." In S. K. Jain (ed.), *Glimpses of Indian Ethnobotany*. New Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta: Oxford & IBH Publishing Company, 37–58.
- Mochtar, Said Gholam and Hartmut Geerken. 1979. "Die Halluzinogene Muscarin und Ibotensäure im Mittleren Hindukush: Ein Beitrag zur volkshelpraktischen Mykologie in Afghanistan." *Afghanistan Journal* 6 (2): 63–65.
- Moebius [= Jean Girard]. 1984. *Reisen der Erinnerung*. Cologne: Taschen.
- Mookerjee, Ajit. 1982. *Kundalini—The Arousal of the Inner Energy*. Rochester, Vt.: Destiny Books.
- . 1985. *Ritual Art of India*. London: Thames & Hudson.
- . 1988. *Kali—The Feminine Force*. London: Thames & Hudson.
- Mookerjee, Ajit and Madhu Khanna. 1977. *The Tantric Way: Art, Science, Ritual*. London: Thames & Hudson.
- Morningstar, Patricia J. 1985. "Thandai and Chilam: Traditional Hindu Beliefs about the Proper Uses of Cannabis." *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs* 17 (3): 141–165.
- Mühlich, Michael. 1991. "Der *dhami* als Vorbild. Ein Kommentar zu Campbells 'Oracular Religion in Hindu Jumla,'" in Michael Kuper (ed.), *Hungrige Geister und rastlose Seelen: Texte zur Schamanismusforschung*. Berlin: Reimer, 109–125.
- Müller, Reinhold F. G. 1927. "Die Krankheits- und Heilgottheiten des Lamaismus: Eine medizinisch-geschichtliche Studie." *Anthropos* 22: 956–991.
- . 1954. "Soma in der altindischen Heilkunde." In *Asiatica—Festschrift Friedrich Weller*. Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 428–441.
- Müller-Ebeling, Claudia. 1994. "Zwiesprache mit den Göttern: Die Thangkas der Newari." *Dao* 4/94: 21–23.
- . 1996. "Leben im Mandala." *Esotera* 4/96: 70–76.
- Müller-Ebeling, Claudia and Christian Ratsch. 1986. *Isoldens Liebestrank: Aphrodisiaka in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. Munich: Kindler.
- Müller-Ebeling, Claudia, Christian Ratsch, and Wolf-Dieter Storl. 1998. *Hexenmedizin: Die Wiederentdeckung einer verbotenen Heilkunst—Schamanische Traditionen in Europa*. Aarau: AT Verlag.
- Mukherjee, Pippa. 1997. *Common Trees of India*. Mumbai: Oxford University Press.
- Mumford, Stan Royal. 1990. *Himalayan Dialogue: Tibetan Lamas and Gurung Shamans in Nepal*. Kathmandu: Tiwari's Pilgrims Book House.
- Mylus, Klaus (ed.). 1981. *Älteste Indische Dichtung und Prosa, Vedische Hymnen, Legenden, Zauberslieder, philosophische und ritualistische Lehren*. Wiesbaden: VMA-Verlag.

- Nadkarni, K. M. [and A. K. Nadkarni (revision)]. 1976. *Indian Materia Medica*. Bombay: Popular Prakashan.
- Nebesky-Wojkowitz, René de. 1993. *Oracles and Demons of Tibet: The Cult and Iconography of the Tibetan Protective Deities*. Kathmandu: Tiwari's Pilgrims Book House.
- Nepali, Gopas Singh. 1988. *The Newars*. Kathmandu: Madhab Lal Maharjan Himalayan Booksellers.
- Ngawang, Geshe Thubten. 1995. *Genügsamkeit und Nichtverletzen*. Freiburg/Basel/Vienna: Herder.
- Nicolazzi, Michael Albrecht. 1995. *Mönche, Geister und Schamanen: Die Bön-Religion Tibets*. Solothurn/Düsseldorf: Walter-Verlag.
- Niedermayr, Gerhard. 1990. "Mineralogische Fahrt zu den Edelstein-Pegmatiten Ostnepals." *Mineralien-Welt* 1/90: 30–38.
- Nitschke, Günter. 1995. *The Silent Orgasm: Liebe als Sprungbrett zur Selbsterkenntnis*. Cologne: Taschen.
- Nivedita, [Sister], and Ananda K. Coomaraswamy. 1994. *Hindus and Buddhists*. London: Studio Editions.
- Noel, Sybille. 1931. *The Magic Bird of Chomo-lung-ma: Tales of Mount Everest, the Turquoise Peak*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Doran & Co.
- Norbu, Namkhai. 1995. *Drung, Den, and Bön: Narrations, Symbolic Languages and the Bön Tradition in Ancient Tibet*. Dharmasala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives.
- Nölle, Wilfried. 1952. "Schamanistische Vorstellungen im Shaktismus." *Jahrbuch des Museums für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig* 11: 41–47.
- Okladnikova, E. A. 1989. "The Shamanic Aspect of the Crystal Magic." In Mihály Hoppál and Otto von Sadovsky (eds.), *Shamanism: Past and Present* (Part 2). Budapest: Ethnographic Institute, Hungarian Academy of Sciences/Los Angeles, Fullerton: International Society for Transoceanic Research, 343–348.
- Oppitz, Michael. 1981. *Schamanen im Blinden Land: Ein Bilderbuch aus dem Himalaya*. Frankfurt/M.: Syndikat.
- . 1991. "Die magische Trommel rē." In Michael Kuper (ed.), *Hungrige Geister und rastlose Seelen: Texte zur Schamanismusforschung*. Berlin: Reimer, 77–107.
- Ott, Jonathan. 1975. "Amanita muscaria: Usos y química." *Cuadernos Científicos CEMEF* 4: 203–221.
- . 1976. "Psycho-mycological Studies of Amanita—From Ancient Sacrament to Modern Phobia." *Journal of Psychedelic Drugs* 8 (1): 27–35.
- . 1977. "Amanita muscaria: Mushroom of the Gods." *Head March/April*: 55–62.
- . 1994. "La historia de la planta del 'soma' después de R. Gordon Wasson." In J. M. Fericgla (ed.), *Plantas, Chamanismo y Estados de Consciencia*. Barcelona: Los Libros de la Liebre de Marzo, pp. 117–150.
- . 1996. *Pharmacotheon, Second Edition Densified*. Kennewick, Wash.: Natural Products Co.
- . 1998a. "The Delphic Bee: Bees and Toxic Honey as Pointers to Psychoactive and Other Medicinal Plants." *Economic Botany* 52 (3): 260–266.
- . 1998b. "The Post-Wasson History of the Soma Plant." *Eleusis N.S.* 1: 9–37.
- Pal, Pratapaditya. 1988. *Tibetan Paintings: A Study of Tibetan Thangkas, Eleventh to Nineteenth Centuries*. New Delhi: Time Books International.
- Passie, Torsten. 1999. *Schamanismus: Eine kommentierte Bibliographie, 1914–1998* (3rd ed.). Hannover: Laurentius Verlag.
- Patterson-Rudolph, Carol. 1990. *Petroglyphs and Pueblo Myths of the Rio Grande*. Albuquerque: Avanyu Publishing.
- Paul, Robert A. 1989. *The Sherpas of Nepal in the Tibetan Cultural Context*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers.
- Paulus, Ernst and Yu-he Ding. 1987. *Handbuch der traditionellen chinesischen Heilpflanzen*. Heidelberg: Haug.
- Pelz, Manfred and Dietmar Rothermund. 1999. *Sadhus: Heilige Männer in Indien*. Munich: C. J. Bucher Verlag.
- Pendell, Dale. 1995. *Pharmako/Poeia: Plant Powers, Poisons, and Herbcraft*. San Francisco: Mercury House.
- Peters, Larry G. 1978a. *Shamanism Among the Tamang of Nepal*. Los Angeles: Diss. Ms.
- . 1978b. "Psychotherapy in Tamang Shamanism." *Ethos* 6 (2): 63–91.
- . 1981. *Ecstasy and Healing in Nepal*. Malibu: Undena Press.
- . 1987. "The Tamang Shamanism of Nepal." In Shirley Nicholson (ed.), *Shamanism: An Expanded View of Reality*. Wheaton, Ill.: The Theosophical Publishing House (A Quest Book), 161–180.
- . 1990. "Mystical Experiences in Tamang Shamanism." *ReVision* 13 (2): 71–85.
- . 1997a. "A Promise to the Goddess Kali." *Shaman's Drum* 44: 35–41.
- . 1997b. "The 'Calling,' the Yeti, and the Ban jhankri (forest shaman) in Nepalese Shamanism." *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* 29 (1): 47–62.
- . 1998. *Tamang Shamans: An Ethnopsychiatric Study of Ecstasy and Healing in Nepal*. New Delhi: Nirala Publications. [= Peters 1981].
- . 1999. "The Day the Deities Return: The Janai Purnima Pilgrimage of Tamang Shamans." *Shaman's Drum* 52: 40–49.
- Pfeffer, Wilfried. 1998. *Vision Tibet: Geheimnis des Heilens*. Freiburg i. Br.: Hans-Nietsch-Verlag.
- Pfeiffer, Ludwig. 1914. *Die steinzeitliche Muscheltechnik und ihre Beziehungen zur Gegenwart*. Jena: Gustav Fischer.
- Phuyal, Surendra. 1999. "Faith Healers and Dhams, Jhankris." *Wave* 38: 17.
- Polunin, Oleg and Adam Stainton. 1985. *Flowers of the Himalaya*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- . 1997. *Concise Flowers of the Himalaya*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Pradhan, Udai C. 1997. *Himalayan Cobra-Lilies (Arisaema), Their Botany and Culture* (2nd ed.). Kalimpong: Primulaceae Books.

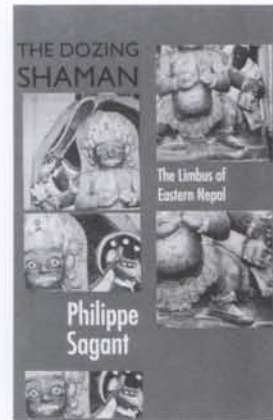


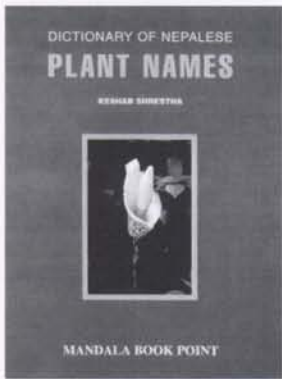
- Pradhan, Udai C. and Sonam T. Lachungpa. 1990. *Sikkim-Himalayan Rhododendrons*. Kalimpong: Primulaceae Books.
- Preston, Travis. 1999. "Ein Fresko für die Opfer." *Hamburgische Staatsoper, Staatsoper Journal* 4 (March/April 99): 8–9.
- RAC [= 1976]. *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*. ed. by Theodor Klause. Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann.
- Rai, Kul Bdr., Bal Krishna Rai, and Santa Kumar Ishara Rai. 1998. *Dowangdum Shamkalin: Kirat Rai and its Culture, Religion, Ceremony, "mundum."* Kathmandu: Kirat Rai Yayokhya Central Office (in Nepali).
- Rai, Topdhan and Lalitkumar Rai. 1994. *Trees of the Sikkim Himalaya*. New Delhi: Indus Publishing Company.
- Ramm-Bonwitt, Ingrid. 1997. *Mudras—Geheimsprache der Yogis*. Freiburg: Bauer.
- Rawson, Philip. 1974. *Tantra: Der indische Kult der Ekstase*. Munich/Zürich: Knauer.
- . 1978. *The Art of Tantra*. London: Thames & Hudson.
- . 1991. *Sacred Tibet*. London: Thames & Hudson.
- Rätsch, Christian. 1984. *Das Erlernen von Zaubersprüchen: Ein Beitrag zur Ethnomedizin der Lakandonen von Naha'*. Berlin: Xpress Edition (Diss.)
- . 1985. *Bilder aus der unsichtbaren Welt: Zaubersprüche und Naturbeschreibungen bei den Maya und Lakandonen*. Munich: Kindler.
- . 1987. "Der Rauch von Delphi: Eine ethnopharmakologische Annäherung." *Curare* 10 (4): 215–228.
- . 1990a. *Die "Orientalischen Fröhlichkeitspillen" und verwandte psychoaktive Aphrodisiaka*. Berlin: VWB.
- . 1990b. *Pflanzen der Liebe*. Bern: Hallwag (2nd ed. Aarau: AT Verlag 1995).
- . 1991. *Von den Wurzeln der Kultur*. Basel: Sphinx.
- . 1992a. *The Dictionary of Sacred and Magical Plants*. Santa Barbara: ABC-Clío.
- . 1992b. "Die kosmische Spirale—Meditation mit Ammoniten." *Dao* 2/92: 20–24.
- . 1993a. "Halluzinogene Pilze und unsere Ahnen." In R. Rippchen (ed.), *Zauberpilze*. Löhrbach: Werner Pieper's MedienXperimente, 21–24.
- . 1993b. "Das Juwel der Schamanen." *Esotera* 4/93: 38–43.
- . 1995a. *Heilkräuter der Antike in Ägypten, Griechenland und Rom*. Munich: Diederichs (DG 115).
- . 1995b. "Mahuang, die Pflanze des Mondes." *Dao* 4/95: 68.
- . 1995c. "Die Klauen des Tengu." *Dao* 1/95: 18–20.
- . 1995d. "Pilze, Schamanen und die Facetten des Bewusstseins." *Curare* 18 (1): 3–14.
- . 1995e. "Äh kib lu'um: 'Das Licht der Erde'—Der Fliegenpilz bei den Lakandonen und im alten Amerika." *Curare* 18 (1): 67–93.
- . 1995f. "Nahrung für die Götter." *Esotera* 11/95: 70–74.
- . 1995g. "Das Geheimnis von Onycha: Aus der Geschichte der Räuscherklaue." *Club Conchylia Informationen* 27 (1): 34–40.
- . 1996a. "Einige Räuscherstoffe der Tamang." *Jahrbuch für Ethnodidizin und Bewusstseinsforschung* 4 (1995): 153–161. Berlin: VWB.
- . 1996b. "Schamanen in Nepal." *Dao* 1/96: 10–12.
- . 1996c. *Räuscherstoffe—Der Atem des Drachen*. Aarau: AT Verlag (2nd ed. 1999).
- . 1996d. *Urbock: Bier jenseits von Hopfen und Malz*. Aarau: AT Verlag.
- . 1997a. *Die Steine der Schamanen: Kristalle, Fossilien und die Landschaften des Bewusstseins*. Munich: Diederichs (DGM 2).
- . 1997b. *Medizin aus dem Regenwald*. Neckarsulm/ Stuttgart: Natura Med/Hampff.
- . 1998a. *Enzyklopädie der psychoaktiven Pflanzen*. Aarau: AT Verlag.
- . 1998b. *Heilkräuter der Antike in Ägypten, Griechenland und Rom* (2nd, corrected edition). Munich: Diederichs (DG 115).
- . 1998c. *Hanf als Heilmittel*. Aarau: AT Verlag.
- . 1998d. "Das Fenster zum Universum." *Esotera* 6/98: 30–34.
- . 1999a. "Der Rauch der Schamanen: über Rauchen und Räuchern in Nepal." *HanfBlatt* 6(51):8–11.
- . 1999b. "Gipfeltreffen der Schamanen: Spirituelle Globalisierung." *Esotera* 6/99: 10–13.
- . 1999c. "Tengu, der Fliegenpilzgeist." In Wolfgang Bauer, et al., *Der Fliegenpilz*. Aarau: AT Verlag, 66–71.
- . 1999d. "From Mead of Inspiration to Spirit of Wine: Alcoholic Brews and Folk Medicine, Medical Science and Pharmacology." *Eleusis* N.S. 3:3–26 [In Italian and English].
- . 2000. "Schamanisches Heilen in Nepal." *Ärztzeitschrift für Naturheilverfahren* 41 (4): 240–247.
- . 2001. *Marijuana Medicine*. Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions. Trans. from the German by John Baker.
- Rätsch, Christian and Andreas Guhr. 1989. *Lexikon der Zaubersteine aus ethnologischer Sicht*. Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt.
- Rätsch, Christian and Heinz Probst. 1985. *Namaste Yeti: Geschichten vom wilden Mann*. Munich: Knauer.
- Recht, Christine and Max F. Wetterwald. 1992. *Bamboos*. Portland: Timber Press.
- Rege, Nirmala N., Urmila M. Tatte, and Sharadini A. Dahanukar. 1999. "Adaptogenic Properties of Six Rasayana Herbs Used in Ayurvedic Medicine." *Phytotherapy Research* 13: 275–291.
- Reichel-Dolmatoff, Gerardo. 1971. *Amazonian Cosmos: The Sexual and Religious Symbolism of the Tukano Indians*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.
- . 1975. *The Shaman and the Jaguar: A Study of Narcotic Drugs among the Indians of Columbia*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

