The marriage of Mahesh Bhaju and Benela Joshi, 22 November 2010.
Prior to the actual marriage ceremony, the Brahmin of the bride's family prepares the ground: A decorated garland of ḍubo grass is displayed in crescent shape on a layer of unhusked and popped rice. The centre is marked by the sacred vase (kalaśa) with an earthenware cup (kisli) on top, filled with ritual rice (kigaḷ), a betel nut, a coin and a red flower. From the vase emerges a twig of white jasmine. Behind the vase stands a silver tray with a small container with vermilion, to be rubbed to the forehead and the parting of the bride. The container stands on the embroidered cloth with which the face of the bride is covered.

Part I

MARRIAGE ARRANGEMENTS

Introduction

In this first section we shall elaborate on the arrangements and actors in marriages. This includes considerations on kinship and alliance, marital age, divorce and separation, but also the economics of marriage or the organisation of feasts and the music bands. The focus will be on Bhaktapur and, for the Buddhist rituals, Patan. We will not reiterate the details of the spatial and social background of the Newars in Bhaktapur, which we have dealt with in the two previous volumes (Gutschow / Michaels 2005 and 2008).

Marriages are generally arranged, even though the couple in some cases knows each other. Bride and groom are chosen by the fathers or helpers (see below) and presented to the marriage partners, who sometimes can meet under the supervision of relatives and thus get to know each other. The initiative for such marriages usually comes from the bride's side.

A marriage is therefore an affair between wife-givers and wife-takers. The daughter is given by her own kinship group to another one. This creates an alliance between them that is expressed through many acts of exchange.

The criteria for a good choice of a bride have been established according to rules of kinship, caste and clan, *gotra* exogamy and subcaste endogamy, age, education, character, health, beauty, skin colour, and especially important, the stars: no marriage would be concluded without previously consulting the Jośi astrologer who examines the couple's horoscopes.

A good wife should be healthy and physically well-formed, and be of a good mood and temperament. She should be modest and reserved, shy almost (even if this is merely feigned). She should respect her new family, especially elderly members. She should not refuse to work. The husband should be likewise of good character, capable of caring for his wife, respectful to his and her kin. He should not drink too much alcohol or gamble or use abusive language. As Levy (1990: 129) aptly remarks, "the reputation and behavior of the other household members, and the extended-family group, the *phukī*, are also of great importance. Immorality, crime, insanity, scandal anywhere in this group will affect the desirability of all its members."

The Ihi marriage system made child marriages – which are so common in northern India – almost obsolete among Newars. This is remarkable since in northern India and other castes in Nepal, Hindu women are often married in early youth. Newar marriages – except for those of the Rājopādhyāya Brahmins who often do not practice Ihi – are mostly post-menarche marriages. But this "does not make rules for human marriage, or general sexual conduct, any more lax than among Hindus elsewhere" (Quigley 1986: 87).

Nowadays, child marriage is illegal in India and Nepal, where the law, i.e. the Mulukī Ain, has set the age for marriage for males at 20 and females at eighteen without parental permission and at eighteen for males and sixteen for females with parental permission. Gopal Singh Nepali (1965: 198-231) in an earlier survey (1957/58), reports that most girls in Kathmandu were between thirteen and twenty (the majority between thirteen and fourteen) when they married, and most boys between fifteen and twenty-four (the majority between fifteen and eighteen). According to the 2001 Census (summarised in the Nepal Population Report 2002) the singulate mean age at marriage has been 19.5 for females and 22.29 for men. However, according to a 2011 UNICEF report 51 per cent of Nepalese children get married before turning eighteen and ten per cent before fifteen – despite the Bihari Bish Barsa Pari (marriage after 20) campaign of the Ministry of Health and Population. It

seems that urban areas with a high percentage of Newars have higher rates.

The Matchmaker (*lami*)

Important for match-making among Newars is a person approved by both families, often called *lami* (lit. = the maker (*mi*) of the way (*la*)), who helps to search for a potential bride if it is an arranged marriage. These middlemen mediate and communicate between both parties and help the couple through the sometimes emotionally difficult procedures. Sometimes it is the groom's maternal uncle (*pāju*) or the husband of the groom's paternal aunt (*jicāpāju*) who helps in this regard (Pradhan 1986: 154), but more often friends (*pāsā*) of the bride and groom take on these roles during the rituals. They sit beside them making jokes, teasing or consoling them. The *lami* sometimes also helps during the performance of certain rituals. The *lami* can be a man or a woman (Asha Kaji 2010: 123).

Thus, in a Citrakār marriage between Sajani Chitrakar, daughter of Madhu from Bhaktapur, and Subin Citrakar from Naṭol, Patan, on December 7, 2008, the first negotiation started in Chauni in the house of Bishnu Kumar, who acted as the middleman. He, the son of the elder sister of Madhu's mother, Chaitya Maya, arranged a meeting between Madhu, his wife, and their daughter Sajani and the prospective groom, his three sisters and his mother's younger sister. The meeting took place in their *kulchẽ* in Cikāmugal in Kathmandu on August 25 to explore the possibility of a marriage between Subin and Sajani. The couple hat not met before and had had no chance of meeting each other. They liked each other and agreed to marry.

The third meeting then took place in Madhu's new house in Ramanjil in Bhaktapur on September 4. The father of the groom, Praya Lakshmi, his mother Suba Ratna and his grandmother Narain Devi (who is called by her nickname Jyaputata) came to meet Madhu, his wife and the bride to get acquainted with the life-style of the prospective wife-taker's family.

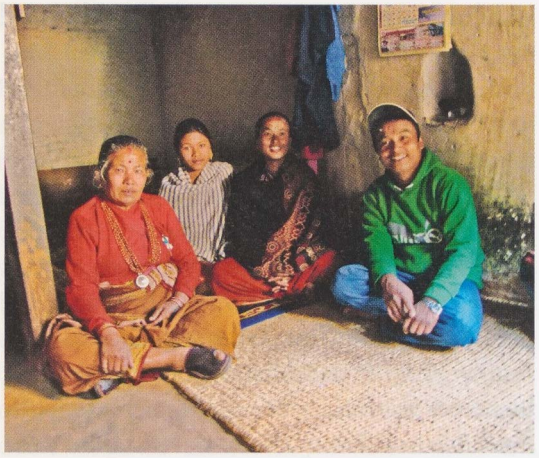
The formal negotiations concluded on September 11 when the bride's party brought yoghurt, eggs and flowers to the groom's house, an act called *dhausvā haygu* that confirms that Subin would marry Sajani. Subin's mother's elder sister *(cimacā)* came with her husband as well as her younger sister with her husband. On that occasion, Madhu's father's sister, his *nini* (the bride's *niniaji*), performed *pūjā* and gave a *tikā* to them.

The *lami* has explicitly said that after the first meeting in the presence of the family members, the bride and groom should not meet. Sajani, however, met Subin on September 2 and 7 at her workplace, the eye clinic. She planned another meeting on 28 September, but a strike (Nepal Banda day) made it impossible.

The *lami* thus helps to make the arrangements and meetings possible. He does not select the prospective marriage partners. Given the rising percentage of love marriages, the *lami* is becoming increasingly obsolete.

However, the *lami* sometimes remains pivotal during the performance of the rituals, as can be seen from the following description of the betrothal and pre-marriage rituals of Sumitra Kvaju and Dilaram Duval in Bhaktapur that took place from February 11 to 13, 2009.

The ritual is regarded as a kind of marriage promise. Krishna Kumari Kvaju as *misā lami* (helper of the bride) and her husband Tulsidas Kvaju as *misan lami* (helper of the groom), both from Cvachẽ, Bhaktapur, had been the matchmakers arranging the marriage after the groom had fallen in love with the bride. The couple had met once or twice on the street before the marriage. The groom is the son of the elder sister of the *misā lami*.



Pre-marriage betrothal ritual of Dilaram Duval and Sumitra Kvaju in Bhaktapur, 11 February 2009
The bride is framed by a female and a male matchmaker (misā lami / misan lami), in this case a couple. The bride's paternal aunt (nini) presides over the bethrothal.

The approval of the marriage of Sumitra and Dilaram takes place at around noon with a kind of engagement ritual called *gvẽ biyegu* (lit. "to give betel nuts"). Both the *misā lami* and *mijan lami* come to the house of the bride in order to hand over the ten betel nuts (*gvẽ*, Nep. *supāri*) which are kept in a decorated silver cup (*lampicā*). This sub-ritual should have happened four days before the marriage but, because of inauspicious days, it was postponed.

Apart from the betel nuts, the *mijan lami* brings four plates from the house of the groom: a clay bowl of yoghurt decorated with flowers and inscribed with the number "2065"; a second bowl with round sweetcake (*lākhāmari*[1]), a third bowl with fruit (oranges, bananas, apples), and a fourth with sweetmeats. These gifts inform the wife-givers about the impending wedding. They are later distributed among the bride's relatives. Sometimes the sweetmeats come with cash (Nepali 1965: 215) or a vermilion container (Pradhan 1986: 157).

The *mijan lami* then hands over ten betel nuts to the *nāyaḥ* (= bride's father), who sits opposite him. Afterwards the *misā lami* gives *dhau svagã* to the father and the bride after she has first thrown small pieces into the air (for the gods) and put some aside (for the ancestors). She then gives *dhau svagã* to all those present: the mother of the bride, the *mijan lami*, and the guests. The whole ceremony lasts no more than half an hour.

The offering of a set of ten betel nuts is the actual betrothal practice, so it seems, used by all Newar castes (Löwdin 1985: 98f.). By accepting them, the *nāyaḥ* and the bride officially confirm the match. Interestingly, neither the groom's father nor the groom are present; it is the *lami* who represents them. The girl is now regarded as engaged, and the betel nuts can be seen as a token for the alliance that is to be completed with the wedding. Afterwards it is not possible for her to marry somebody else. The couple should also not meet privately until the wedding is over.

During the rituals the *lami* sits beside the bride and often hands the betel nuts to her.

The *lami* (or the *pāsā*) are especially helpful when it comes to the emotional aspects of the bride's departure, as expressed by giving betel nuts to several members of her own *phukī*, and, especially moving, at the end to her father and mother, who cries openly. The bride hesitates to give the nuts away and is forced to do so by her friend and the *lami*, who press the nuts through her hands. This moment, called *lhāgoye phaye* ("begging betel nuts with open palms"), is regarded as a culmination because it marks the moment of separation from her natal house.

Sometimes the *lami* is active even after the wedding. Thus, on the morning of the fifth day of the above-mentioned Kvaju marriage, the mother or the *lami* came to the groom's house to invite the bride back to her natal house. The bride returned to her parental house the next day and after four days she was taken back by the *lami* and received by the eldest woman of the wife-taker's household (*nakhī*) with *sukũda* etc.

[1] The *lākhāmari* can have different sizes and standards, sometimes said to depend on the closeness of kinship bonds: cf. Nepali 1965: 214-5, Löwdin 1985: 99-100.

Kinship and Alliance

The Brahmanical system

The North-Indian Brahmanical marriage system (the following after Michaels 2004: 120-124) may be isogamous, endogamous, exogamous, hypergamous and sometimes even anagamous, depending on social group, locality and status. In principle, the class (*varṇa*) is isogamous; class, caste and subcaste are endogamous; extended family and clan are mostly exogamous but sometimes also endogamous; and the extended family and clan are generally hypergamous groups.

According to the Dharmaśāstra, one should marry within one's class and subcaste (Manu 3.12). This means that within the classes, there are no hierarchies: no Brahmin or Kṣatriya is higher or lower than another Brahman or Kṣatriya solely because of his class. Similarly, the obligation to marry outside of one's kinship group, extended family, and often village does not imply any hierarchy in the choice of a partner. Other factors such as rank in the army, police or in companies, education, prestige, wealth, status and family reputation etc. might, however, make for such hierarchies within the classes.

It is predominantly through the hierarchical structure of the gift (*dāna*, Michaels 1997, 2004: 197-200) and the conception of the marriage as such a gift (*kanyādāna*) that the hypergamous structures in the marriage system come into play through the various forms of marriage (Fürer-Haimendorf 1966: 30-31; Bennett 1983: 16). Thus, a higher and purer status is ascribed to the one who takes the woman rather than to the one who gives the woman.

The choice of male and female candidates for marriage is a complex affair, primarily because the boundaries of kinship are not firm. Kinship is a human concept, not a natural law. Because humans create their own rules for it, those rules can be changed. Thus, every marriage is an opportunity to clarify who belongs to one's kinship group, from whom one may expect (unpaid) help, and whom one considers to be one's peers. These questions are discussed when marriage partners are looked for and at the latest, when the list of wedding guests is drawn up.

Social status is not absolutely firm either, but is ascribed and thus is always relational. The parties to the marriage must reach a consensus over its definition. This also applies to kinship boundaries, hence ultimately to the question of when a marriage is considered incestuous. The ritual gives a number of opportunities to express social status and difference.

Moreover, at least in the higher castes, two systems of kinship have to be coordinated, which weaken overly rigid criteria of hierarchy: the fictional-genealogical *gotra* system and the blood kinship *sāpiṇḍya* system of acknowledged kinship relations. The introduction of these regulations in post-Vedic times was coterminous with other drastic changes affecting women in the upper classes: child marriage, the ban on remarriage, the exclusion from sacrifice and the right of inheritance, as well as an increase in widow-burning.

Gotras (and *pravaras*) are patrilinear clans or units, who call on a common ancient ancestor, one of seven or eight seers (*ṛṣi*), and draw their names from him: e.g., Jamadagni, Gautama, Bharadvāja, Atri, Viśvāmitra, Kaśyapa and Vasiṣṭha, as well as Agastya. According to this fictional kinship system, a man and woman may not marry if the same ancient ancestor appears in their paternal lines. So if someone is of the Vāsiṣṭhagotra, belonging to the line of descent of the seer Vasiṣṭha, he cannot marry a woman whose father also has this fictional descent. In reality, there are not only seven *gotras*, but hundreds of exogamous units and many regional variations.

According to Brahmanical legal literature, violations of the *gotra* system and marriages between classes had serious consequences (Manu 10.24 ff.): a man became casteless and so did his progeny, he destroyed the heavenly living space of the ancestors, was despised, and was threatened with being cast into hell.

Despite legal bans (e.g. the Hindu Marriage and Divorce Act of 1955), this exogamous marriage system has been preserved to this day, primarily in northern India and Nepal where it is normally the Jośi who says whether a prospective marriage partner is a match or not.

The *gotra* system is strictly patrilinear: at birth, a woman acquires the *gotra* of her father; when she marries, occasionally even at the betrothal (Bennett: 1983: 74), she receives the *gotra* of her husband; she loses her "ancestors" or those of her patrilineage. The married daughter is no longer considered a blood relative; she loses the "physical" relationship after marriage and subsequently has only an indirect (kinship) relation to her paternal family (Raheja 1994: 56). Such relationships become especially visible in death rituals. Thus, when the married daughter dies, her husband's relatives perform the death rites; and if her own parents die, she must not include them in her ancestor worship. Among the Newars, a married daughter observes four days of pollution when her parents die, but ten days when she is unmarried.

Traditionally, the rule of blood relationship excludes marriage bonds in direct ascent and descent within the paternal line to the seventh generation and in the maternal line to the fifth generation. *Piṇḍa* denotes rice or flour balls, which are central in the death ritual and are a sign of kinship proximity (Gutschow / Michaels 2005: 128 ff.). Thus, relatives in a *sāpiṇḍya* relationship are to fast or be ritually purified in cases of death or birth.

Gotras cannot and may not overlap in a marriage, but one can be part of several *sāpiṇḍya* relationships, including one which incorporates the maternal kinship line. Belonging to the *gotra* is relatively unambiguous, even if only the priest can name it. In cases of doubt, consulting the household priest or a glance in the personal birth horoscope helps. On the other hand, the *sāpiṇḍya* system is more open and variable.

Through the *gotra* system, extended families form a common, pan-Indian social group, even though the members often do not know one another, hardly have anything to do with one another, and often live far apart. What is noteworthy is that the *gotra* system continues to exist even when everything else in Hindu societies is changing. The norms of purity and hierarchy deviate so much from one another that they exist only as strategies for delineating extended families. But the criterion of patrilinear descent of the *gotra* system remains – at least among the Twice-Born – and even resists modern influences. An untouchable may become a minister or a film star, he can achieve wealth, influence, and respect; but in the village it will still be hard for him to marry off his daughter to a conservative Brahmin or Kṣatriya. He lacks a *gotra*, the ritual identification with the Vedic seers and thus the soteriologically crucial identification with the Veda.

Why do two families let their son and daughter marry if neither emotional nor economic reasons are decisive? When neither of the two decide this themselves and the families have nothing directly to do with one another? Axel Michaels (2004) has argued that there appears to be only one conclusive answer: pure patrilinear descent is the surviving, integrative principle of Brahmanical Hindu society, because only thus is the Brahmanical path to salvation substantially opened. Marriage endangers this strictly patrilinear path to salvation; it can be integrated only by ritually denying or downplaying matrilinear aspects.

The Newar system

The North-Indian Brahmanical kinship system is basically also valid for the Newars. However, there are differences.

Newars do not marry within their patrilineal group (*phukī*), i.e. agnates up to the third generation who share the same ancestral deity (*dugudyaḥ*). Marriages within the bounds of kinship exogamy would be regarded as incestuous and lead to being outcast and banished (Levy 1990: 129).

High caste Newars (Rājopādhyāya Brahmins, Chatharīya castes) follow a kind of *gotra* system, for they forbid marriages within "larger groups thought to have a significant and close patrilineal connection, to be of the same patrilineage or *kul*" (Levy 1990: 128).

The *sāpiṇḍya* system is followed by the fact that within the subcastes (*thar*), exogamous units are distinguished that mostly forbid marriages within less than six generations (Levy ibid., Löwdin 1998: 98) to which one can trace one's ancestry. If there is a scarcity of brides, this rule might be circumvented "if the relationship is traced through the female links only" (Nepali 1965: 205).

Thus, Newars are in principle isogamous as far as their caste and even their subcaste is concerned. Jyāpu marry Jyāpus, Rājopādhyāya marry Rājopādhyāyas (though they sometimes also marry Bares). However, among Śreṣṭhas outside the Kathmandu Valley, cross-caste marriage is common (Quigley 1986: 77-78) and hypergamy is practiced among some Jyāpu and Śreṣṭha subcastes. Even marrying partners with the same *digudyaḥ* seems to be possible (Löwdin 1998: 98).

Territorial endogamy is another point that differs from the practice in northern India, where village exogamy is often the rule (Nepali 1965: 209, Pradhan 1986: 155, Quigley 1986: 88 and 91). Almost all the Jyāpu subcastes marry within Bhaktapur, and often within the same locality of the city. Among Rājopādhyāyas there are also marriage links to Patan and Kathmandu. This territorial aspect is remarkable because for Newars it is one of the most important factors in organising social life:

> In order to be a full member of the Newar community, it is necessary to frequently participate in local rituals and feasts. ... Not to participate – minimally in the rituals of the *deo pūjā guṭhi* and the functions of *śī guṭhi* (particularly cremations), and rites of passage of other lineage members – is to provoke an immediate sanction: fine, defamation, and ultimately, for repeated absences, expulsion from lineage and subcaste. The man who forgoes these responsibilities takes serious risks – even his brother will not be obliged to observe pollution in the event of a death in his household. To abstain from observing pollution is essentially to deny kinship. Cut off from his own lineage in this way, a man will find it extremely difficult to find brides for his sons among other lineages of his subcaste. (Quigley 1986: 88f.)

