The marriage of Kailash Dhaubanjar and Monika Shrestha in Bauddha on 21 November 2011. The Gāthā woman handing over auspicious flowers, white narcissus and mugwort, to the bride.

Part III

CONCLUSIONS
FACETS OF NEWAR RITUALS

Bhaktapur
The marriage of Rupesh
and Sajani Bajracharya on
18 November 2005.
In the act of offering of the virgin
(kanyādāna), the hands are
joined with the palms upwards at
the bottom the hand of the bride's
mother, then the bride's father,
the groom Rupesh, the bride
Sajani and on top the right hand
of the groom's paternal aunt
(nini). Water is poured by a
lineage member (left) and a

Introduction

In the summaries and conclusions of the previous sections we have focussed on what we believe to be specific aspects of various life-cycle rituals within the community of the Newars in Bhaktapur and Patan. In this final part we will examine what these rituals, which are all embedded in a highly complex, urban and literate socio-cultural environment, have in common, and what they mean for a wider Hindu and Buddhist context. We would again like to emphasise that we deliberately do not wish to reduce rituals to a few aspects, functions or meanings, because we consider that approach misleading. Life-cycle rituals are rich and dense events full of ritual elements in different orders, dynamic processes and socio-religious relations. They show a kind of irreducible and singular richness, which implies that one can only arrive at broad generalisations by neglecting the specificity of the event. In the following we will therefore highlight only four aspects: the situation of the bride, the use of mantras in the texts and rituals, the function of Newar ritual handbooks, and elements of a "grammar" of Newar rituals.

The Processuality of Newar Marriages

In the north Indian Brahmanical marriage system, the bride's side generally has to provide a bigger share than the groom's side, and demands for gifts can also continue after the wedding. As we have seen, the Newars differ from this system in two ways: the ornaments, household goods and money given to the bride remains her personal property; the wife-taker also bestows considerable gifts, as for instance gold ornaments, on the bride. We therefore see in Newar marriages both a dowry and a kind of bride-price, and we see a symmetrical form of exchange that corresponds to the isogamic structure of the alliances that Robert Levy has described: "In the Newar case the general emphasis on equality of prestations corresponds to an emphasis on isogamy" (Levy 1990: 130).

In the northern Indian Brahmanical marriage system, what is striking is the inequality in the gifts that are exchanged during the wedding celebrations. For all intents and purposes, only the bride's side gives gifts. Sometimes it is even explicitly forbidden for the groom's party to give anything in return. And the father of the bride or other relatives occasionally may not even eat cooked food in the groom's house, because that evokes the suspicion of an exchange or payment (see Dumont 1980: 138).

This asymmetry is, of course, predominantly expressed by the fact that the bride herself is considered to be a free gift (kanyādāna, lit. "gift of a virgin or daughter") to her future husband. Unlike reciprocal gifts among equals or in the act of economic exchange, the religious gift (dāna) does not oblige a material gift to be made in return. A gift produces religious merit for the giver only if it is given without expectation of a gift in return. What he then obtains is an invisible merit, unlike the profit or gain in secular gifts.[1] To avoid the appearance of a secular purchase, *Manu* (3.51-54) stipulates that no bride price may be accepted; otherwise, it would be prostitution. Thus the hierarchy of the gift is established from the outset. The giver has a lower status than the receiver.

In a ritual sense, the father "sacrifices" his daughter for religious merit,[2] for in return he obtains the "blessing" of the higher clan. Representing his extended family, he also obtains standing and prestige. If the father does not give the daughter away as a virgin, disaster threatens: the daughter is considered impure or as casteless (śūdrā, vṛṣalī). The institution of child marriage arose out of anxi-

[1] For the invisible or visible gain (adṛṣṭaphala, dṛṣṭaphala), see Trautmann 1981: 45, 280.
[2] See Trautmann 1981: 26.

Bhaktapur
The marriage of Rupesh and Sajani Bajracharya on 18 November 2005.
In the act of offering of the virgin (kanyādāna), the hands are joined with the palms upward: at the bottom the hand of the bride's mother, then the bride's father, the groom Rupesh, the bride Sajani and on top the right hand of the groom's paternal aunt (nini). Water is poured by a lineage member (left) and a brother of the bride (right).

ety about not marrying off the daughter before her first menses, and the fear of impurity and loss of standing for the whole family. The early promise of marriage given long before the wedding, and in terms of ritual almost as solid as marriage, probably occurred for the same reason.

Although the Ihi marriage to the bel-fruit might be regarded as a reaction to such Brahmanical notions (Allen 1982), the Newar marriage is basically much more balanced (Levy 1990: 129f.). Both sides share the expenses of the rituals that take place in either house. It even seems that the expenses at the time of marriage are slightly higher on the groom's side. In the marriage of Mahesh and Benela, it was estimated that the bride's side spent about two million and the groom's side about 2.5 million rupees.

Newar marriage rituals in particular are extremely diverse and fuzzy events. They consist of a mixture of Vedic, Smārta and folk elements. They can be pompous celebrations with exchanges of a great many goods and gigantic parties, full of ritual and festive elements, but also rather simple ceremonies in which the groom's family accepts the bride into its household. They can be performed in a very traditional way with learned Brahmin or Bajrācārya priests or without any priest at all. It is therefore difficult to speak of *the* Newar marriage without specifying caste, religion and place. However, there are some common characteristics that are true at least for the majority of Newar marriages. It is on these that we shall concentrate in the following.

At the centre of the Newar marriage and Hindu marriages in general is not the couple but families, lineage groups and clans. Due to the influences of mediatised love marriage, this rule is slowly becoming fragile, but it persists as one of the dominant characteristics in defining Hinduism (see Michaels 2004: 121-124).

We have already seen in the Ihi rituals (Gutschow/Michaels 2008) that rituals do

not centre on the girls alone but are meant as an initiation ritual for the acceptance of the girl into the clan and society. At a wedding, the perspective of the West tends to focus on the bridal couple. But in a traditional Hindu and Buddhist marriage, man and wife do not come together simply to establish a family. Descent groups also come together, who try to preserve or improve their purity and status. Economic exchanges of considerable size take place between two groups. And not only does the couple undergo a rite of passage, new kinship ties are made between former "strangers" by becoming an in-law-relative with new bonds of solidarity and mutual aid.

Thus, marriage also has to do with the distribution of goods, labour rights and duties or privileges. The other purposes of a marriage bond, such as legalising sexuality and producing progeny or setting up a new household, are to be seen within this network of relations. Whereas most domestic life-cycle rituals take place in the house, several parts of the ritual of the Hindu wedding are almost public: the wedding procession with the noisy bands, the formal talks at the Gaṇeśa shrine, the festive and opulent meals with often a great number of guests, or the sacrifices after the wedding in the shrines.

Love must not be the predominant motive for a Newar marriage. Romantic love is shown by certain modern elements, such as the video filming, the wedding cake or the wedding car, where it is expressed more conventionally than spontaneously (Trawick 1990: 153), but certainly not during the traditional rituals. Traditionally the groom would not even go to fetch the bride. Love may emerge after the wedding, but it is not the dominant aspect in marriage.