दोवाडुम
शामकालिड



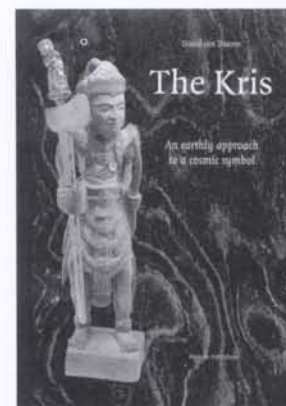
- . 1978. *Beyond the Milky Way: Hallucinatory Imagery of the Tukano Indians*. Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Center Publications.
- . 1981. Brain and Mind in Desana Shamanism. *Journal of Latin American Lore* 7(1):73–98.
- . 1985. *Basketry as Metaphor: Arts and Crafts of the Desana Indians of the Northwest Amazon*. Los Angeles: Museum of Cultural History.
- . 1987. *Shamanism and Art of the Eastern Tukanoan Indians*. Leiden: Brill (Iconography of Religions IX, 1).
- . 1996a. *The Forest Within: The World-View of the Tukano Amazonian Indians*. Totnes, Devon, U.K.: Green Books.
- . 1996b. *Das Schamanische Universum: Schamanismus, Bewusstsein und Ökologie in Südamerika*. Munich: Diederichs.
- Richtsfeld, Bruno. 1982. "Der Amulettbehälter (Ga'u) und sein Inhalt." In Claudia C. Müller and Walter Raunig (eds.), *Der Weg zum Dach der Welt*. Innsbruck: Pinguin-Verlag, 288–308.
- Ripinsky-Naxon, Michael. 1993. *The Nature of Shamanism*. Albany: State University of New York.
- . 1997. *Sexuality, Shamanism, and Transformation*. Berlin: VWB.
- . 1998. "Shamanistic Knowledge and Cosmology." In Helmut Wautischer (ed.), *Tribal Epistemologies*. Aldershot, etc.: Ashgate, 119–161.
- Rippe, Olaf. 1998. "Homöopathie mit Edelsteinen." *Naturheilpraxis* 51 (7/98): 1061–1068.
- Rivière, J. Marques. 1998. *Tantrik Yoga: Hindu and Tibetan*. Delhi: Book Faith India (reprint).
- Ronge, N. Gonpo. 1982. "Kunst und Stil in Tibet," in Claudia C. Müller and Walter Raunig (ed.), *Der Weg zum Dach der Welt*. Innsbruck: Pinguin-Verlag, 323–336.
- Rosenbohm, Alexandra. 1991. *Halluzinogene Drogen im Schamanismus*. Berlin: Reimer.
- . 1991 "Der Fliegenpilz in Nordasien." In Wolfgang Bauer et al. (ed.), *Der Fliegenpilz: Ein kulturhistorisches Museum*. Cologne: Wienand-Verlag, pp. 121–164. [Reprint under the title "Der Fliegenpilze in Sibirien," in the same, *Der Fliegenpilz*. Aarau: AT Verlag 2000, 72–97.]
- . 1995. "Zwischen Mythologie und Mykologie: Der Fliegenpilz als Heilmittel." *Curare* 18 (1): 15–23.
- . 1997. *Wat bezielt de Sjamaan?* Amsterdam: Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen.
- Rosenthal, Franz. 1971. *The Herb: Hashish versus Medieval Muslim Society*. Leiden: E. J. Brill.
- Roy, Susanta K. and R. N. Singh. 1979. "Bael Fruit (*Aegle marmelos*)—a Potential Fruit for Processing." *Economic Botany* 33 (2): 203–212.
- Röttgen, Herbert and Mariana Röttgen. 1999. *Der Schatten des Dalai Lama: Sexualität, Magie and Politik im tibetischen Buddhismus*. Augsburg: Patmos-Verlag.
- Ruck, Carl A. P. 1995. "Gods and Plants in the Classical World." In Richard Evans Schultes and Siri von Reis (eds.), *Ethnobotany: Evolution of a Discipline*. Portland: Dioscorides Press, 131–143.
- Ryf, Walter. 1962. "Über das Genus *Haplophylloceras* (Ammonoidea) in den Spiti-Shales von Nepal." *Eclogae geologicae Helvetiae* 55/2: 317–325.
- Saar, Maret. 1991. "Ethnomycological Data from Siberia and North-East Asia on the Effect of *Amanita muscaria*." *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* 31 (2): 157–173.
- Sagant, Philippe. 1996. *The Dozing Shaman: The Limbus of Eastern Nepal*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Salzman, Emanuel, Jason Salzman, Joanne Salzman, and Gary Lincoff. 1996. "In Search of *Mukhomor*, the Mushroom of Immortality." *Shaman's Drum* 41: 36–47.
- Samorini, Giorgio. 1995. "Umbrella-stones or Mushroom-stones? (Kerala, Southern India)." *Eleusis* 6: 33–40.
- . 1996. "Un singolare documento storico inerente l'agarico muscario." *Eleusis* 4: 3–16.
- . 1998. *Halluzinogene im Mythos*. Solothurn: Nachtschatten Verlag.
- Samuel, Geoffrey. 1994. "Ge sar of gLing: Shamanic Power and Popular Religion." In G. Samuel, Hamish Gregor, and Elisabeth Stutchbury (eds.), *Tantra and Popular Religion in Tibet*. New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 53–78.
- . 1995. *Civilized Shamans: Buddhism in Tibetan Societies*. Nepal: Mandala Book Point.
- Saso, Michael. 1991. *Homa Rites and Mandala Meditation in Tendai Buddhism*. New Delhi: Aditya Prakashan/International Academy of Indian Culture.
- Scharfetter, Christian. 1985. "Der Schamane: Zeuge einer alten Kultur—wieder belebbar?" *Schweizer Archiv für Neurologie, Neurochirurgie und Psychiatrie* 136 (3): 81–95.
- Schenk, Amélie. 1994. *Schamanen auf dem Dach der Welt*. Graz: ADEVA.
- . 1996. *Was ist Schamanentum?* Löhrbach: Werner Pieper's MedienXperimente (Der Grüne Zweig 192).
- Schicklgruber, Christian, and Françoise Pommaret (ed.). 1997. *Bhutan, Festung der Götter*. Ausstellungskatalog, Museum für Völkerkunde Vienna, Museum der Kulturen Basel. London: Serindia.
- Schiran, Ute. 1988. *Menschenfrauen fliegen wieder*. Munich: Knauer.
- Schleberger, Eckard. 1986. *Die indische Götterwelt*. Cologne: Diederichs.
- Schlüter, Jochen. 1996. *Steine des Himmels: Meteorite*. Hamburg: Ellert & Richter.
- Schlüter, Jochen and Christian Rätsch. 1999. *Perlen und Perlmutter*. Hamburg: Ellert & Richter.
- Schmidt, Michael. 1999. "Nepal: Bier im Schatten des Mount Everest." *BierKultur* 3/99: 8–15.
- Schmitt, Eberhard. 1990. *Nordindischer Himalaya*. Rieden am Foggensee: Mondo-Verlag.
- Schneider, Ulrich. 1971. *Der Somaraub des Manu: Mythos und Ritual*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz.

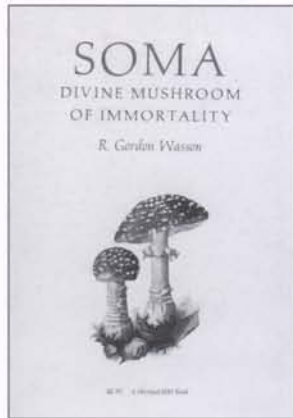




- Scholz, Dieter and Dagmar Eigner. 1991. "Medicinal Plants and Magic Cures: The Notebook of a Tamang Healer in Nepal." *Planta Medica* 57, Suppl. 2: A60–A61.
- Schroeder, Leopold von. 1974. *Mysterium und Mimus im Rigveda*. Amsterdam: Philo Press (reprint of Leipzig edition 1908).
- Schroeder, R. F., and Gastón Guzman. 1981. "A New Psychotropic Fungus in Nepal." *Mycotaxon* 13 (2): 346–348.
- Schröder, Dominik. 1955. "Zur Struktur des Schamanismus." *Anthropos* 50: 848–881.
- Schumann, Hans Wolfgang. 1986. *Buddhistische Bilderwelt*. Cologne: Diederichs.
- . 1992. *Auf den Spuren des Buddha Gotama*. Olten/Freiburg i. B.: Walter-Verlag.
- Schurr, Theodore G. 1995. "Aboriginal Siberian Use of *Amanita muscaria* in Shamanistic Practices: Neuropharmacological Effects of Fungal Alkaloids Ingested during Trance Induction, and the Cultural Patterning of Visionary Experience." *Curare* 18 (1): 31–65.
- Schultes, Richard E. and Albert Hofmann. 1980. *The Botany and Chemistry of Hallucinogens*. Springfield, Ill.: Charles C. Thomas.
- . 2001. *Plants of the Gods*. New and expanded edition, revised by Christian Rätsch. Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions.
- Schultes, Richard E. and Norman R. Farnsworth. 1982. "Ethnomedical, Botanical and Phytochemical Aspects of Natural Hallucinogens." *Botanical Museum Leaflets* 28 (2): 123–214.
- Sepulveda, María Teresa. 1983. *Magia, Brujería y Supersticiones en México*. México, D. F.: Editorial Everest Mexicana.
- Shah, Pragna R. 1987. *Tantra: Its Therapeutic Aspect*. Calcutta: Punthi Pustak.
- Shah, Tahir. 1998. *Sorcerer's Apprentice*. New Delhi: Penguin.
- Shakya, Min Bahadur. 1994. *The Iconography of Nepalese Buddhism*. Kathmandu: Handicraft Association of Nepal (HAN).
- Sharma, Chandra K. 1990. *Geology of Nepal Himalaya and Adjacent Countries*. Kathmandu: Sangeeta Sharma.
- Sharma, G. K. 1972. "Cannabis Folklore in the Himalayas." *Botanical Museum Leaflets* 25 (7): 203–215.
- . 1977. "Ethnobotany and Its Significance for Cannabis Studies in the Himalayas." *Journal of Psychedelic Drugs* 9 (4): 337–339.
- Sharon, Douglas. 1978. *Wizard of the Four Winds: A Shaman's Story*. New York: The Free Press.
- Sharpa Tulku and Richard Guard. 1990. *Meditation on Vajrabhairava*. Dharmasala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives.
- Shawcross, W. E. 1983. "Recreational Use of Ergoline Alkaloids from *Argyria nervosa*." *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs* 15 (4): 251–259.
- Shearer, Alistair. 1995. *Buddha: Das weise Herz*. Munich: Kösel.
- Shelley, William Scott. 1995. *The Elixir: An Alchemical Study of the Ergot Mushrooms*. Notre Dame: Cross Cultural Publications.
- Shrestha, Bom Prasad. 1989. *Forest Plants of Nepal*. Lalitpur, Nepal: Educational Enterprise.
- Shrestha, Keshab. 1998. *Dictionary of Nepalese Plant Names*. Kathmandu: Mandala Book Point.
- Shrestha, Ramesh M. and Mark Lediard. [1980]. *Faith Healers: A Force for Change*. Kathmandu: Educational Enterprises.
- Shrestha, Tej Kumar. 1997. *Mammals of Nepal*. Kathmandu: Bimala Shrestha.
- Shukowskaja, N. L. 1996. *Kategorien und Symbolik in der traditionellen Kultur der Mongolen*. Berlin: Schletzer.
- Siklós, Bulcu. 1993. "Datura Rituals in the Vajramahabhairava-Tantra." *Curare* 16: 71–76, 190 (addendum).
- . 1995. "Flora and Fauna in the Vajramahabhairava-Tantra." *Jahrbuch für Ethnomedizin und Bewusstseinsforschung* 3 (1994): 243–266.
- . 1996. *The Vajrabhairava Tantras: Tibetan and Mongolian Versions, English Translation and Annotations*. Trinkl, U.K.: The Institute of Buddhist Studies (Buddhica Britannica, S.C. VII).
- Singer, Jane Casey and Philip Denwood. 1997. *Tibetan Art: Towards a Definition of Style*. London: Laurence King.
- Singh, H. L. 1998. "Padmasambhava, an Apostle of Tantric Buddhism." *The Himalayan Voice* June/July 1998, vol. 2, No. 2: 1–7.
- Singh, M. P., S. B. Malla, S. B. Rajbhandari, and A. Manandhar. 1979. "Medicinal Plants of Nepal—Retrospects and Prospects." *Economic Botany* 33 (2): 185–198.
- Sinha, Indra. 1993. *The Great Book of Tantra: Translations and Images from Classic Indian Texts with Commentary*. Rochester, Vt.: Destiny Books.
- Skorupski, Tadeusz. 1983. *Tibetan Amulets*. Bangkok: White Orchid Books.
- Sloterdijk, Peter (ed.). 1994. *Mystische Zeugnisse aller Zeiten und Völker gesammelt von Martin Buber*. Munich: Diederichs (DG 100).
- Smith, Elvin D. 1985. "Notes on the Proposed Experiment with *Argyria nervosa*." *Psychedelic Monographs and Essays* 1: 30–37.
- Snellgrove, David L. (trans.). 1959. *Hevajra Tantra*. Oxford University Press.
- . 1967. *The Nine Ways of Bon*. Oxford University Press.
- . 1989. *Himalayan Pilgrimage*. Boston: Shambala.
- Solvyns, Baltazard. 1811. *Les hindous*. Paris: Mame Freres.
- Stablein, W. 1973. "A Medical-cultural System among Tibetan and Newar Buddhists: Ceremonial Medicine." *Kailash* 3: 193–204.
- Stamets, Paul. 1995. *Growing Gourmet and Medicinal Mushrooms* (2nd ed.). Berkeley: Ten Speed Press.
- . 1996. *Psilocybin Mushrooms of the World*. Berkeley: Ten Speed Press.