Despite these isogamous tendencies, wife-givers are considered to be of slightly lower status than wife-takers. Pradhan (1986: 156) reports a statement by an informant: "those who give daughters have to bow down (*mhyāmcā bi pī koswemā*)."

All these criteria are discussed and controlled by social groups that are essential to Newar society: the *guthīs*, especially the funeral or *siguthī* through which caste status is publicly marked. The person helping in a marriage alliance, the *lami*, sometimes uses *guthī* membership to verify subcaste membership.

Thus, caste identity becomes a public concern. In a closed society, such as the Newars create, it is always important to know who belongs to one's own and who not. This means there is a significant emphasis on con-

formity (Quigley 1986: 83, Fürer-Haimendorf 1956: 37). What matters is expressed in these rituals, which are organised by the *guthīs* or lineages. Membership to such groups denotes caste status.

The homogenisation of rituals through Sanskritisation does not blur the unique diversity of the Newar marriage system based on territorial and subcaste endogamy. This guarantees relatively closed marriage circles, since only a limited number of families are eligible for alliances (Quigley 1986: 91). Thus, ultimately in the Newar system a person marries an affine. Apart from marrying into the lineage of one's parent's mother or that of any grandparent's mother's brother, which would be a cross-cousin marriage system, alliances between affines are possible and even desirable.

How Bhaktapur differs

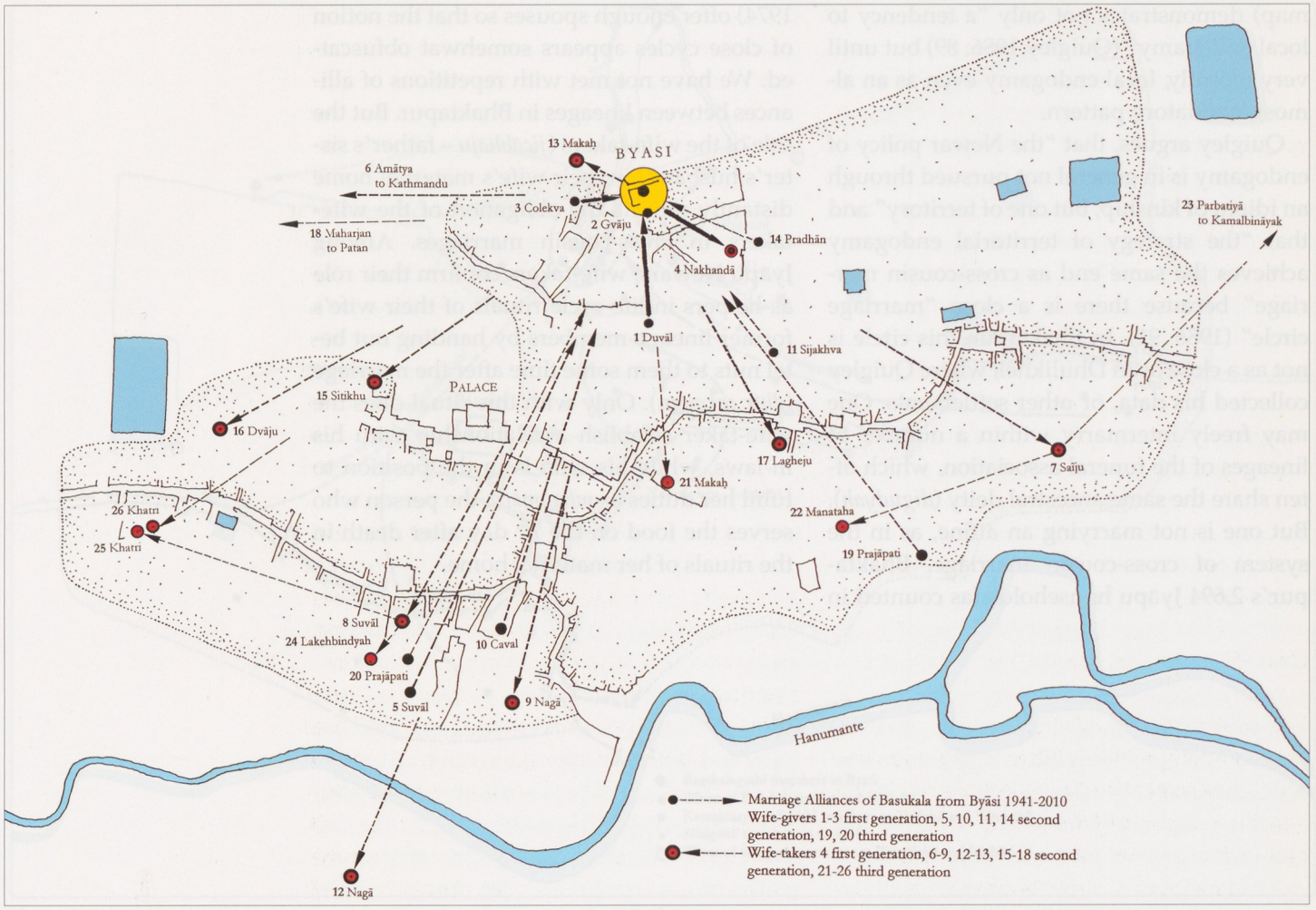
The case of the Basukalaguthī may serve as a good example to recall earlier accounts of social mobility among the Newars. Declan Quigley has pointed out that "caste identity is hidden by adopting [the caste names] Shrestha or Pradhān" (1986: 78) in the Newar diaspora settlements. This obviously happened to gain access to a wider range of spouses. This is certainly not the case in Bhaktapur.

A mésalliance is inevitably based on love marriage, often between a Jyāpu and a woman from sub-castes of the marginally pure range. People who conceal their erstwhile caste status have in the past regularly been teased or even abused. Only in recent years has the designation Śreṣṭha become more vague because many Jyāpus have opted for that designation with the arrival of citizenship certificates. People try to get rid of their lineage names, which are often nicknames such as "monkey" (Makaḥ) or "copper face" (Sijakhvaḥ). The second option is to acquire a widely known and respectable name from a Jyāpu sub-caste such as Suvāl. When it comes to registering the sale of plots at the land-registration office, this change in name creates difficulties and requires a long administrative process. At least four witnesses have to be found to certify that the former Lava or Makaḥ – who often is only registered by his shortened first name, such as "Gane" – has a grandson named Suvāl. Within the current generation, territorial mobility will probably create a situation similar to that found in the diaspora settlements.

No case of social upward mobility, as suggested by Colin Rosser (1966), is known to us from Bhaktapur. A Jyāpu will at best remain a Jyāpu when marrying a spouse of higher status and if he marries a spouse from a subcaste of inferior status, he faces problems in having his wife and children admitted to the funeral association (*siguthī*), whose caretakers guard the purity of their status. Quigley confirms this notion by saying that conformity to the lineage and the funeral association "underpins the cohesion of local, caste-based groups, and this severely limits the possibility for mobility" (1986: 83).

In view of these limits, Fürer-Haimendorf's notion of "customary provision for inter-caste unions" (1957: 245) seems farfetched. At any rate, we know of no such case in Bhaktapur, where inter-caste unions almost inevitably create dramas. A survey of sub-castes in Bhaktapur in 1974 (Gutschow/Kölver 1975) revealed that 309 households belonged to lineages of Śreṣṭhas, Pradhān, Śākaḥ(karmī), Devpradhān, Ulak and others – designations that reveal earlier cross-caste marriages.

Increasing spatial mobility and a new freedom of contact between the sexes will lead to a partial collapse of the isogamous ideal. Similarly, spatial mobility not only obliterates the functions of the funeral associations but also their role as guardians of caste purity. The case of the Basukala funeral association (see



Bhaktapur

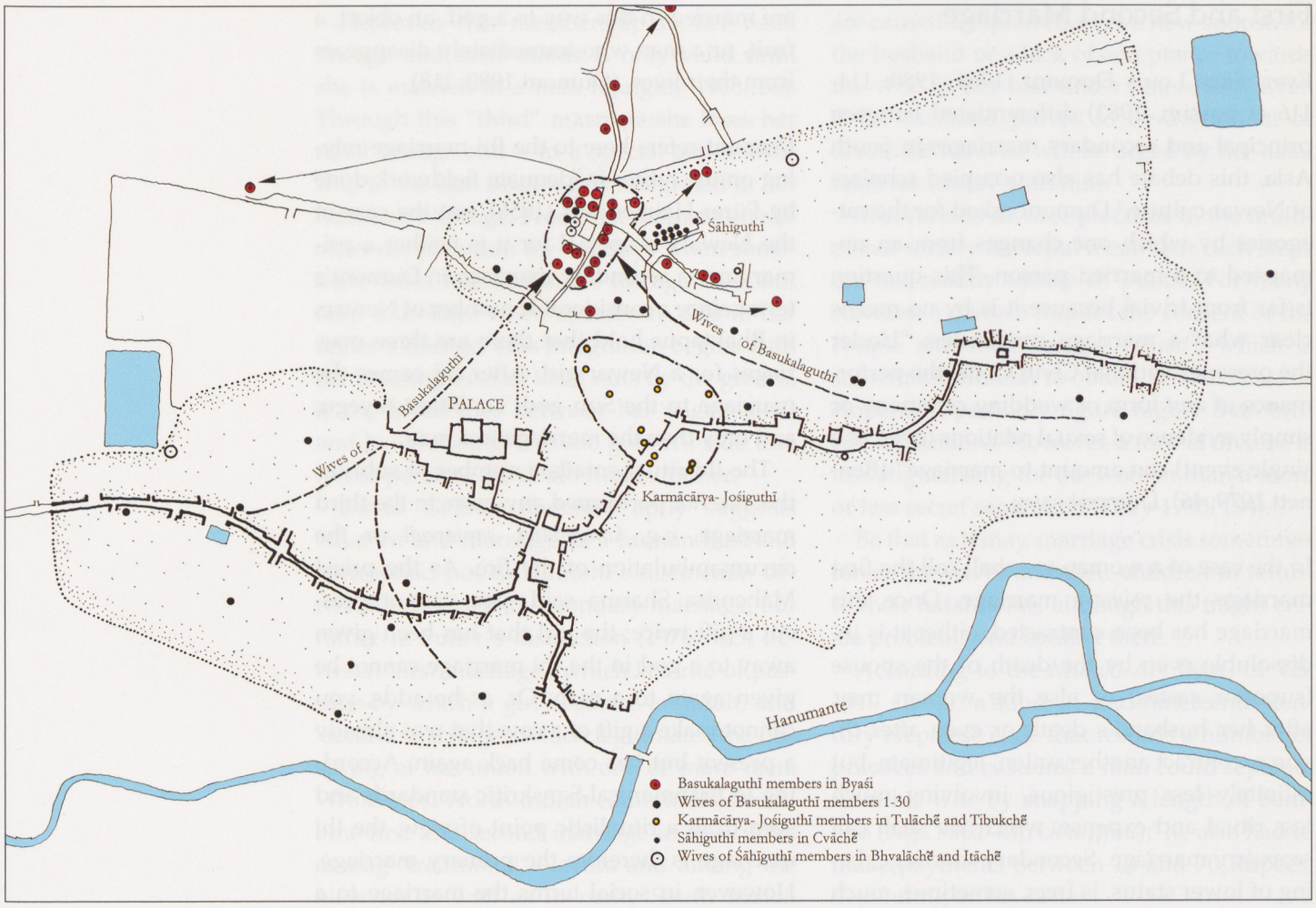
Marriage alliances of a single Basukala family (of Jyāpu status) in Byasi, covering three generations (1941-2010): destination of daughters (after marriage called mhaymacā) and the origin of daughter-in-laws (bhamcā). Ganesh Bahadur (1922-82) married a Duvāl (1), his brothers a Gvāju (2) and a Colekva (3), his sister a Nakhanda (4), all of them Jyāpu. The following generation (5-18) not only married Jyāpus from Bhaktapur (5, 7, 8. 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17) but also a Maharjan-Jyāpu from Patan, an Amātya (high sub-caste) from Kathmandu and a Pradhān (a Chipi claiming high caste). This generation witnessed ruptures that seem to herald an overthrow of traditional marriage patterns. Two daughters left their drunkard husbands and joined a Śākya and a Jyāpu without formally marrying, one married a husband from a "dubious" background, who was accepted, one "ran away" (melay vane) for a love marriage.

Of the present generation (20-26), two married girls from the sub-caste of potters (19, 20, Prajāpati), who were not accepted by the Basukala funeral association. Marrying a Parbatiyā Brahmin, one daughter even engaged in an inter-ethnic alliance. However, within three generations, three brothers, four sons, and two grandsons, one sister, eleven daughters and five granddaughters married Jyāpus.

The mapping of wife-givers and wife-takers demonstrates that in the 1940s marriage relations were established in the immediate neighbourhood, within a radius of 150 metres. In the 1960s the pattern covered the entire urban territory and even crossed its narrow borders for inter-caste and inter-ethnic relations.

map) demonstrates not only "a tendency to local endogamy" (Quigley 1986: 89) but until very recently, local endogamy even as an almost mandatory pattern.

Quigley argues, that "the Newar policy of endogamy is in general not pursued through an idiom of kinship, but one of territory" and that "the strategy of territorial endogamy achieves the same end as cross-cousin marriage" because there is a close "marriage circle" (1986: 91). In Bhaktapur, this circle is not as a close as in Dhulikhel, where Quigley collected his data, or other settlements. One may freely intermarry within a number of lineages of the funeral association, which often share the same ancestral deity (*digudyaḥ*). But one is not marrying an affine, as in the system of cross-cousin marriage. Bhaktapur's 2,694 Jyāpu households (as counted in 1974) offer enough spouses so that the notion of close cycles appears somehwat obfuscated. We have not met with repetitions of alliances between lineages in Bhaktapur. But the role of the wife-takers (*jicābhāju* – father's sister's husband) in their wife's maternal home distantly reflects the obligation of the wife-takers in cross-cousin marriages. Among Jyāpu Newars, wife-takers confirm their role as helpers in life-cycle rituals of their wife's former lineage members by handing out betel nuts to them some time after the marriage (*dhīr cakaygu*). Only with this ritual does the wife-taker establish a relationship with his in-laws, while his wife is in the position to fulfil her duties as *mhaymacā*, the person who serves the food on the 7th day after death in the rituals of her maternal home.



Bhaktapur, location of the members of three funeral associations and of the wives of the members of the Basukala funeral association.

Of the association of Jośī (astrologers, 4), Karmācārya (auxiliary priests, 7), Baidya (physicians, 2) and Munankarmi (1) the wives of the Jośīs originate from Kathmandu, Sanga, Panauti and Kharpu, the wives of the Karmācārya originate from Kathmandu (3), Banepa, Sanga and East Nepal, only one from Bhaktapur itself, the wives of the Baidya originate from Dolalghāt and Patan.

Of the wives of twelve members of the funeral association of Śāhi (butchers, also Nāy or Kāsāī) from Cvāchẽ, only two originate from Bhaktapur, the others from Dhulikhel, Banepa, Khokana, Thaiba, Capagaon and Kathmandu.

The majority of the thirty active members (guthīyār) of the Basukala funeral association (marked by red dots), still settle in Byasi, while seven have recently moved to new houses. Four have married wives from the sub-caste of Suvāl, two of Duvāl, two of Tvāyna, two of Caval, two of Sitikhu, two of Kvaju, and one each of Baidya, Gvacā, Baiju, Tyata and Lakhā. Only seven originate from Byasi itself, two from the neighbouring quarter of Cvāchẽ eleven from the lower town (Kvane), eight from the upper town (Thane) and one from the eastern periphery. The marriage pattern is isogamous as all of the brides come from sub-castes of the farmers (Jyāpu), and endogamous because the population of farmers in Bhaktapur is large enough to observe rules of exogamy.

First and Second Marriage

Ever since Louis Dumont (1964, 1980: 114-116 et passim, 1983) differentiated between principal and secondary marriages in South Asia, this debate has also occupied scholars of Newar culture.[2] Dumont asked for the categories by which one changes from an unmarried to a married person. This question is far from trivial because it is by no means clear what a marriage constitutes: "Under the present [National Civil] Code, the performance of any form of wedding ceremony or simply evidence of sexual relations (even as a single event) can amount to marriage" (Bennett 1979: 46). Dumont says:

> In the case of a woman we shall call the first marriage the *primary* marriage. Once this marriage has been contracted, either it is indissoluble even by the death of the spouse (superior castes) or else the woman may, after her husband's death or even after divorce, contract another union, legitimate, but infinitely less prestigious, involving much less ritual and expense, which we shall call *secondary* marriage. Secondary marriage, being of lower status, is freer, sometimes much freer, than primary marriage. In the case of a man his first marriage becomes the *principal* marriage only if it bears him children, preferably sons. But a man has the option, either in the case of the barrenness of the first marriage, or freely in other castes (royal, etc.) of taking other wives, either with full rite (necessary for the wife if she has not been married before) or with secondary rite (if the wife has already been married). Thus for a man there are supplementary or subsidiary marriages, with a corresponding hierarchy of wives. ... In various groups, in order to secure for women great freedom of [secondary] marriage or of sexual unions in general, primary marriage is, or rather was, reduced to a mere ritual formality. Sometimes women are married in this way to a god, an object, a fruit, or a man who immediately disappears from their lives. (Dumont 1980: 118)

Dumont refers here to the Ihi marriage relying on the rather inadequate fieldwork done by Fürer-Haimendorf (1956), but the case of the Newars is special for it is neither a primary nor a secondary marriage in Dumont's terms since a considerable number of Newars in Bhaktapur hold that there are three marriages for a Newar girl. After Ihi comes the marriage to the Sun god, i.e. Bāhrā tayegu, and only then the marriage to a man.

The Ihi ritual entails a number of subrites that are not performed any more in the third marriage, e.g. *kanyādāna*, *saptapadī* or the circumambulation of the fire. As the priest Mahendra Sharma said, you cannot present a gift twice; the girl that has been given away to a god in the Ihi marriage cannot be given again to a man. Or, as he adds, you cannot make a gift of a cow that was already a present but has come back again. According to Brahmanical-Sanskritic standards and seen from a ritualistic point of view, the Ihi marriage is therefore the primary marriage. However, in social terms the marriage to a man is the primary marriage since only this ritual is prestigious and binding and legitimates the offspring.

Anne Vergati has argued that the main purpose of the Ihi marriage, which she, following Dumont, calls primary, is to "maintain the hierarchical status of the woman and to confer on her the full status of a lineage and caste membership. This primary marriage ensures that she will never suffer a loss or decline in status because of the death of her husband or following divorce from him" (1982: 285). It is true, as we have also argued in *Growing up* (Gutschow/Michaels 2008: 185-7), that Ihi is to be seen more as an initiation ritual for the girls into the lineage than as marriage proper.[3]

[2] Nepali 1965: 198, Pradhan 1986: 149, Quigley 1986: 87, Levy 1990: 673.