A marriage in the West is remarkably different from (Newar) Hindu or Buddhist marriages (cf. Michaels 2004: 111). There it is no longer necessary to guarantee property, livelihood, and reproduction (the government is

a substitute); children and marriage no longer require one another; modern anti-ritualism directed against formalisation turns away from high ideals of personal relations (love, trust, fidelity). In the West, people often get married purely for the purpose of legalising the status of the children, that is, only once the relationship is no longer a private matter. In Nepal, however, an unmarried couple with children would not be tolerated.

Unlike Parbatiyā and some Newar Brahmin families, Newar marriage basically follows endogamic patterns with regard to caste and locality as well as isogamic patterns with regard to caste and status. In other words, compared with Parbatiyā castes, Newar marriages show far fewer hyper- or hypogamic structures. These patterns of caste isogamy and territorial endogamy make for the closed society that typifies the Newars, and that has fostered the rich ritual llife that they lead. There is little exchange or assimilation with other population groups in Nepal, and even between Newar groups of different towns, although these patterns are changing rapidly. Yet the differences in the marriage rituals of the Newar towns and settlements cannot be overlooked.

It is notable that the Brahmin or the Vajrācārya priest only plays a comparatively marginal role in Newar marriages. To be sure, he is indispensable during the core rituals of the high castes, but in many other rituals at the houses before and after the wedding he is not or only occasionally required. Many middle and all low castes will in any case dispense with a priest; instead lineage or family elders assume their roles. But even among the high caste Newars one sometimes feels they only formally commit to Brahmanical Smārta values, and do not follow them in practice.

The dominant agency in the whole marriage process lies with the women. They are responsible for a number of customary rites,

the worship in the house, the ritual meals and the decorations. As it is already said in the *Āpastambhadharmasūtra* (II.6.25.10): "From the women and from people of all castes one should learn the other (minor) rites and customs" (cf. Winternitz 1892: 15). Among Newars, priest, groom and the eldest of the lineage are the most active men, but often they operate under the directive of the women, especially the *nakhī*. By and large, Newar women have a relatively high status; they are more involved in economic and public life than Parbatiyā women (except for high caste women), and they are often self-confident and patronising in the way they govern household affairs (Allen 1982, Gellner 1991: 115).

There is also a conspicious absence of the Veda in the ritual practice of Newar Hindu weddings. Though evident in the texts, many essential elements such as the fire, seven steps, *kanyādāna*, and until recently *svayaṃvara* are missing from the ritual performances. Given the lack of these elements, there are even doubts whether the Newar Hindu marriage can be counted as a traditional *saṃskāra* or life-cycle ritual. However, "if we insist that only *kanyadan* can be a sacrament, then by definition Newar (human) marriage is not a sacrament and only *ihi* is. Those Newars who perform the elaborate marriage ritual do however regard it as one of the set of 'ten sacraments' (*dasakarma*)" (Gellner 1991: 116).

Indeed, Newar marriage has to be seen as a process rather than as an event: it is in continuation of Ihi and confinement (Bāhrā tayegu) and only lasts perhaps until the day the first child is born. Only then has the daughter-in-law effectively arrived in her new environment. Some of these traditional elements are performed before the wedding and are not repeated afterwards; other elements such as *svayaṃvara* seem to be recent introductions from the past few decades. Only if they have not been performed, as in the case of Brah-

min Newars, will they be carried out during the wedding. This characteristic also contributes to the Newarness of the ritual to which we will return below.

Confirming Relations – The Betel Nuts

Among Newars, no straightforward symbolic association is offered with areca or "betel" nuts. No specific deity is associated with the nuts and no specific virtue. However, it seems that in general, betel nuts mark and establish relations. In the following we will present some examples to support this assumption.

Chipped fragments of betel nuts are consumed when packed with a variety of ingredients in a betel leaf to form what is called "pan". In contrast to India and the Nepalese Terai, only a few Newars engage regularly in chewing pan. In Bhaktapur, only one pan shop caters to the few customers. The scene changes considerably in festive times such as Dasaī or Bisketjātrā, when many pan vendors populate the squares.

Pan is an inevitable offering on the occasion of marriage processions, because it is presented together with a pouch containing a variety of sweets, nuts and herbs (*masīpva*).

It is often said that in the Indian Subcontinent, the chewing of betel nut and betel dates back to the pre-Vedic period. Later, it was the custom of royalty to chew pan. Servants would carry artfully designed boxes with spices and a well-designed scissor-like cutter to slice the betel nut into pieces.

There was also the custom among lovers to chew the nut and the leaf because of its relaxant properties. In such a context the nut is said to represent the male and the leaf the female principle. In parts of Assam, nuts are sent out as an invitation to a wedding reception. Similarly betel nuts appear in Malay

A variety of betel nuts (gvē). Husked nuts are usually 15 mm in diameter (1), large ones measure up to 35 mm (2). A plate with ten gaudily decorated nuts is taken by the groom's party to the bride's house prior to the actual marriage ritual. The bride returns these nuts after the ritual and they are kept in the room of the newlywed couple as an auspicious token. In olden times, nuts were skilfully carved (3). Unpeeled nuts (4, pāgvē) are brought by the wife-taker and demonstratively produced in front of the wife-giver together with other items. The unhusked shape probably indicates potential affluence.

culture as a customary offering to guests. A newly married couple is often compared to a nut, divided in two halves.

Such sexual connotations are not explicitly referred to in Newar society. Instead the fact that bride and groom handle betel nuts (without betel leaves!) – all of them given to members of the wife-takers' as well as of the wife-givers' family – demonstrate the use of betel nuts as gifts symbolising various aspects. Finally the nuts presented by the newlywed wife to her husband's family signal her arrival in her new family. The nuts are not brought along by her but originate from the wife-taker.

The gift of betel nuts (New. *gvē*, Nep. *supari*)

Nuts are offered in various contexts and the number of times varies with the tradition of the sub-castes.

Quite a number of such nuts of regular size are brought by the matchmaker to the bride's house on the occasion of *gvē yēkegu*, the bringing of offerings: some hundred nuts in those cases when they are brought in a box specially designed to hold nuts (*gvēbātā*). Most significant is the offering of a set of ten nuts, which allegedly represents the body of the groom: the nuts are identified with ten body parts (*daśendrīya*) two eyes, two ears, nose, mouth, brain, heart, navel, penis). By handing over the symbolic body, the groom promises to be a faithful and steadfast husband.

The tradition has arisen over the last generation for families of upper status sub-castes and of the rising middle class to send a set of ten colourfully decorated nuts, fixed to a board.

Until the middle of the 20th century, pairs of nuts were turned on a lathe to create a decorative towering form, representing the vermilion container (*sinhamū*) and ritual mirror (*jvālānhāykā*).

The mode of exchanging betel nuts differs according to caste, as the following examples

demonstrate. Betel nuts are for instance offered twice, thrice or even four times in course of the wedding ritual.

The example of a Jyāpu (farmer) marriage: The simplest ritual was observed on the occasion of Anil Basukala's marriage to Sumitri Prajapati, both from Bhaktapur, on August 26, 2000. The young girl had hidden with her lover for a couple of days to demonstrate their willingness to marry. Her act of absconding is called *mele vanegu*, and is considered as the consummation of the marriage. However, in order to attain the status of a daughter-in-law (*bvamcā*) and to become a member of her husband's lineage, she has to hand out betel nuts to all the members. Whoever disagrees with the new union, will neither come to receive nuts, nor join the ensuing feast (*gvēsabhvay*). In marked contrast to other marriage rituals, the first nut is presented to the new daughter-in-law by the eldest woman of the household, in this case the husband's grandmother. She in turn hands the nut over to her newly wed husband who in turn offers it to the ancestral deity (*dugudyaḥ*). This first nut represents her as the woman that is about to join a new lineage. The moment in which the nut is offered to the representation of the ancestral deity and is kept in a special room in the company of other deities (*dyaḥkvathā*), she has crossed from her parental lineage to that of her husband.