- . 1999 "Mycomedicinals"—An Information Booklet on Medicinal Myshrooms." Olympia, Wash.: A MycoMedia® Publication.
- Starosta, Paul and Yves Crouzet. 1998. *Bambus*. Cologne: Taschen.
- Stein, Sir A. 1932. "On Ephedra, the Hum Plant and Soma." *Btn. School. Or. Stu. London Institution* 6: 501.
- Stijve, T., and Th. Kuyper. 1988. "Absence of Psilocybin in Species of Fungi Previously Reported to Contain Psilocybin and Related Tryptamine Derivatives." *Persoonia* 13: 463–465.
- Stone, Linda. 1988. *Illness Beliefs and Feeding the Dead in Hindu Nepal: An Ethnographic Analysis*. Lewiston/Queenston: The Edwin Mellen Press (Studies in Asian Thought and Religion, vol. 10).
- Storl, Wolf-Dieter. 1988a. *Feuer und Asche—Dunkel und Licht: Shiva—Urbild des Menschen*. Freiburg i. B.: Bauer.
- . 1988b. "Hexenkräuter wirken wirklich," *Esotera* 12/88: 56–61.
- . 1992. *Berserker und Kuschelbär: Der Bär als Seelengeführte des Menschen*. Braunschweig: Aurum.
- . 1993a. "Die Werkzeuge der Wurzelgräber: Elemente archaischer Pflanzensammelrituale." In C. Ratsch (ed.), *Naturverehrung und Heilkunst*. Südergellersen: Bruno Martin, 131–145.
- . 1993b. *Von Heilkräutern und Pflanzengottheiten*. Braunschweig: Aurum.
- . 1996a. "Heilkräuter: Komplexität des Lebendigen." *Natürlich* 16 (5): 6–14.
- . 1996b. *Kräuterkunde*. Braunschweig: Aurum.
- . 1996c. *Heilkräuter und Zauberpflanzen zwischen Haustür und Gartentor*. Aarau: AT Verlag.
- . 1997. *Pflanzendevas—Die Göttin und ihre Pflanzenengel*. Aarau: AT Verlag.
- Storrs, Adrian, and Jimmie Storrs. 1987. *Enjoy Trees*. Kathmandu: Sahayogi Press.
- . 1990. *Trees and Shrubs of Nepal and the Himalayas*. Kathmandu: Pilgrims Book House.
- . 1998. *Trees and Shrubs of Nepal and the Himalayas* (new edition). Kathmandu: Pilgrims Book House.
- Stutley, Margaret. 1983. *The Illustrated Dictionary of Hindu Iconography*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Suwal, P. N. et al. 1993. *Medicinal Plants of Nepal*. Kathmandu: Department of Medicinal Plants.
- Svoboda, Robert E. 1993. *Aghora: At the Left Hand of God*. New Delhi: Rupa.
- . 1994. *Aghora II: Kundalini*. New Delhi: Rupa.
- Symon, David E., and Laurence A. R. Haegi. 1991. "Datura (Solanaceae) Is a New World Genus." In Hawkes, Lester, Nee, and Estrada (eds.), *Solanaceae III: Taxonomy, Chemistry, Evolution*. London: Royal Botanic Gardens Kew and Linnean Society, 197–210.
- Tenzin [Lama], Khempo Sangay, and Gomchen Oleshey. 1975. "The Nyingma Icons: A Collection of Line Drawings of 94 Deities and Divinities of Tibet." *Kailash* 33 (4): 319–416.
- Thieme, Paul. 1964. *Gedichte aus dem Rig-Veda*. Stuttgart: Reclam.
- Thomas, P. 1983. *Secrets of Sorcery Spells and Pleasure Cults of India*. Bombay: D. B. Taraporevala Sons.
- Thukral, Gurmeet and Ruskin Bond. 1998. *Himalayan Flowers*. New Delhi: The Varsity Book Depot.
- Torres, Constantino Manuel. 1998. "Status of Research on Psychoactive Snuff Powders: A Review of the Literature." *Jahrbuch für Ethnomedizin und Bewusstseinsforschung* 5: 15–39.
- Torres, C. Manuel and David Repke. 1997. "The Use of *Anadenanthera colubrina* var. *cebil* by Wichi (Mataco) Shamans of the Chaco Central, Argentina." *Jahrbuch für Ethnomedizin und Bewusstseinsforschung* 5 (1996): 41–58.
- Touw, Mia. 1981. "The Religious and Medicinal Uses of Cannabis in China, India, and Tibet." *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs* 13 (1): 23–34.
- Trungpa, Chögyam. 1993. *Das Herz des Buddha*. Bern/Munich/Vienna: O. W. Barth.
- . 1991. *The Heart of the Buddha*. Boston: Shambhala.
- . 1995. *Die Insel des Jetzt im Strom der Zeit*. Frankfurt/M.: Fischer.
- Tucci, Giuseppe. 1989. *Geheimnis des Mandala: Der asiatische Weg zur Meditation*. Düsseldorf: Econ.
- Turner, Nancy J. and Adam F. Szczawinski. 1992. *Common Poisonous Plants and Mushrooms of North America*. Portland: Timber Press.
- Uhlig, Helmut. 1992. *Himalaya: Menschen und Kulturen in der Heimat des Schnees*. Bergisch-Gladbach: Bastei-Lübbe.
- Van Alphen, Jan and Anthony Aris (eds.). 1997. *Oriental Medicine: An Illustrated Guide to the Asian Arts of Healing*. Boston: Shambala.
- Van Duuren, David. 1998. *The Kris: An Earthly Approach to a Cosmic Symbol*. Wijk en Aalburg: Pictures Publishers.
- Vandor, Ivan. 1978. *Die Musik des tibetischen Buddhismus*. Wilhelmshaven: Heinrichshofen's Verlag.
- Vokes, Emily H. 1963. "A Possible Hindu Influence at Teotihuacan." *American Antiquity* 29 (1): 94–95.
- Wall Major F. 1997. *Poisonous Snakes*. Delhi: Pilgrims Book (reprint).
- Wasson, R. Gordon. 1967. "Fly Agaric and Man." In D. H. Efron (ed.), *Ethnopharmacological Search for Psychoactive Drugs*. Washington: U.S. Government Printing, 405–414.
- . 1968. *Soma—Divine Mushroom of Immortality*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- . 1972. *Soma and the Fly-Agaric: Mr. Wasson's Rejoinder to Professor Brough*. Cambridge, Mass.: Botanical Museum of Harvard University (Ethnomycological Studies No. 2).





- . 1979. "Traditional Use in North America of *Amanita muscaria* for Divinatory Purposes." *Journal of Psychedelic Drugs* 11 (1–2): 25–27.
- . 1983. "The Last Meal of the Buddha." *Botanical Museum Leaflets* 29 (3): 219–249.
- . 1986. "Lightningbolt and Mushroom." In R. G. Wasson et al., *Persephone's Quest: Entheogens and the Origins of Religion*. New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 83–94.
- . 1995. "Ethnomycology: Discoveries about *Amanita muscaria* Point to Fresh Perspectives." In Richard Evans Schultes and Siri von Reis (eds.), *Ethnobotany: Evolution of a Discipline*. Portland: Dioscorides Press, 385–391.
- Watts, Alan. 1962. *The Joyous Cosmology: Adventures in the Chemistry of Consciousness*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Weihreter, Hans. 1988. *Schmuck aus dem Himalaja*. Graz: ADEVA.
- Weil, Andrew T. and Wade Davis. 1994. "Bufo alvarius: A Potent Hallucinogen of Animal Origin." *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* 41: 1–8.
- Weiner, Douglas. 1974. *Tibetan and Himalayan Woodblock Prints*. New York: Dover.
- Westbury, Virginia. 1991. "The Sorcerers' Apprentices." *HQ Spring* 1991: 121–125.
- Wiemann-Michaels, Annette. 1994. *Die verhexte Speise: Eine ethnopsychosomatische Studie über das Depressive Syndrom in Nepal*. Frankfurt/M., etc.: Peter Land (Medizin in Entwicklungsländern, 35).
- Wiesner, Ulrich. 1986. *Nepal, Königreich im Himalaya*. Cologne: DuMont.
- Winged Wolf [= Heather Hughes-Calero]. 1994. *Shaman of Tibet: Milarepa—From Anger to Enlightenment*. Sedona: Higher Consciousness Books.
- Winner, Ellen. 1993. "Doubting Shaman: An American's Apprenticeship in Nepali Shamanism." *Shaman's Drum Summer* 1993: 24–31.
- Winner, Ellen and Mohan Rai. 2000. "The Shaman of Dorokha Conquers the Bokshies." *Shaman's Drum* 54: 23–29.
- Winnerwiser, Sylvia and Cornelia Schütt-Kainata. 1999. *Räucherkräuter: entspannende Düfte für Ihr Wohlbefinden*. Stuttgart: Trias/Thieme.
- Wirz, Paul. 1941. *Exorzismus und Heilkunde auf Ceylon*. Bern: Hans Huber.
- Wohlberg, Joseph. 1990. "Haoma-Soma in the World of Ancient Greece." *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs* 22 (3): 333–342.
- Wolf, Fritz. 1910. *Avesta: Die Heiligen Bücher der Parsen*. Strassburg: Trübner.
- Woodcock, Martin. 1980. *Birds of India, Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka*. London: HarperCollins Publishers.
- Yeshe Tsogyal. 1996. *Der Lotusgeborene im Land des Schnees: Wie Padmasambhava den Buddhismus nach Tibet brachte*. Frankfurt/M.: Fischer.
- Zahner, R. C. 1974. *Zen, Drugs and Mysticism*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Zimmer, Heinrich. 1984. *Indische Mythen und Symbole*. Cologne: Diederichs.
- . 1987. *Abenteuer und Fahrten der Seele, Ein Schlüssel zu indogermanischen Mythen*. Cologne: Diederichs.
- . 1988. *Philosophie und Religion Indiens*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp (tb Wissenschaft).
- Zysk, Kenneth G. 1991. *Asceticism and Healing in Ancient India: Medicine in the Buddhist Monastery*. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press.

DISCOGRAPHY

There are a number of CDs that document the music of Nepal. A few of these recordings could contribute to an understanding of this book.²⁷⁵ (Most of the Nepali CDs are available from the Dexo Music Center, P. O. Box 4758, Thamel, Kathmandu, Nepal, Fax +977-1-54 15 56, E-Mail: manoj@dexo.mos.com.np.)

Aman, Dhyana, *Meditation of No Mind* (EMW, 1998)

Bardes de l'Himalaya Népal/Inde: ...popées et Musiques de Transe (CNR, 1997)

Bharat Nepali Party, *Himalaya Roots: Traditional Music of Nepal* (Interra Records/SPA, 1996)

Bollmann, Christian, *Echoes of Ladakh: Seelenkontakte* (Audio Bauer Verlag, o.J.)

Eberle, Thomas, *Shiva Shakti* (Surya Music, 1999)

———. *Lala Lila* (Surya Music, 1999)

Folksongs & Sacred Music from Nepal (ARC Music, 1999)

Heart Sutra, *Bliss and Serenity—Music of Nepal* (EMW, 2000)

Lama Karta, *Tcheud* (Kunchab Productions, Belgium, Éditions Milan Music, 1997) (Describes a tantric meditation which touches on a shamanic ritual.)

Koselee, The Souvenir (Dexo Music Center, 1997)

Loten [Namling], *Songs of Tibet* (self-released, Bollingenstr. 46, CH-3006 Bern)

Mongolie—Chamanes et Lamas (Ocora, 1994)

Musique sacrée des moines tibétains (Arion, 1989) (recordings from Svayambunath and Bodnath)

Namaste Band, *Sandesh* (Dexo Music Center, 1998)

Nepal: Musique de fête chez les Newar (AIMP/VDE, 1989)

Prem Rana's Himal, *Himalayan Meditative Music* (Dexo Music Center, 2000) (Beautiful flute music, well suited to tantric meditations.)

Presencer, Alain, *The Singing Bowls of Tibet* (Saydisc Records, 1981)

Shaman, Jhankri & Néle: Music Healers of Indigenous Cultures, Book and CD from Pat Moffitt Cook (ellipsis arts, 1997)

Singh, Tara Bir, *Nepal Sitar* (Wergo/Spectrum, 1986)

Sudha, Sur, *Images of Nepal* (Schtung Music, 1993); *The Third Eye* (self-released, no date)

———. *Melodies of Nepal* (Schtung Music/MCA, 1996)

Wiese, Klaus, *Tibetische Klangschalen* (Edition Akaska, 1990)

Wolff, Henry and Nancy Hennings, *Tibetan Bells II* (Celestial Harmonies, 1978)

There are a number of CDs that have inspired us with their style of music and their texts and that can lend some understanding to shamanism and tantra:

Amorphis, *Elegy* (Nuclear Blast, 1996)

Betray My Secrets, [no title] (Serenades Records, 1999)

Borgir, Dimmu, *Spiritual Black Dimensions* (Nuclear Blast, 1999)

Dark, [no title] (CMP, 1986; produced by Silva Screen London)

Dark with L. Shankar and David Torn, *Tamna Voda* (CMP, 1988; produced by Silva Screen London)

Hart, Mickey, *At the Edge* (Rykodisc, 1990)

———. *Planet Drum* (Rykodisc, 1991)

———. *Planet Drum Supralingua* (Rykodisc, 1998)

Hollow, *Architect of the Mind* (Nuclear Blast, 1999)

Mari Boine Band, *Bálvoslatjna/Room of Worship* (Antilles, 1998)

Monk, Meredith, *Atlas: An Opera in Three Parts* (ECM, 1993) (Opera about a vision quest in the Himalayas, based on the story of Alexandra David-Neel and others)

Rage, *XIII* (Gun Records/BMG, 1998)

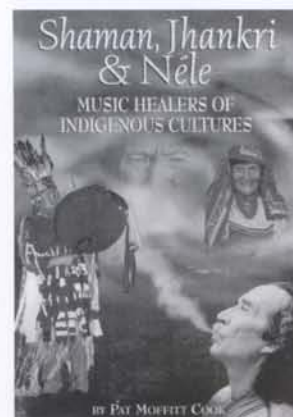
Rockbitch, *Motor Driven Bimbo* (SPV/Steamhammer, 1999) (A band of wild Dakinis with true tantric offerings: *It's rock 'n' roll!*)

Therion, *Vovin* (Nuclear Blast, 1998) (Contains the piece "Eye of Shiva")

Wagner, Richard, *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, Directed by George Solti (Original recording [vinyl] 1958; CD Decca 1997)

Yes, *Relayer* (Atlantic, 1974)

———. *Yesshows* (Atlantic, 1980) (Both albums contain the very shamanic psychedelic 27-minute-long piece "The Gates of Delirium.")



The shamanic trance is not only a field of research for ethnologists and researchers of consciousness, but is a part of the techno-culture as well. The techno artists orient themselves on shamanic rhythms and musical tricks for their sound mixes which are supposed to put the dancers into raging ecstasy. (CD cover *Return to the Source: Shamanic Trance*. Dada funk mixed by Tsuyoshi Suzuki, London: Volume, 1996)

²⁷⁵ Some of these CDs are already out of print, but could be re-released.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Claudia Müller-Ebeling and
Christian Rättsch



Claudia Müller-Ebeling, Ph.D.

was born in 1956 into this hyphenated-named family (the name comes from her father's side). As the daughter of a single mother who was a physician, she and her older brother became well acquainted with the world of the hospitals, as well as with the different social classes in and around Freiburg in southern Germany, where she grew up, graduated from high school, and began her studies in art history, comparative literature, and Eastern Studies. She concluded her doctorate with a thesis about visionary art in European painting.

Claudia Müller-Ebeling lives in Hamburg. She has worked at the Hamburg Museum for Arts and Crafts, was editor-in-chief of the magazine about the Far East, *Dao*, and earns a living as a freelance art historian, translator, lecturer, and author.

She has numerous publications, including *Hexenmedizin* [Witches' Medicine].

Christian Rättsch, Ph.D.

was born in 1957. His first name is an irony of fate (the name was given to him by his mother and was meant to be in honor of a Viking king). His surname means "duck" in an older German dialect placing the name directly in a Germanic shamanic tradition. He is an ethnopharmacologist who specializes in the shamanic use of plants (smoking, "traveling," and medicinal) and is the author of numerous books. His tireless work as a researcher blossomed with his highly respected book *Encyclopedia of Psychoactive Plants*, published originally as *Enzyklopädie der psychoaktiven Pflanzen* by AT Verlag, 1998. The American version will be published by Inner Traditions, 2003. The rest is meaningless—how can academic honors compare with the kiss of a shaman?

Surendra Bahadur Shahi

was born in 1956 in Kathmandu into a Newari family of the Shahi caste, which is the designated branch of businessmen. In addition to two brothers from his father's first marriage, he has one younger brother and four younger sisters. The religious background of the family is Hindu. He was already interested in thangka painting when he was a child. When he was fourteen he went to the school of a Tibetan lama and thangka painter with whom he studied for four and a half years. He taught himself the Newari style. His particular contribution to the art form has been to unite the permanent technique of painting with mineral colors with the early Newari style. The older Newari painting used only plant pigments in an egg tempera base, both of which are susceptible to light and water damage. His highly developed Tibetan style brings him many painting assignments from monasteries in Darjeeling, Nepal, and Tibet. In 1973 he started his first thangka business. Together with his business partner,²⁷⁶ Pradip Raj Bhandari, he currently directs three businesses.

In 1977 he married Meena Shahi, the fourth youngest of seven sisters and two brothers, who is from the same Shahi caste. They have four children.

Surendra lives in his birthplace, surrounded by his large family. He is a happy husband and father, as well as a successful businessman. Until now his work as a painter has been known only within a very small circle because he has limited his work to the monasteries and to time-consuming individual pieces.

Surendra Shahi is very conscious of tradition and is a good-natured and spirited man. His linguistic gifts (he speaks about ten different languages), his thorough knowledge of the Buddhist and Hindu religions and mythologies, his skillful craft work and intelligence, and his intimate familiarity with the cultural customs of the Newari people have contributed a great deal to our introduction into the complex culture of Nepal. With his income, Surendra Shahi supports numerous people who live in poverty.

Mohan Kumar Rai

was born in 1928 in eastern Nepal (Tapeljung) and raised in Bhutan (Dorkha) as the oldest of two sisters

²⁷⁶ In Nepal the designation "heart brother" plays an important role. This term is used the same as a family designation. Those who have this status are addressed by both families in corresponding family terms. It indicates a profound personal understanding and often also a business partnership. There is also the term "heart sisters."