[3] See also Gonda (1977: 566): "It has often been observed that there exists a certain parallelism between the marriage and initiation rites; what the latter are for a boy, the former are for a girl." Cf. Keßler-Persaud 2010 or Allen 1982.

However, this membership to her natal lineage and caste status is only valid until she is married to a man (Quigley 1986: 86). Through this "third" marriage she loses her natal lineage and – in a special act of worship to the clan deity – gets integrated in her husband's lineage. From that moment on she observes pollution for ten days when somebody from her husband's lineage dies, but only four days when somebody dies in her father's lineage. This integration begins with the handing over of betel nuts by the groom. If the bride dies between her engagement and her wedding, it is the groom's side that has to perform the death rituals for her.

David Gellner therefore aptly suggests "that *ihi* and marriage to a human husband correspond not to Dumont's distinction between primary and secondary marriage, but rather to Fuller's distinction (1976: 105) between 'first marriage', which is a rite of passage by which a girl becomes an adult, and 'second marriage', which legitimates the offspring of her union with one or more men. While most North Indian communities combine first and second marriage in one ritual, among 'traditional' Nayars and among the Newars, as well as in many South Indian cases (Good 1982), they are kept separate," (Gellner 1991: 114).

Divorce and Separation

Traditionally Hindu marriages, being a sacred bond, cannot be dissolved. Sometimes in high castes this bond was even stronger than life itself, as shown by widow-burning. In Nepal, the practice of *satī* was forbidden only about hundred years after it was in India[4] and underlines the emphasis on marriage as a life-long union.

However, divorces are legal, even if not often openly practiced. The reasons for divorce and separation are manifold. Very often they are caused by quarrels over a new spouse for the husband or a lack of acceptance towards the wife in her husband's household. Even if the husband proves to be a criminal or drunkard his wife will be urged by her natal relatives to stay with him.

The various divorce practices in the multiethnic society of Nepal mean that such steps are not readily visible in public. For many Newars, a divorce implies the consent of the couple and their lineage (*phukī*), which is sometimes difficult to obtain, so that cases of elopement probably figure higher than official separations. However, a formal divorce is less stigmatising for the woman than a more or less secret separation (Levy 1990: 134).

Be that as it may, marriage crisis sometimes forces the wives and their children to return to their natal home, although this might create problems and conflict there.

According to the *Mulukī Ain* (MA) of V.S. 1910 (1854), a kind of mid-nineteenth century Nepalese code that records a number of practices and customs, a man could separate from his wife by snapping a length of bamboo (*Nep. sinko-kāṭi chhuṭṭinu*);[5] he also had to make payments between 10 and 70 Rupees, depending on his caste.

The MA of 1854 apparently tries to make divorce for Newars more difficult, but it confirms the right of Newar women to divorce under certain circumstances (which was not permitted for other ethnic groups or castes): at the end of three years, if the husband had gone abroad, mostly to Tibet, leaving her without any support; if he had committed a crime and been branded; if he became an ascetic (*phakir*); or if he got some severe disease or injury (leprosy, loss of a leg, loss of speech, impotency). The divorce was performed by returning betel nuts, as B.H. Hodgson (1836: 130-1) notes: the Newar woman had to see the head court of the district and give two betel nuts and one *mohar* (half a rupee) to the judge, who then sent the betel nuts on to the husband.

[4] For a history of suttee in Nepal including the edition and translation of the relevant passages in the MA see Michaels 1992, 1993 and 1994.

[5] See the chapters Pāuke Garnyāko ("On Divorce") and Lognya Swasniko Mahal ("On the Section of Husband and Wife").

But a Newar wife was not allowed to return the betel nuts and leave her husband even if he was ill (except for the diseases mentioned above), took a second wife, or if she wanted to marry a lover beyond the caste limitations; and a Newar husband could not abandon his wife just because he did not like her anymore.

In a later amendment of the MA from V.S. 2055 (1997/98) that basically is still valid, four provisions are mentioned to make a divorce effective:

1. The wife or husband must have lived separately for at least three years.
2. Either the wife or husband must have engaged in a conspiracy against the life of the other or have committed a crime of serious physical assault against them, causing grave injuries.
3. The wife is found to have engaged in extramarital sexual affairs or to have eloped.
4. The wife has made a confession in a competent court that she has had sexual relations with somebody besides her husband. (Acharya 2006; cf. MA V.S. 2055: 135)

The right of child custody generally remains with the father's household (Bennett 1979: 64).

It is often said that due to the Ihi ritual, Newar woman can more easily divorce and remarry and are less stigmatised than widows (Pradhan 1986: 149, Levy 1990: 122). This is certainly not true. It is quite difficult for women to remarry, and even so for men. Mostly the "new marriage" is not a proper wedding but simply a matter of cohabitation.

Such observations sometimes come with remarks that the allegedly lax Newar women are easily allowed to leave their husbands and practice polyandry.[6]

However, Declan Quigley (1986: 85) has shown that divorce and widow remarriage rates do not differ appreciably from those among the rest of Nepal's population. In a sample of 226 married women, only one widow had taken a second husband; Gopal Singh Nepali reports that 13.3 percent of his male and 14.4 percent of his female informants had been divorced or lived in separation and only 4.9 percent remarried (Nepali 1965: 247ff., see also Levy 1990: 132). According to research by the sociologist Bala Ram Acharya in the Pokhara area, Newar divorce rates are at the lower level (Acharya 2006). Widow marriage is easier when no children are born.

Newar widows are no better off than other Hindu widows. Especially when they are young they face being blamed for the death of their husbands, and sometimes are regarded as witches. They are seen as impure and can only marginally participate in the rituals. They cannot become a *nakhī*. This also holds true for the marriage of their own daughters, as our cases described in the next chapter demonstrate.

Nevertheless, Newar widows often remain with their fathers-in-law und thus are members of the *siguthī*, even if they do not have any children. We do not know a case where a widow has been expelled from her in-laws' house.

[6] See, for instance, Kirkpatrick 1811/1975: 187, Hamilton 1819/1971: 41 ff., Hodgson 1880/2: 129-130; cf. Gellner 1991: 109.

Love Marriage

Love marriages, sometimes forced through unexpected pregnancy, become agreeable to the families involved if the partners are within the acceptable *thar* relationships. It seems that about half of the Newar marriages are love marriages. This means that the couple has known and frequently met each other before marriage, sometimes even for years. They mostly meet at college or school. For a few years now, boys and girls in Bhaktapur also meet around temples and at water tanks, such as Kamal Pokhari and Siddha Pokhari. Another occasion is the Valentine's Day that has recently become popular.

Valentine's Day: Experimenting with modernity

Valentine's Day, the "Day of Lovers", celebrated on 14 February of every year, was introduced to Kathmandu Valley in the early 1990s. Celebrating romantic feelings of two people towards each other, and catalysing the declaration of love through a plethora of material objects and events that mark 'special time' and 'special place' ritually, Valentine's Day in Nepal is a witness of social as well as economic change. It grew even further with the new millennium, with an increase in new media technologies, privatised media landscape such as television, with a thriving urban landscape that brought along shopping malls, but also gift and card shops, cafes and restaurants (Brosius 2011). Moreover, newspapers and magazines became important tools of communicating and legitimising the 'language of love'.

A few weeks before Valentine's day, they would carry special features about happy relationships of selected married couples who would recall their first celebration of Valentine's Day, give advise as to how to stay in a happy marriage, and how to use Valentine's Day to declare one's love and affection in the most convincing and effective way. Readers advise others about what gifts to present, what love-songs to listen to, and what movies to watch in order to convey and recognise 'love'. Romantic 'dating' spots are listed, mostly religious or tourist sites in the Kathmandu Valley or the nearby hill resorts, and restaurants advertise special 'candle-lit dinners' for two, consumer brands such as 'close up' toothpaste organise Valentine's parties. The celebration of intimacy between two people does not find approval throughout and is linked to economic liberalisation (comparatively weaker than in neighboring India) and a more affluent and professional middle class and consumer culture based on conspicuous consumption. Romantic Love, and a festival celebrating affection between two individuals was visualised by means of cards and gift shops, with the first Archies card shop from India being established in Kathmandu in 1995. Many youth in the valley appreciate Valentine's Day to indulge in 'doing fashion' (Liechty 2002) and socialising with peers, showcasing their knowledge of the latest trends.

Below the surface of celebration of love and consumption lie various levels of tension and conflict linked to the idea of 'being in love'. In a conservative society like Nepal, where marriages are still largely arranged by two families and not the result of individual decision-making and desire, Valentine's Day may also challenge traditional values and cause anger and dissent. Although the festival is widely celebrated by married couples, it is with the idea of premarital affection where tensions emerge. The public display of affection in parks or temples finds critics particularly during the advent of Valentine's Day. Courting couples have been pushed out of sacred places such as the Paśupatināth temple or the Svayambhūcaitya, with the introduction of fines of up to Rs 500 for 'immoral' behav-

iour. Newspapers stir discussions about the disadvantages and 'low' moral standard of 'live-in'-relationships and question the value and sincerity of feelings stated on that day. As if Valentine's Day was a catalyst of all these changes and ruptures, it is often blamed for the dilution of values, at best as an 'experiment with modernity'. Albeit, its popularity does not seem to be affected by worries about morality. Last but not least, it is also just one more festival among the many other festivals in Kathmandu Valley. And most youth prefer arranged love marriage, thus trying to combine both 'the past' and 'today's aspirations.

Three examples of love marriage

Love marriages seldom imply sexual contact before the wedding. Although bride and groom might know and love each other, they rarely dare to transgress the endogamic rules mentioned earlier.

In most cases a love marriage ends in an arranged marriage, during which the couple pretends not to know each other.

Given these patterns there are many stories of both happy and unhappy love marriages:

Thus, Maya Prajapati and Prem Palikhel, both from Bhaktapur, grew up in the same lane, leading from Inacva down to the shrine of Maheśvarī. In 2002, they decided to marry although she comes from the Prajāpati subcaste of potters and he from a family of high-caste Chatharīya, who for generations have been traders.

Maya left her house for the love marriage with the consent of her parents. The day she left the house she received *svagã*. The new couple had rented a room in Itāchẽ where they took up residence. In order to celebrate their "marriage", Maya went to the Nārāyaṇa temple north of Itāchẽ, from which both of their friends organised a formal *svayaṃvara*, taking the "bride" to the rented room. The following day the couple threw a party with their friends, but family members did not join in.

Following this love marriage, the husband joins his wife when she is invited by her *pājū* (mother's brother) and her elder sister (a requirement unique among Prajāpatis). She will not, however, be invited by her father's lineage members. Nor is her elder sister invited, who is married to a Basukala. The third daughter, who married a brick-maker (Avāḷ), is the only one who was accepted by the lineage members because brick-makers are on par in status with potters – both working with the same material, clay.

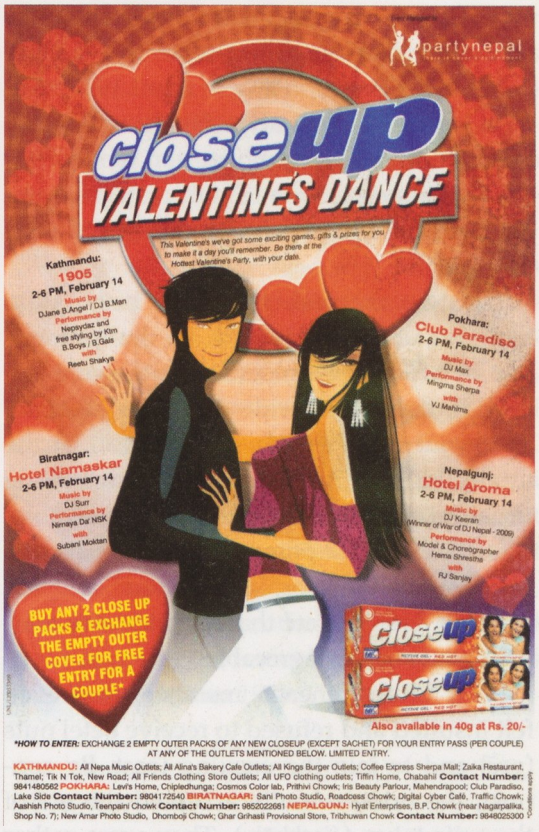
Prem will eventually perform the duties expected from a *jicābhāju*, the wife-taker, although he has never performed the *dhīr cakaygu* ritual, the handing-over of betel nuts to the members of his wife's lineage. For example, he came to help when the initiation (Kaytāpūjā) of his wife's brother's son was performed in 2006 – one of those occasions when the wife-takers are expected to serve. She joins her husband at his parents' house on certain ritual occasions (e.g. Mhāpūjā, or *kuchibvay*, *aṣṭamī* of Dasāĩ, Yāḷmārhipunhi, Bisketjātrā etc.) and she fulfils her duties at the *guthī* meetings of her husband's *siguthī*, but does not participate in the ensuing feasts, a fact which implies that she is not an accepted member. The problem will be discussed again once her husband takes over his *guthī* caretakership (*pālaḥ*).

Nevertheless, it seems that both have made their way and lead a happy life – despite the ritual constraints they still have to face. In 2003, they built a house at Surjebinayak. They have one son.

Another story is that of Ganesh Munankarmi and Sita Libi. The couple met before 1990 as activists of the United Marxist and Leninist Party (UML). They often provided shelter for the leaders of the party in the 1980s when they came to Bhaktapur undercover. They

Men buying roses for V-Day at a makeshift stall set up in front of the Archies Gallery in Khichhapokhari, Kathmandu, on Valentine's Day, 14th February 2010.
This stall was set up especially to meet the high demand for cut flowers and roses on Valentine´s Day. On other days the Archies Gallery sells a limited selection of flowers.

"Close-up Valentine, 2010" – advertisement for a party called "Close-up Valentine´s Dance", which is going to take place on Valentine´s Day, 14th February 2010, in four different cities in Nepal (Kathmandu, Pokhara, Biratnagar, Nepalgunj). The party is organized by the event management collective "partynepal.com" and the toothpaste company "Close-up". An entry ticket for a couple can be obtained by exchanging two empty "Close-up" toothpaste boxes at one of the shops listed at the bottom of the advertisement.
Source: The Himalayan Times, 10 February 2010



Bottom
Shop in Kathmandu selling hearts for Valentine's Day.

even had to support them with small sums of money. They married after the Janaandolan I (the first uprising in April 1990). Ganesh is from a Chatharīya family of Ghatka, his father being a local historian who writes books. Sahana is from a sub-caste of farmers from Laykvẽ, the quarter on the way to Yaḥśimkhel.

The two married, the bride being duly brought with *svayaṃvara* to the groom's house, where his parents alone were expecting them. The bride was fully accepted as *bhamcā* (at other places *bhaumacā*), at the threshold. The lineage members were willing to accept the bride if the wedding ceremony was done without pomp and without a party. The groom however was "proud" and decided to demonstrate that his intercaste marriage was socially agreeable.

Most of the lineage members, however, felt insulted and refused to receive betel nuts (*gvẽ*) and to join the ensuing feast. By contrast, the bride's family accepted the *gvẽ* of the wife-taker (*jicabhāju*). They were rather proud of gaining a *jicabhāju* of Chatharīya status. The bride joined her in-law's house, but her mother-in-law still considered her to be impure. She secretly added *ghyaḥ* (clarified butter) to the rice cooked by her daughter-in-law and thus purified the rice. After the death of the husband's father, his mother left the joint kitchen and started to cook her own rice to ensure its purity.

Ganesh and Sita have two sons who will certainly not find a bride from the same status group. They belong to the emerging generation that may opt for love marriages.

A third story is the love marriage of Prem Bahadur Basukala and Ritu Shakya from Byasi, from the Basukalaguthī with 30 active and 250 non-active members.

Prem Bahadur first married a Suvāl girl from Cvāchẽ in 1975. As the wife was not liked by her in-laws and especially by her husband's four sisters (a common phenomenon in Newar society), she returned with her son to her maternal home for more than ten years. In the meantime Prem Bahadur was studying health in Birgunj, where Ritu worked as a nurse. They married in 1978 without any pomp.

Afterwards he joined his parent's household but was expelled from his *phukī*, i.e. from the group of parental relatives. This also implies that they have to perform the worship of the ancestral deity at Bisīkyaḥ as a nuclear family. His father (who died in 2007) used, however, to be an active and thus quite influential figure. As such he was successful in persuading the funeral association to accept his new daughter-in-law. After his sisters were married, the first wife joined her husband again, who has two sons from his Śākya wife. The first son left his parental home and lives in Sallaghari, the second and third sons have been studying in the USA since 2005. Ritu had no problems from her family in Kathmandu. Also the fact that she served as the royal Kumārī in Kathmandu in the late 1960s did not play a role, although it is said that ex-Kumārīs have difficulties in finding marriage partners (Allen 1975). She joins the seasonal feasts at her maternal home in the company of her husband without any problems.

Such stories emphasise the relevance of traditional social structures and the tensions that arise from breaking them. Even if the love marriage couple is accepted by their families, it might not be accepted by the lineage groups.

However, love marriages have now become an integral part of Newar life. Even the priests respond to this. Some ritual handbooks contain portions of the *gandharva* marriage ritual (see manuscript 3 in Appendix I). According to the traditional scheme of acceptable and unacceptable marriages (cf.

Manu IX: 88-103), this means a form of illegitimate and low caste marriage. But most Brahmin priests in Bhaktapur now celebrate and sanction such inter-caste marriages in a very short and abbreviated form.

It seems that the term *svayaṃvara*, the act of the bride personally choosing her husband – as made so prominent by Sītā's choosing Rāma in the Rāmāyaṇa – has become a kind of substitute for the love aspect in marriages. According to priest Hari Sharan, *svayaṃvaras* have only been celebrated for a few decades. As Pramod Shamsher Rana recalls (Rana 2000: 85), Maharaja Bir Shamsher Jang Bahadur Rana (1852–1901) still faced serious problems when he wanted to marry off two of his many daughters without prior consultation of an astrologer. Faced with the opposition of the traditional pandits, he sent royal priests to Varanasi to consult legal advisers (*dharmaśāstrin*). They proposed *svayaṃvara* as the only solution. "If the bride chooses her partner by putting a flower garland over his neck there was no need to match the horoscopes", writes Pramod Shamsher Rana, adding: "From that day 'Swayambara' came into practice in Nepal. The wedding was celebrated with great pomp and show" (ibid.).

Today *svayaṃvara* basically implies this hanging of a flower garland round the husband's neck. Among the Newars it is often regarded as the central aspect of the wedding, perhaps due to the fact that *kanyādāna* and *saptapadī* are not normally celebrated by them.

Seen from a tradional Gṛhya or Smārta point of view, the Newar marriage is not therefore a *saṃskāra*, because the core element *kanyādāna* is generally missing. However, Newars who perform the marriage ritual do see it as one of the ten obligatory sacraments (*daśakarma*, Gellner 1991: 116).

The Economics of the Wedding

In the long process of the various marriage arrangements and rituals there are many exchanges involving gifts, prestations and visits between the bride's and the groom's parties.

One of the most striking elements in this economics of marriage is the exchange of betel nuts between and within the families: the groom's family sends betel nuts to confirm the betrothal, the bride gives them to her relatives in a farewell ritual, and her husband's relatives take them, thus signifying her acceptance in her new family.