The following six pairs of nuts are offered to Sūrya, the principal locational deity Chumā Gaṇeśa, the threshold guardian, the absorbing stone at a nearby street cross and the sources of water, a tube well and the tap in the house (see map). After having joined the lineage, she has now arrived in the house and the locality. Only then are the nuts handed out to the members of the lineage (*gvē sālegu*), starting with the oldest man (*nāyaḥ*) and woman (*nakhī*) and the husband's paternal aunts (*nini*) and his maternal relatives. Following

the acceptance of the daughter-in-law by the family and the lineage, the following events were as normal: after four days Sumitri was taken to her parent's home (an act called *penu yagu cahivanegu*) by her sister and a few days later, Anil's sister saw her there and accompanied her to her new home (an act called *lāsva vanegu*) while carrying the auspicious *sukūda* lamp. A week later, Anil visited his wife's home to be formally accepted as a son-in-law (*jicābhāju*). On that occasion he handed out ten nuts to each of the family members.

The example of a Kasāī (butcher) marriage: The marriage of Sangeeta Sahi and Laxmi Prasad Sahi, both from Bhaktapur, on November 16 and 23, 2008, demonstrates a simple process without the involvement of a priest and the parents of the groom playing a prominent role.

The act of bringing the nuts by the wife-taker is called *gvē yēkegu*, while the receiving party calls it *gvē haygu*. On that occasion the bride takes her seat with the matchmaker on her right and the groom's mother to her left. It is she – not her son – who smears vermilion into the bride's parting to demonstrate the act of wife-taking.

The groom's father offers the first handful of betel nuts to Gaṇeśa before offering another handful to the bride, who lets these pass through her palms into a large brass vessel (*libātā*). A second handful follows, mixed with aluminium 25 and 50 paisa coins. Finally he offers her a thousand rupee note. The groom's mother offers three handfuls of nuts in the same way.

A week later the bride performs the handing over of betel nuts (*gvē sālegu*) to her relatives, beginning with the oldest woman of the lineage and her parents. She takes the nuts, which she had received earlier from her future father-in-law, from the vessel and hands them out in exchange for various household and kitchen items.

The bride will only meet the groom an hour later, once she has been guided to her future home by her mother-in-law. Surprisingly, she does not hand out any betel nuts to her in-laws and members of their clan.

The example of a Citrakār (painter) marriage: In contrast to many other sub-castes, the tradition of the marginally pure sub-caste of painters (Citrakār) prescribes the offering of betel nuts by the bride to her close relatives and the deities of the location on the day of *gvẽ yẽkegu*. In the case of the marriage of Sajani Chitrakar to Subin Chitrakar from Patan on 20th of November 2008, pairs of nuts handed to her by the *lami* were offered to thirteen deities of the immediate neighbourhood and Bhaktapur (see maps), including the tutelary deity of the Citrakār, Viśvakarman in the form of Chumā Gaṇeśa, Bhīmsen as the protector of trade and the Navadurgā in total, as well as Vārāhī, the Mother Goddess who presides over the western sector of the urban *maṇḍala*. In a rare move across the boundaries of Bhaktapur, the shrine of the Buddhist female deity Hārātī, located on Svayambhūcaitya Hill, was also given a pair of nuts.

Only then did the bride hand three times five nuts to her father, once to her mother, two times to her parental uncle, once to her father's grand-aunt, and once to her brother and two sisters.

Seventeen days later the bride again dedicates two nuts each to seventeen deities, now including the guardian stone of the house and even Bagalamukhi, the powerful Mahāvidyā in Patan. In the following sequence, the Buddhist Vajrācārya priest receives the first five nuts, followed by the eldest married woman of the lineage (*nakhī*), who presents a symbolical coin in return. She is followed by the oldest man (*nāyaḥ*), who receives nuts in exchange for the offering of a water container (*ghaḥ*), the aunts and uncles, her sisters and in the end mother and father.
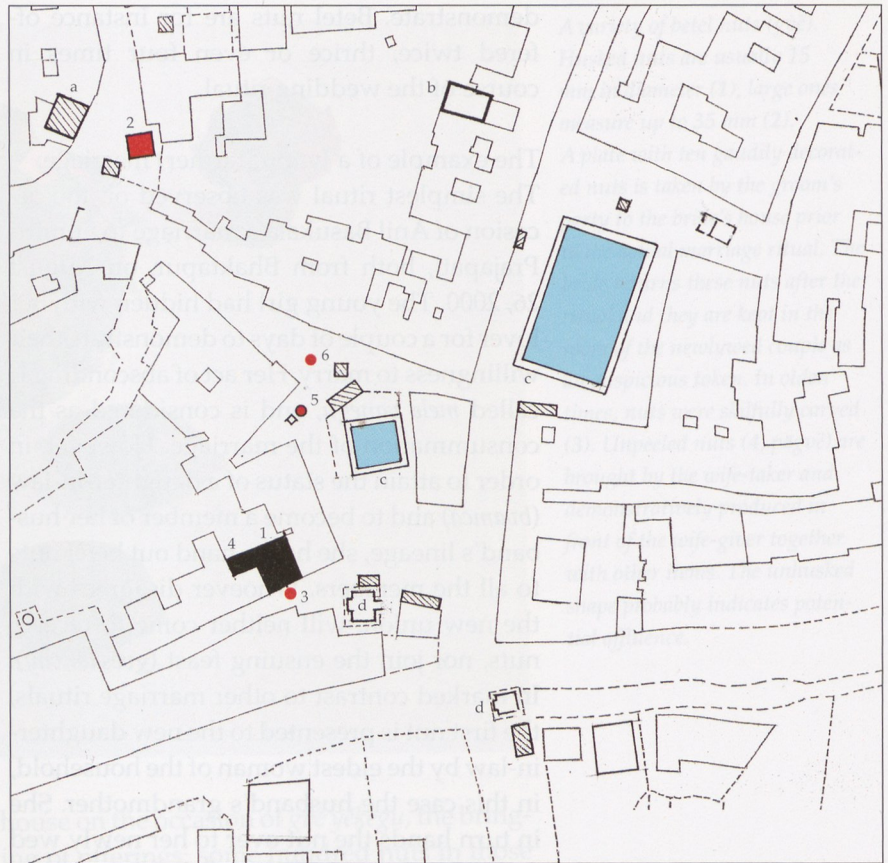
Bhaktapur

The marriage of Anil Basukala and Sumitri Prajapati in Byasi, 28 August 2000.

Gvẽ sālegu (lit. taking the betel nuts [from the bride – *bvamcā*]) in an act of tying the new daughter-in-law to the neighbourhood into which she has married.