Surendra Bahadur Shahi



Mohan Kumar Rai

and one brother. In the 1930s his father was the Royal Court Shaman of Bhutan. He possessed a thorough and vast knowledge of the *mundum* path and, as a guru, guided his son through the intricacies of this technique. At first, Mohan taught in an elementary school. When he was seventeen he joined the Bhutanese army. There he attained the rank of lieutenant and resigned his post after ten years of service. In 1964 he left his homeland of Bhutan with most of his family. The current King of Bhutan, Jigme Singye Wagchuck (born in 1955), supports a system of enforced conversion to Buddhism, which became too oppressive for Mohan Rai's family, whose religion is based primarily on honoring nature and acknowledging Shiva and Parvati as the highest gods. In Nepal he married a Magar woman, Bindu, with whom he has had two sons and five daughters. With his second wife, Kumari, a Gurung, he has two sons and a daughter. (A further relationship produced a son. In addition, the family adopted two sons of his dead brother.) In the European Alps Mohan Rai was trained to be a certified mountain guide.

He lives with his two wives and many children as the founder of a trekking organization in Kathmandu. He is also the founder and director of the Shamanistic Studies Research Centre. For more than twenty years he has been committed to the preservation of shamanic tradition and the international recognition of the most ancient spiritual and material technique of humanity.

We thank our friend Mohan Rai for most of the contacts to the shamans who shared their broad knowledge with us in this book. His gift of communication, his dramatic temperament, and his above-average gift of language (he has fluent command of about sixteen languages) made understanding possible. Thanks to his sensitivity and worldly sophistication (he has traveled in countries on all continents except Africa) we were able to probe into depths that otherwise would have been impossible for us to reach.

SOME OF "OUR" SHAMANS

Indra Doj Gurung

was born in 1958 in a Gurung village near Besishahar in the Lamsang district near Pokhara, western Nepal as the last of four sons. When he was thirteen he had his first initiatory experience. When he was fourteen he was introduced to the Buddhist-influenced traditional family work of a lama. When he was sixteen he was confirmed as a shaman. At the age of eighteen he entered the Nepali army, where he served for eleven years in order to help his family, who lived in modest conditions.

Today he lives with his two wives and five daughters in Kathmandu. He works as a shaman, lama, and attendant in a hospital. His fame as a shaman led him to be the "house shaman" at the university clinic in Kathmandu.

Gurung is a quiet and reserved man who mostly talks with a soft and quick voice. He truly comes alive when the discussion turns to other worlds and states of consciousness or when he himself goes into a trance. Only when he shamanizes do his highly developed theatrical and dramatic gifts come to light. On the basis of his background as a lama he has a good theoretical knowledge and is well acquainted with the Buddhist world of images. We thank Indra Gurung for his refined and evocative reports of traveling in the other worlds and the interpretations of the thangkas with a shamanic content.

Maile Lama

was born in 1949 into a Tamang family in the Kirati Rai town of Chhipchhipé (near Okhaldunga, eastern Nepal,) as the second youngest of one brother and four sisters. Like all Tamang, the religious background of the family is Buddhist. When Maile Lama was nine years old, she had her first initiatory experience. By the time she was twelve she was already known as a healer throughout a vast rural area. In 1979 she fled to Kathmandu in order to escape the relentless duties of a healer. But even in the city, her reputation of great shamanic gifts soon spread. Thus she earned a living during the day in a rug factory and at night performed often elaborate ceremonies. In 1986 she suddenly found herself in a marriage ceremony with a Tamang lama who was over eighty years old. Without her knowledge, friends had arranged this ritual in order to help the two get on their feet economically.

Today Maile Lama lives with the Buddhist lama and their twelve-year-old son in Kathmandu. Thanks to the support of Mohan Rai, specifically through contacts and income from his institute, the family can live on the income of a lama and a shaman. Now, as before, she receives the usual few rupees from patients, but earns extra income teaching shamanic wisdom to interested people who have come to the institute.

Maile is a gracious and lively woman who embraces everyone with her joyfulness and sensitivity. Although she is illiterate and Tamang (not Nepali) is her mother tongue, she expresses herself poetically and she possesses a striking intuitive knowledge about the historical sequence of ancient and early history.



Indra Doj Gurung



Maile Lama



Parvati Rai



Myingmar Sherpa

Parvati Rai

was born in 1946 in a Kirati village, Bhojpun Chhinakhu (near Khaubari, eastern Nepal), as the second oldest of three sisters and two brothers. Like all Kirati-Rai, the family has a religious background that is based on the worship of nature. When she was nine years old she sensed a change in herself that at first was disquieting. At the age of sixteen she was confirmed as a shaman by Guru Lal Bahadur. She married her husband, a farmer, when she was fifteen, and together they had ten children. The family couldn't survive from farming and the meager income of a shaman without the support of the four surviving children.

Through the encouragement of Mohan Rai, Parvati moved to Kathmandu in 1998. There she works as "Master Shaman,"²⁷⁷ in particular for the Kirati Rai Yayokkha—a cultural organization that supports and encourages this ethnic group.²⁷⁸

Parvati Rai has not had the luxury of a scholastic education, but we saw in her a natural scientist whose knowledge of animals, plants, and processes in nature is vast. We were always surprised by her ex-

²⁷⁷ In the shamanism of Nepal there is no hierarchy. Nobody is addressed as "master shaman" or "over shaman." This term is to signify that Parvati Rai in the circle of the Kirati community of Kathmandu has achieved a great reputation and is brought in for all important occasions to which shamans are called.

²⁷⁸ In recent times the Summer Institute of Linguistics, whose real name is the "Wycliff Bible Translators," went to this meeting under the pretense of researching the many languages of the Kirati. In reality, however, this Protestant sect from the USA wants to translate the Christian bible into all the languages of the world in order to bring the heathen and animistic minority to the "truth" of Christian belief. The devastating results of the concealed missionary activity caused Mexico to forbid the entry of missionaries into the country and to expel them out of it. Sadly this "institute" that has contact with the CIA (Hvaikof and Aaby 1980) is as busy as ever working on all continents.

planations, which were different from modern scientific ones only in their mythical expression, but not in their conveyed understanding of the laws of nature. Parvati is a sincere, quiet, and reserved woman who has never forgotten how to laugh. Of all our interviewers, she referred to ritual objects most often. With exceeding care and deliberate thoughtfulness—but without any rigidity—she made sure we were aware of the profound symbolic meaning of all her actions and objects that were involved.

Myingmar Sherpa

was born in 1941 in Dramthali, in a small village in eastern Nepal, as the first of two sons and four daughters. His shamanic gifts demonstrated themselves when he was seven years old. He had a number of experiences that were later described as "abductions by the Ban Jhankri." Following these, he was introduced to the techniques of shamanism by his father, Mangare Sherpa, and at fifteen he was officially initiated as a jhankri. Over the course of time he became one of the most powerful shamans in the Kalinchok region. He is generally called the "King of Kalinchok" and says he has trained about eight hundred jhankris.

He lives with his wife, Songi Sherpa, with whom he has had five daughters and two sons, in the house of his parents in Dramthali. He spends the summer in Photeng in the alpine hut of one of his sons. Like all Sherpas of the mountain region, Myingmar lives as a farmer. He has a Buddhist background. Almost every night he is called to do a healing ceremony somewhere in the area.

Myingmar Sherpa is a very reserved, modest, and gracious person. When he takes up his drum, he shows his powerful and distinct nature. For this reason he is often called to be a mediator for disagreements.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost we would like to thank all of the unnamed people upon whose help we were dependent in Nepal.

Without Mohan Rai we would have remained blind in the land of the shamans. We owe him a special thanks for his profound knowledge, and his untiring and conscientious effort for shamanism in general, and for answers to our technical and practical questions and meeting our translation needs, in particular.

Without the shamans Maile Lama, Indra Doj Gurung, Danashing Tamang, Myingmar Sherpa, and Parvati Rai, we would never have been able to travel into the depths of consciousness.

We are deeply grateful to our dear "dai" Surendra Bahadur Shahi and his heart brother Pradip Kumar Rajbhandari and their families (Jagat Bahadur, Ramaya, Meena, Shusma, Shreejana, Dikendra, Deena, Birendra, Baiju, Aayushma, Bharat, Gan Bahadur; Sangita, Pradipti, Prasanna, Bindu) not only for their knowledge of thangka painting and conveyance of the rich Newari tradition, but also for their generous hospitality at all times and their continuous support.

Without Gautam Ratna Shakya and his wife, Moti Shanti, we would have remained poor with regard to the invaluable treasure of shamanism and tantrism in Nepal and poorer still from lack of Lukul delicacies.

We would like to thank relatives and assistants of Mohan Lal Rai for happy hours full of knowledgeable information and practical help in the city and country. These assistants include: Bindu, Kumari, Suraj Kumar, Saroj Kumar, Sanu, Shiva, Tuli "Knutschi" Maile and Nirmala Gurung; Sukar Makchar Rai, Mani Prasad Rai, Mangal Rai and "Mr. Lok" Bahadur Rai; the cook Sange Sherpa and his crew Mangal Sing Rai, Dhan Bahadur Rai, Dande Sherpa, and Kumar Sherpa; and the Sherpas in the country, Ganesh Lama, and Bahadur Bhandari, as well as his wife Kalpana.

We would like to further thank: the Brahman and royal advisor Muktinath Ghimire for his competent information; the Brahman Yaga Prasad Khanal; the priests of Buddha Ratna Shakya and Yudda Kumar Takari; Uttam Manadhor (for his drinks); the young and friendly gubaju Dipak Buddacharya from Svayambunath; his father Herukaji; his older brother Ashok Buddacharya; the highest gubaju of Patan, Asar Ratna Vajracharya; and Vishnu Phatta for the English transcription of the Devanagari.

In Europe we would like to thank our publishers and spiritual advisors, without whom the art of shamanism would never have seen the light of day in the "world of publishing": Urs Hunziker and Dorothea Hunziker, as well as the crew from AT Press in Aarau (Monika Schmidhofer, Adrian Pabst, Annette Aebischer, Esther Gisin); Roger Ligenstorfer, Agnes Tschudin, and Anupama Grell from the Nachtschatten Press in Solothurn; Michael Günther and Irmi Schreiber from the Diederichs Press in Munich; Werner Pieper and his MedienXperimenten; Franz-Theo Gottwald and the Schweisfurth foundation, Munich; Amand Aglaster from the VWB Press in Berlin; Wolf Wies from the Shamanism and Healing Association, Munich; Christine Gottchalk-Batschkus from Ethnemed, Munich; as well as all of our colleagues from the European College for the Study of Consciousness and the International Association of Cannabis in Medicine, which help raise Shiva's healing herbs and the gifts of the shamans to a place of honor. A very special thanks to Mark Nauseef for his dedication to transcribing the shamanic rhythms.

For the English-language edition we would like to thank our translator, Annabel Lee, and our editors Michael Moynihan, Elaine Sanborn, Jessica Matthews, and Jeanie Levitan.

For inspiring talks and experiences we would like to thank our circle of friends: Albert Hofmann, without whose work many would have been denied a glimpse into other worlds; Nana Nauwald for her more than artistic insights into trance and shamanism; Bruno Martin for his knowledge of the broad field of secret Western occult sciences; Patricia Ochsner for pharmaceutical advice and other things; Wolfgang Kundrus for computer and concentration help; Conny and Hartwig Kopp and Janine Warmbier for Walpurgis-excesses; Jonathan Ott, Ralph Cosack, Gerhard Heller, Holger Kalweit, Amélie Schenk, and Wolf-Dieter Storl for their inspiration; and Fred Weidmann for visionary insights.

We would also like to thank the photographers of the thangkas, who took great care, as well as the company Leica for the excellent cameras (among others, Leica minilux zoom, R5, APO-Macro-Elmarit-R); their photographic results enrich this book.

Claudia Müller-Ebeling would also like to thank Andreas "Amos" Moser for so much encouragement and unusually fertile mastery; Arno Adelaars and Hans van den Hurk from Amsterdam for the lucky

experience of true teamwork in connection with “psychoactivity” and for the beginning of a profound friendship; Bill and Gudrun Mahoney for the jewelry magic; and Uli Kesper-Grossman, Paul, and Noah for their supportive friendship. Last but not least she would like to thank her mother (who is now in *akash*) and her brother and their “adopted family”—especially Gertrud Hadwich, Elke, and Jan Baedeker.

First and foremost Christian Rättsch would like to thank Wotan, Thor, and Freya, and his parents Lore and Paul, as well as his brothers Stephan and Sebastian Rättsch.

He would also like to thank Astennu (*for your ****ing attitude*), Wolfgang Bauer (for de-demonizing the beloved magic mushroom); William S. Burroughs; Wolfgang Büscher (finally there is a journalist who has comprehended something about shamanism); Uwe George and Vanita Kaleps (above all, for a shared laugh) as well as the “Geo” crew; Andreas Guhr (for the wonderful crystal); Peter Huber/High Society (for his interest in the CD project, *The Dark Side of Shamanism*); Christopher Johnsson (for *Therion*); Heinz Knieriemen (naturally from and for *Natürlich*); Andreas Lüderwald (überseemuseum Bremen); Margaret Madejsky and Olaf Rippe (for reviving the magic of healing arts); Nuclear Blast Records for the furthering of heathen music; Sebastian Scheere for his tremendous contribution to the history of “drug” prohibition; Axel Schindler for the seeds of the Tibetan henbane; Jochen Schlüter for mineralogical advice, friendship, and a great expedition together in Nepal; Gabriele Schnaut for her embodiment of the Wagnerian Brunhilde; the unfortunately deceased Sir Georg Solti for his “Ring” (finally, Heavy Metal Wagner); and Peter Rausch for “nectar.”

Thanks also to Sabine for the Powerbook and Sensatronics.

There are people in North and South America who deserve our thanks: our “midwife” and ethnological comrade John Baker; our true colleague Jonathan Ott; the master shaman (*muraya*), friend, and colleague Questembetsa Guillermo Arévalo from the tribe of the Shipibo; the Korean shaman (*mu-dang*) and friend Hi-ah Park; Alex and Allyson Grey; Bob Venosa and Martina Hofmann; Peter T. Furst; the late Terence McKenna; Johannes Wilbert; Giorgio Samorini; Paul Stamets; Rob Montgomery; Donna and Manolo Torres; and Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff for inspiring writings and talks. And thanks “to the whole psychoactive gang and everybody from entheobotany!”

Special thanks to the following bands for power and endless inspiration:

Amorphis, Beseech, Betray My Secrets, Blue Cheer, Bodh Gaya, Carpe Tenedrum, Children of Bodom, Christian Death, Covenant, Crazy Word of Arthur Brown, Mark Nauseef’s Dark, Miles Davis and those he brought to fame, Death, Deep Purple and Steve Morse, Dimmu Borgir, Dismal Euphony, Dreamtheater, Einherjer, Eldritch, Enslaved, Godgory, Gong, the Hamburg Philharmonic under the direction of Ingo Metzmacher, Mickey Hart, Hamza el Din, Hawkwind, Jimi Hendrix Experience (the eternal magician), Hollow, Ice Age, In Flames, Jethro Tull and Doane Perry, Lake of Tears, Lefay/Morgana Lefay, Liquid Tension Experiment, Marilyn Manson, Ministry, Gary Moore, Nightwish, Pain of Salvation, Pentagram, Rage, Lou Reed, Rockbitch, Rotting Christ, Sentenced, Sinergy, Steel Prophet, Jon Kay’s Steppenwolf, Therion, Tiamat, Pete Townsend, Trail of Tears, Steve Vai, yes, Zakk Wylde’s Black Label Society, and Frank Zappa, whom we could never forget!