However, the offering of betel nuts, on which we will elaborate in the final conclusions, is only one form of prestation. The wife-taker and wife-giver exchange *masalā* pouches at the wedding (*svayaṃvara*); the wife-taker also gives the same item to the wife-giver during the "Looking at the Bride's Face" ceremony (*khvā svayegu*). Both sides offer snacks and meals, which they consume together: the wife-giver at the betrothal and *svayaṃvara*, the bride-receiver at Khvā svayegu. The bride-receivers send more than 40 trays with food, fruits, make-up utensils etc. to the bride's side; many are returned to the groom's side a few days later. Bride and groom exchange ornaments during *svayaṃvara*.

In this way both sides demonstrate their equal status, which is also evident by the polite forms of hospitality on both sides. When the friends of Mahesh, the groom in the one marriage that we shall describe below, refused to accept the dinner at the bride's house at the "Accepting the Son-in-law" ritual (*jilancā dukāyegu*) because they had just had an opulent meal at the *khvā svayegu*, it was taken by the bride's sisters as an affront, so that they had to eat at least a symbolic morsel.

It is true, as David Gellner observed, that "the scale of the celebration is slightly less munificent on the wife-giving side (who are losing someone), but otherwise the rituals balance each other out, and are a clear demonstration of isogamy. Wife-givers are not inferior to wife-takers; the relationship is one of equality" (Gellner 1991: 113).

However, some goods go in only one direction and are not balanced. This concerns the dowry, the items that the bride brings into her new family: money and mostly kitchen items presented by family members and guests at the farewell rituals and party.

While the core elements of the ritual, such as offering betel nuts (*gvē sālegu*) and sharing food (*svagā and thaybhū*), do not seem to have changed, other elements suggest a considerable dynamism: With the introduction of *svayaṃvara*, the Newar marriage has adopted prominent features of what can be called the South Asian mainstream. Only a few subcastes have been immune to this overwhelming restructuring.

Beyond the actual ritual, changes in the economics of marriage are even more conspicuous. The wish to comply with trends that appear "modern" and a growing affluence has contributed to these changes. The second half of the 20th century witnessed the total replacement of processional music, including the performers: the bride is now only ever brought by car to her new home, the dowry includes western-style furniture and washing machines, and the jewellery includes rings and necklaces as well as imitations – to mention only a few characteristic elements that have recently been introduced.

Dowry – gifts to the bride and others

The presentation of gifts (*kvasa*) to the bride by her parents, her brothers and sisters, the eldest of the household (*nakhī/nāyaḥ*), her father's and mother's brothers and sisters, the eldest (*nakhī/nāyaḥ*) of the clan (*phukī*) and one from each family of the clan constitute the

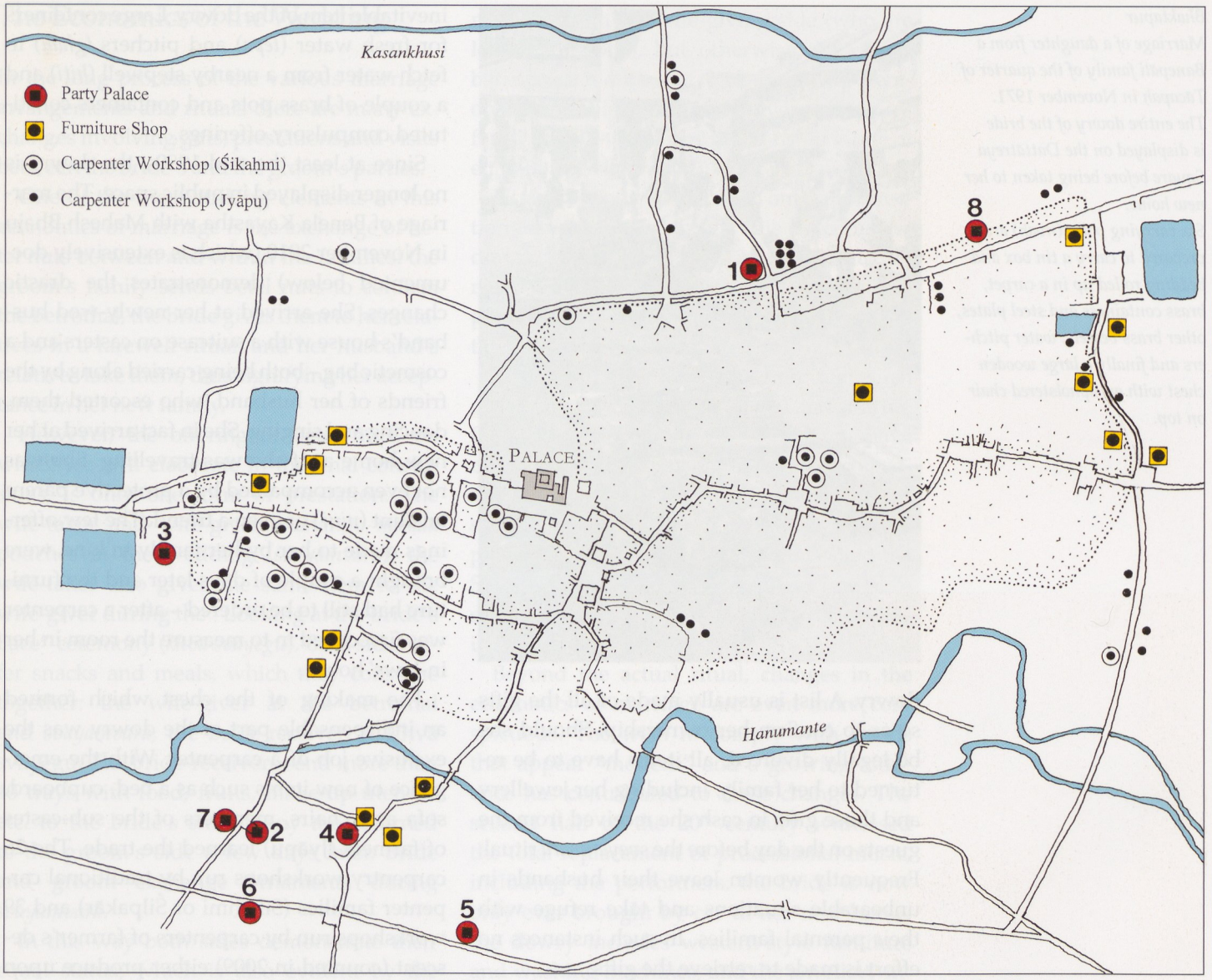
Bhaktapur
Marriage of a daughter from a Banepāli family of the quarter of Tācapaḥ in November 1971. The entire dowry of the bride is displayed on the Dattātreya Square before being taken to her new home.
Six carrying poles (nvaḥ) are prepared to carry a tin box and bedding rolled up in a carpet, brass containers and steel plates, other brass vessels, water pitchers and finally a large wooden chest with an upholstered chair on top.

dowry. A list is usually made of all the gifts so as to confirm her ownership. Should she be legally divorced, all items have to be returned to her family, including her jewellery and those gifts in cash she received from the guests on the day before the *svayaṃvara* ritual. Frequently women leave their husbands in unbearable situations and take refuge with their parental families. In such instances no effort is made to retrieve the gifts.

Until a generation ago, until the early 1980s, most brides left their parental homes in the company of their gifts. These gifts regularly included a tin box and a large wooden chest, both stuffed with clothes and kitchen utensils. A large roll with blankets, bedsheets and a two-inch cotton mattress for the couple constituted the "bedding", because beds were not used in Newar households. Mattresses were always rolled up in the morning and stored in a corner of the second floor (*cvata*) room or on top of a wooden chest (*sanju*), which was an inevitable item of the dowry. Large containers for fresh water (*tepa*) and pitchers (*ghaḥ*) to fetch water from a nearby stepwell (*hiti*) and a couple of brass pots and containers constituted compulsory offerings.

Since at least the mid-1980s, the dowry is no longer displayed in public space. The marriage of Benela Kayastha with Mahesh Bhaju in November 2010 (which is extensively documented below) demonstrates the drastic changes. She arrived at her newly-wed husband's house with a suitcase on casters and a cosmetic bag – both being carried along by the friends of her husband, who escorted them, dancing and singing. She in fact arrived at her new home as if she was travelling. She was not even accompanied by a protective parental aunt (*nini*) or even a friend. The few offerings made to her by her family in kind were brought a couple of days later and the furniture had still to be ordered – after a carpenter was first called in to measure the room in her in-laws' house.

The making of the chest which formed an indispensable part of the dowry was the exclusive job of a carpenter. With the emergence of new items such as a bed, cupboard, sofa and chairs, members of the sub-castes of farmers (Jyāpu) learned the trade. The 26 carpentry workshops run by traditional carpenter families (Sikaḥmi or Śilpakār) and 39 workshops run by carpenters of farmer's descent (counted in 2009) either produce upon advance notice by an individual client, or for one of the thirteen furniture shops, the first of which opened in the late 1980s. The majority of carpenters, however, deliver to shops in Kathmandu. A whole marriage-set cost 40,000 Rs (approx. 400 euros) in 2009, a bed (size 4 x 7 feet) cost 6,500 rupees. Surprisingly, the design for a double bed did not change for a decade, but in 2003 the wardrobe changed in design and colour. A large wardrobe was now black and had two doors framing a large mirror in the centre, at a cost of 21,000 rupees.



Bhaktapur
Location of eight party palaces, thirteen furniture shops, 26 carpentry workshops run by traditional Śikaḥmi (members of the sub-caste of carpenters) and 39 carpentry shops run by Jyāpu (members of the sub-caste of farmers). Survey November 2009

***1** Party ground at Mahākālī Pīṭha in a courtyard on the hill since the early 1990s, space and shelter has been provided at the foot of the hill by the caretakers of the shrine since March 2001; **2** Party space at Vārāhī Pīṭha, provided by the caretakers of the shrine since the 1980s; **3** Party ground at Bhajupūkhū, run by Shiva Prasad Hyonju since 2010; **4** Party Venue at Gapali, run by Prithivi Prajapati since 2005; **5** Shubhakamana Party Palace near Jagati, run by Jitendra Khanakkhusi since 2007; **6** Ajima Party palace, run by Narendra Thapa since 2009; **7** Varahi Party Mahal, run by Rakesh Khatri since 2009; **8** Kamal Binayak Party Palace, run by Rabindra Shakhakarmi since 2010. One more is located on the ground of the Shri Padma High School, adjacent to the compound of the palace.*

Bhaktapur
Top, furniture shop in Itāchẽ, displaying upholstered armchairs, sofas and cabinets.
Bottom, carpentry in Bharbacva
Right, poster of the "navadurga farnichar so rum".
Photographs 1 November 2009

Since 2005 another new development started which – similar to many other trades such as tailoring – threatens the autonomy and survival of carpentry. Furniture made in China is assembled in Nepal, and catalogues for this are presented in the very same shops in Bhaktapur that trade locally produced marriage-sets.

The first example is the marriage of Mohan Yakami with Mina Kvaju – both from the subcaste of farmers from Byasi in Bhaktapur – on the 16th day of the month of Māgha in BS 2057 (February 2, 2000), when a wide range of household and especially kitchen utensils are presented to the bride by her family members in exchange for betel nuts (*gvẽ slegu*):

List of items brought by the bride

1 *sijatepa*: large copper pot for storing drinking water
2 *sijaphvasī*: copper vessel for making alcohol (*ailā*)
2 *dhacā panecā*: ladle and scoop in brass
4 *libātā*: brass bowls
6 *istil tapes*: steel bowls for storing and serving vegetables
7 *ligaḥ*: containers (Nep. *gagro*) for fetching fresh water (*nīnaḥ*)
1 *gvẽbātā*: container for betel nuts
1 *sinhamu/jvālānhāykã*: vermilion container and mirror (both of brass)
1 *sukũda*: lamp with Gaṇeśa
1 *sinhatalā*: twin cups for vermilion and yellow powder
3 *karuvā*: water jugs with spout
1 *tapa*: jug without spout, to drink water
5 *kayabhū*: bronze plates
3 *likisti:* plastic trays
1 *likisti*: brass tray
1 *āti*: jug with spout for serving brandy
1 *dharaj*: cupboard
1 *mekap misin*: hairdryer

1 *taruva*: lampstand
1 *pakabhū istil*: moulded steel plate
1 *liyagu pūjābhū*: brass plate for worship

Most items are of brass or bronze and are only occasionally used in the kitchen. The large copper water container (*sijatepa*) is a symbolic offering because almost every household in Bhaktapur has had running water since the mid-1970s. In times of scarcity, however, small containers (*ghaḥ*) are used to bring fresh water from the step-wells (*hiti*). Significant is the conical copper bowl (*sijaphvasī*) for making liquor (*ailā*), mostly from wheat, which is usually presented by the father.

Essential for the establishment of a separate household is the pair of vermilion containers (*sinhamhū*) and ritual mirror (*jvālānhāykā*), representing Lakṣmī and Śrī, small cups for vermilion (*bhuisinha*) and yellow powder (*mhasusinha*), as well as the lamp with Gaṇeśa (*sukũda*). These three objects are preferably presented by the parents. The maternal uncle (*pāju*) used to present a goat (*bakra*) or sheep (*phaicā*), nowadays he prefers to offer a brass container (*lighaḥ*) for water.

The list also contains a hairdryer (*mekap misin*), and a cupboard (*dharaj*), which is handed over in the form of the keys.

A second example is the marriage of Dilaram Bohoju and Sumitra Kvaju in February 2009 in the quarter of Jēlā in Bhaktapur. The donor was noted for each item: the mirror was presented by her father, the vermilion container by her mother, a pressure cooker by her elder sister (*tata*), the jug for liquor by her cousin (father's elder brother's son), three brass objects by the cousin's wife, a brass tray by her younger sister, a bell and plate by another cousin, the keys for a cupboard by her older brother and a water container (*lighaḥ*) by her maternal uncle and another younger sister (*kehẽ*).

Since quite a number of relatives present identical items – for example up to fifteen brass water containers – these are returned by the couple to shops for cash. They may also be stored and presented on similar occasions.

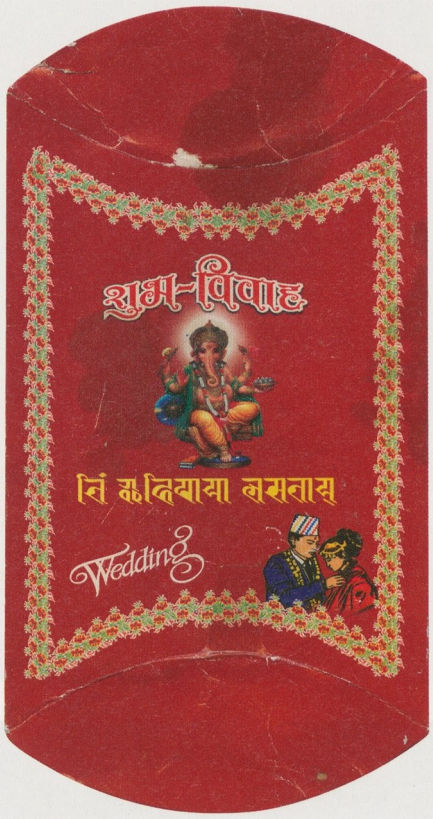
Offerings of food and clothes

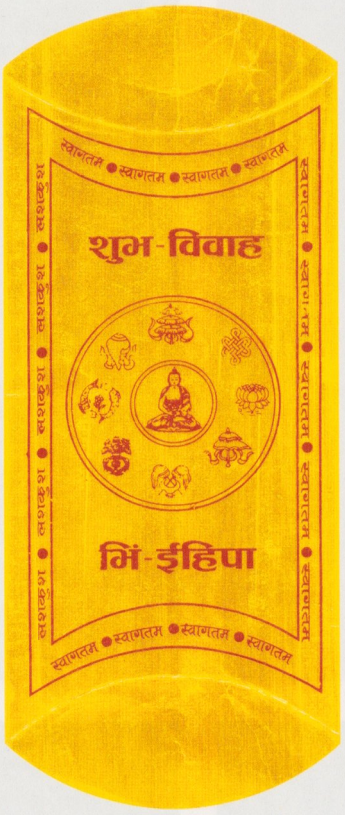
A week in advance of *svayaṃvara*, both parties, the wife-giver and the wife-taker organise packing the sweets, nuts, herbs and spices (*masīpva* – *masī* from *masala* and *pvaḥ* – packet or pouch). Another option is to order some hundred packets, ready-made from a shop in Bhaktapur, or to buy all the raw ingredients separately and enjoy preparing the individual bags as a social event.

Mandatory items are a betel nut (*gvẽ*), clove (*lava*), cardamom (*sukumel*), brown cardamom (*yelā*), coconut (*nankyaḥ*), popped prickly water lily (*makhā*), walnuts (*khvāḥsā*), cinnamon (*dalchin*) and sugar-candy (*misri*). Dates (*codā*), ground-nuts (*badam*), cashew nuts (*kāju*), dried apricots (*korpani*), raisins (*kismis*), pistachios (*pesta*) and dried figs (*anjir*) have only recently become available through imports from India and Iran. In some cases even Tibetan cheese (*durkva*) is included and candies wrapped in colourful paper and small Cadbury's chocolates (*chaklet*).

Shops in Bhaktapur provide packets shaped as boxes or oval pouches which are often packed again in velvet pouches. Inscriptions in Sanskrit (*śūbha vivāha*) and Nevārī (*bhīihipā lasataya*) indicate that the packet is presented on the "auspicious occasion" of a "happy marriage". The English term "Wedding" is occasionally added and a central picture heralds either the all-encompassing protective deity Gaṇeśa or Buddha Śākyamuni in his earth-touching gesture (*bhūmisparśamudrā*).

On the occasion of *gvẽ yẽkegu*, the "taking" (*yẽkegu*) of betel nuts to the bride's place, a number of plates are brought bearing sweets, vegetables and fruits, along with clothes,





Pouches for masala (a variety of sweets, nuts and spices such as clove), inscribed in Sanskrit Śubha-Vivāha and in Nevārī Bhī-Ihipā (happy marriage). Reflecting the religious affiliation of the marriage parties, either the Buddha, surrounded by the eight auspicious objects, or Gaṇeśa graces the cover.

Right
The marriage of Sajani and Subin Chitrakar, 20 November 2008.
Prior to the marriage,the groom's party brought 34 brass trays with offerings of fruits, vegetables and sweets (in the front row āmala and nimki). In the background the bride with her paternal aunt (nini) to her right.

shoes, make-up, bangles and a small container with vermilion (to perform the colouring of the bride's forehead and hair parting). From the bride's side this act may be called *gvẽ haygu* (the coming of betel nuts), while the bringing of those many plates with offerings may be called *lākhāmari cvayegu* (the sending of sweetmeats). In this case, *lākhāmari* stands for a variety of deep fried breads made of white wheat flour (*maidā*) such as *nimki*, *phini*, *kajuri* and *svari*, or of whole-wheat flour (*chucũ*) such as *lākhāmari* and *sayguli*. In addition, *jeri* is offered, made of deep-fried white wheat flour soaked in sugar water.