The first pair of nuts is offered to Sūrya (**1**), represented by a stone featuring the face of the sun, the second pair is dedicated to Chumā Gaṇeśa (**2**), the deity of the *ilākā*, a well-defined area, the third pair is presented to the absorbing stone (**3**, *pikhālākhu*) in front of the threshold and incorporated into the pavement of the lane. The fourth pair of nuts is offered to the tap (**4**) on the ground floor as the source of water needed by the household; the fifth pair goes to the deep well (**5**, *tū*), and finally, the sixth pair of nuts is put onto the stone (**6**, *chvāsaḥ*) that absorbs ritual waste on the occasion of life-cycle rituals.

The "seat" (*pīṭha*) of the protective deity, Chumā Gaṇeśa, is located in a shrine opposite the God-House (**a**, *dyaḥchē*), the house of the funeral association (**b**, *siguthī*) is located in a nearby backyard. Two ponds (**c**, *pūkhū*), three step-wells (**d**, *hiti*) and ten arcaded structures (*phalcā*) and shrines add to the infrastructure of public space.

Bhaktapur
The marriage of Anil Basukala and Sumitri Prajapati, 28 August 2000.

Top
The distribution of betel nuts (gvẽ):
The first nut is offered to the bride by the eldest woman of the house (in this case the groom's grandmother). The bride hands it over to her future husband, who offers it to the ancestor deity (dugudyaḥ). The following six pairs of nuts are offered to the locational deity, (Chumā Gaṇeśa), to Kumār, the protective deity who presides over the threshold at the pikhālākhu, to the water tap on ground floor level, to the tube well on the neighourhood square, and to the nearby cvāsaḥ stone which absorbs impurities and ritual waste.

Bottom
Following the distribution of pairs of nuts to the deities and spirits, the family members receive nuts from the bride against offerings of money. The sequence is strictly according to seniority: first the eldest man (nāyaḥ) of the lineage, then the eldest woman (nakhī), then the male and female members of the lineage, then the oldest woman of the household, the groom's brother, his wife and son, his paternal granduncles and uncles, his parental aunts, his sisters, the daughters of his paternal uncles, his paternal aunts' daughters, and finally his mother's sister.

The betel nut container (gvēbātā)
is artfully shaped:
The lid shows the scene of Viṣṇu
subduing two demons, Madhu
and Kaiṭabha, on the knob
shaped like the pericarp of a lotus
flower. The knob is encircled by
twelve bulgy lotus leaves, and
two more circles on the edge of
which the outer one also bears
the eight auspicious objects and
other symbols.
Photograph 11 December 2008

*The marriage of Sajani Chitrakar
from Bhaktapur and Subin
Chitrakar from Patan.
Four days after the marriage
Subin visits his in-laws' house
for the jilancā dukāyegu ritual,
the handing out of five betel
nuts to each member of his wife's
family, beginning with the clan
eldest (nāyaḥ/nakhī), her par-
ents, brothers and sisters, uncles
and aunts.
The matchmaker (lami) reaches
into the container of nuts,
counts them and adds nuts until
there are five nuts on each of his
palms, which he then hands out.
Photograph 11 December 2008*
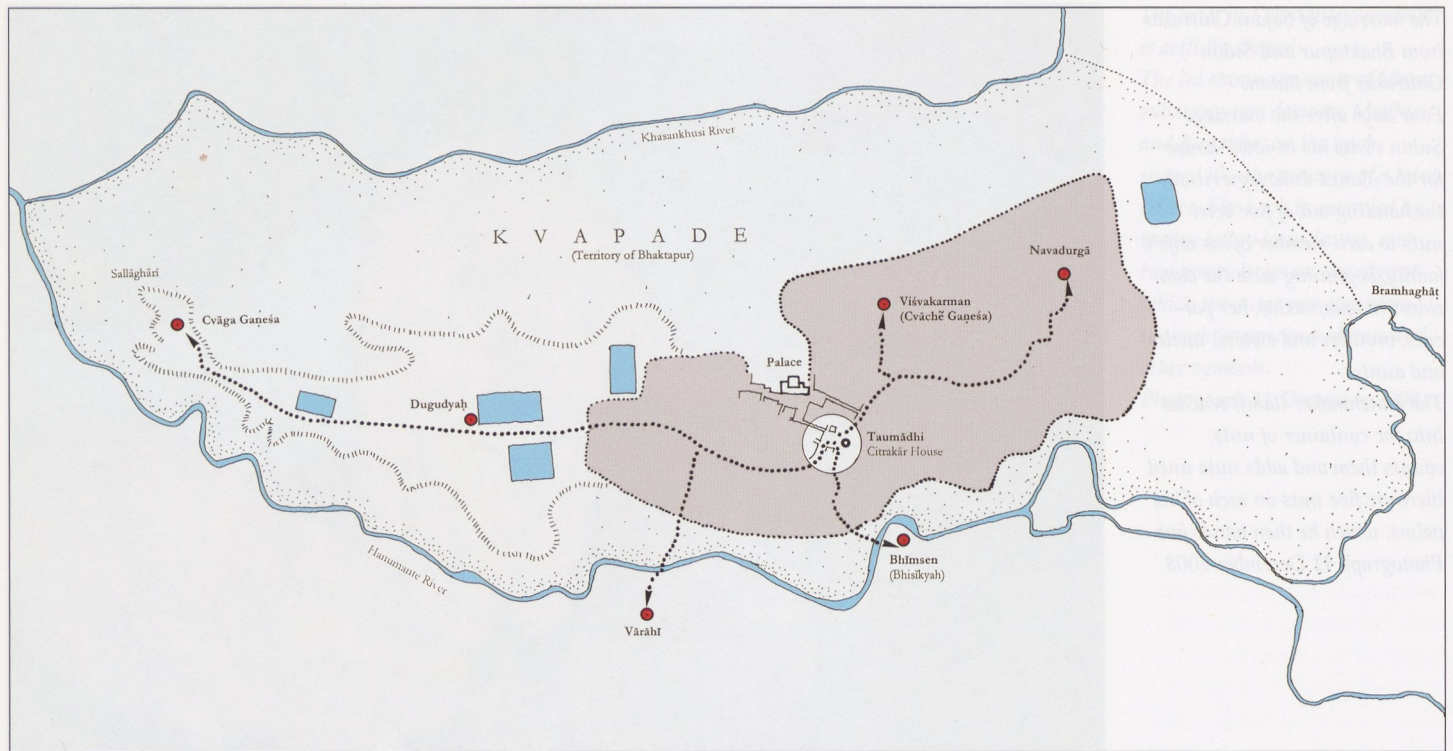
To conclude what the Citrakār claim to con-
stitute the "offering of the virgin" (*kanyādāna*)
is performed: the eldest of the lineage pours
water onto the hands of the couple, the bride's
parents and the matchmaker, and then the
bride hands over to her newlywed husband
nine large betel nuts in a mixture of barley
and black sesame (*techva-hamvaḥ*). A mixture
of barley and black sesame is in fact not only
a regular offering made to any deity, but also
a specific offering made to the bel fruit on the
occasion of the Ihi ritual in the very moment
the virgin is handed over to Suvarṇakumāra,
the Golden Boy (Gutschow / Michaels 2008:
147). A few minutes before the bride is car-
ried out of the house, the members of the lin-
eage present *dakṣiṇā* to the matchmaker (*lami*)
and receive in return four (the number varies
according to the sub-caste) betel nuts packed
in red velvet. In allusion to the thread which
closes the traditional purse (*putumhecā*) of the
Newars, these nuts are called (*putugvẽ*). The
nuts literally bind those who accept that of-