Page numbers in italics indicate illustrations

- abhaya mudra, 187
 abortions, 140
Acacia arabica, 52
Acacia nilotica, 52
 accidents, 126, 127
Aconitum, 107, 112, 161–62, 163
 addiction, 139, 161
Aesandra butyracea, 144
agar/agur pati (aloes wood), 142
 Aghoris, 107, 222
 Agni, 67–68, 200
 Ajimi, 89–90
ajna chakra, 117
 Akash Bhairab, 74–75
akash (upper world), 16, 57–58, 59, 82, 144
akshyata (sacred rice), 149, 233
 alcohol
 as *amrita*, 146–47
 bhutas and, 124
 chhang, 89, 146, 147, 149
 palm wine, 147, 149
 rakshi, 44, 89, 124, 146, 147, 149, 197
 shamans use of, 19, 146–47
alimah (goosefoot), 140
 aloes wood, 142
 altar
 as coordinate system, 57
 as cosmogram, 196
 for invoking the dead ceremony, 120
 Kirati altar, 190, 196, 203
 Lamaist-tantric altar, 196
 setting, 139
 tantra and, 187
 altar objects
 bamboo, 167, 190, 202–3
 Beak of *Garuda*, 200
 cotton string, 196, 203
 ginger, 43, 44, 46, 124, 204
 mugwort, 40, 44, 50t, 51, 140, 201–2
 oil lamp, 47
 overview, 195t, 196
 plants, 201–3
 porcupine quills, 201
 rice basket, 197, 200
 rice plate, 197
 seeds, 44, 203
 trident, 196
 water pitcher, 47, 139, 163, 196–97
 See also ritual objects
amala tree, 147, 235, 240
Amanita caesaria. See Caesar's mushroom
Amanita muscaria (red fly agaric), 174–75
 amber, 143
amlisau, 24, 42, 53, 54, 201–2
 ammonites, 204
 Amoghasiddhi Buddha, 70
amrita
 alcohol as, 146–47
 amala tree as, 147, 235, 240
 angel's trumpet as, 168
 coconut milk as, 147
 defined, 147
 as Drink of the Gods, 70
 Ganges River as, 246
 moon as vessel of, 70, 102
 mushrooms as, 169
 psychoactive substances and, 3
 trance and, 40
 as victory over death, 70
 See also soma
 Amrtahavana, 70
 amulets, 51–52, 74
anahata (heart chakra), 3, 115, 247, 248
 angel's trumpet, 167–68, 169
angeri (cigarettes), 142, 143, 153, 160
 animals
 dreams about, 44
 hallucinogens from, 240
 roosters, 104, 120, 122, 182–83, 185
 sacred, 233–35, 240–41
 Shamans' birds, 226t
 as spirit helpers, 58, 166, 173–74
 spiritual white horse, 59–60
 See also animal sacrifice; horns; specific animals
 animal sacrifice
 during cemetery ritual, 120, 122
 during *nava graha rekhi* yantra healing, 183, 185
 Hanuman and, 105
 to Kali, 90
 at Kalinchok, 251, 255
 meaning of, 45, 46, 252, 254–55
 antelope, 91, 133, 207, 214, 215
 antibiotics, 128
 antidotes, 211
 aphim (opium), 160–61
 aphrodisiacs, 51, 157, 172, 173
 appetite, 51
Aquillaria agallocha. See aloes wood
Areca catechu. See betel palm
Argyrea nervosa. See Hawaiian woodrose
Arisaema. See cobra plant
 Arniko, 78
 arrows, 211
 art, 74
Artemisia vulgaris. See mugwort
 artist's conch, 170–71
Arundinaria. See *nigalo*
 astrology, 20, 29, 102–4, 124–26, 127t, 182
 Asura, 90, 91–92
asyamo/kukhure chyau, 170
ati bas aune (night jasmine), 3, 152, 163–64, 202
 Avalokiteshvara, 31, 70, 96–100, 261
 axes
 bancharo, 204, 207
 copper double-ax, 242
 vajra dhunga, 16, 110, 169, 204
axis mundi (World Axis), 10, 58, 233
 ayurvedic healing arts, 33, 178
 ayurvedic incense, 136
 Azaria demon, 133
 bad luck, 42–48, 58
baipankhi (spiritual white horse), 59–60
bakoh, (cobra plant), 109, 151t, 164–65
 baldness, 52
balu (bears), 166, 214, 215, 241
 bamboo, 167, 190, 202–3
 banana (*kera*), 202
 banana tree, 43–44, 46, 233
bancharo (battle ax), 204, 207
bandel (wild boar), 60, 166, 211–12
bangre sisnu (nettle), 107
 Ban Jhankri, 26, 105, 106, 164–65, 251
banko (cobra plant), 109, 151t, 164–65
ban mancche (yeti), 105–6
ban mula (radish), 3, 116
 banya caste, 137
 Barahima, 36n. See also Vajrayogini
 Bara theo ritual, 98
 Bardo mandala, 84–85, 85
 Bardo Thodol, 22, 124
 Barnajin Bhairab, 159, 265
 basil, 142, 205
 bats, 52
 battle ax, 204, 207
 Beak of *Garuda*, 200
 bear claws, 240, 241
 bears, 166, 214, 215, 241
 beer
 chhang, 89, 146, 147, 149
 of enlightenment, 17
 henbane beer, 18
 rakshi, 44, 89, 124, 146, 147, 149, 197
bel fruit, 98
bel leaves, 99
 bell necklaces, 59–60, 218
 bells, 17, 218
belu chare (radish), 3, 116
 berberis shrub, 149
 betel leaf, 98, 100, 161

- betel nuts, 98, 161
 betel palm, 161
 betel pepper, 110
 Bhairab
 Akash Bhairab, 74–75, 75
 Barnajin Bhairab, 159, 265
 Bishu Bhairab, 67, 264–65
 Kali and, 89
 list of seven, 74n, 89
 phurba, 53, 55
 rudraksha of, 133
 Tika Bhairab, 158, 265
 Ulmata Bhairab, 148, 162–63, 268
 as wrathful manifestation of Shiva, 31, 32, 60, 89
bhairunga pate/pati, 44, 142
 Bhaktapur, 6
bhanga, 17, 157. *See also ganja*
bhat. *See rice*
 Bhotyas, 4
bhuanath haku (Hawaiian woodrose), 167, 168
bhumispara mudra, 187
bhutas (negative spirits), 57, 58, 124, 125t
bhutis (fabric amulets), 51
 Bhutung Ming Wang, 133, 266
bidi (cigarettes), 142, 143, 153, 160
 bilva trees, 98–99
bindu, 231–32
 birds (Shamans'), 226t
biribiri (cigarettes), 142, 143, 153, 160
 birth, 20
bis (poison), 107, 112, 161–62, 163
 Black Calendar, 103, 269
 blacksmith, 211
 blood drinking, 36
 blood-red plant, 202
 blood sacrifice. *See animal sacrifice*
 blue cow, 91, 133, 207, 214, 215
 blue monkhood, 161
 Blue Tara, 80, 273–74
 boar, 60, 166, 211–12
bobkha (rice cake), 166t
 Bodhnath Buddhist shrine, 78, 79
 bojo (calamus plant), 136, 140
 bokshas (warlocks), 133
bokshi dhup (witches' incense), 137, 144–46
bokshi ghans, 145
 bokshis
 festival honoring, 132
 flying of, 38, 223
 persecution of, 257
 protection against, 50n, 137
 riding on brooms, 133
 shamans vs., 24–25, 38, 165
 tantric priests and, 55
 transformation of, 145
 bone aprons, 30
 bone trumpets, 40–41, 118, 120–21, 219–20
 Bon tradition, 51, 68, 254, 255, 257
 bottle gourd, 58
 Brahmins
 incense claws used by, 144
 incense recipe of, 146t
 tantra of, 187
 brooms, 53, 54, 133, 223
 “brown sugar,” 161
Brugmansia (angel's trumpet), 167–68, 169
 Buddacharya, Deepak, 185
 Buddha, 95, 187
 Buddhacharya caste, 29, 186
 Buddhism, 36–37. *See also Vajrayana Buddhism*
 Buddhist prayer chain, 224
 buffalo, 60, 171, 208
 bull, 33, 48, 60
bumba (water pitcher), 47, 139, 163, 196–97
buri chyau (Old ladies' mushroom), 173
bya khyung, 68

Caesalpinia decapetala. *See chain flowers*
 Caesar's mushroom, 177
 Cakrasamvara thangka, 84, 266
 calabash, 21
calambac (aloes wood), 142
 calamus plant (bojo), 136, 140
 camphor, 22, 142, 143, 154
 cancer, 162
Cannabis. *See ganja*
 “Can Witches Fly?,” 38
Capsicum. *See chili pods*
Castanopsis. *See chestnut tree*
 castes, 4, 30
 caterpillar mushroom (shamans' club), 171–72
 Catholics, 139
 cedar, Himalayan cedar, 139
Cedrus deodara. *See Himalayan cedar*
Ceiba pentandra. *See kapok tree*
 cemeteries, 118, 120–22
 centipede, 18
 ceremonies. *See death rituals; healing ceremonies*
Cestrum nocturnum. *See night jasmine*
cha amang, shaman initiation, 27
chachamak (fire knife), 210
 chain flowers, 166
 chains, 223–24
 chakras, 3, 115–17, 247, 248
 Chakrasamvara, 29
chamera (bats), 52
 Chandra, Shiva as, 91
chandra ma (peony), 82, 147, 149
charas. *See ganja*
charmukhi dorje, 67
chasum (oak tree), 233
chaturbuj (throat chakra), 115, 117
 Chenresi, 72, 73, 75
 chestnut tree, 147
chhang (rice beer), 89, 146, 147, 149
chhora phul (blue monkhood), 161
 chickens, 203
 “chicken shamans,” 19, 24, 156
chikan paapcha (bats), 52
chilams (pipes), 86, 151, 157, 220
 children, 43, 51, 53–54, 55, 98
 chili pods, 144–45
chiindo, 197–98

chintas. *See healing ceremonies*
 Chitrugupta, 57n
chiuri mantra, 144
chiurisin (sulfur), 143–44
 Christianity, 4, 5
 cigarettes, 142, 143, 151, 153, 157, 160
cimtra (fire tongs), 222
Cinnamomum camphora. *See camphor*
 cliff drawings, 92, 179
 clothing
 feathers/headaddresses/headbands, 225–26
 jama pagari, 226
 masks, 226–29
 pagari, 226
 clover, 98
 club moss, 110
 cobra plant, 109, 151t, 164–65
 cobras, 107–8, 111–12
 coconut milk, 147
 coconuts, 147
 colds, 51, 142
 collective experience, 38
 communism, 5–6, 257
 conch shell, 112, 116, 206, 218–19
 Confucianism, 5, 257
 coordinate system, 57
 copper (*kurin*), 206, 242–43
Cordyceps sinensis. *See shamans' club*
 cosmic mushrooms, 111, 173
 cosmic umbrella, 58, 169, 170, 172
 cosmogram thangka, 260, 274
 costume (*jama pagari*), 226
Costus speciosus. *See kusha grass*
 cotton string, 196, 203
 cowry shells, 52
 cows, 48
 crocodile, 58
Crocus sativus, 44
 crow mushroom. *See raven mushroom*
 crows, 234, 235–40
 crystals, 48, 59, 185, 205, 241
 cutting the threads of fate ritual, 42–48, 58
 cymbals, 33, 218
Cynodon dactylon (*dubhotar*), 147
Cypraea annulus, 52
Cypraea moneta, 52

 Dakshin Kali, 53, 90
 Dalai Lama, fourteenth, 55, 206
 Dalai Lama, fifth, 125–26, 196
daling (radish), 3, 116
dalo (rice basket), 197, 200
damaru drum, 89, 91, 214
danesha (hornbill), 200, 234
dankina dhupa (witches' incense), 137, 144–46
danphe bird (tragopan), 60, 149
 daphne, 7, 139
 Darti Mata, 57
 Dasain, 45
Datura metel (thorn apple), 152, 233
 death
 death mudra, 187

- Ganesha as master of, 1
 hungry spirits of the dead, 46
 shaman burial posture, 22
 Western view of, 121
 Yamaraj and Yamarani and, 57
- death rituals
 cemetery ritual, 120–22
 of the Kirati, 20, 21–23, 36
 of lamas, 22
 sickles for, 211
 of Vajracharya caste, 29
 Yamantaka as Lord of, 44, 51, 59
- debra lahara* (“Snaking Vine”), 165–66
- deer, 208, 211, 214, 215, 222, 234
- demons
 Asura, 90, 91–92
 Azaria, 133
 beliefs about, 132–33
 Bhutung Ming Wang, 133, 266
 blood sacrifice for, 183
 as cause of disease, 55n
 driven back by the gods, 13
 festival honoring, 132
 hiding in people, 183
 Jimin Graha, 182–83
 need for, 99
 tools for dispersing, 17, 207, 211, 222
 yantras for release of, 185
- denguru chyau* (artist’s conch), 170–71
- denguru* drums, 33, 102, 212–17, 234
- depression, 18, 49
- deshukpa* (ginger), 43, 44, 46, 124, 204
- Devalok, 57–58
- dhalo khursani/dalle khursane*, 145
- dhanus kar* (arrows), 211
- Dhanvantari, 70, 178
- dharti mata*, 192
- dharti* (middle world), 21, 44, 57
- dhature phul* (*siva ghanta*), 167–68
- Dhaturo*, 162–63, 167n
- dhodre* (*siva ghanta*), 167–68
- Dhritarastra, 63, 270
- dhunga*. See stones
- dhupauro* (incense bowl), 47, 159, 200
- dhup/dupha*. See incense
- dhup wala/dhup sau* (incense dealer), 137
- dhyani* (meditation), 118, 120, 122, 217, 231–32
- dio bajus*, 51, 53, 137
- dio mesu*, 51, 53, 54
- Dionysus, 168
- directional deities, 36
- directions, four cardinal, 60, 62, 67–70, 73
- disease
bhutas as cause of, 124
 children’s, 43, 53–54
 demons as cause of, 55n, 129
 diagnoses of, 19–20
 genetic causes of, 128
grahas as cause of, 124–26
karma as cause of, 126–27
 loss of humanity and, 254
 mantras and, 180
- natural and spiritual, 128–30
 negative energy as cause of, 12
 from spells, 48
 treated by shamans, 257
 wind as cause of, 48
 See also doctors; healing
- divination, 43, 46, 124, 125, 126, 229–30
- divine grace, 17
- diyo* (oil lamp), 47
- DMT, 167, 170, 178n, 240
- doctors, 128, 256, 257
- dong chong xia cao*, 173
- dorje* (*vajra*), 16–18, 67, 204
- dove, 60
- dragon plants, 165, 166
- dragons, 72, 73, 82, 110–11, 269–70
- dreams, 27n, 44, 156, 196
- dreamtime, 44
- Druids, 210
- druk* (dragons), 72, 73, 82, 110–11, 269–70
- drums
damaru, 89, 91, 214
denguru, 33, 102, 212–17, 234
 drum rhythms, 215–17
madhal, 214–15
- dubhotar*, 147
- Duerr, Hans Peter, 38
- duk shyamu*. See mushrooms
- dumsiko kada* (porcupine quills), 201
- dumsi* (porcupine), 60, 195, 201, 234
- dunche*, 52
- dupsi/dhupsi/dutsi*, 163
- Durga, 90, 92
- Düsölma, Lhamo, 75, 76, 77
- Dzogchen, 68
- eagles, 16, 225
- earth goddess, 57
- ecstasy, 157
- Ekadesitshvara (Avalokiteshvara), 31, 70, 96–100, 261
- elder flowers, 202
- elephants, 43, 47
- Elixir of Life. See *amrita*
- enlightenment, 16, 17–18, 111
- environmental issues, 6n, 138, 142–43
- Ephedra gerardiana* (moon plant), 143, 144
- Essen, Gerd Wolfgang, 75, 77
- ether, 57
- Euphorbia pulcherrima*, 44
- evil, 12, 19, 132. See also demons
- evil-eye, 215
- excrement, 52, 55
- exhibitions, 5, 6
- eye of Shiva, x
- faith, 5, 23
- Faith Healers of the Himalayas*, 5
- faith healing vs. shamanism, viii, 5, 23–24
- family tradition, 25, 29
- fear, 19, 38, 41, 118
- feather headdress, of porcupine quills, 201, 225
- festivals, 52, 131–33, 240, 245n
- fire
 fire god, 67–68, 200
 fire knife, 210
 fire tongs, 222
 firewall, 60, 68
Garuda as energy of, 68
 swallowing, 122, 123
- fireplace, 203
- five elements, 57
- flame of the forest (*palas tree*), 211
- flies, 177
- flowers, seven sacred, 27n
- fly agarics, 171, 173–76, 177, 178
- foods, seven sacred, 27n
- forehead chakra, 3
- fossils (*saligrams*), 86, 204–5, 241
- four cardinal directions, 60, 62, 67–70, 73
- Franzke, Reinhard, 5
- “Freak Street,” 175
- frogs, 58. See also toads
- gadha (sexual chakra), 116
- gakadhu (sulfur), 143–44
- Ganesha
 death and rebirth of, 1–2, 247
 as first shaman, 1–3
 as guardian of thresholds, 3, 47
 prayer to, 1
 as Protector of the Chakras, 3
 in *sapta graha rekhi yantra*, 47
 shrines to, 137
 thangka, 2, 261
- Ganges River, 246
- ganja
 as aphrodisiac, 51, 157
 cobra poison on, 112
 flowering, 141
 henbane with, 18
 as incense, 159t, 178
 medicinal uses, 49, 50, 51
 pipes for smoking, 86, 151, 157
 shamans use of, 156, 157
 as traveling herb, 157, 159–60
- Ganoderma lucidum*. See artist’s conch
- garnets, 205–6, 241–43
- Garuda*
 aloes wood and, 142
 Beak of *Garuda*, 200
 as “Destroyer of Snakes,” 68, 109
 as emanation of Vajrapani, 68
 living in the upper world, 82
phurba and, 12
 protecting shamans, 60, 68, 69, 71
 thangkas, 69, 71, 266–67, 274
 as thief of *amrita*, 70
- Garuda* mantras, 70, 109
- Gathamoo* festival, 131–33
- Gathamugal* festival, 131–33
- gau*, 51, 74
- gazelle, 209
- geckos, 240