Until the 1970s, clumped-together balls (*laddu*) of *svari* were sent in large quantities to the bride's family. These in turn constituted an offering to all the families who were invited for the feast the day before the marriage and the distribution of the betel nuts (*gvẽ sālegu*).

The size of the ball indicated which families were expected to come: large balls were sent to families of which all members (*bhvaḥ pāhā*) were invited, while small balls were for families from which only one member (*yākhā pāhā*) was expected. When ordering the *laddu* some four weeks in advance, the bride's father had to specify the number of large and small ones.

While sweetmeats were always presented in large quantities such as 32 or 64, pairs of doves, fish and frogs formed of white wheat flour, deep-fried and soaked in sugar water constitute a compulsory offering. No specific symbolism is tied to these animals of the air and water. But it should be remembered that frogs receive symbolic food offerings on the occasion of Janaipūrṇimā, full moon in August, and fish are an essential offering in ritual food (*kẽ svagã*). Doves do not appear in any Newar ritual context but constitute sacrificial offerings by other ethnic groups such as the Tamang.

The making of these pairs of animals is documented in the attached film: hot vegetable oil (invariably imported from Singapore or Saudi Arabia) is added to white wheat flour to create a consistent dough. The dough has to be kneaded for about ten minutes before the animals can be formed. First a rough shape is created from which the legs or wings are separated. A teaspoon is used to mark the body of the dove and a knife to create a pattern of feathers and the triangles of the fins. Black soybeans mark the eyes. It takes less than five

Production of pastries in the shape of a dove, a fish and a frog, documented in November 2008

Offering of pastries, brought by the groom's party to the bride's house prior to the marriage,

Top
Three auspicious animals, fish, pigeon and frog, are made in wheat flour, deep-fried and dipped in sugar-water.

Bottom, right
Large rings of up to 60 cm diameter of deep fried whole wheat flour, mixed with ginger and black pepper and covered with sugar constitute a prestigious offering.

Bottom, left
Token of invitation to the marriage feast
Small oval-shaped balls (18 x 12 cm) lumped together from fragments of the lākhāmari dough were traditionally distributed to those families who were expected to attend the feast with all members (bhvaḥ pahã).

minutes for one of the animals to attain its full shape. They are then deep fried for ten minutes and subsequently soaked for one minute in sugar water. Finally they are rubbed carefully to ensure that the entire surface has absorbed the sugar equally all over.

Often, the groom's father offers a set of new clothes (*daura/suruval*) to the eldest members of his (and his son, the groom's) lineage (*nāyaḥ*) in a gesture of respect. Rarely, his wife and even other female relatives of the groom receive new clothes, a sari. On the occasion of the marriage of Kailash Dhaubanjar on November 21, 2011, his father gave away 70 saris at the price of seventeen Euros each.

Offerings collected for masĩpva pouches – spices, nuts and sweets presented on several occasions during the marriage ritual.

Traditional offerings 1-10:
***1** betel nut (gvẽ, Nep. supari), **2** cardamom (sukumel, Nep. sukumel), **3** cinnamon (dalchin, Nep. dalchin), **4** clove (lava, Nep. lohan), **5** brown cardamom (yelā, Nep. alainchi), **6** walnut (khvaḥsĩ, Nep. okhar), **7** coconut (nankyaḥ, Nep. narival), **8** eurale, popped prickly water lily (makhã, Nep. makhan), **9** sugar-candy (Nev./Nep. misri), **10** date (codā, Nep. coḍa).*

Imported nuts and sweets 11-16:
***11** apricot (korpani, Nep. khurpani), **12** almonds (Nev./Nep. marsya badam), **13** pistachio (pesta, Nep. peṣta), **14** cashew nut (Nev./Nep. kāju), **15** raisin (Nev./Nep. kismis), **16** candy and chocolate (Nev./Nep. chaklet).*
Other varieties include Tibetan cheese (durkva, Nep. anjir) and fig (Nev./Nep. anjir).

Offerings on the occasion of marriage:
1, 2, 3, 4, 6 for gvẽ haygu, the bringing of betel nuts by the bride's house, three or five days prior to the actual marriage, 5 also on the occasion of khvaḥ sva vanegu, to "see the bride's face", c. 3-4 days after svayaṃvara.
***1** phini, made from white wheat flour in ghee or soy bean oil, without sugar or salt, **2** nimki, made from white wheat flour with salt and colour, preferably in ghee, **3** svari, made from white wheat flour, done in ghee, **4** kajuri, made from white wheat flour with sugar, in ghee, **5** sayguli (small pieces of lakāmari), made from whole wheat (cuchũ), mixed with ginger, black pepper, done in ghee, then covered with sakhar (these days with sugar), **6** jeri (white wheat flour (maida), deep-fried and soaked in sugar water).*

Decorations for the bride, which only recently have been adopted in imitation of the customs of Parbatiyā.
Heart-shaped pendants, decorated with red and green glass beads (jhumakhā) are fixed to cotton threads, entwined with the hair of the bride. Fake jewellery for ears and forehead add to the bride's colourful outfit.

Jewellery

Originally, that is until the introduction of the *svayaṃvara* ritual in the early 1960s, rings were not exchanged. The bride merely received a very few ornaments from her father on the occasion of *gvẽ sālegu*, the parting from her parental home and her lineage, or from the groom on her arrival in her new home and lineage.

Brides received up to five golden earrings (*tuki*, each weighing three *ṭola* = 33 g.) on each ear, to decorate the upper curve of the earlobe. Inserted into the lower end of the earlobe was a flat, circular piece of gold (*tap*) shaped like a drawing pin. On the occasion of the old-age ritual (*jākva*), women received a pair of *tap*, attached not to the earlobe but three centimetres higher up on the outer edge of the ear. A bracelet of five different metals (*pañcaratna*), often of only iron, copper and brass (without gold and silver) was also presented to women some time after the marriage.

Necklaces of gold, bracelets, anklets and bangles of glass or other material were unknown.

Small children still receive silver anklets, which are worn till the age of four. Otherwise, no silver ornaments were worn. With the growing influence of South Asian wedding customs, however, silver toe-rings and ankle-chains have become common. Since the 1980s, gold rings are exchanged on the occasion of *svayaṃvara* and in recent years again at engagement parties. Gold necklaces, earrings and bracelets are added, presented both by the groom and the bride's father and even her sisters and aunts.

To quote only two examples: in November 2008, Sajani Chitrakar from Bhaktapur received from her father gold jewellery totalling twelve *ṭola* (134 g.) while Benela Kayastha (whose marriage is documented in Part III) received 35 *ṭolas* (390 g.) in November 2010.

Some time after the marriage, women from the farmer sub-castes used to receive a coral necklace (*bhĩpau*) from their father which, when put tenfold around the neck, extends almost down to the navel. The prefix *bhĩ* designates the necklace as an auspicious ornament, similar to the term *bhĩ ihipā*, "auspicious marriage." In contrast to Tibetan coral necklaces, those of the Newars have small links of no more than five millimetres in diameter. Coral necklaces were widely worn until the early 1980s. Since the late nineties

they are worn on certain public occasions by women of Jyāpu (farmer) status together with a black sari and a white shawl. Such occasions have been newly invented as representing indigenous folklore.

Single chain-links of coral are usually given to newborn children after the purification ritual (*mācabhū byẽkegu*) and tied around the waist on a black thread. It protects the children against evil spirits that appear in their dreams.

Imitating mainstream features of Nepalese-style marriages among the Parbatiyās, Newar brides wear ear hangings and ornaments on the forehead in imitation gold and strands of red cotton threads (*jumakhā*) to beautify their hair-do.

A generation ago there were not more than six goldsmiths of the sub-castes of Śākya or Bajrācārya in Bhaktapur; their workshops used to face the street, complete with a small forge and a clay water basin to cool the works. They did not have any ornaments in stock but worked exclusively on order. In 2011 there were 27 shops, mostly located along the main street, selling readymade gold rings, bracelets and necklaces and silver anklets. Most shops have a selection of photographs and magazines showing ornaments that can be made on order.

Apart from ornaments, these shops also sell ritual objects such as lamps (*sukũda*), mirrors (*jvālānhāykã*), and vermilion containers (*sinhamhu*) worked in thin sheet silver. These objects tend to be presented to the bride by her parents, but are rarely used in rituals. They are kept rather in glass cases to demonstrate the owners' affluence.

Three more shops in Bhaktapur are specialised in imitation gold (*nakali sun*) and a couple of other shops cater to tourists with a variety of necklaces produced at large workshops in Kathmandu or India.

Objects worked in red cotton thread such as a plait-like addition to the coiffure, and garlands and necklaces with glass beads have, however, been traditionally produced by a few Muslim (Nev. Musmã) families who used to cater to the needs of Parbatiyā and Tamang from the surrounding villages. For that reason they occupy public space. For over a hundred years Bhaktapur has even had a small mosque for the Muslim minority of Nepalese origin, which speaks Nevārī. Bangles of glass are either sold by Musmãs or in shops dealing in cosmetics.

Flowers

Almost every ritual requires special flowers of a particular colour. For death rituals, for example only yellow and white flowers may be used, such as false daisy (Nev. *talāy*, Skt. *taṅgarāja*) or crape jasmine (Nev. *bhyalāy*, Skt. *bhṛṅgarāja*). For the Ihi ritual the flower and even the stem of *micikisvã* is mandatory.

For marriage rituals white narcissus (*gunakera*) and narrow-leaved mugwort (*dācāsvã*) and lotus (*pale*) were mandatory until recently. White narcissus blossoms in the month of Māgha (January/February) and thus must often be used in dried form, as is also true of lotus and mugwort. Narcissus and mugwort are often handed to the bride by the Gāthānī lady from the sub-caste of gardeners. None of these flowers, which are used to decorate the hair, is easy to find at the market, but they can simply be replaced by asters (*godāvarīsvã*), poinsettias (*lālpate,*) or red hibiscus (*hiphaḥsvã*). The most common, now rarely used decoration is a band of 40 braided lilac globular-shaped flowers (*gvẽcāsvã*, lit. "areca nut flower", Nep. *makhmali*). These braids are made on request by a woman from the Gāthā sub-caste. She fixes a thread to a basket containing flowers, folds a leaf of the Asian butterfly bush (*sinasvã*), ties it to the thread and adds a pair of *gvẽcāsvã*. As soon as these have formed a row they are called *tāsvã*. A similar braid of 14 or 16 flowers is made as

Three flowers which are mandatory for marriage rituals: white narcissus (1, gunakera), narrow-leaved mugwort (2, dhācasvā) and a lotus bud (3, pale). As the lotus only blossoms in August and the narcissus in January, dried flowers are used.

ear-hangings on the occasion of the first occasion on which a boy's head is shaved (*busā khāyegu*, Skt. *cūḍākaraṇa*, see Gutschow/Michaels 2008: 53). On various other occasions such as the worship of the younger brothers by their sister (*kijāpūjā*), or Satyanārāyaṇapūjā in the month of Maṅgśīra, *gvēcāsvā* are used to make garlands (*gvēcāsvāmā*).

Almost none of these flowers are indigenous to the Indian Himālaya – which supports the notion of a widespread syncretism with an inherent dynamism. The most common flower in rituals, the marigold (*bare taphaḥsvā* for the small budded variety and *taphaḥsvā* for the large budded one, Skt. *śatapatrikā*, Nep. *śāyapatrī*), originated from South America and must have reached the Himālaya in the 16th or 17th century (Zotter forthc.). It may even have reached India before the landing of the Portuguese and later reached the Mediterranean Sea, thus leading it to be known as a flower from India.

Likewise, the poinsettia (*lālpate*) originated from Middle America and seems to have replaced the truly indigenous rhododendron as a prominent red flower in the course of the 19th century. Hibiscus (*hiphaḥsvā*) must have reached the Himālaya via Orissa from China. Sanskrit texts occasionally refer to it as *oḍrapuṣpa*, the "Orissa flower".

Organising the Marriage Parties: from feasts to party palaces

Engagement parties

Since the beginning of the millennium, engagement parties have gradually become fashionable. Earlier, the parents of the bride and groom would agree on a date for the marriage in an informal way. Now it is an event to which the relatives of the paternal clan as well as maternal relatives are invited.

The following describes the more recent form of engagement between Kailash Dhaubanjar, son of Suresh Dhaubanjar and his wife Indira Karmacharya, and Monika Shres-

Bhaktapur
Sajani Chitrakar wearing a tress of ball-shaped, lilac flowers, which are usually called "betel-nut flowers" and which are famous for not wilting for a long time, similar to the everlasting daisy.
7 December 2008

Bhaktapur
The making of a hair decoration (tasvā) for the bride by Mohan Maya Banmala from the sub-caste of Gāthā.
A long tress of 40 flowers are braided together with green leaves of Buddhleja asiatica (sinasvā).
Photograph 8 November 2009

tha, whose family had moved a decade ago from Sanga to Bauddha, building a large house along the main road of the latter. Monika's family had originally been Dhaugoda, who had adopted the more anonymous title Shrestha when they moved to Bauddha. The wife of his maternal uncle (*pāju*) had acted as mediator when Suresh had been searching for a suitable bride for his son. Information and photographs were exchanged in May 2010 and on 13 July Kailash met Monika for the first time in the presence of the matchmaker.

Kailash left the following day for a training programme in China and kept talking to Monika on the telephone. Back in Nepal they continued to telephone but did not meet because Monika was reluctant to leave the house prior to the engagement. Only when the two parties met did it became clear that they are related to each other – a relationship which did not, however, exclude the planned alliance. The groom's grandfather's first wife was a Dhaugoda from Sanga, whose daughter was present on the occasion.

The groom's father conceded that the idea of having an engagement party mirrors the influence of Indian films. The core event of exchanging rings to symbolise the promise has become a good excuse for another get-together and exchange of gifts. The father-in-law of the groom's sister insisted that tradition has to be dynamic and that the Newars will happily grasp any new opportunity to add to their customs. Asked how he feels, Kailash answered in a stereotyped way "like in a dream", as if he felt obliged to reflect the dream world of the silver screen.

The meeting had been fixed for the afternoon of December 12, 2010 in Bauddha. The groom's party had six trays prepared with offerings such as apples, Chinese pears, *laddus* (sweetmeats), *anarsa* and *phini* (two types of sweet bread) and *selroti* (deep-fried rings of wheat flour). Furthermore, a yoghurt bowl was inscribed with the words "Happy Engagement – Kailash – Monika", and a tray with a set of clothes (sari and blouse) and bangles was organised. The father admits that upon the advice of others, his wife had prepared a *pūjā* plate. Thus it became clear that the meeting of the two parties would be more than an exchange of rings. The casual mention of "the advice of others" further demonstrates that an engagement party has no fixed rules – at least for the time being. It is in fact an event that is about to turn into a fomalised ceremony or ritual. More often

"Engagement" of Kailash Dhaubanjar and Monika Shrestha on 11 December 2010 at Bauddha.
Kailash's mother Indira applies a tikā to his forehead in an act of ritualizing the recently invented event of "engagement". To his left sits Monika.
Monika puts a golden ring on the ring finger of Kailash's "pure" right hand.

than not, nobody takes the lead, so the outcome is the result of constant consultation: it is shaped cumulatively and will eventually attain a more stereotyped form that will be performed by others.

As the party arrived from Bhaktapur, a professional cameraman was at the ready with his video camera. It took almost an hour before about 30 relatives arrived from Bhaktapur. The same people were also about to meet again that evening at the marriage party of the groom's great-grandfather's eldest son's grandson.

Two large rooms on the first floor, which have been rented out to a beauty parlour, had been vacated for the occasion. Kailash's family was welcomed by Monika's father and her eighty-four-year-old grandfather and asked to take a seat in one room while Monika's family busied itself in the other room with preparations. Once snacks and drinks had been served, Monika was led into the room to take her seat to the left of Kailash. His mother Indira performed the usual *pūjā*, took yoghurt from the large bowl, prepared *svagā* with *abīr* and marked the forehead first of her son, and then of the prospective bride. Rosani Nayaju, the wife of one of Kailash's paternal uncles assisted her. The entire scene of the couple-to-be sitting in chairs, the mother officiating from behind a low table bearing the trays of offerings, appeared to be a bit awkward. Holding the *pūjā* plate with the Gaṇeśa lamp in her left hand and reaching out for *svagā* with her right hand across the table ends up in quite an unfamiliar gesture. Traditionally, the mother would be seated cross-legged in front of her son with the *pūjā* plate in front of her.

Following the *pūjā*, Indira handed the tray with the clothes and two apples and two pears on top over to Monika's mother, who asked her daughter to touch it with her forehead in a gesture of acceptance. She then offered two balls of sweetmeat, wrapped in a paper napkin, first to her son, then to Monika, expecting them to take small bites. The two did not actually share the food in the way they would do during the marriage ritual, but they were offered food from the same tray.

Finally, Kailash took the ring from his six-year-old brother's son and put it on Monika's left ring finger, while she put the ring on his

right ring finger. Having completed this central gesture of exchange, a form of *pāṇigrahaṇa* performed to the applause of both parties, Indira offered *svagã* to Monika's parents. At that moment, Monika's father was overcome by emotion. He went into convulsions and was unable to stop his tears, while his son consoled him and took him into his arms. The emotion then reached Monika, who averted her gaze as she suppressed her sobs and wiped her eyes with her handkerchief. In strong contrast to the tears that are expected from the bride when the betel nuts are handed to the relatives and when she leaves the maternal house on the occasion of the *svayaṃvara* ritual, the father of the bride seems to have been caught by a feeling of imminent loss and his daughter seems to have been engaged in sororal loyalty.

After everybody had received or taken *svagã*, the atmosphere brightened. Both parties had now mixed in the same room and engaged in conversation. In a final gesture, the father of Kailash, his brothers, and his daughter's talkative father-in-law invited Monika's father to take a seat with them on a carpet to discuss the forthcoming wedding, which was scheduled for the end of November the following year. Not short for words, Suresh assured Monika's father that he would treat his daughter like his own, while the assurance was returned from the other side. Later, Monika's brother joined his father, jokes were cracked and the atmosphere was a happy one in anticipation of a viable marriage alliance between two families. Kailash stood to one side and had repeatedly to confirm that he would be a "good boy", worthy of this wonderful woman, who had by then moved to the second room with her female relatives to prepare the buffet dinner – which came as a surprise for the party from Bhaktapur and probably also as a burden, because two hours later all of them had to attend another buffet dinner at Bhaktapur.

In the late afternoon, the Dhaubanjars and their relatives returned to Bhaktapur. Having exchanged rings, the couple-to-be was free to meet in public.

Wedding parties

The most important event used to be the feast (*gvẽsabhvay*) that was celebrated after *hyãkegu*, the act of "causing to be joined together" and the handing out of betel nuts to the members of the lineage of the bride's husband on her arrival at the wife-taker's house. All lineage members were to be present at that time.

A couple of days later a feast would be arranged not only for the lineage members but also for all the relatives and friends. In Bhaktapur, this was either accomplished in the house itself, where some 200 guests would be served in shifts, or in the courtyard of a temple or the outer confines of a shrine (*pīṭha*) to one of the Mother Goddesses, notably at Vārāhī in the south and Mahākālī in the north.