Bhaktapur
Location of six temples and
shrines at which a Citrakār
family from Bhailaḥcuka in
Taumādhi offerered two betel
nuts each. These nuts have been
brought from the groom's house
and handed over by the bride to
her father. Six more pairs of nuts
are offered to those deities, which
are located in the immediate
neighbourhood of the house (see
map on the opposite page).
The distribution of nuts rein-
forces the liminal status of the
bride a couple of days days prior
to the actual marriage ritual
(svayaṃvara). She bids adieu to
the deities and spirits with whom
she grew up before she joins the
lineage of her husband and his
place-bound deities.
Mapped in November 2008

Daily visit to neighbouring temples and shrines by female members of the family of Madhu Chitrakar:
1 Chvāsaḥ, the stone that absorbs impurities and ritual waste; 2 Gaṇeśa; 3 Siddhilakṣmī (Nyātapvala); 4 Caṇḍikā; 5 Bhairava; 6 Betāl; 7 Kṣetrapāla.
All of these, except the chvāsah stone (no. 1) receive a pair of betel nuts which Sajani Chitrakar handed over to her father on 20 November 2008, a few days prior to the actual marriage. Five more places receive pairs of betel nuts within Bhaktapur while the final one is offered to Hārītī at her temple on Svayambhūcaitya Hill.

opposite:
Bhaktapur
The marriage of Sajani and Subin Chitrakar on 7 December 2008.
In the act of kanyādāna, hands are joined in a formal act of offering the bride to the groom.
At the bottom the left hand of the father, followed by the left hands of the mother and the groom.
Then come the hands of the bride and on top the right hands of the groom, mother and father.
The nāyaḥ of the bride's lineage pours water from a sacred golden pot, while her paternal aunt holds a brass container to collect the water.

fering to her. In case of her death they will be polluted for a period of four days. In order to avoid pollution some relatives refuse to accept *putugvē*.

In the Citrakār marriage, the final act of *jicābhāju du cakaygu*, i.e. of the husband introducing himself as a son-in-law (*jicābhāju*), to (inside = *du*) his wife's family concluded the complex marriage ritual. He handed over ten nuts each to all lineage members of her family to confirm his role as wife-taker, which entails a couple of duties. Not until that night is the marriage consummated.

The example of a marriage of Pāñcthārīya: A few days before the marriage of Benela Kāyastha and Mahesh Bhaju, ten wrapped decorative betel nuts were brought to the bride's house (*gvē yēkegu*) by the matchmaker (*lami*) to confirm the willingness of the groom to marry.

On the day of the wedding, the bride offered ten nuts and a pouch with five more nuts to each of her relatives, starting with her paternal aunts (*nini*) and ending with the eldest couple of her lineage (*nāyaḥ/nakhī*) in lieu of her parents. Those ten nuts, which had been brought in advance, were then returned to the matchmaker and taken back to the groom's house.

Twelve clay cups with five betel nuts each were dedicated to the deities of the house and its ritual environment.

Upon the arrival of the bride at her in-laws' house, she presents ten nuts each (*gvē sālegu*) to the members of her husband's lineage,

starting with her parents-in-law, and ending with her husband's parental aunt, who had assisted her in handing over the nuts. Twelve earthenware cups with five nuts each are prepared, dedicated to the deities of the house and the ritual environment.

Two days later, the wife-taker visits his in-laws to confirm his role as *jicābhāju*: as such, he will have to help them in times of distress and in case a death occurs in the lineage to which his wife belonged. He hands out ten nuts to each of her relatives in return for offerings or cash.

In all cases we see how the exchange of betel nuts marks the arrival and acceptance of the bride as *mhaymacā* and the groom as *jicābhāju*, and thus helps to strengthen the alliance between two clans. This assumption receives confirmation in other contexts.

Betel nuts in other rituals

On rare occasions, fruit and flowers similar in shape to betel nuts are given the prefix *gvē*. The "areca nut flower" (*gvēcāsvā*), which was mentioned above in the context of the worship of brothers by their sisters (Kijāpūjā) retains its lilac colour for a long period and stands for longevity.

A symbolic betel nut is also offered to the frogs on the occasion of full moon in August (Janaipūrṇimā), the day that marks the peak of the rainy season. Two weeks earlier, the period for transplanting rice had ended. The offerings dedicated to frogs (*byēcā jā nakegu*) include a specific fruit in the shape of a small betel nut (*byācāgvē*), a mirror (*byācānhāykā*) in the shape of a radish slice, cooked rice (*jā*), a sacred thread (*jajāka*), and a small piece of fried bread made of whole wheat (*maricā*).

Pieces of betel nuts are also distributed after the completion of a feast on the occasion of death rituals (*śrāddha* and *soraśrāddha*). The oldest married woman (*nakhī*) of the clan

(*phukī*) is obliged to collect the plate put aside for the ancestors (*dyaḥbvaḥ*) and the leftovers of the participants in a brass container (*bātā*). She discards this on the absorbing stone (*chvāsaḥ*) and cleans the container while holding it above the threshold stone (*pikhālākhu*) of the house. A second woman from the house pours water over the container for that purpose. Then the woman who pours the water puts chips of a betel nut into the container, of which every female and male participant in the feast takes a piece together with some drops of water. Then the *nakhī* places the container upside down at the place where the feast was served. Any participant may then turn the container over and take the last piece from the betel nut to indicate the closure of the event. The *nakhī* and the container are now free of pollution.

The betel nuts appears prior to marriage in the Ihi ceremony, the initiation ritual of girls which celebrates the marriage with the bel fruit. On the second day the girls wear a garland of *kumaḥkāḥ* thread into which twelve items have been woven, one of which being a betel nut. In a concluding rite the girls perform seven steps (*saptapadī*) and circumambulate – as is mandatory for any traditional Hindu marriage – the sacred fire three times (Gutschow/Michaels 2008: 152). The seven steps are each marked by a betel leaf bearing a betel nut, a clove (*lavā*) and a coin (*daṅg*). At the end the nuts are collected by the Joṣī and Ācāju helpers. It has been speculated that the items in the garland represent the provisions needed for a journey to the realm of the future human husband (Gutschow/Michaels 2008: 38). Likewise, it can be said that the nuts of the seven steps are inevitable on the way to be eventually married to a human husband.

Nut and coin – these two items are in many other contexts offerings that signal respect. Brahmins, for example, are invited to a feast by being given an offering of this kind called

gvẽ daṅg (a *daṅg* is equal to a quarter of one paisa). Students used to offer their *gvẽ dang* at the feet of their guru in a gesture of respect.

In the context of Parbatiyā, betel nuts promise longevity when a birthday ritual is performed. The Brahmin priest arranges eight nuts on a diagram drawn with sandal wood paste on a plate, representing the family of seers known as Aṣṭacīranjīvi, while Mārkaṇḍeya, who represents the immortality that is attained through knowledge, marks the centre.