Ghantakarna, 131–33
ghantas (bells), 17, 218
ghanti mala, 224–25
ghanti phul, 163
 Ghimire, Muktinath, 117, 187, 188, 190
 ginger *jokhana*, 43, 44, 46, 124, 204, 211
 goats, 43, 47, 110, 214, 234
gobar chyau/gobre chyau (mottlegills), 172–73
 gods
 amrita as drink of, 70
 calling the gods, 45
 demons and, 13, 133
 Devalok as abode of, 58
 of five elements, 57
 of the gubajus, 29
 possession by, 53
 punishment and, 133
 wrathful manifestations of, 133
 Gokarneshvara Temple, 4
 gold, 210, 242, 243
 Golden Temple of Patan, 96
 goosefoot, 140
 Goraknath, 99, 100
gorato chyau, 170
 Gosainkunda Lake, 86
grahas, 124–26, 127t
 Green Tara, 78, 78, 270
gtad, 52
 gubajus
 astrology and, 29, 104
 bokshis transformed by, 145
 falling into trance and, 53
 five metals of, 243
 gods of, 29
 as healers, 29
 incense for, 138
 as tantrikas, 29–30, 53, 186–87
 way of, 29–30, 54
 weather-making by, 253–54
guduchi, 147
gupha (meditation), 118, 120, 122, 217, 231–32
gurbo (cobra plant), 109, 151t, 164–65
 Gurkhas, 210
gurubua (teaching plants). *See* traveling herbs
guruju (tantric priests), 55
 Gurung, 4
 Gurung, Indra Doj
 bokshi dhup of, 145
 bone trumpet used by, 40–41, 41, 220
 call to shamanism, 28, 28
 cemetery meditation, 118, 120–22
 with cymbals, 218
 as hospital shaman, 256
 inducing kampa state in the author (CR), 39–40
 interest in images, 75
 pilgrimage to Kalinchok, 252–53
 as shaman and lama, 36
 in trance, 20
 treating “normal” patients, 42

Guru Rinpoche
 on dragons, 110, 269–70
 as enlightened, 110, 266
 thangkas, 84, 85, 93, 113, 263, 273
 See also Padmasambhava
 Gyatso, Ngawang Losang, 125–26
 gynecological folk medicine, 140
 Haegriva and Shakti, 259, 271
 Haida Indian dagger, 240
 hallucinogens, 18, 168, 170, 240, 251
Hamsa (swan), 60
 handprints, 92
 Hanuman, 105, 235
 Hanuman Doka, 105
 Harati Mata, 53
 Haridwar, 246
 Hariti Mata, 89–90, 95
 Harner, Michael, 212
 harvest festivals, 133
hasana (night jasmine), 3, 152, 163–64, 202
 hate, 19
hati (elephants), 43, 47
 Hawaiian woodrose, 167, 168
hawa lageko, 43
 headaches, 142
 headdresses/headbands, 225–26
 healing
 chakras and, 115
 ecstasy and, 157
 “healthy” patients, 43
 love as healing power, 3
 shamanic healing, viii, 42–52
 tantric healing, 53–55
 See also disease; healing ceremonies
 healing ceremonies
 cutting the threads of fate, 42, 43–48
 diagnoses made during, 19–20
 going into trance during, 19
 nava graha rekhi yantra healing, 182–83, 185
 with Yonjon and Danashing, 23–24
 health, 117, 124–26, 127t, 182
 heart chakra, 3, 115, 247, 248
 heaven. *See* upper world
 hemp. *See* ganja
 hemp tree, 157
 henbane, 17, 18
 henna, 132
 herbs. *See* medicinal plants; plants; traveling herbs
 heroin, 161
 Herons, 6
 Hillary, Sir Edmund, 118
 Himalayan cedar, 139
 Himalayan juniper, 136, 138–39, 147, 152
 Himalayan pheasant (*munal* bird), 234
 Hinduism
 amala tree and, 240
 mythology, 68, 70
 Newari influenced by, 4
 sacred number three of, 197

tantric teachings of, 186
 vajrayoginis and, 36
 Hinduistic-Buddhistic worldview, 127
 history of shamanism, 31–33
Holarrhena pubescens. *See* rainbow tree
 Holy basil, 142, 205
 hornbill, 200, 234
 horns
 antelope horns, 91, 133, 207, 220–22
 phurbas made of, 14, 243
 as ritual daggers, 92, 207–8
 used by shamans, 208t
 from wild goats, 110
 horses, 59–60, 235
 human flesh, 145
 human sacrifice, 255
 hungry spirits of the dead, 46
 “hunter’s spell” (*shikari* mantra), 209
Hyoscyamus. *See* henbane
 hyperventilation, 48
Hysterix indica. *See* porcupine
 ignorance, 19
Im Banne des Schamanen exhibit, 6
 immortality, mushroom of, 170–71
 incense
 addiction to, 139
 agarbhatti, 137–38
 ayurvedic, 136
 bhang recipe, 159t
 bokshi dhup, 137, 144–46
 hasana as, 163
 incense claws, 136, 144
 for invoking mythical beings, 73
 Kalachakra Incense, 104
 mantras for, 141
 psychoactive blends, 159
 recipes for, 144t, 146t
 Tibetan incense sticks, 138, 139
 toxicity and, 139
 See also incense materials
 incense bowl, 47, 159, 200
 incense materials
 aloes wood, 142
 bhairunga pate, 142
 camphor, 22, 142, 143, 154
 dried human flesh, 145
 goosefoot, 140
 gubajus personal recipes, 138
 juniper, 136, 138–39
 Kirati incense recipe, 159t
 moon plant, 143, 144
 mugwort for, 51, 139–40
 Nepalese, 140–42t
 Newari witches’ recipe, 146t
 sal, 142–43
 sulfur, 143–44
 of the three worlds, 144
 white sandalwood, 136
 incense tree (juniper), 136, 138–39, 147, 152
 Indian butter tree, 144
 Indian Gupta painting, 79

- Indian Ojha, 147
 Indra, 16, 17, 147, 177, 178
indrajow (rainbow tree), 147, 149
 Indralok, 16, 57–58, 251n
indrayani (rainbows), 16, 110
 insanity, 162t
 insects of the underworld, 110
 insomnia, 51
 intoxicating plants. *See* traveling herbs
 invocation of Ganesha, 1, 2
 Ipomoea flower, 9n
 iron, 14, 131, 211, 243
- Jack-in-the-Pulpit, 109–10
jahiko phul (night jasmine), 3, 152, 163–64, 202
jai patri, 164
 Jala Deva, 70
jalathathi (shark), 58
jama pagari (costume), 226
 Jambu tree, 95
 Janai Purnima festival, 52, 245n
jatamichi/jata makhi, 145
jatayu, 133
 jealousy, 19, 182
 Jehovah, 33
 Jesuits, 5
 Jesus, 33
 jewelry
 ghanti mala, 224–25
 malas/chains, 223–24
 naga mala, 224
 rittha mala, 225
 rudraksha mala, 224
jhamtar (cymbals), 33, 218
jhankri. *See* shamans
jhankri kath (shaman's tree), 233
Jhankri Mela, 245
jhumre bhut, 124, 125t
 Jimin Graha demon, 182–83
jivanbuti (shamans' club), 171–72
jokhanas (divination), 43, 46, 124, 125, 126, 229–30
jotish, 125
juga, 96
jungali bakhra (wild goats), 110, 234
 juniper, 136, 138–39, 147, 152
juwala (muki dhoop), 145
- kachhuwa* (turtle), 58
kag (crows), 234, 235–40
 Kagyupa sanctuary, 258, 262
kahjuro, insects of the underworld, 110
kakke chyau (raven mushroom), 173–74
kak tihar festival, 240
kala (ceremonial staves), 122
Kalachakra Incense, 104
 Kalachakra mandala, 102, 232, 268–69
kalahsa (water pitcher), 47, 139, 163, 196–97
 kalasha (bottle gourd), 58
 Kali
 Dakshin Kali, 53, 90
 Kali mantra, 92
 Kali yantra, 185
 as Mahakali, 89–92
 as manifestation of Parvati, 90
 as protector, 60, 70
 puja festival, 90
 seven Kalis, list, 90
 shrines, 90, 247, 251
 thangkas, 88, 90–92, 264, 269, 273
 as witch goddess, 131
 worship of, 89–90
 Kalinchok mountain, 7–8n, 86, 245–55
 Kali Yuga, 13n, 248
kalo aaran, 142
kalunge chyau (fly agarics), 171, 173–76, 177, 178
 Kama Sutra, xiii
 Kama the love god, 161
kami (blacksmith), 211
 kampa, 40
 Kane, Bob, 52
kanse dabuko (singing bowls), 217–18
kapala (skull bowl), 89, 222–23
 Kapalikas, 223
 kapok tree, 233
kapur (camphor), 22, 142, 143, 154
karda, 208–9
karkalo mane (cobra plant), 109, 151t, 164–65
karma, 126–27
kartika (chopping knife), 206, 207
kartilea, 89
kasethaal (rice plate), 197
 Kasthamandapa temple, 100
 Kathmandu Valley, 4–9, 10n, 17, 95
katus (chestnut tree), 147
katvanga, 111
kaulo, 44, 45
kaura, 52
keta puja ritual (rite of passage), 98
 kettle of the moon, 57
khadgo kumpa. *See* cutting the threads of fate ritual
 Khading, 68
 Kham Magar shamans, 40
kharkokatni, 43n
kharkothaba, 43n
khar (rock salt), 146
khote simal (kapok tree), 233
khukuri knife, 22–23, 47, 182, 183, 208–9, 210
 Khyung, 68
 king cobra, 108
 Kirati
 death rituals of, 20, 21–23, 36
 defined, 20n
 first palaces built by, 4
 psychoactive plants and, 151
 sacred animals of, 234–35
 shamanism of, 20–24
kiuyama dhupa. *See* *bokshi dhup*
 knives
 fire knife, 210
 kartika (chopping knife), 206, 207
khukuri knife, 22–23, 47, 182, 183, 208–9, 210
- Knödel, Susanne, 5
koshi (sheep), 43, 47, 214
 Krishna, 196
Krishna Chatur Dasi, 131
krishna nagam (king cobra), 108
 Krishna's flute, 166
kucho (shamans' broom), 53, 54, 133, 223
kuda-kallu, 178
 Kulan, calling the gods, 45
kulkelegma, 144
 Kumari, 5, 98
kumbhla mela, 246
kum kum pati, 44
 kundalini, 73, 122. *See also* *shakti*
kurin dhunga (garnets), 205–6, 241–43
kursani (chili pods), 144–45
 Kurukula Devi, 212, 267
kusha grass, 136
- Lache lahara* ("snaking vine"), 165–66
 ladder to the heavens, 205
 Lakshmi, 99, 233, 240
laliwah (henbane), 17, 18
lalu pati, 44
 Lamaism vs. shamanism, 36, 257
 lamas, 22, 53, 140, 214, 218
 Lame Deer, 254
 leeches, 140, 249, 251
 leprosy, 108
 liberation, oceanic self-liberation, 115n
 libido, 51
 lightning, 17, 110, 169
linga as demon image, 30
lingam mantra, 180
 lingams, 10, 86, 163, 168
ling-shi mushroom (artist's conch), 170–71
 liver disease, 51
loban, 137
Lobelia pyramidalis. *See* blood-red plant
 Lord of Death. *See* Yamantaka
 love
 importance of, 122
 of life, 49
 love-energy transformed into awareness, 3
 love magic/spells, 107, 128–29, 180
 as shamanic healing power, 3
 as the way of the shamans, 19
 LSD, 167, 168
luang, 98
 Luchesi, Elisabeth, 214
 Lüderwaldt, Andreas, 5–6
luinche (wild chicken), 203
lukh (goats), 43, 47, 110, 214, 234
Lyonia (Ericaceae), 160
- Machapuchare mountain, 245, 246
 Machendranath (Avalokiteshvara), 31, 70, 96–100, 261
madhal drum, 214–15
 Magar tribe, 4
maggar (crocodile), 58
 Magical Dagger. *See* *phurba*

- magical weapon, 185
 magic mushrooms, 175
 Mahadeva, 59, 86. *See also* Shiva
 Maha Dhoop, 136
 Mahakala
 black, four-armed, 198, 199, 268, 271
 Mahakala Bhairab, 87, 159, 261, 265
 Shiva as, 89
 Ulmata Bhairab/Ulmata Mahakala, 148, 268
 in yab-yum position, 73, 268
 with Yamantaka, 150, 263
 Mahakala dance, 227–28
 Mahakali, 89–92. *See also* Kali
 Mai, 90
 Maile Lama
 called to shamanism, 25–27
 demonstrating shaman burial posture, 22
 honoring the *bumba*, 197
 incense recipe, 144t
 pilgrimage to Kalinchok, 252
 prayer to Ganesha, 1
 with psychedelic mushroom, 174
 in trance, 38
 makara, 12, 68, 82
 mala bung (chain flowers), 166
 mala mukhi (chain flowers), 166
 malas, 223–5, 231
 mandalas
 Bardo mandala, 84–85
 Kalachakra mandala, 102, 232, 268–69
 Medicine Buddha mandala, 85
 Medicine Mandala, 49
 Tara Mandala, 35, 269
 Mandraba, 85
 mandrake, 3
 mangpa, 20
 manipura chakra (navel chakra), 115, 116
 Mañjushri, 95, 131
 mantras
 bad magic from, 52
 balu mantra, 241
 chiuri mantra, 144
 chyau mantra, 171
 copper mantra, 243
 dragon mantra, 73, 110
 function of, 180–81
 Garuda mantras, 70, 109
 for healing children, 43, 53
 for incense, 141
 Kali mantra, 92
 for love magic/spells, 128
 naga mantra, 107
 OM MANI PADME HUM, 80, 218
 as protection, 42
 sacred, 53
 shamans and, 180, 186
 shikari mantra, 209
 Shiva mantras, 86, 180t, 187
 for transforming alcohol into *amrita*, 146
 yantras and, 185
- mara* (tortoise-reptile deity), 102
 marijuana. *See* Ganja
 marriage, 4, 20
 masks, 226–29
 Mastyalok, 74, 248n
 Mata Sarasvati, 214
 mathematics, 190
matne chyau. *See* mushrooms
 Matsyendranath (Avalokiteshvara), 31, 70, 96–100, 261
 maya, 38
 meat taboos, 234t
 medicinal plants
 bojo, 136, 140
 ganja as, 49, 51
 monkshood as, 162
 mugwort, 40, 44, 50t, 51, 139–40, 201–2
 used by shamans, 50t
 medicinal teaching thangkhas, 236–39, 263
 medicine
 bilva tree fruit as, 98–99
 choosing, 156
 cobra poison as, 108
 excrement as, 52, 55
 fly agaric as, 177
 lache lahara as, 165
 shamans' mushroom as, 171
 medicine bird (bats), 52
 Medicine Buddha, 59, 271–72
 Medicine Buddha mandala, 85
 Medicine mandala, 49, 263–64
 meditation, 118, 120, 122, 217, 231–32
 memory, 51
Menschenfrauen fliegen wieder, 38n
 menstruation, 243, 245n
 Messner, Reinhold, 105, 118
 metals, 242–43
mialung, 203
 middle world, 21, 57, 58, 144
 migraines, 128, 140
 Milarepa, 215
 milk, 251
 Miller, Father Caspar, 5
Mimosa rubicaulis, 145
 miracle cures, 5, 23–24
mirga (musk deer), 222, 234
moch lageko, 43
mohanis (love magic/spells), 107, 128–29, 180
 monkeys, 215
 monsoons, 157, 245
 Mookerjee, Ajit, 30n, 90, 92
 moon
 as cycle of time, 102
 Shiva moon, 17, 118n, 245
 as vessel of *amrita*, 70, 102, 178
 moon plant, 143, 144
 morphine, 161
 mother herbs, 140
 mottlegills, 172–73
 mountains, 241, 245
 Mount Everest, 118
 Mount Kailash, 68
- mudras
 abhaya mudra, 187
 animal horns mudras, 209
 bhumispara mudra, 187
 in daily life, 188t
 death mudra, 187
 dhup mudra, 138
 of four cardinal directions, 62
 of granting a wish, 81
 phurba mudra, 189, 250
 pinda mudra, 190
 puja mudra, 188
 shanti mudra, 74, 75, 188
 stupa mudra, 188
 of the teacher, 81
 mugwort, 40, 44, 50t, 51, 139–40, 201–2
 Muktinath, as pilgrimage site, 86
muladhara (root chakra), 3, 115–16
mumeo, 52
munal bird (Himalayan pheasant), 234
mundum, 20, 23, 176
 mushrooms
 caterpillar mushroom, 171–72
 cosmic mushrooms, 111, 173
 created by lightning, 17, 169
 growing on pig excrement, 55
 as lingams, 168
 magic mushrooms, 175
 mushroom of immortality, 170–71
 old ladies' mushroom, 173
 psychedelic mushrooms, 147
 for trance journeys, 151, 168–79
 wild mushrooms, 177
 musical instruments
 bell necklaces, 59–60
 bells, 17, 218
 bone trumpets, 40–41, 118, 120–21, 219–20
 conch trumpets, 218–19
 cymbals, 33, 218
 denguru drums, 33, 102, 212–17, 234
 horns as, 220–22
 singing bowls, 217–18
 musk deer, 222, 234
 Muslims, 4, 137
 mustard oil, 23
mykes. *See* mushrooms
Myristica fragrans. *See* *jai patri*
- Naga Babas, 111, 222
naga mala, 224
 Nagaraja, 12, 58, 59, 109
nagaraja (king cobra), 108
 Nagarani, 12, 58, 59, 109
 Nagarjun, 253
nagas
 angel's trumpet and, 168
 bites from, 107, 111, 160
 Buddhism and, 104
 cobras, 107–8, 111–12
 food of, 109–10
 human spinal column as, 110–11
 Naga Festival, 108