Matters changed appreciably when the caretakers of the Mahākālī shrine constructed a kitchen and arcades at the foot of the deity's hill in 2001 that could accommodate up to 400 guests at a time. The Mahākāli Kṣetra Samrakchan Samiti (Mahākālī Area Renovation Committee) charges 2,000 rupees (approx. 18 euros), including the use of water. Similarly the municipality rents out the tourist bus park and the Shri Padma High School's compound next to the palace for such occasions.

An entirely new type of building complex, the "party palace", evolved in the early 1990s in Kathmandu to cater to the needs of a rising middle class which crosses the traditional borders of caste. Merchants and traders, craftsmen and farmers alike are customers of such venues.

Prithivi Prajapati opened the Party Venue in 2005 in Gāpālī, south of Bhaktapur (no. 4

on the map), as the first venue of this kind. Five more party palaces opened within four years from 2007 to 2010. To represent the interests of the party palaces and some 30 catering businesses in Bhaktapur, an association was set up under the name of the Khvopa Rental and Catering Organisation. Two more party palaces are to be found in Banepa, five in Thimi, and over 100 in Kathmandu.

The Party Venue offers a price list with more than a hundred items. Only a few clients will order full catering at a price of 400 rupees, excluding drinks. The majority orders half-catering at the price of 70 rupees, because the raw materials for the kitchen of the Party Venue are supplied by the client. The cost is thus reduced considerably.

The Party Venue at Gāpālī catered for 95 groups in the year 2065 BS (13 April 2008 to 14 April 2009). Of these, a majority of 49 events catered to the guests of marriage parties, either organised by the wife-giver or the wife-taker. In some cases, the wife-giver not only hosted the farewell party of his daughter but also the wife-taker's party on the occasion of *svayaṃvara*. Madhu Chitrakar, for example, hosted 700 family members and friends on 21 November 2008 and 150 members of the wife-taker's party on the following day.

For marriage parties, the number of guests ranged from 225 (a Suvāl family from the sub-caste of farmers) to 1000 (a Śilpakār family from the sub-caste of carpenters). During the three months of Baiśākha (April/May), Maṅgśira (November/December), and Phālguna (February/March), the venue hosted 13, 11 and 14 marriage parties respectively. A few parties were arranged for couples who had married abroad during the five months from mid-June to mid-November, which had no designated auspicious days in 2008. In 2011, however, there were six auspicious days in late June and early July in the month of Āṣāḍha, while 36 days were designated within the period of May 5 to June 12 and November 21 to March 12, 2012.

The party palace also hosted eighteen parties on the occasion of boys' initiations (*kaytāpūjā*), six parties to celebrate the girls' seclusion (*bārhā tayegu*), four parties celebrating "first feeding of solid food" (*annaprāśana*), two feasts after the final death ritual after 360 days (*dakilā*), and one celebration of old age (*jākva*). Nine more events celebrated farewells to various persons, annual meetings of associations or seminars, each with 100 to 300 participants.

A new era started with the announcement that "Welcome Wedding Event Management" was starting business at the beginning of the marriage season in mid-November 2011. Welcome Wedding offers "three thematic wedding packages in the beginning – Royal, Valentine and Fairy Tale. They will be further separated into Platinum, Gold and Silver packages"[7], with rates starting at 570,000 rupees (approx. 5,000 euros). The company decorates the venue, arranges the menu, and chooses the music according to the client's wishes, making "their auspicious event memorable, enthralling and pleasant."

Transportation – bridging the localities

Bringing the bride to her future home has undergone a significant change since the 1970s. A bride from the sub-castes of farmers used to walk barefoot to her new home in the company of a maternal uncle (*pāju*) and the groom's father (*sasubau*).

Brides from the upper status families (Chatharīya and Pāñctharīya) were wrapped in a blanket, suspended from a three-metre-long pole. This pole (*dūgū*) and bundle were covered in embroidered cloth (*duguphāgā*), which was brought along by the wife-taker. Not every family owned such a cloth, not even every lineage.

Similar to the ornaments for the Ihi ritual or the large plates (*jvaḥkvataḥ*), it is still possible to borrow the lamp (*sukũda*) and torches carried in the procession from friends.

Menu from the Bhaktapur Party Venue in Gapālī, 2009. The owner offers catering service or hires out the place, which can accommodate up to three hundred people. "Bhaktapura Pārṭi Bhenyū; Gapālī, Sūryavināyaka, Bhaktapur, 14; Bhaktapur Reṇṭal eṇḍ Kyāṭariga Sarbhisa."

[7] "Get Married in Style", in: *The Kathmandu Post*, 25 November 2011.

Bhaktapur
Marriage of a daughter from a Banepāli family of Tācapaḥ in November 1972.
The palanquin (dū) is ready to be carried by two Gāthā to the groom's house. The bride hangs in a blanket as in a hammock, suspended from the carrying pole (dīdhāsī). It is covered with an embroidered cloth (dūphāgā) which has been brought by the groom's father. Seven Kusle musicians with trombone, trumpet, shawm, rattle and drum accompany the procession of the bride to her future home.

The pole is owned and brought along by members of the sub-caste of gardeners (Gāthā, Nep. Banmali), one of the nine marginally pure castes (*nau jāt*, Gutschow/Michaels 2008: 23) who in one way or another provide their services in various rituals. While the Gāthā women collect and sell flowers, the principal obligation of the male Gāthā is to perform as mask-bearing dancers in the Navadurgā troupe (Levy 1990: 563-571). Every household in Bhaktapur used to have an inherited relationship not only to a barber (Nau) but also to a Gāthā family. The woman was expected to supply the household with flowers at least on the major festive occasions, while two men had to come and carry the bride. The moment the bride was about to leave the house, the waiting Gāthā were supposed to lean the carrying pole against the house (*dūgū dāki*). Once the bundle with the bride was tied to the pole, it was carried on their shoulders. In order to stop for a rest, the carriers take forked sticks with them as supports. One Gāthā woman accompanied the procession with a torch (*musyāḥ*). A second Gāthā woman carried a bundle with a box full of betel nuts (*gvēbātā*). The matchmaker (*lami*) was also supposed to join the procession. Finally, the procession was to be accompanied by six to eight musicians from the sub-caste of Jugi (Nep. Kusle or Darśandhārī, Kāpālī) who, as Levy (1992: 365) says, are in a "permanent state of impurity", and who act as auxiliary priests and musicians. Two

or three would have played their traditional instrument, the shawm (*mahalī* or *shahanāī*) while others played trumpet, trombone and drum.

Families of privileged status might already have used cars to transport the bride in the 1920s, when the leading families maintained sizeable car fleets. The first car was probably brought to the Kathmandu Valley shortly before the First World War, following Candra Śāṃśer's visit to London and Sheffield in 1908.

In Bhaktapur, however, the only car was owned by the Rāṇā governor, who had it parked in front of the palace. The first locally owned car was acquired in the early 1960s by a Dhaubanjar family in order to transport crops and clarified butter from Dabcā (east of Dhulikhel) to Kathmandu. In 1971, the eldest son of the youngest of the Dhaubanjar was probably the first to use a taxi from Kathmandu to bring the Karmācārya bride, even though only a very short distance had to be covered. Since the early 1980s, one could no longer see a Gāthā carrying a bride. Though not stationed in Bhaktapur, Toyota taxis could easily be booked, not only to bring the bride but also to accompany the wife-taker's party to the wife-giver's home. The embroidered cloth is now spread across the car. In recent years a decisive act has changed: the bride's maternal uncle no longer needs to carry her on his back around the car. In a crowded public environment, he guides her with his right hand before she enters the car.

Since the introduction of the *svayaṃvara* – the ritual of giving the bride to the groom at her parental home in a first phase of the complex marriage ritual – in the early 1960s (Levy 1992: 674), the procession to the wife-giver has gained an overwhelming importance. Not the bride alone is brought to her future house but the couple.

Inside and Outside the Marriage Tune: Wedding Bands in the Kathmandu Valley

by Christiane Brosius and Tessa Pariyar

This section of the book focuses on a particular way of framing and staging marriage processions (*janta vanegu*) in Nepal: the wedding band. Despite many changes within the choreography of marriage (e.g. the introduction of a 'dating culture', the addition of the engagement, hiring a DJ on the evening of the reception, etc.), for various reasons that shall be explored here the wedding band is still an essential part of marriages. The material for this was collected in 2010 after accompanying several wedding bands from Bhaktapur during the marriage season, interviewing band leaders and band members, wedding photographers and videographers who also documented the bands' performances, and members of the wedding parties.

The bands at work

It is impossible to ignore a wedding band at work. They break into other soundscapes and draw attention as they march through public space in a line, often led by solo musicians (the band master and band proprietor, dressed in a dark western suit) and a leading boy carrying their banner. Most of the band members wear red uniforms, some of them embroidered with golden letters, or decorations. In some instances, they also carry matching caps. Among the chaos and noise of the streets, moving through established middle class neighbourhoods, new residential compounds, along dusty highways and past construction sites and fields, the wedding bands remind people in times of immense change and economic and political instability of one thing that remains important throughout: marriage. Wherever they are, they create and mark a special time and special place. This supports what anthropologist Gregory Booth argues in his study of Indian brass bands, that during the procession, and in their play, the bands create an enclosed ritual space sonically and physically (Booth 2005: 213).

In 2010, there were approximately 65 brass bands in Kathmandu Valley, all of them specialized in weddings and thus differing from bands playing for other rituals, such as the boys' initiation ceremonies and special festivals. Their numbers are growing due to increasing competition and demand, and due to a growing influx of people into the Valley. The bands we spoke to from Bhaktapur had noticed the increase but did not complain about a decrease in business (but mentioned rather a decline in fees). A brass band can be made up of twelve to twenty people, depending on the client's budget and the availability of musicians. Many have known each other for years, if not decades, and one gets the impression of a 'family affair', a transfer of knowledge from father to son, who are often both engaged in the same band.

Despite the fact that these ritual actors are so crucial to this central life-cycle ritual, and manage to pull crowds of onlookers during their processions and while performing in front of the groom or the bride's house, there is a strange lack of recognition by those for whom they play. At certain moments of the interaction, such as when members of the customer's side approach the bandmaster asking him to perform a particular song, and play in a particular way, there is an invisible curtain between the world of the musicians and the marriage members. After playing at the groom's house and leading the procession to the house of the bride, the band remains and plays outside (with the exception of the flute-players: see below), with no other audience except the neighbours or passers-by. Although the presence of their music is

crucial for the success of certain key rites in the marriage ritual (such as the exchange of the betel nuts and *kanyādāna*), due to caste restrictions spatial and visual separation is a must.

Besides a beautiful and enchanting wedding couple, nice wedding locations and the pleasure of enjoying good food and drinks, the bands are the sugar and spice to a Nepali marriage procession. They mark a liminal space of ritual transition, "outside the safety and cleanliness of private homes or wedding halls" (Booth 2005: 4), guiding the marriage couple between marriage sites and invoking key states and sentiments such as auspiciousness, sorrow and joy, and, last but not least, the pleasure of being entertained. Despite their importance in the overall choreography of the marriage, wedding bands are situated at the margins of ritual space and impurity, precisely *because* they mark and accompany liminality, and thus danger. Wedding bandsmen are ritual actors who generate an ecology of feelings, ranging from auspiciousness to mundane celebration and the joy of conspicuous consumption. Despite this competence, and typical of any society based on caste hierarchy and concepts of ritual purity and pollution, the members of brass bands belong to the ritually and often socially lowest strata of society. Thus it might well be their ritual impurity that renders them invisible and spatially segregated in moments of ritual relevance. They also do not feature centrally in the wedding videos and photo albums produced by professionals. But no one so far has wanted to substitute them by a sound system. They are relevant to a family's declaration of status while leading the procession through the neighbourhood: the more band members, the more attention and importance accrue to the family that has hired them. The band weaves together and transgresses borders between sacred and secular domains, it alludes to both the world of deities and to that of popular Hindi films or Nepali folk culture, it merges the taste for 'modern lifestyle' with 'traditional' canons and devotion.

A look at one particular brass band, Shri Santoshi Band Baja (hereafter Santoshi Band) gives a better illustration of the work of a wedding band. Ratna Tailors, Rabin Kumar Pariyar´s tailoring shop, which is also used as a band shop, is located outside the ritual boundaries of the historic core of Bhaktapur, between the Hanumante River and the Arniko Highway, previously a dusty road passing through the outskirts of Bhaktapur and linking Nepal's capital Kathmandu with the border of Tibet/China. Out of approximately fifteen brass bands that exist in Bhaktapur today, at least four bands are located in this area. Most of the bands have a tailoring shop as well, but they are specialized in different styles, in suits, shirt, jeans, etc. Small signboards, sometimes with photos of the band, or an instrument, indicate the double nature of their existence and are about the only 'marketing tool' the bands from Bhaktapur use – their reputation is established by word-of-mouth.

The Santoshi Band's main room is occupied by five sewing machines and shared with another tailor. There is another room where the band stores its instruments and uniforms, but it is too small to rehearse there. "We practice on the first day of the first wedding", says Kumar, band owner, and trumpet player. "Normally we do not assemble earlier, and have no time". Smiling, he adds that "these first weddings have to bear the burden because we are least prepared." Most bands do not have their own office and do not advertise their services. The tailor's shop is the place where potential customers contact the band first and fix a booking, mostly after having heard about or witnessed them. Moreover, the shop is the meeting-place for the band members before proceeding to a wedding, going to a

The visiting card of "Pro(prietor) Nala Bahādur Sundās" from Balaju, who manages the "Śaktikālī Naumati Bājā" music group invites people to remember him in case for auspicious events (Śuvakarya) either the Naumati Bājā , a Brass Band or Piper Band is needed.

Advertisement of the Śrī Śantoṣi Baiṇḍ Bājā from Bhaktapur, with mobile phone numbers of Master Purushottam and Proprietor Rabin Kumar.

rehearsal, passing the time, or getting paid. Many of the Santoshi Band have been members for years. Some are members of Rabin Kumar Pariyar and his younger brother and bandmaster Saroj's extended family, some come from the same home village, others joined later, via other routes.

As most of the weddings during the auspicious season are held in the late morning hours, the band members of the Santoshi Band collect their uniforms and instruments at the shop in the early morning. The garments and instruments are owned by the bandmaster and stored in the back room of the tailor shop. While some are still changing others smoke, chat, and wait until everyone has arrived. We learn that some band members might have already gone for an early morning drink. The consumption of alcohol is a problem, and some bandmasters sanction those who drink too much, or ban drinking altogether, at least when on duty. The band owner takes care of the transport to the customer and groom's house. On that day in November 2010, the members of the Santoshi Band took the local bus to Kathmandu while the sixteen-member Deepa Brass Band from the tailor shop next door was bundled into the back of an old pickup to get to another marriage in Kathmandu. "Are all the buffalos in?", asked one of the band members with a sarcastic laugh, while Ram Kumar, the band leader of the Sri Purna Band Baja who sometimes also manages the Deepa Brass Band, preferred to travel the fifteen kilometres from Bhaktapur to Kathmandu on his motorbike.

On their arrival, the members of the Deepa Brass Band assembled in a loose circle in the courtyard of the groom's large house and started to play the popular welcome song *Shubhakamana*. This song was written by Aishwarya, the late Queen of Nepal, and is dedicated to the late King Birendra[8]. The courtyard was separated by colourful party walls, where plastic chairs had been set in rows and breakfast and tea were offered. A popular Hindī film song (*Jee karda* from the film *Singh is King*, 2008) and the Nevārī song *Vā maicā vā* ("Come, love, come!") followed. Then the band was invited to have breakfast, seated apart from the wedding party.

According to the auspicious moment of marriage (*sāit*), the band accompanies the groom to the bride's house. If the bride's house is too far away, a wedding palace is chosen instead for the performance of the main rituals. Then the married couple is taken to the groom's house in a decorated car, and accompanied by the band. Both on the way to the bride and when bringing her to her husband's home, the marriage party on the groom's side is supposed to be in a celebratory mood. The bride's family must refrain from accompanying her on this route because following *kanyādāna* ("the gift of the daughter") she has now become the 'property' of her husband's family. The marriage rituals may last until late in the night.

[8] For a version of this song, see http://youtube.com/watch?v=WUBLgNNulpg, accessed on 16.8.2011.

The power of music

The selection of songs is a key quality marker for a brass band's reputation and success at a marriage, and beyond. There are different categories that are featured for a variety of reasons, and at different moments during the long day, depending on what mood is to be generated. The wedding bands are held partially responsible for the emotional and auspicious atmosphere at a wedding.

Each song must be related to love, explains Ram Kumar Pariyar, bandmaster of the famous Everest Band in Patan. There are the so-called evergreens, sentimental, romantic and nostalgic songs, most of which are from Nepālī or Hindī films, or Nepālī or Nevārī folksongs. They are sometimes referred to as 'sweet songs' (Nep. *mītho gīt*). In order to address older members of the family and invited guests, and to confirm the ethnic heritage of a Newar customer, at least one or two Nevārī songs must be played at a Newar wedding. Folk songs, particularly songs of a special ethnic group, may be requested by the customer.

Evergreens that underline romance and nostalgia, and that are played by bands such as the Santoshi Band or Purna Band, have been taken from Hindī films such as *Pakeezah* (dir. K. Arohi, 1972), *Dilwale Dhulhaniya Le Jaenge* (dir. Y. Chopra, 1955), *Raja Hindustani* (dir. D. Darshan, 1996) or *Suraj* (dir. T. P. Rao, 1966). One popular song, which features a band *bājā* and the groom's procession, is *Aaj Mere Yaar Ki Shaadi Hai* ("Today is My Friend's Marriage", from the film *Admi Sadak Ka*, dir. D. Goel, 1977).

Other songs come from Hindī action-films that convey a dynamic youth culture and friendship and have gained their popularity through particularly 'lively' and 'fashionable' song and dance scenes, e.g. *Sholay* (dir. R. Sippy, 1975), or *Dhoom* (dir. A. Chopra, 2004).

Many customers demand songs from the charts, such as *Munni badnam hui* ("Munni gets infamous") from the film *Dabangg* ("Fearless", dir. Abhinav Kashyap, 2010), and popular Nepālī films or Nepālī pop songs, e.g. Shiva Pariyar's drinking song *Kya daami bho* ("This was really cool"), from 2010, with the famous refrain *piũdā piũdai behos*.

Pariyar's popular drinking songs are only played during the procession, that is, in the phase of liminality. Not all wedding parties appreciate such references to alcohol, even though nowadays the consumption of alcohol by the men at the wedding party is standard practice (ranging from 'hard' drinks to beer and wine).

For the wedding season in 2010, the Everest Band, one of the best-known bands in the Valley, which also has a rehearsal and show room, rehearsed eleven new songs. They include 'dancing' songs, fast in rhythm and normally played during the procession to encourage the wedding participants to dance and increase the celebratory and participatory atmosphere of the event. A band must be able to perform a good mix of songs for all kinds of guests and situations. Some customers may request songs when they book (there are customers who only want Nepālī songs to be played) or, more often, by the guests and family members during the wedding procession. English songs are rarely adapted, one exception being Stevie Wonder's *I just call to say 'I love you'*.