Concluding remarks

When the issue of the meaning of betel nuts is discussed in accordance with the wishes of foreign researchers, people do not – in contrast to many other issues pertaining to ritual – indulge in speculations, but are cautious and almost guarded: the nut is hard and lasting. It does not rot and does not change its shape or colour. In short, the nut stands for the establishment and re-establishment of a relation, such as of the daughter with her parents and wider family, of the daughter-in-law (*bhamcā*) with her husband's family, of the son-in-law (*jicabhāju*) with the family of his wife, students with their teacher, and clients (*yajmāna*) of upper status sub-castes (Chatharīya) with their Brahmin priests. The hard nut is a token of faithfulness and loyalty. Tuladhar (1979/80: 62) believes that the nut stands for the durability of relationships.

On the occasion of the annual worship of the brothers by their sisters (Kijāpūjā), garlands made of flowers shaped as betel nuts similarly re-establish the bond between siblings. This is done on the second day of the New Year according to Nepāl Saṃvat.

The association of the betel nut with fertility remains vague, although the fact that the unhusked nuts are presented by the wife-taker to the bride in the company of a pair of testicles from the musk ox is suggestive.

Löwdin (1985: 102) is the only author so far who feels reminded of testicles.

Separation and Integration – The Situation of the Bride

It is often said that the situation of Hindu women during the wedding and in the early years of marriage is rather desperate and pitiful, stressful and insecure (see, for instance, Gellner 1991: 117). The bride is (too) young, the marriage is arranged, often the couple does not know each other, they have not met or spoken to each other beforehand. Many girls are therefore anxious about leaving their natal place for an unknown fate. It is on the day of the wedding itself that the bride leaves her maternal home (Nep. *maita*) and comes to her new home (Nep. *ghar*) in an extended family where she is and remains for some time, if not forever, a stranger. She takes a few clothes, cosmetics, some personal items and jewellery with her, nothing more.

In the new house the young wife is often lonely at first, and pines after her parents' house. From that moment on, she internalises the conflict between her emotional ties to her parents' house and loyalty towards her husband's house. Whether the wedding is a trauma for her (Bennett 1983: 168) or not is difficult to say, and depends on the circumstances. But basically, there are two indications for the emotional stress for the bride and young wife during the marriage rituals: the tears she sheds at certain moments, and the marriage songs.

The Bride's Weeping

The emotion of crying, weeping or wailing is very strong and easy to observe.[3] However, lamenting, wailing or weeping does not necessarily disclose one's feelings and emotions. Moreover, one has to differentiate between

[3] The following is partly after Michaels 2012.

The marriage of Ishvar Joshi and Sahan Sila Maskey, both from Bhaktapur, on 30 November 1998.

After handing out betel nuts (gvẽ sālegu) to her relatives the bride is overwhelmed by feelings of grief in anticipation of leaving her parental home. She leans on the wife of her paternal uncle, while a friend holds her on her right.

crying during a ritual and ritual crying.[4] The first emotion can be evoked by rituals, since weeping often is emotionally contagious, but remains subject to the individual's choice or psychic disposition. Ritual weeping, on the other hand, depends on a causal change (e.g. death or farewell): it is stipulated (*intentio solemnis*), performed or staged in a prescribed form. In other words, certain forms of weeping are not a spontaneous reaction to the cause and subject to personal feelings. It is a must and part of a symbolic performance.

In such situations it is hardly possible to discern whether the tears are "real" or not, because what perhaps occurs as ritualised weeping may end in "real" weeping due to the trigger effect created by the situation. Ritualised tears are as "real" as tears shed as an emotional response to the event. Assuming that they are not "real", presupposes a Western individualism and emotionalism that values individual and spontaneous emotions higher than formalised and ritualised emotions. However, since a ritual is formally framed, tears within this frame are performative tears; their "intention" or cause (motive) is laid down or prearranged. They can be formally stipulated and prescribed, or more or less "allowed" by the ritual community. Nobody will ask why a participant starts crying if tears are stipulated or a "normal reaction" in this part of the ritual.

Although no ritual handbook formally imposes the weeping, it is at least customarily prescribed by many cultures and also in Hindu and Buddhist marriages, where it is at least expected that the bride and the bride's mother will start crying at certain moments, especially when the bride hands over the betel nuts to her close relatives and leaves her paternal home. Why do the bride and often the mother or sisters cry then? Both because they have to and because they are sad. Through this behaviour the daughter demonstrates that she will be a good wife in future. If she did not cry, people might assume that she does not love her parents and this could be seen as a lack of emotional stability. And the mother demonstrates by her tears how much she loves her daughter.

Ritualised tears intermingle here with spontaneous tears which, however, are also framed and "permitted" by the ritual context. In the Khvaju Hindu marriage mentioned in our Introduction, the couple knew each other, the groom had even chosen the bride himself (quite unusual in a traditional Hindu context), but they had to behave as if they had had no previous contact. It became obvious that the crying was staged when the bride, after the emotional handing over of betel nuts, went up to the second floor where the popular *Indian Idol* TV show was running all the time. In this moment all of her "grief" vanished from her face in an instant and she was her normal smiling and laughing self again.

Thus, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between staged and "real" weeping. Occasionally it looks as if both the bride and the mother are "really" moved, sometimes one gets the impression that the tears are not "really" expressing sadness. Tears are sometimes called the windows to the soul that show true feelings. But even tears can be crocodile tears, masked, pretended or simulated. Most importantly, they cannot be taken as a clear sign of the emotions. Just how ambiguous such situations can become is seen during the Hindu marriage between Mahesh and Benela when the bride was brought to the car on leaving her parental home and when the brass band played auspicious music. In this case, too, the bride has to cry or weep. But while her ritual "father", the *nāyaḥ*, carried the bride on his back and circumambulated the Mercedes three times, his brother's son clapped the bride on the shoulder saying "You must weep, weep more!" Apparently, she was not weeping enough and her scripted tears were not convincing. Thus, it is not the personal

[4] Michaels 2012 elaborates on this topic in more detail; in addition to the literature mentioned there, the interested reader should consult Gamliel 2010.

feeling that matters in such situations but the ritualised emotions.

These examples suggest a sharp line between ritualised emotions and emotions in ritual. And indeed, we argue that it is clear within rituals whether emotions are ritualised or not. This has to do with the fact that rituals are framed, often marked by the *intentio solemnis* or *saṃkalpa*. These criteria help to distinguish between more or less formalized emotions that are stipulated and normatively regulated, e.g. scripted tears, and emotions in rituals that are accidental or spontaneous but in a strict sense not essential for the ritual, so-called "real tears". However, even in highly emotional rituals we mostly encounter hybrid contexts where stipulated and spontaneous acts come together and mutually support each other. This is why in rituals emotions never become free of the suspicion of being closer to theatre than inner feelings, and are open to reinterpretation and questioned in their authenticity. But only if the distinction between ritualised emotions and emotions in rituals is made can ritual itself be upheld as a special mode of action. This does not mean that spontaneous emotions within the ritual frame do not belong to the ritual, but it marks such emotions as conceptionally different from emotions that are not appropriate, expected or stipulated and therefore not regarded as an important or essential part of the ritual.

If one asks the Newar brides or grooms about the bride's tears, they all admit that the bride has to cry "because that is our tradition". In India, a significant Hindi proverb is sometimes referred to in this context: "One has to somehow endure a daughter's birth; there's crying when she's born and crying when she goes away" (*beṭī kā dharam nibhānā hai āte bhī rulāye jāte bhī rulāye*) (Raheja 1995: 28). Some women also admit that they were sad, but only for a few days. Others say: "We only wept until we entered the car." Thus, the bride's tears might and might not reveal her inner feelings; they definitely cannot be taken as simply an expression of general and enduring sadness on the part of the bride.