- phurba* and, 12
 poison of, 107, 112
 as sacred, 233–34
 snake gods, 109, 160
 trance journeys with, 110
 types of, 111
- naksi bonwa*, 46n
- nalihar* (bone trumpets), 40–41, 118, 120–21, 219–20
- Nandi (bull), 33, 48, 60
- nanlo* (rice basket), 197, 200
- Naropa, 36
- nature
 depictions of, 80
 ecstasy and, 157
 Indralok and, 57
 of Kathmandu Valley, 6–9
 mathematics and, 190
 metals, 242–43
 nature religions, 4
 preservation of, 6n
 shamans and, 20, 23
 See also animals; plants; stones
- Nauseef, Mark, 216
- nava graha rekhi* yantra, 182–83, 185
- navel chakra, 115, 116
- necromanteia, 121
- negative energy, 12, 13
- negative spirits, 57, 58, 124, 125t
- Nepal
 castes in, 4
 cultural relationship with Tibet, 78–79
 multiculturalism of, 33
 traditions preserved in, 31
- nepali kagas*. See daphne
- nettle plants, 107
- Newari
 caste system of, 137
 gubajus of, 29–30
 as native people of Kathmandu Valley, 4, 131
 puberty rituals, 98
 religion and culture of, 4
 as thangka artists, 77
 witches' incense recipe, 146
- Nicotiana rustica*, 151
- Nicotiana tabacum*, 151, 160. See also tobacco
- nigalo*, 166–67
- night jasmine, 3, 152, 163–64, 202
- Night of Shiva (*Shiva Ratri*), 156, 214
- Nilgai* antelope horn, 91, 133, 207
- nirvana, 186
- nisa jhar*. See traveling herbs
- number symbolism, 20–21, 47n, 75, 79, 151n, 190–92
- Nyingmapa sect, 30n, 74–75, 267–68
- oak tree, 215, 233
- oath of shamans, 24, 26, 28, 42, 140
- objectivity, viii–ix
- “ocean fruit” (Hawaiian woodrose), 167, 168
- oceanic self-liberation, 115n, 122
- Ocimum sanctum*. See Holy basil
- oil lamp, 47
- Ojha shamans, 107, 111
- old ladies' mushroom, 173
- OM MANI PADME HUM, 80, 218
- OM PHAT SHOHAR, 58, 180t
- Om yantra, 185
- onycha*, 144
- onyx*, 144
- opium, 160–61
- Oppitz, Michael, 40
- oracles (divination), 43, 46, 124, 125, 126, 229–30
- padma* (heart chakra), 3, 115, 247, 248
- Padmasambhava
 as Chenresi, 72, 73, 75
 on dragons, 110, 269–70
 family tree of, 31, 32, 33, 266
katvanga of, 111
 Shiva as, 89
 wife of, 31, 32
 See also Guru Rinpoche
- Paeonia emodi*. See peony
- pagari* (headbands), 226
- pahelo jayi phul* (night jasmine), 3, 152, 163–64, 202
- palabi/palati*, 96
- palas* tree (flame of the forest), 211
- palm wine, 147, 149
- Panaeolus*. See cosmic mushrooms
- pangla bung* (radish), 3, 116
- pani*. See water
- pan/paan* (betel leaf), 98, 100, 161
- Papaveraceae* (opium), 160–61
- Papaver somniferum* (opium), 160–61
- paper-making, 7, 139
- Parewa* (dove), 60
- Parvati
 death of, 248, 251
 Ganesha and, 1–2
 ganja smoked by, 157
 Kali and, 70, 86, 90, 92
 pheasants and, 234
 shamans vs. witches and, 24–25
- Pashupati, 86
- Pashupatinath temple, 86, 163
- patal*. See underworld
- pate/pati* (leafy incense), 139
- patients, as “vampires,” 42
- payung pati*, 44
- peacock feathers, 193, 196, 225–26
- “peacock flower” (chain flowers), 166
- peony, 82, 147, 149
- Persea gambleia*, 44, 45
- personal memory, 31
- phallus. See lingams
- phanang*, 52
- Phoebe lanceolata*. See shaman's tree
- phul* (*siva ghanta*), 167–68
- phurba*
 aspects of, 12
 Bhairab *phurba*, 53, 55
- from conch shell, 206, 219
 of copper, 243
 of crystal, 242
 for cutting the threads of fate ritual, 44
 demonstrating use of, 30, 74
 function of, 12, 13
 god of, vi, 274
 grim faces on, 13
 gubajus use of, 29
 of horn, 14, 243
 iconography of, 13, 16, 206
 makers of, 14–15
 materials for, 13, 14, 15
 of metal, 243
phurba mudra, 189, 250
 as tantric tool, 55
 thangka, 11, 274
 trance and, 40
 trident and, 15
 used during healing, 12
 Vajrayana Buddhism and, 13, 206
 weather-making with, 16, 254
 as World Axis, 10
 as yoni/lingam, 10, 12
- Phurba Seta Himal mountain, 245
- Phyllanthus emblica*. See *amala* tree
- phytotherapy. See medicinal plants
- pigs, 104
- pilgrimage
 to Gosainkunda Lake, 86
 to Kalinchok, 244, 247, 251–53
 for replenishing *shakti*, 118
 use of alcohol during, 147
- pinda* mudra, 190
- piper betel* (betel leaf), 98, 100, 161
- planets, 124–26, 127t, 182
- plantas maestras*, 153, 156n, 168
- plants
 harvesting, 142–43
 for incense, 140–42t
kusha grass, 136
 sacred plants, 27n, 106t, 116, 233
 as snake food, 109–10
 tribes knowledge of, 7
 used in cutting the threads of fate ritual, 42–43
 wild plant exploitation, 138
 See also incense material; medicinal plants; poisonous plants; traveling herbs
- poison
 for arrows, 211
 from Indian cobra, 107–8
 of *nagas*, 107
 opium for, 160
 poisonous animals, 108
 shamans' use of, 177
 thunder ax for, 110
 from toads, 251
- poisonous plants
Aconitum as, 161, 162
 angel's trumpet as, 168
 artist's conch as, 171

- cobra plants as, 164, 165
 dragon plants as, 165
 mushrooms as, 177
- Pokhara, bhāng incense recipe, 159t
polypores (thute chyau), 169–71
 porcupine, 60, 195, 201, 234
 porcupine quills, 201
Potentilla fruticosa. See *bhairunga pate prajna*, 186
prasad, 197
pratabanda (rite of passage), 98
 prayers, 1, 10
 predictions, *phurba* for, 10
 primordial soul, 39
 “professional” shamans, 19
 protection
 alcohol as, 146
 amulets for, 51
 art and, 74
 for babies, 42
 dragons for, 72, 73
 during trance, 67–68
 firewall as, 60, 68
 henna as, 132
 iron for, 14, 131, 211, 243
 mantras as, 42
 mugwort for, 51
 mushrooms as, 169
 thangkas as, 74
 from “vampire” patients, 42
 from witches, 50n, 137
 yarn cross as, 170
- Prunus cerasoides*, 44
Psilocybe cubensis. See magic mushrooms
 psychoactive incense, 136
 psychoactive plants. See traveling herbs
 puberty rituals, 98
puja mudra, 188
pungari technique, 180
 Puranas, 204–5
- quartz (rock crystal), 48, 59, 205
Quercus (oak tree), 233
- radish, 3, 116
 Rahula, Bishu Bhairab, 67, 264–65
 Rai, Dil Bahadur, 176–77
 Rai, Mohan, 1, 12, 22, 43–48, 172, 228
 rainbows, 16, 110
 rainbow tree, 147, 149
 Rai, Parvati
 call to shamanism, 27, 27–28
 cutting the threads of fate ritual performed by, 44–46
 with horn and wooden *phurba*, 208
 invoking psychoactive plants, 151
 Kirati Death Ritual performed by, 21–23
 Kirati incense recipe of, 159t
 pilgrimage to Kalinchok, 253
 psychoactive plants revealed in dreams, 153
 with rock crystal, 205
 with spiritual “binoculars,” 203
- Rai, Sukar Makcha, 214
rajas, 197
rakshasas. See demons
rakshi (schnapps), 44, 89, 124, 146, 147, 149, 197
 Rakta Kali, 34, 90
 Ramayana, 234
ram dhup (incense of the gods), 140
ranke bhut, 124, 125t
Raphanus sativus. See radish
 raven bread (fly agarics), 171, 173–76, 177, 178
raven mushroom, 173–74
 ravens, 173–74, 234
 Rawson, Philip, 30n
 recipes
 for *bobkha*, 166t
 for incense, 44t, 144t
 psychoactive incense blends, 159
 smoking blends, 164t, 120t
 for *titepati* tea, 51
 for treatment of insanity, 162t
 “red cross,” 206
 red fly agaric, 174–75
 reincarnation, 127
 religion, 5, 33, 35, 36–37
 responsibility, 127, 133
 retreat (meditation), 118, 120, 122, 217, 231–32
 rhinoceros bird, 70
 rhododendron, 6, 44, 140, 144
 rice, 149, 233
 rice basket, 197, 200
 rice beer, 89, 146, 147, 149
 rice cake, 166t
 rice plate, 197
ringal bans (nigalo), 166–67
 rite of passage, 98
rittha mala, 225, 231
 ritual objects, 193–230
 clothing, 195t, 225–26
 of gubajus, 39
 jewelry, 223–25
 masks, 226–29
 plants, 201–3
 See also altar objects; musical instruments; stones; tools/weapons
- rna-khyun*, 68
 rock crystal, 48, 59, 205
 rocks. See stones
 rock salt (*khar*), 146
 roosters, 104, 120, 122, 182–83, 185
 root chakra, 3, 115–16
 rosary beads, 224
 Rosenbohm, Alexandra, 5
rudraksha, 133, 208, 231
rudraksha mala, 224
runchev lageko, 43
- sacred food (*akshyata*), 197
 sacred metals, 242–43
 sacred plants, 27n, 106t, 116, 233
 sadhus, 30, 107, 111, 222, 223
 saffron, 44
Sagarmata (Mount Everest), 118
- sahasrara* (crown chakra), 115, 116
sahastrasir (crown chakra), 115, 116
 sal, 44, 142–43, 165
saligrams (fossils), 86, 204–5, 241
salu pati, 44, 142–43, 165
 Samadhi thangka, 116, 262
Sambucus canadensis. See elder flowers
 Samsara thangkas, 101, 102, 104, 264, 269
samundra phul (Hawaiian woodrose), 167, 168
 Sanctuary of the Kagyupa school, 258, 262
Sankata, 182
 Sanskrit, 33
Santalum album. See white sandalwood
sanwa (buffalo), 60, 171, 208
sapana, visionary dreams, 27n
sapera (snake charmers), 107, 112
sapta graha rekhi yantra (seven planet yantra), 43–44, 45, 46–47
 Sarasvati, 14, 269
 Satanists, 121
 Sati, 247–48
sato lageko, 43
 satori, 18
sattvik, 197
 sauna, 51
 scatological medicine, 55
 schnapps, 44, 89, 124, 146, 147, 149, 197
 science, viii, 49, 180–81, 190
Scopolia straminifolia. See *ghanti phul*
 seeds, 44, 166, 203
 self-sacrifices, 145
serow (goats), 43, 47, 110, 214, 234
setho dhago. See cotton string
 Seti Naga, 160
 seven planet yantra, 43–44, 45, 46–47
 seven seeds, 44
 sex, 186
 sexual chakra, 116
 Shahi, Surendra Bahadur, 33, 77, 185, 218
shakti
 dragons as, 73
 as healing energy, 118
 love and, 3, 122
 nagas and, 107, 109
 root chakra as source of, 3, 115–16
 as shamans source of power, 70
 strengthening, 52, 118–23
shakti chyau/shyamu, 170, 171
Shamanen im Blinden Land (film), 40
 shamanism
 as a calling, 19, 25–28
 faith healing vs., viii, 5, 23–24
 future of, 256–57
 history of, 31–33
 Lamaism vs., 36
 oppression of, vii, 5–6, 36–37, 256–57
 science and, viii, 14, 49, 180–81
 shamanic healing, viii, 42–52
 as spiritual technique vs. religion, 13n
 shamans
 as ambassadors to the gods, 58
 bokshis vs., 24–25, 38, 165