Over the last decade the repertoire played by the wedding bands has changed: new kinds of 'disco' tunes and 'remix songs' are posing new challenges to the bands because these songs are difficult to adapt and rearrange for the requirements of brass instruments. Bandmaster Saroj Kumar confirms this: "The songs have changed a lot. Now everyone is talking about *remix*. And due to this *remix*, we face problems. In the past there used to be these very sweet songs, which let yourself feel comfortable as well, while you used to play them in a relaxed way. Now

Kathmandu, November 2010 Wedding Bands work on a seasonal basis during months assigned as auspicious for marriage. Throughout the years, the band owners often run tailor shops as this one at Pepsi, east of the airport, where instruments and tailored dresses form a friendly alliance.

due to their noisiness (Nep. *dhyaṅg-dhuṅg*), [new songs] seem to be a little tasteless (Nep. *khallo*) to me. Now there are so many songs, which are really tricky, very difficult to play. … But learning these songs is also part of our obligation, as we have to play them."

But as the success of a band depends on the number of bookings, which are connected to the satisfaction and taste of the customer, the band has to change with the times and adapt its repertoire according to the customers' wishes and taste. Some songs are notated. But the majority of songs are practiced by ear. Some band members mentioned their mobile phones, which they use as a cheap repository for songs downloaded from the internet or traded with other musicians. They listen to them repeatedly and apply the melody to their respective instrument. For particular songs, customers may provide the bands with CDs or audio-recordings.

Within the categories of both current hit songs and evergreen songs there are songs which are connected to the ritual context of the marriage, i.e. the text of the song refers to the ritual of marriage in general, or to a specific event or situation in the marriage ritual. For instance, to the moment when the groom, his friends and family are about to collect the bride from her home, or to the ritual of applying vermilion on her forehead, or the act of the bride leaving her paternal home. Some songs are even witty. A Nepālī folk song by Arun Thapa, played by the Santoshi Band upon the arrival of the procession at the bride's house in Bhaktapur, informs the bride's family that *Katara, kataramā timro suhaũdo jvaī āyo motarmā* ("Vroom, Vroom, your good looking son-in-law is arriving by car"). Besides references in the texts to specific situations during a wedding rite, the songs played also enable the participants to imagine a particular film song and the visual framework of the film. Thus emotions are not only generated by means of lyrics but also by evoking memories of film scenes as if they could be enacted. Especially male wedding guests may imitate gestures and dance styles from a particular film, such as Mithun Chakraborty from *Disco Dancer* (1982) or Salman Khan as the ruthless policeman in the film *Dabang* (2010), dancing rapidly in a dance bar to the song *Munni badnam hui* (Munni gets infamous).

One main theme of songs played at every marriage are those referring to the bride leaving home for good. One of the 'musts' is the song *Maitighar timro hoina* by Dwarika Lal Joshi. It is in an emotional and narrative key, and one of the few sad tunes (Nep. *duḥkha gīt*) suitable for a marriage ritual (on songs of sadness, see Skinner 1994). The father bids farewell to his daughter at the time of leaving her paternal home. This is an example of a close contextual interaction between the music played by the band and the actual ritual action. In the song, the father conveys the following message to his daughter:

The home of your parents is not yours (anymore), (Now) go to the home of your in-laws, take leave

to come from time to time to the house where you were born.
How will be the home of the bridegroom, how will life be (there), you possibly fear being someone's wife.
Somewhere in your courtyard the band will start to play.
My daughter, your soul may be in tears. …
The quarters of the home of your destiny is more important than those of the house where you were born, from now on obey your in-laws more than us.
Leave to spread happiness; we will dry your tears.
May your life grow and blossom; this is the blessing we give you.

While the father conveys a message of sympathy and understanding for her feelings, he simultaneously reminds his daughter that from this moment onwards it will be her duty to take care of her husband and in-laws. He is sending her away to an alien household, to which she is obliged to belong. But he also requests her to come back to visit her maternal home from time to time. The song reflects both the feelings of the parents and the daughter at the time of leaving her parental home. It asserts that her parents still love her, despite the necessity of sending her away. The song also generates an atmosphere of solidarity among the members of the bride's side, allowing and even encouraging the expression of feelings of sorrow.

While the contextual songs mentioned above are played shortly before or after the ritual referred to in the lyrics, a very special tune has to be played during the actual performance of the ritual. It is the (Nep.) *maṅgaldhūn* (lit. "the auspicious tune or melody"). It must be played during the main actions of the wedding ritual, for instance during the *svayaṃvara*, the exchange of betel nuts (*gvē sālegu*), the moment when bride and groom eat from the same plate, or when they exchange the *tikā* (cp. Grandin 2011: 77). Other, more traditional, ritual-related tunes like, for instance, *beulo anmāune vākya*, a specific tune played when the groom leaves his house (Tingey 1994: 160ff), have not survived the instrumental transformation from the *pañcai bājā* to *brass bājā*. These tunes are nowadays replaced by the above-mentioned film or folksongs. Nepālī folk songs (Nep. *lok gīt*) are still very popular for weddings. This differs from India, where old and new popular film songs dominate (see Booth 2005: 239-266).

Creation and division of ritual space

The most vivid parts of the band's performance take place during the procession, when it reaches the house of the bride, on the way back to the groom's house, and while arriving at the groom's house. Here the band leads the procession. The band members are formally arranged in two rows and both the bandmaster and the proprietor perform either in front of the two rows, or between them. Following the band are the carriers of the candles and ritual materials from the groom's side. Following this comes the car with bride and groom, and then the groom's party. Especially upon reaching the bride's house, the members of the wedding party are expected to dance, and to some extent it depends on the band's performance whether, and how, they do so.

By accompanying the wedding party with its music, the band contributes to the creation of a different space, as their music manages "to enclose, both sonically and physically a public space for private purposes" (Booth 2005: 213, see also Prato 1984). Thus, space is redefined, not only from public to private space, but also from mundane to ritual space (Booth 2005), sometimes coexisting, thus informing liminality.

Functions of processional and auspicious music

The display of status and prestige are key functions of processional music and the reason why a customer decides to dedicate a certain amount of money to hiring a band. Prices may vary, according to the band's reputation, general availability and size: while the proprietor of the Purna Band charges 12-14,000 rupees (120-140 euros), the Bal Kumari band owner claims to successfully demand 15-18,000 rupees per day, and the 'star' of bands, the Everest Band, charge as much as 22,000 rupees. Each musician is paid anything between 300-1,500 rupees per day, including travel expenses and food, the payment depending on the performance quality and the ranking of the instrument. A videographer documenting and editing a marriage over three to four days would charge 8,000-10,000 rupees, a lump sum for about three hours of film; some may charge 3,000 rupees per day for a one-man business, sometimes an additional photographer.

Saroj Pariyar, band leader of the Ratna Band, states that especially Newars and people from Kathmandu often ask for 'upgrading': "They try to make the wedding *standard*. They are looking for a longer *line* [of musicians during the procession] to have a better-looking procession. But actually, taking more musicians does not mean that the band will play better. … Important is the way the wedding is presented to the community; it's, let's say, showing off. On this and that son's wedding so and so many musicians came and played. That's the only thing people want to hear. No one says: If they play well and the songs are good, it doesn't matter if there are only 11-13 persons. Far from it! The thinking [of some customers] is: I don't care how they play, as long as they are many."

Saroj also points out that to have no band is often considered tasteless (*khallo*), and can normally only be found in the case of an unapproved love marriage. Having a band highlights how 'cultured' the groom's family is: "At the place of a wedding without band, there won't be that much tam-tam, there won't be a big crowd. Out of nothing the groom went, suddenly he brings the bride. What actually happenes, nobody knows. If there is a band, there will be loud and joyful songs, people watching, people dancing and singing and the wedding of this and that [person's] son and this and that [person's] daughter will be heralded."

Because one of the main issues is seeing and being seen, the procession route is of essential importance. In order to ensure that as many people as possible from the neighbourhood or the village get to know about the marriage, a few hundred metres at least have to be walked, even if the larger distance between the groom's house and the bride's house is taken by bus. If a wedding in Bhaktapur takes place in the bazaar, the procession will most probably follow a part of the traditional processional route through the bazaar. At a Śreṣṭha wedding in November 2010, the buses transporting band and guests (separately) from the groom's house had to take a longer route in order to stop at the old home of the groom's family and perform a procession with three songs. The intention behind this was to inform the former neighbours of the marriage, to 'show off'.

Besides sacred and public space, a socially and ritually stratified hierarchy has to be maintained by the band members. During the main rituals of the wedding at the bride's house, the band is once again placed at a distance to this auspicious space, even though they contribute to, if not facilitate, the auspicious aura with their music. While the rituals are performed by a priest in a room, or on the rooftop, the musicians play outside the house, seated in the courtyard, or on a street in front of the house. At the wedding of the

US-educated son of a university professor and the daughter of a senior bank manager (the two fell in love while studying in the US), which took place at a fancy party palace in Lainchor, Kathmandu, the Deepa Brass Band and a traditional *pañcai bājā* ensemble were hired together, in order to increase prestige. Both bands were seated and fed near the main gate to the party palace. At another wedding, the Santoshi Band was seated on the road in front of the bride's house in Bhaktapur, while the ritual was taking place on the rooftop of the three-storey building. As a result of this division of space, a member of the family had to tell the band when to play what (here, mostly *maṅgaldhūn*, due to the ritual context).

Digression: the shift from Jugi to Damāi musicians

Pañcai bājā (lit. "five instruments band") is an ensemble that not only plays at marriages but also during initiations (Nep. Vratabandha) among the Parbatiyā or the first rice feeding ceremony (Annaprāśana). It specialises in traditional folk songs and often serves as a signifier of the patron's `ethnic prestige'. The band is made up exclusively of members of the Damāi. The Damāi are a caste hereditarily ascribed to the duties of playing ritual music and tailoring. Today, the Damāi often use the surname Pariyār, a name preferred over that of Damāi.

Similarly, the Newar caste of tailors and musicians nowadays uses the name Kapāli instead of Kusle or Jugi. In contrast to the Pariyār, the Kapāli actively classify themselves as Dalit. As with the *brass bājās*, the tradition of the *pañcai bājā* has been introduced from India, the Sultanate court and Rajputs (see Tingey 1994).

Traditionally, music in Newar society was performed exclusively in a ritual context (Wegner 2009): the farmers (Jyāpu) entertained with groups of eight drummers (*naudāphā*) accompanied by trumpets and cymbals or groups with large double-headed drums (*dhimāy*) on many festive occasions. Oil-pressers (Sāymi) played long trumpets and horns in the month of Gūlā, Śākya played drums and trumpets, and butchers (Nāy) played a small kettle-drum (*nāykhī*). Members of the sub-castes of farmers (Jyāpu) played large barrel drums (*dhimāy*) on various occasions, and transverse flutes (*basuri*) and even violins accompanied by small barrel drums on the occasion of Dasāī, Bisketjātrā and life-cycle rituals such as Ihi.

Music groups of Jyāpu, Sāymi and Śākya were joined by Jugi (Nep. Kusle) who play a shawm which is related to shawms of Arabic origin, although their often curved conical bore points to a Burmese origin (Tingey 1990: 25). Nothing is known about when and in which context the Jugi came to be associated with the shawm. At present, the earliest known inscriptions that mention the duties of the Jugi/Kusle as musicians (*bājā bajāūnyā*) date from the early 19th century: for the Bhīmbhakteśvara temple, built in 1823 in Kathmandu, the Nepālī section of the inscription mentions among the 25 caretakers (*guṭhīyār*) seven singers and seven "Kusalā" (Gutschow 2011: 894) whose duty was to play in the very early morning. Until the early 1970s, the Jugi could be seen playing at temples as long as their meagre compensation was paid by the Guṭhī Saṃsthān. They were also called to play at marriages when they would accompany the bride to her future home and accompany the first outing of infants (Gutschow/Michaels 2008: 50) on the occasion of the first feeding of solid food (Annaprāśana).

Originally, the shawm (Nev. *mālī*) was exclusively accompanied by a double-headed barrel drum (*ḍholak*). Brides from the farmer sub-castes and occupational castes were often guided to their new homes without any

music. By contrast, brides from upper-status families were carried in a litter to the music of the Jugi. By the middle of the 20th century or even earlier, the Jugi may have formed the first band (*byend*) to perform on festive occasions with a variety of new instruments such as trumpets, trombones, clarinets and big as well as small military drums (Nep. *disko ḍol, tamar*). All of these instruments arrived in South Asia "in the musical baggage of the British merchants and soldiers ... some time after the beginning of the eighteenth century" (Booth 1997: 489). By the early 1970s twelve Jugi bands were performing, three decades later not one of them was left: Jugi musicians had been integrated into the upcoming Damāi bands. For instance the Santoshi Band, made up of around eighteen musicians, counts three Jugis. Likewise, the Indrayani Brass Band from Kathmandu has three Jugi musicians as its members. The organiser and proprietor of the band is from the butcher sub-caste. He trades a CD with the entire repertoire of the group so that clients can choose their tunes. Among the three Jugi is one from Bhaktapur, who produced a list of 56 engagements for marriage processions for the season that started on April 15, 2008 (the New Year's day of BS 2065) and ended on March 14, 2009. Of these engagements, 22 had five star hotels or halls run by the Marwari merchant community as their destinations. The organiser charged 20,000 to 25,000 rupees (250 euros), while the musicians received 400 per head.

In 1970 a single group of Jyāpu joined the trend and formed a *band bājā* under the guidance of a master from the butcher sub-caste (Nāy) from Kathmandu. Using the simple name Band Baja, the group performed under the guidance of Nhuche Lal Kharbuja. The tunes were popular songs in Nepālī and Nevārī that had been transposed to wind instruments. Film music was not played in the 1970s. The band included four drums (two *ḍol* and two *saltum*), two rattles (*markas*) and ten wind instruments, namely two trombones (*salait*), four trumpets (*tumpet*), two large tubas (*aphonium*) and, most importantly, two clarinets (*karnat*). The musicians avoided fancy colourful outfits with military caps and boots and wore instead traditional trousers (*suruval*) and blouse (*daura*), a black vest (*istakot*) and black cap (*topi*). The group not only played for wedding processions but also for life-cycle rituals such as Ihi, Jākva, Annaprāśana and Kaytāpūjā and on annual occasions such as Bisketjātrā (in April), Gāījātrā (in August), Dasāī (in October) and Bisīpūjā (on the full moon day in February). In 2005 the band gave up and sold its instruments to a band in Banepa.

The first *band bājā* organised by a Damāi with wind instruments and drums borrowed from the British military tradition was formed near Bhaktapur under the name Ratna Band in 1976. A second group named Santoshi Band was formed in 1985 and features centre-stage in this chapter. Only three are Jugi from Bhaktapur, while all the others are Damāi from the nearby villages of Katunje and Kibacok or from as far away as Kabhre Palancok. When playing *band bājā*, the Damāi replaced their specific kind of shawm (*śahanāī*) in 1985 with the clarinet. The first "indigenously motivated clarinet performance" is said to have occurred at weddings in Mumbai in the 1850s.

While according to the Mulukī Ain legal code of 1854 the Newar Kusle (Jugi) were ranked as an impure but touchable caste (Gutschow/Michaels 2008: 23), the Damāi, who belong to the Nepālī speaking Parbatiyā population, are ranked as an untouchable caste (Höfer 1979: 45).

Damāi must have migrated to the Valley by the end of the 18th century to serve the growing Parbatiyā population with their peculiar *pañcai bājā* music (Tingey 1990). As tailors they used to visit the public squares

in Bhaktapur with their sewing machines, as did the shoemakers (Sārki), who according to the legal code equally rank as untouchables. To this day, no Damāi has been able to open a shop within the historic core area, while Jugi who also worked as tailors have given up their trade altogether. Members of other sub-castes including Bajrācārya have opened tailor shops in town, while the untouchable Damāi have established shops on the southern periphery, beyond the Hanumante River, which is still perceived as the border between pure and impure territory.

The performance of Jugi music at weddings has not really been replaced by Damāi music, because until recently both groups have played the same repertoire. The organisation, however, has shifted toward the Damāi, who not only integrate Newar Jugi but also Tamang and Rai.

The shift from Jugi to Damāi is not only a shift from an impure to an untouchable caste, but also a shift from one ethnic group to another. In a Newar environment the Damāi are strangers, and they are evidently treated as such.

Moreover, beside the tradition of *band bājā* with a prominence of wind instruments, on rare occasions other types of musical performance could be heard. In the 1960s groups of four or six *dhimāy* drums could be seen accompanying wedding processions, and in the late 1990s vocal singers appeared on pick-ups, backed by a sound system.

Auspiciousness and pollution

The creation of auspiciousness is a central function of the music played by the bands during the marriage ritual. Music itself is regarded as auspicious due to its association with the divine, and in particular with the Goddess Sarasvatī (Tingey 1994: 4) and to local sacred geographies and ritual events (Wegner 2009). While the band is able to enhance an auspicious atmosphere, the act of playing instruments (especially drums and wind instruments) is traditionally connected with pollution. Drums are impure because of the leather that is used, which the player has to touch. Wind instruments such as the clarinet or trumpet are impure because of the saliva that is involved in playing (Booth 2005: 41, Tingey 1994: 87). This inherent impurity is said to demand spatial separation of the musicians from the wedding party and the Brahmin priest who performs the ritual.

Even though caste politics have changed in Nepal today, and with them, the attribution of pollution to a so-called lower caste person, or 'untouchable', the fact that ritual space during the marriage is still divided during the performance of auspicious moments, or commensality is still practiced, indicates that band members are still ritually – and socially – stigmatised. Band members still come from the lowest castes, the Pariyār (Damāi) and Kapāli (Kusle), occupational castes that sew clothes and play music on special occasions for their patrons. Sita Ram Pariyar from the Guheshvari Band states that the caste exclusiveness of the bands is slowly changing since members from other, higher castes are also entering the market. This might be due to the decline in caste stigma, but also due to the high unemployment and relatively secure income for band members. Traditionally, they would receive a part of the annual harvest, clothes, etc. on major festivals and the right to ask for favours in times of need.

Pañcai bājā ensembles are said to still be paid predominantly in material goods rather than money (Tingey 1990: 94, Cameron 2007). Today, many musicians associate their low caste status – as seen by high caste Nepalis – with their low economic position. Dropping this association enables them to step out of this vicious circle, as Rabin Kumar suggests: "We are working, we earn our money by working, we are not begging from anyone,

so why should I think low/small about myself?" He and his father never depended on the *jajmani* system (a quasi-feudal relationship), but his grandmother still used to go to several upper caste houses to sew clothes in exchange for grain. For such people, criticism, disobedience or even protest against discrimination by higher castes is hard to imagine.

The Nepal Band Baja Vyavasai Sangh (Nepal Brass Band Trade Union), which comprises bands in the Kathmandu Valley and the neighbouring district of Kabhre, is one example of how band masters try to link up the band owners. On the one hand, this is to ensure the seasonally 'contracted' musicians will stay with them (instead of taking money in advance and then running away, or/and working for another band). On the other hand, this union also serves as a legal and communications infrastructure to protect the band from being exploited by the customer by providing an actual service contract. Such contracts aim at fair rates, fixed working hours, and transportation to the workplace. This relationship between band proprietor and customer sometimes covers up asymmetries and inequalities within the bands. The musicians themselves often complain about being ill-treated and underpaid, but are unable to protest since they see themselves at the bottom of a ladder of ongoing exploitation. Loyalty and dependency are highly ambivalent and dynamic.