How differently tears in such a context may be analysed can also be seen from the fact that Moriz Winternitz (1892: 42f., Hillebrandt 1897: 2-3; cf. Apte 1939: 13f.) interpreted the weeping of the bride in *Āpastambagṛhyasūtra* 4.6 together with *Ṛgveda* 10.40.10 as a remnant of the ancient bride capture or wife-abduction.

It is true that an unknown number of marriage relations do not hold and that the young husbands abscond, or the young wives return to their natal house. It is also true that the newly married woman suffers in her new house because she has to do the most disliked kitchen work, is teased if not terrorised by her mother-in-law and, even more so, her husband's sisters. It takes time before she finds herself in her new role and gets accepted. Often this happens only after she has given birth to a child, even more so if it is a son. But it is difficult to say whether this situation is really felt as desperate, or to what extent other emotions that have to do with love, desire, growing up, responsibility or pride at having left the natal house and now become a wife and eventually a mother play a part. It is certainly as misleading to reduce the Hindu marriage to trauma, sadness and despair as it is to reduce Western marriages to romantic love and euphoria.

Women's songs

In the Brahmanical and patriarchal view, the woman is considered the alien element in a family. She is welcomed as the wife of the son and also needed for the continuity of the paternal line, but she is also feared as a subversive force who might persuade her husband to break with his parents, establish his own household, or not to fulfill his duties as son, brother, grandson. In this context, her sexuality is seen as intimidating and misleading.

This situation makes a young wife long for her own parental family, and such feelings are often in fact heard in marriage songs (Agarwala 1982, Raheja 1995), mixed with the disappointment that her parents have given her away to somewhere too far away, or too soon, or to a man who drinks or is violent. However, literature about the fate of women often has ironic undertones, and therefore particular attention must be paid to where the melancholic songs are sung (Raheja 1994).

In Nepal, the Tīj festival (Bennett 1983: 218-34) gives an occasion for such voices. It is a festival for women, celebrated on the third day after new moon in the month of Bhādra (mid-August to mid-September). The women dress up and gather and sing songs that they have composed themselves or heard from others. Two days later, on Ṛṣi Pañcamī, they also fast and worship Śiva for the health and life of their husbands. Although mostly celebrated by Bāhun and Chetrī castes, the songs are also occasionally sung by Newar girls, and the moods and feelings expressed in these songs are shared by them.

In a remarkable article, Debra Skinner et al. have collected and translated a great number of such songs mainly from a Parbatiyā context. The majority of the songs are what Skinner et al. call *dukha* songs, i.e. songs of sadness, hardship and suffering. They also express "a feeling common among unmarried women: fear of marriage and of possible bad treatment in the husband's household" (Skinner et al 1994: 268).

If they are not happy in their marriage, some girls even express their anger about their parents, especially their father, for having married them to an unbeloved or impoverished husband. The following song may suffice as an example:

Combing the hair and putting a flower in
   the hair clip,
Father, don't give your daughter to Baran-
   phat.

Crossing the Bardan River, I have to go to
   my husband's home.
I have to go there by making my heart as
   hard as stone.
Carrying a load of grass and walking on the
   bank of the Bardan River,
Who told you, father, to give your daughter
   there?
After crossing the Bardan River, the mango
   trees are plentiful.
[My father], seeing a boy wearing a Seiko
   watch and Lee jeans, gave me [to such a
   house].
(…)
The Seiko watch was borrowed from others.
A small pot for cooking rice and a chulo
   (traditional wood stove).
Though they are poor, they are great because
   he wore the Seiko watch. (Skinner et al
   1994: 270)

Many songs describe the hardship created in the new house by the mother-in-law:

Mother:
"You should finish the household tasks
before you go to do the fieldwork.
After you clean the house, then husk the
rice.
Clean the door properly.
Do not comb your hair in front of your husband's eldest brother. …"

Daughter:
"My house is not here, my house is on the
other side of Rainas.
Who told my father that the boy wanted to
marry me?? …
The mother-in-law scolds me, showing the
stick in her hand.
Should I throw away my gift of love or keep
it?
When I try to greet her by touching her feet,
she hides them.
When I cut the grass and make bundles,

She throws them away, scolding me that the grass is not enough. ..."(Skinner et al 1994: 272)

These songs portray the imagined suffering of women in marriage and the pressures on them to be a loveable bride, faithful wife, submissive daughter-in-law and good mother. They express their anxiety about failing these expectations and their anger at the virtues imposed on them. As Skinner et al. (1994: 267) rightly remark, "the songs provide a commentary, an alternative perspective, on women's position in society. The verses disclose the problems wives and daughters face, the anguish they feel, the criticisms they have of their malefactors, and the implicit or explicit protests they have against the social system that places them in their powerless and vulnerable position."

However, the situation of the young Newar wife is not as appalling as such songs might suggest. In general, the young Newar wife is expected to return frequently to her parents' house, sometimes she may even give birth to her first child there, though precisely because of that she is suspected of not really belonging to her husband's family. Moreover, as the title of Lynn Bennett's book (1983) correctly says, she is not only "a dangerous (or endangering) wife," but also "a sacred sister." Bennett sees not only the patrifocal (Brahmanical) perspective, in which the woman is

seen as a danger to the purity of the paternal line, but also the filiafocal view, in which the daughter is in the foreground bringing prestige to the father and protection to the brother. Here is the root of a special, often described brother-sister relationship in India, which is expressed in its own celebrations and protection rituals and comes to the foreground during the weddings (Bennett 1983: 246-252). And there is a matrifocal perspective, on which patrilinear descent feeds and which leads to a high level of esteem for the woman as mother.

Thus, for the woman, marriage is not only a sacrifice. In the minds of many men, women also constitute a special power (śakti), the dynamic part of the cosmos, life-giving energy and provider of auspiciousness. The ritual of welcoming and honouring the new wife or the touching of her feet by the father-in-law is not just a farce; it expresses respect and even fear that is to be controlled by marriage.

Tolerated as a daughter, loved as a sister (of the brother), feared as a spouse, worshipped as a mother (of a son) – that is the fate of Hindu women. But only from the patrifocal and androcentric perspective. The matrifocal perspective is different: deified as a virgin, loved as a daughter and sister (of the brother), needed and respected as wife, strengthened and venerated as a mother (of a son), and eventually honored as a grandmother.

Towards a "Grammar" of Newar Rituals

What is Newar in Newar Hindu and Buddhist life-cycle rituals? In *Growing up* (Gutschow/Michaels 2008: 38-39) and in Appendix 2, we have started to identify some ritual elements that we regard as specifically Newar since they do not appear in rituals of other social groups or castes in South Asia, or only differently so. These elements are not variants of Hinduism but characteristics of a religion *sui generis*; even if they sometimes look similar to the Gṛhya tradition or have the same terms. The Newar words for *pratiṣṭhā* (scattering popped rice, Nev. *cvaki hvalegu*) or *tikā* are different from Skt. *pratiṣṭhā* and *tilaka*.