- doctors and, 128, 256, 257
humanity of, 19
oath of, 24, 26, 28, 42, 140
possession by deities and, 53
primordial shaman, 26n, 106, 251
protection for, 60
self-healing and, 144
shaman's sickness, 25
women shamans, 20n
- shamans' broom, 53, 54, 133, 223
shamans' club, 171–72
shamans' mushroom (artist's conch), 170–71
shaman's tree, 233
- Shaman Women in Korea: Healing Rituals and Cell Phones* exhibit, 5
- shangshing* (juniper), 136, 138–39, 147, 152
shanka (conch shell), 112, 116, 206, 219
shankha (root chakra), 3, 115–16
shanti mudra, 74, 75, 188
Shantipur temple, 253–54
shanti ritual, 75
shark, 58
shastra (magical weapon), 185
Shatipur, 29
sheep, 43, 47, 214
Sherpa, Myingmar
 blowing bone trumpet, 220
 drumming of, 217
 with *kalunge chyau mushroom*, 176
 love spell healing, 129
 Mahakala dance of, 227–28
 with raven mushroom, 174
 with *shaki shyamu* mushroom, 171
- Sherpas, 4, 118, 243
shikari mantra, 209
shikharuni (woodcutters), 14–15
shikiphob, 45, 203
shila dhunga (rock crystal), 48, 59, 205
shime, destructive Nagas, 109
- Shiva
 birthday of, 156, 214
 creating the trident and *phurba*, 15
 eye of, x
 Ganesha and, 1–2
 ganja smoked by, 157
 Garuda as embodiment of, 68
 as God of psychoactive plants, 3, 151
 Kali and, 90–92, 91
 as Lord of Soma, 17
 as Mahadeva, 59, 86
 mantras to, 86, 180t, 187
 names of, 33
 Parvati and, 248, 251
 as poison drinker, 111–12, 162, 247
 poisonous plants/animals sacred to, 18
 as protector of shamans, 20, 89
 Sati and, 247–48
 shamans vs. witches and, 24–25
 Shiva moon, 17, 118n, 245
 worship of, 86–87
 wrathful manifestations of, 31, 32, 86, 89
 See also Bhairab; Mahakala; trident
- Shiva lingams, 10, 16, 86, 163, 233, 241
Shiva Lingam Stupa, 36
Shiva Ratri, 156, 214
Shorea robusta Gaertn. See sal
shraddha (Festival of the Dead), 240
shuna jhankri (Ban Jhankri), 26, 105, 106, 164–65, 251
shu paati, 140
Siberian shamans, 175, 176
sickles, 43, 47, 183, 210–11
siddha, 157
siddhi, 157
sili (drum rhythms), 215–17
silver, 242
singing bowls, 217–18
Sing Thoma, 112, 130, 272
sinus problems, 140
sirpech motif, 82, 82
sisnu (nettle), 107
siva ghanta, 167–68
skopa (yeti), 105–6
skull bowl, 89, 222–23
skull scepter, 89
smell, trance journey's through, 168
smoking
 bis, 163
 cigarettes, 142, 143, 153, 160
 henbane as smoking herb, 18
 pipes for, 86, 151, 157, 220
 recipes, 120t, 164t
- snake ascetics, 111
snake charmers, 107, 112
snakes. See nagas
“Snaking Vine,” 165–66
snow lion, 48
snow man, 105–6
snuff powder, 178–79
soda-mukhi, 145
Sogyal, Yeshe, 31, 32, 85
solu bung chhang (henbane), 17, 18
soma
 bhang as, 178
 defined, 16, 177
 fly agaric as, 176
 as psychoactive substances, 16–17
 Shiva as Lord of Soma, 17
 stolen by *Garuda*, 70
 See also amrita; traveling herbs
- somalata (moon plant), 143, 144
Sosubokiteshvara (Avalokiteshvara), 31, 70, 96–100, 261
sotang (dragons), 72, 73, 82, 110–11, 269–70
souls, 22, 39
South American Indians, 178
spathe (cobra plant), 109, 151t, 164–65
spells, 48, 107, 128–29
spirits
 as cause of disease, 43
 as energy vampires, 48
 hungry spirits of the dead, 46
 negative spirits, 57, 58, 124, 125t
- spirit helpers, 166, 173–74
 water spirits, 68
spiritual path, 18
spiritual white horse, 59–60
Srimati Devi thangka, 75–77, 76
Sri Yantra, 43, 184, 185, 267
srung-ba (amulets), 51–52, 74
srung-khor, protective chakras, 151
standa kundas, 245, 247
staves, 122
stones
 fossils, 86, 204–5, 241
 garnets, 205–6, 241–43
 rock crystal, 48, 59, 205
 thunder ax, 16, 110, 169, 204
- stupa* mudra, 188
suicide, 126, 127
sulfur, 143–44
Sundhoka Palace, 82
sun pati, 44
supari, 98, 161
suptulung, 203
surti (*Nicotiana tabacum*), 160
Surya Binayak temple, 3
svadhithana chakra, 116
Svayambunath temple, 16, 29, 36, 95
swan, 60
Zyzygium cumini, 95
- taboos, dietary, 53, 234t
talismans, 51–52
Tamang, Danashing
 drumming to honor the underworld, 21
 healing ceremonies by, 23–24, 183
 incense recipe from, 145t
 mudras used by, 188
 nava graha rekhi yantra healing by, 182–83, 185
 performing animal horns mudras, 209
 phurba mudra demonstrated by, 189
 smoking ganja, 157
 swallowing fire, 123
 witches' incense, 145
- Tamang tribe, 4, 53, 84–85, 234
tamas, 197
tama shoots (*nigalo*), 166–67
tantra
 charmukhi dorje and, 67
 neo-tantra, vii–viii
 phurba used by, 55
 shamanism and, viii, 17, 33
 tantric deities of, 29
 tantric healing, 53–55
 tantric shields, 102
 vajra as insignia of, 16
 See also tantrikas
- tantrikas
 arrows used by, 211
 bone aprons of, 30
 drinking blood, 36n
 drums and, 214
 five metals of, 243

- gubajus as, 29–30, 53, 186–87
 importance of astrology, 104
 lamas as, 53
 shamans vs., 17, 186
 skull bowl used by, 223
 tools/weapons of, 206, 207
 use of bells, 218
 weather-making of, 254
 as yogis, 30
- Tara
 Blue Tara, 80, 273–74
 forms of, 80n
 Green Tara, 78, 81, 212, 267, 270
 Kali and, 90
 mandala, 35, 269
 White Tara, 81, 84, 85, 262
 worship of, 80–81
- taralung*, 203
 teaching plants. *See* traveling herbs
 Tengu, 70
 thangkas
 as Buddhist vs. Nepali, 77, 78
 clouds for, 83
 ethnic features of, 82, 84–85
 for healing and meditation, 74
 index of, 261–74
 modernization in, 80
 of Nepal, 77–85
 as protection and cures, 74
 purpose of, 74
 quality of, 79–80
- thankro* (witches broom), 133, 223
thapana law, 27
thapana (snuff powder), 178–79
thar (goats), 43, 47, 110, 214, 234
 Tharu shamans, 107, 147, 211
 THC, 139, 157
 third eye chakra, 117
thoc kag, 201
thog lcag, 13, 17
thokre chyaw (shamans' club), 171–72
 thorn apple, 152, 233
 three worlds
 mushrooms as, 169
 rulers of, 59
 trident and, 15
 upper world, 16, 57–58, 59, 82, 144
See also middle world; underworld
- thresholds, 3
 throat chakra, 115, 117
 thunder, 110
 thunder ax, 16, 110, 169, 204
 thunderbolt (*vajra*), 16–18, 67, 204
thute chyaw (*polypores*), 169–71
 Tibet, cultural relationship with Nepal, 78–79
 Tibetan Buddhism, 218, 258, 262
 Tibetan-Chinese calendar, 102, 103
 Tibetan incense sticks, 138
 Tibetan shamanism, 4n
 tigers, 212, 235
tihar/dipawali (Festival of Light), 240
 Tika Bhairab, 158, 265
- time
 Black Calendar thangka, 103, 269
 incense for, 104
 Nepalese year, 245n
 symbolized with the *phurba*, 12
 Tibetan-Chinese calendar, 102, 103
Tinospora cordifolia, 147
titepati (mugwort), 40, 44, 50t, 51, 139–40, 201–2
 toads, 240, 251n
 tobacco, 151
 tools/weapons
 arrows, 211
 battle axes, 204, 207
 chopping knife, 206, 207
 conch shell, 112, 116, 206, 219
 fire tongs, 222
karda, 208–9
khukuri knife, 22–23, 47, 182, 183, 208–9, 210
 list of, 195t
 shamans' broom, 53, 54, 133, 223
 sickle, 43, 47, 183, 210–11
 skull bowl, 89, 222–23
 trident of Shiva, 14, 15, 33, 47, 91
 wild boar teeth, 211–12
See also phurba
- toothaches, 212
 tortoise-reptile deity (*mara*), 102
totalaka phul (seeds), 44, 166, 203
 tourists, 6n, 7
tragopan (*danphe* bird), 60, 149
 trance
 described, 38, 72, 73
 dragons for, 110
 drumming and, 212
 falling into, 19, 25, 38–41
 fear as obstruction to, 19
 ginger *jokhana* for, 43, 204
 gubajus ability with, 53
 knowledge gained through, 14
 lamas ability with, 53
 mantras and, 180
 meditation and, 232
 possessed by deities during, 53
 protection during, 67–68
 psychoactive plants and, 156
 through skin contact, 165
 through smell, 168
 trance journey thangka, 72, 73–74
See also traveling herbs
- Traumzeit*, 38n
 traveling herbs, 151–68
 botanical names and uses, 151–53t
 enlightenment experienced with, 17–18
 indigenous names and constituents, 153–55t
 mugwort, 40, 44, 50t, 51, 139–40, 201–2
 revealed in dreams, 153
 snuff powder, 178–79
 as teachers, 153, 156–57, 168
See also mushrooms; *specific herbs*
- trees
amala tree, 147, 235, 250
 banana tree, 43–44, 46
 bilva trees, 98–99
 chestnut tree, 147
 hemp tree, 157
 Indian butter tree, 144
Jambu tree, 95
 kapok tree, 233
palas tree, 211
 rainbow tree, 147, 149
 seven sacred, 27n
 shaman's tree, 233
 world tree, 10n, 233
See also world tree
- tribes, 4, 234t
 trident of Shiva (*trishul*), 14, 15, 33, 47, 91
 trumpets, 40–41, 118, 120–21, 219–20
 Tucci, Guisepppe, 30n
tulassi pati, 44
tulsi (Holy basil), 142, 205
 turtle (*kachhuwa*), 58
 Tütting, Ludmilla, 6n
- ubhauri/udhauri* (harvest festival), 133
ud (psychoactive scent), 142
 Ulmata Bhairab/Ulmeta Mahakala, 148, 268
 umbrella (cosmic), 58, 169, 170, 172
 underworld
 described, 58–59
 dragons help in, 73
 incense of, 144
 shamans travel in, 57, 73
 as world of water and crystal, 21
 Yamaraj as ruler of, 58
 upper world, 16, 57–58, 59, 82, 144
- Vaidyanātha, 89
 Vaisravana, 66, 271
vajra, 16–18, 67, 204
vajrabhang (henbane), 17, 18
 Vajracharya, Asar Ratna, 29, 62, 186, 187
 Vajracharya caste, 29, 186
vajra dhunga (thunder ax), 16, 110, 169, 204
 Vajrakila, 274
vajrakila triangle, 185
 Vajrasattva, 29
 Vajrayana Buddhism
 guardians of, 31, 32
 gubaju tradition rooted in, 29
 influence of, 12–13
 Nagarjun and, 253
 tantric deities of, 29
 tantric teachings of, 185–86
See also Nyingmapa sect
- Vajrayogini
 with bow and arrow, 212, 267
 with Cakrasamvara, 84, 265
 as directional deities, 36
 as manifestation of Kali, 34, 36, 112, 272
 as tantric deity, 29
 “vampires,” 42, 48
 Vedic-Hindu worldview, 126
 vermilion red, 1n

- Viagra, 51
 Virudhaka, 64, 270
 Virupaksha, 65, 270–71
 Vishnu, 131, 233, 247
vishuddha (throat chakra), 115, 117
 visionary dreams, 27n
 visions, 38, 49
vitarka mudra (mudra of the teacher), 81
Vitex negundo. See rainbow tree
- warlocks, 133
Was ist Schamanismus?, 5
 Wasson, R. Gordon, 176
Wat bezielt de sjamaan: Genesing, Extase, Kunst, 5
 water
 for coming out of trance, 47
 for cutting the threads of fate ritual, 44, 46
 underworld as, 21
 water pitcher, 47, 139, 163, 196–97
 water spirits, 68
 worshipped as Jala Deva, 70
 water buffalo, 171, 208
Way of the Shaman, The, 212
 weapons, 206
 weather
 Indra as god of, 16
 Indralok and, 57
 weather-making, 16, 253–54
- Wheel of life, 101, 102, 104, 264, 269
 white sandalwood, 136
 White Tara, 81, 262
 wild boar, 60, 166, 211–12
 wild chicken, 203
 wild goat, 110, 234
 witches. See bokshis
 witches' broom, 133, 223
 witches' incense, 137, 144–46
 women, 18, 20, 29, 30
 woodcutters, 14–15
 World Axis, 10, 58, 233
 world disks, 192
 world tree, 10n, 233
 Wotan/Odin, 173, 174
- yab-yum* position, 31, 32, 186, 210, 259
 Yama. See Yamantaka
 Yamalok, 57–58, 251n
Yamantaka
 Lord of Death, 44, 51, 57, 58, 59
 Mahakala with Yamantaka, 150, 263
 thangkas, 56, 134–35, 272–73
 in union with Yamarani, 119, 262–63
 Yamaraj. See Yamantaka
 Yamarani, 57, 58, 59, 119, 262–63
yangbag (wild boar), 60, 166, 211–12
- yantras
 adopted from shamanism, 33
 for cutting the treads of fate ritual, 182
 importance to Kirati shamans, 20–21
 Kali yantra, 185
 materials for, 185
 nava graha rekhi yantra, 182–83, 185
 Om yantra, 185
 for release of demons, 185
 seven planet yantra, 43–44, 45, 46–47
 sri yantra, 43, 184, 185, 267
 as visualization of mantras, 185
- yarn amulets, 74
 yarn cross, 170
 Yeshey, Sangyay, 181
 yeti, 105–6
 yoginis, 186
 yogis, 30, 232
 yoni, 115
yoni kunda, 247
yoni tattva, 247
 Yonjon, 23–24, 145t, 149, 153, 213
 Yungtonpa, Siddha Thuch'en, 254
 Yüntün Dorje thangka, 74–75, 267–68
- Zimpu ritual incense*, 138



 Thames & Hudson

ISBN 0-500-51108-X

9 780500 511084

Shamanism and Tantra in the Himalayas

Claudia Müller-Ebeling Christian Rättsch
Surendra Bahadur Shahi

Shamanism and Tantra in the Himalayas is the first all-encompassing study and first-hand report of the shamans and tantrikas of the Himalayan kingdom of Nepal. Shamanism is not an archaic 'religion' but rather a set of practices and beliefs from which Buddhism and Hinduism have borrowed fundamental tenets. This book is the first to examine Nepalese shamanism from an interethnic perspective, allowing the voices and practices of various ethnic groups to emerge. It is also the first to explain the shamanic background of thangka-painting, and includes detailed descriptions of the techniques used to paint the thangkas, the deities depicted, and the ritual uses of the images.

Shamanism and Tantra in the Himalayas allows us to travel into the depths of the consciousness and life work of five shamans, all of whom are among the most powerful and respected people in their ethnic groups. It features the first photographic documentation of their esoteric rites, such as the midnight graveyard ritual dedicated to Shiva, and describes a pilgrimage to the most sacred mountain of the Nepalese shamans, Mount Kalinchok. The authors also explore the soma myth and offer valuable insights into the use of this ancient hallucinogen.

The volume is lavishly illustrated with 135 colour thangkas, which serve as visual guides to the shamans and those following their ways. These thangkas – fifty of which are contemporary masterpieces by Surendra Bahadur Shahi, the leading thangka painter of Nepal – reveal the specific practices of the tantric tradition. Surendra Bahadur Shahi offers an ethnographic approach to the rich tradition of Nepali thangka painting, revealing for the first time the secret history of thangka paintings. In addition to the thangkas, there are also numerous photos of different shamanic healing ceremonies, ritual objects and culturally significant plants that have never been published before. The book also contains a wealth of original recipes, smoking mixtures, scientific tables, charts and descriptions of more than twenty plants whose psychoactive properties and uses by shamans have never before been researched or documented.

With 605 illustrations, including 135 colour thangkas

On the jacket

Front: *Vajrayogini with bow and arrow*, Kurukula Devi, 41.5 x 32 cm,
by Surendra Bahadur Shahi

Back: The shaman Danashing Tamang drums to honour the underworld
at a waterfall on the pilgrim's path to Kalinchok

Christian Rättsch PhD is a world-renowned anthropologist and ethnopharmacologist who specializes in the shamanic use of plants. Among his previous book is *Marijuana Medicine*.

Claudia Müller-Ebeling PhD is an art historian and anthropologist, and was editor-in-chief of *Dao*, a magazine about the Far East.

Surendra Bahadur Shahi was born in Kathmandu into a Newari family of the Shahi caste and is an accomplished thangka painter.

Other titles of interest

The Tibetan Art of Healing

Paintings by Romio Shesthra Text by Ian A. Baker
With 250 colour illustrations

Shamans Through Time

500 Years on the Path to Knowledge
Jeremy Narby and Francis Huxley
With 8 illustrations

Buddhist Himalayas

People, Faith and Nature
Daniele and Olivier Föllmi Matthieu Ricard
With an introduction by His Holiness the Dalai Lama
With 218 illustrations, 210 in colour

The Dalai Lama's Secret Temple

Tantric Wall Paintings from Tibet
Text by Ian A. Baker Photographs by Thomas Laird
With 188 illustrations, 150 in colour

If you would like to receive details
of our new and forthcoming titles,
please send your name and address to

Thames & Hudson

181A High Holborn
London WC1V 7QX

www.thamesandhudson.com

Printed in China