Santoshi Band: a glance at its social history

Rabin Kumar Pariyar, proprietor of the Santoshi Band, has been involved in the band business since his childhood. He lived with his family in Kolkata until the age of 12, where his father played in a police band. Thereafter his family returned to the ancestral village of Katunje in the district of Bhaktapur, Nepal. Rabin Kumar´s eldest brother Abhin Kumar founded Sri Ratna Band Baja (Ratna Band in the following), one of the first brass bands in Bhaktapur in 1974. In those times hiring a brass band for the wedding instead of the traditional folk band started to become more and more popular and thus many retired police and army musicians started to set up their own bands.

So changing from traditional instruments to brass instruments was more of a pragmatic decision than a real choice. This applies to playing in a band in general, as Rabin Kumar observes: "It's like that: one needs employment. Our father knew how to play brass instruments. He taught us, then we got employed, and then we learned more and ended here, having our own band." After having played in an army band for four years, he joined Ratna Band. At that time, the band was led by his oldest brother, Abhin, with whom he played until he founded his own Santoshi Band around seventeen years ago. His youngest brother Saroj, who has also played in bands since the age of six, joined Rabin after the death of his oldest brother seven years ago. He revitalised the Ratna Band around three years ago. Rabin states that previously there was no alternative but to follow in his father's footsteps – as assigned by caste – to play band music on ritual occasions and to tailor clothes. Rabin says that he would have liked to learn another profession, one where he could have earned more money, or at least be more respected in society.

Since weddings are only held during six auspicious months (from the end of April to early March) and on certain auspicious days (*lagan*), most of the musicians work as tailors or work as daily wage labourers. Only a few engage in other professions, such as work in government offices or in NGOs. "Before, there was no other way. Now there are other possibilities, as for example my sons, who now are not playing in a band. One went to the US and the other just got a scholarship for

his PhD studies in the Netherlands", recounts Rabin Kumar Pariyar. Rabin and his wife are happy that both sons have managed to find work elsewhere and make a living abroad. They have never visited them there and now live alone, with fond memories of earlier times. It seems that despite the low status of the Pariyārs as musicians and tailors, he would have liked to have seen his sons return to Nepal and approve of his job. This is a combination of his personal story of loss and the history of massive youth migration out of Nepal for reasons of unemployment, lack of a functioning educational infrastructure, and immense political instability.

This example also exemplifies the ambivalent position of the band members towards their profession (duty) and social position (low caste, ritually polluted). The inherent ambivalence is that of being impure, in terms of caste, and auspicious, in terms of their function during the respective rituals (Tingey 1990). Even today in the Kathmandu Valley, the majority of brass band musicians consist of members of the low-caste Damāi. Only a few members hail from the Newar caste of tailors and musicians, the Kusle, and there are even fewer bands led by Kusle. The Sri Bal Kumari Brass Band of Thimi, a small town between Kathmandu and Bhaktapur, is one of the few exceptions. Apart from Pariyār and Kapāli, there are also a few musicians of northern Indian origin who play in Nepalese brass bands (*band bājā*), most of them also from a lower caste or Dalit background. Usually they only join during the high marriage season. Often they have known each other for many years, and they combine their work in the band with other work, e.g., shoe-making (which shows that the Indian musicians are also from a low caste because they handle leather).[9] This is interesting because it also relates to the tradition of employing (Muslim) bandmasters from India to teach Nepalese army bandsmen in the 19th century, or the fact that various brass bands in Nepal have ancestors who learnt an instrument while working in the Indian army in the early 20th century.

The stigma of caste and caste consciousness has changed since Rabin grew up. Caste discrimination has become a widely discussed topic within the public and political discourse relating to changing identity politics and practices of representation in "New Nepal". Nevertheless, and paradoxically, these views have been internalised by many, and led to an ambivalent form of self-perception that dominates many Nepalis today: of being simultaneously proud of one's caste and embarrassed for one's underdeveloped state and inertia (see Folmar 2008, 2007; Gupta 2004). Despite their awareness of the internal problems in 'bands' and certain 'castes', such as for example the consumption of alcohol, band members try to maintain a positive image of their caste identity and their identity as ritually relevant musicians. This way, the skill of playing music, which connects to a history of playing auspicious music, becomes a central self-affirmative aspect.

Dalits employ different strategies of resistance against high caste domination. One of these may be converting to Christianity. While Purushottam Pariyar, bandmaster of the Santoshi Band, has not converted, his wife and children have. Whereas Saroj wants to challenge the status system openly through confrontation, or even a verbal battle with high caste customers, his elder brother Rabin Kumar prefers to quietly accept the status quo. He argues pragmatically that fighting with a customer for his personal agenda would only ruin his band's reputation and result in fewer bookings and thus in declining business.

[9] Santoshi Band had to wait for a few weeks until the Indian musicians finally arrived, and then not everyone who was expected arrived, or new people came. This was also due to the fact that they often have jobs back in India, e.g., in a factory, and cannot take so much time off if they do not want to risk their jobs.

Bhaktapur
Led by a boy carrying their banner, the Santoshi Band heads a marriage procession along the main street.
Photograph November 2010

Other publics, other tastes

> The band is explicitly and physically distanced from the people and the event whose happiness they have been celebrating. The world of the bandsmen is therefore the world of the public street, … (Booth 1997: 492)

One day in November 2010, the Santoshi Band was in the process of arriving at the bride's house to pick her up and accompany her to her future home. They played *Mehndi laga ke rakha* ("Ensure your hands are painted with henna!"), a very popular song from the Indian blockbuster film *Dilwale Dhulhania Le Jaenge* ("The big-hearted man will take (home) the bride", dir. Yash Chopra 1995). The scene itself is not irrelevant, because it depicts one of the most important rituals before the marriage act in an Indian Hindu wedding, applying *mehndi* to the bride's hands, also depicting the intoxicated feeling of being in love, and looking forward to the ultimate embrace. Even though this is not part of Newar weddings, just as *svayaṃvara* was only introduced twenty years ago, the song and the film are so famous that they belong to the standard repertoire of a wedding band.

As opposed to other occasions when the band leads the guests of the groom's family in a wedding procession to the bride's house, they did not travel along the periphery of the city, through fields, along dusty streets, and remote neighbourhoods. This time, they moved right through the city centre, catching the attention of a lot of people, including tourists. The band waited in front of the groom's house, next to a market on the main street of Bhaktapur. The bride's family had placed several red plastic chairs for the members of the band to sit on while they played on a public platform, as well as in a *pāṭī*, a

Bhaktapur
Saroj Kumar, bandmaster of the Santoshi Band presents a solo piece with his clarinet while the band waits for the bride to come and enter the decorated car waiting for her. The band members enjoy the attention received by a larger audience due to the central location of the bride's house. Photograph November 2010

traditional covered arcade set opposite. Purushottam, the bandmaster and clarinettist, was aware of the fact that not only the two foreign researchers but a larger crowd of western tourists had assembled to watch them perform. As he played the clarinet – one of the "most widely dispersed and deeply indigenized foreign instruments in South Asia" (Booth 1997: 489), introduced to the subcontinent by British merchants and most of all colonial military bands in the 19th century – he also transformed the performance into a jazzy jam session.[10] The foreigners would probably only recognize the clarinet as a western instrument, and be unaware that it had reached Nepal through transcultural pathways: the British Empire in India, and the enormous attraction of Hindī films across the globe. But the scene also opened up a new public space, filled with new meaning, of entertainment, admiration for the artful display of cultural heritage. For a fraction of a second, the band members felt that they were stars, in a different world; one could see they were excited. Until they were called on by the customer to play *maṅgaldhūn* – the "auspicious tune". For a different public, yet in the same physical space.

Sounds of an unknown future

There is a growing confidence among some bandmasters that they are doing culturally significant work, and even contributing to the preservation and nurturing of Nepal's heritage. Many hope that in a rapidly changing Nepal, their social status may also change, and that they may gain more recognition and experience less stigmatisation on account of caste and ritual matters. Others do not have so many hopes; they see the growing competition, and diminishing loyalty and

[10] Another introduction from Europe that has been broadly incorporated into local traditions is the harmonium, although this instrument is not part of a wedding, and also not of wedding processions. The price in Nepal for a clarinet, imported from India, is about rupees 8,500 (85 euros).

Bhaktapur
The marriage procession of Kailash Dhaubanjar on 21st November 2011
The Śaktikālī Naumati Bājā group of ten musicians of the sub-caste of Damāi from Dhading is parading with two horns (narsiṅga) in front of the palace.

commitment among their fellow musicians. But they also know that they cannot expect too much in such difficult and rather harsh times. Interestingly, many of the bands have still refrained from marketing themselves beyond word-of-mouth. Often, bandmasters are approached by potential customers while performing for another wedding. Only a few have proper showrooms (e.g., Everest Band), and have turned to advertising. Their calendars are usually filled with bookings, sometimes even double bookings (you never know), so despite the economic and political crisis, they stay employed because marriages take place independently of such problems. A few bands can be booked through online marriage portals such as 'weddingnepal.com'. And despite the fact that love marriages have entered urban lifestyles and habits, rendering a 'traditional' marriage unnecessary, they are still in the minority. Even people who choose to cohabit out of love want their families to approve of their relationship and finally, for prestige reasons, marry in 'traditional style'. This is probably a cause for the increase in wedding bands mentioned above, from which one could assume that the bands are gaining in visibility and popularity.

But there is also a 'danger' of this tradition fading away, at least among wealthy westernised elites, or among Nepali families living abroad. Their position towards wedding band *bājās* is that these are reminiscences of an 'old Nepal', one that must overcome its backwardness and become 'world class'. To them, the cacophony of sounds and the seemingly chaotic performances, often in worn-out uniforms, is 'bad taste', if not 'embarrassing'.

Two examples of performances

Months in advance of the marriage of his son Kailash Dhaubanjar with Monika Dhaugoda on November 21, 2010, Suresh Dhaubanjar, the father of the groom, said that he cannot bear the noise of the brass bands anymore and that he definitely wants "to do some-

Bhaktapur
The marriage procession of Kailash Dhaubanjar on 21st November 2011
The Nāsaḥnani Basuri Bājā group of 22 musicians of the Newar sub-caste of Jyāpu from Thimi features six transverse flutes played by women and 13 flutes played by men. Upon the explicit wish of the groom's father, the group circumambulates the Yakṣeśvara temple which houses his chosen deity Śiva in the form of a liṅga.

thing that nobody did." His ambition to be unconventional demonstrates a constant process of change on the periphery of the core ritual which is meant to establish an alliance between two families.

Thus, the Śaktikālī Naumati Bājā was hired with ten musicians from the sub-caste of Sundas, who as Damāi rank at the bottom of the social scale, as laid out in the Mulukī Ain in 1854. The designation *naumati bājā* ("nine instruments") substitutes for the usual *pañcai bājā* in reference to a larger ensemble (Tingey 1990: 24). The nine instruments are the shawm played by Nala Bahadur, the leader of the group (*naike*), and his brother Chet Bahadur, one unpitched copper kettledrum (*damāhā*, the instrument which lends its name to the Damāi), two small pitched kettledrums (*ṭyāmko*), one double-headed barrel drum (*ḍholaki*), one cymbal (*jyāli*) and two conical bore natural horns (*narsiṅga*) of finely beaten copper.

At weddings they prefer to play a tune called *beulī māgne dhūn* (Tingey 1990: 114). As an alternative, the leader also offers *band bājā* including bagpipes and trombones played by Damāi and Tamang.

The group hails from Jamrung Darbār, where they used to play daily for Śaṅkadevī, the presiding deity of the hill above Dhading. Members of one extended family form the group, a twelve-year old boy playing the small pitched kettle-drum and a thirteen-year-old boy the cymbal. The leader had served as a musician with the Nepalese army from 1986 to 1989 before he established his own band. For twenty years the *naumati bājā* had been hired by wedding parties of various sub-castes in and around Kathmandu, but in Bhaktapur it is not only their first engagement but it is the first time that a Newar client has engaged a *naumati bājā* group. In 2005 a Puri family from the group of "born ascetics", who have resided in Bhaktapur for centuries, had engaged *naumati bājā* for the initiation (Vratabandha) of his son, but otherwise this music had never been heard in Bhaktapur.

The second music group invited to play was the Nāsaḥnani Basuri Kalaḥ from Thimi, which was formed specially in 2010 to present the music of the Newar sub-caste of farmers (Jyāpu) in more formal settings. The group has eleven male flautists, six female flautists, one barrel drum (*madal*), the most popular drum played by many ethnic groups, and one large barrel drum (*pascima*) which is played exclusively by Newars. Moreover, one large cymbal (*jyāli*), one small cymbal (*tā*) and one rattle (*babucā*) are introduced to accompany the transverse flutes. Similar to the brass bands which introduced military band music to the wedding context, the flute bands mixed the flute with drums and cymbals from a traditional background.

In 2010, the group from the small town of Thimi had played four times at formal music presentations and on 27 October 2011 they played the national anthem, written by Byakul Maila (Rai) from Sankhuwasabha and composed by Ambar Gurung from Darjeeling, on the occasion when Prime Minister Babu Ram Bhattarai attended the inauguration of a statue in Thimi on New Year's Day according to Nepāl Saṃvat. The performance in Bhaktapur is their first at a wedding. It is also the first performance of a flute band in the context of marriage after a hiatus lasting thirty years.

The procession of the marriage party in the company of 31 musicians started in Khauma, crossed Darbār Square, circumambulated the Yakṣeśvara Temple, turned to Tulāchē, reached the main road at Sukulḍhokā and marched all the way to the western end of the city.

Four people from the family of the groom headed the procession, followed by the *naumati bājā* and six people carrying the formal ritual implements. One Jyāpu helper carried the two large brass containers with *pūjā* material, four Jyāpu helpers carried two candlesticks with red candles and two *sukũda* lamps, and one woman from the sub-caste of Gāthā carried the "precious offerings" in a bowl wrapped in red cloth. Then came an old white Mercedes marked "K+M" on the rear window, which would bring the newlywed couple along the same path back to Bhaktapur in the evening. Walking behind the car were family members and friends of the groom, ten women and 65 men.

On the following two days the *basuri bājā* group played for the marriage party. For the procession and the party they played the same set of Newar love songs (*matinā maye*) that everybody knows from radio, television, CDs and DVDs. Among the more popular ones is an old tune named "The girl Rājamati will marry me" (*rājamati kumati jikay vasā*). Equally popular is a song written in 2000 by Ram Krishna Duval from Kirtipur, named "My brother presented me with a spinning wheel" (*jimidaicā byugu haykucā*). In this song the lover is called brother (Nep. *dai*, Nev. *arā*) who has given a token of his affection to the girl named Rājamati. Apart from songs in Nevārī, popular Nepālī tunes are also played, such as "In the month of Āṣādha (July/August)" (*āṣāre maina ma pani parne...*). Ever since it was written, composed and performed by Chuzang Dhukpa from Kalimpong in around 1975, this song has frequently been rerecorded and remains one of the most popular songs in the country.

With thirteen musicians, the *basuri bājā* group also joined the party on the following two days, hosting a total of 1,250 guests. The Damāi musicians received 200 euros for their services, the Newar group received the same for the procession and 130 euros for playing at the party.

An example from the Internet

To further underline the contested role of wedding bands in a globalised context, the following example of a homemade video

uploaded on YouTube in 2007 by a German couple, entitled 'Newari wedding music and ceremony' should suffice. The film shows the normal arrival of a *brass bājā* at a house, playing a Hindi film tune. There is nothing special about the film itself. However, the video, about five minutes long, is interesting because of the comments by different people, supposedly all Nepalis, tagged below. In the comment fields beneath the YouTube video screen, one can read among others the following commentaries:

> It sounds like a joke, i am praying i do not get this music on my wedding Ceremony..... it sounds like they are celebrating for the QUEENS 50TH BIRTHDAY...
> what a fuck is this .newari weeding n hindi_ sound track ?????????
> thats mangal dhun.
> is this klezmah?
> that music has to go! its too loud! I have never seen a marching band at a newari wedding, and I am married to a newari! at least edit it with some nepali folk!
> when are we going to learn our original songs are the best we don't have to borrow this stupid band and hindi songs from some other country to make our weddings memorable. where is damai baja??! (Comments, accessed on 15.8.2011, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0MNn1MaCXGQ)

Here, instead of caste discrimination, (globalised) class distinction and a revitalized ethnic and nationalistic ethos take over. The bands might not be 'impure' any more, but they are looked down on as 'unsophisticated', 'backward' and thus 'unsuitable' for 'modern times'. The stigma of Nepal as a backward country impacts on the view of these people, possibly Nepalis living abroad, who have stopped seeing the bands as an 'authentic' and essential ingredient of marriage rituals – not just as decoration. Possibly, they represent a general trend for marriages to become events with engagement rings, ethnic and/or cosmopolitan chic in the form of a white wedding dress, wedding cakes, or reception parties with a DJ at posh hotels that serve multi-cuisine buffets instead of Nepalese *bhoj*, where the guests are also offered red and white wine in addition to whisky. This might lead to another, yet not visible steady form of downgrading and another form of marginalisation of wedding bands as 'ethnic chic' and item – but not as a shaper of auspiciousness. Some comments on the uploaded youtube video reveal yet another tendency towards cultural heritage: there are several complaints that the music played in the video is *not* Newar but Indian, that the instruments used are *not* Newar but western, that the wedding ceremony thus can clearly not be Newari but Indian. This returns us to the previous elaborations on 'origins' and 'authenticity' in the case of the Jugi and the Damai musicians (p. 64). To be sure, some of the music played by the *brass bājās* are Indian film songs, and the bands were only formed in the 1970s. But like the *brass bājā*, the *pañcāi bājā* too is neither 'genuinely' Newari nor Nepali but has been introduced from the Sultanate and Rajput courts in India and subsequently 'indigenised'. And the founders of the *brass bājās* were former Jugi musicians, thus Newars. The 'fusion' of different caste members and members of ethnic groups as well as of music styles, and as much as there are shifts, and battles, of distinction among those musicians, there seem to be ongoing negotiations among the publics consuming their products. In many ways, this microcosm mirrors contestations within Nepal on a larger scale. It mirrors the dynamics of rituals between inclusion and exclusion, for revitalisation and innovation, as we could see in the case of the *naumati bājā* at the marriage procession of Kailash Dhaubanjar in 2011 (p. 72-3).

Wedding bands will survive, in whatever

shape, because they have inherent capacity, like the people of Nepal, to adapt, to remain traditional while modernising, to enjoy, no matter whether at a posh hotel or in the bazaar.

Conclusions

The wedding bands of the Kathmandu Valley show interesting parallels to their counterparts in India. But with time they have also developed their own tunes and aesthetics, responding to and involving local traditions. The bands are a central part of the wedding choreography, they frame auspicious and secular, entertainment-based 'spaces' and emotions and are crucial for the client's social distinction. While they constantly adapt to new musical tastes and tunes, thus responding to the larger commercial musical landscape, transnational mobility and urbanisation, their low-caste status is an underlying stigma that the band members often aspire to overcome. This turns the wedding bands and their music into a substantial 'contact zone' for research on ritual dynamics as a source and indicator of cultural-social dynamics.