It is therefore inadequate to assume that Newar Hinduism is just a deviation from mainstream or Parbatiyā Hindu (cf. also Gellner 1991: 109) or Buddhist orthodoxy. Inaya is not necessarily Gaṇeśa but a deity embodied in stones as representations of "places" and guardians with various names: thus it is Inaya who is refashioned as Gaṇeśa.

The question is how to bring these elements into a kind of grammar of Newar rituals. As elaborated elsewhere (Michaels/Mishra 2010, Michaels 2010c and especially 2012a), variations, change or transformation in rituals presupposes rules from which they deviate. The system of such rules or their characteristic features or "parameters" can be termed, in a metaphorical way, a "grammar" or "morphology" of rituals. Strictly speaking, rituals are not identical to a language. Although they often involve language, they also include many non-verbal elements, most significantly acts. Yet there are reasons why it makes sense to pursue this figure of speech. That is why we use the term "grammar" in the general sense of a specification of the elements and structure of an area of knowledge or skill.

"Grammar" in this sense means rules that can be followed, varied and extended by those who know them. It is like the rules of a game that one has to learn in order to be able to play it. If somebody violates the rules, he or she may face problems from the other players.

In general, each ritual has its own grammar. However, there are elements and arrangements that can be observed in all or clusters of Newar life-cycle rituals (and other Newar rituals). The following "grammatical" structures – *nota bene*: not a grammar, but a kind of morphology – can be regarded as the most common rules to be followed by the priest, the priest's client, i.e. the *yajamāna* or clan eldest man (*nāyaḥ*) or woman (*nakhī*) who mostly are ritually responsible for the ritual, and the individual(s) for whom the life-cycle ritual is performed. Not all of these rules are obligatory and exclusively Newar, but the system is very much so. The acts performed by the priest generally come with a mantra.

Following Michael Oppitz, these ritual elements or units can be termed the "building blocks" or "prefabricated structural elements" of rituals that make for the "construction plan" or design of a ritual.

The prefabricated structural elements or units from which rituals are made are the building blocks with which they are composed. They come simultaneously from a number of levels: a material level in the form of certain objects required to conduct the ritual at a set time and at a designated place; a linguistic level of ready formulated utterances such as prayers, magical formulae or recited myths; an acoustic level in a broader sense, with musical and other sonic means of expression; and a kinetic level with special actions, movements and gestures. (Oppitz 1999: 73)

Elements in Newar life-cycle rituals[5]

	Priest	Clan eldest (nāyaḥ)	Individual
Preparatory rites		Fixes the auspicious moment (Nep./Nev. *sāit*) with the help of an astrologer (Josī). Invite relatives, neighbours and friends.	
Preliminary rites		On the morning of the main day(s), feeding curd and flattened rice to the individual (*dhaubaji nākegu*).	On the morning of the main day(s), get a *tikā* from *nāyaḥ* or apply it .
	Purifying (*nisi yāyegu*) self, the specialists and family members by sprinkling water (*abhiṣeka*), mouth rinsing (*nasalā, ācamana*).		
	Preparing the ritual arena, by drawing diagrams on the ground and arranging it with sacred vases and pots.		
	Making a ritual commitment (*saṃkalpa, nyāsa*) or let the priest make it for individual or *nāyaḥ* (and other ritual specialists).		
	Worshipping the ancestors (*nāndī-* or *vṛddhiśrāddha*).		
	Concentrating mentally on the deities (*nyāsa*).		
	Making a ritual invocation (*āvāhana, namaḥ*) of the deity or deities by sprinkling (*abhiṣeka*) water from a certain pot (*arghyapātra*) on their seats (*āsana*) and/or vessels (*kalaśa*).		
	Offering an oil-cake (*khau kāyegu*) mixed with sesame paste and water used for purification.		
	(with individual and *nāyaḥ*): Worshipping the deities in the sacred vases (*kalaśapūjā, dyaḥ chāye, gurumaṇḍalapūjā*), on the sacred plates (*kāyabhaḥpūjā*) and in ritual instruments.		
	Making a fire sacrifice (*homa, yajña*).		
	Having the nails pared and coloured (*lusi dhenegu* or *pācake; ala taygu*).		
Main rites[6]	Nāyaḥ to priest: Handing the *pūjā* plate or "flower basket" (*puṣpabhājana*) to the priest together with the *puṣpabhājanamantra*.		
	Sending a share of the *pūjā* to the local Gaṇeśa shrine.		
	Making *balipūjā*, i.e. worshipping mother goddesses, Kṣetrapālas, spirits, and supplementary gods.	Welcoming the main participants (*lasakusa*).	
	Waving the smoke of mustard seeds on charcoal over the sacred place and participants in order to ward off any evil influence.		
	Lighting the *sukūda* lamp or a wick (*dīpa*) in a clay saucer with oil as witness to the ritual.		
	Sending a clay cup with fire, together with other offerings to the protective and absorbing stones (*pikhālākhu, chvāsaḥ*).		

Worshipping with a lamp, a wooden measuring vessel, and iron key(s) – mostly over the head of the individual.

Offering well-wishing food (*svagā*) to the individual.

Reciting the *ratnoṣadhi* hymn.

Waving fragrant materials (*dhūpa*).

Applying a *tikā* made of sandalwood paste or vermilion and rice.

Worshipping with husked, uncooked and unbroken rice (*akṣata*).

Presenting and worshipping new dresses.

Core rites	The main parts of the ritual, such as the initiation or the marriage rites, are evidently specific, i.e. not common to all Newar life-cycle rituals	
Concluding rites	Sending leftovers to the Kalādyaḥ, or absorbing stone.	
	Waving the wooden measuring vessel and the lamp.	
	Having popped rice scattered before the deities in the sacrificial arena (*pratiṣṭhā*).	
	Letting the indiviual or *nāyaḥ* make a "decision for food" (*annasaṃkalpa*). i.e. handing over rice or other grains to priest	
	Letting the individual give money (*dakṣiṇā*) to the priest	
	Blessing (*āśīrvāda*) the participants.	
	Releasing the deities by removing the vases and other holy items (*visarjana*).	
	Giving a *tikā* and a wristband to the participants.	
	Showing a mirror to everybody (*nhāykā kenegu*).	
	Reciting the *pūrṇacandra* verses	
	Releasing the witness deities such as the Sun or Viṣṇu.	
	Sending a share of the *pūjā* material to Kumārī or locational (aniconic) deity.	Offering well-wishing food (*khē svagā, prasāda*) to all participants. Inviting to a festive joint meal (*bhvay,* Skt. *bhojana*) on the same day or some days later.

[5] *Gurumaṇḍalapūjā, homa* and *kalaśapūjā* can be elaborate separate rituals.

[6] The sequence in this group varies considerably according to the individual life-cycle ritual.

In actual fact, the ritual elements are complex ritual acts that include prescriptions for body movements, language and music, decorum and material. That is why one cannot compare them with the morphemes of a language. Yet they can be regarded as the smallest or the self-contained units of a ritual from which the rituals in question are composed. We can call it an inventory of Newar life-cycle ritual acts.

How are these elements combined? This question concerns the "syntax" of a ritual. It is evident that not all elements can be performed at any one time in a given ritual. The invocation of deities will naturally come at the beginning and their release at the end of a ritual. But a great number of ritual elements are isolated units that can be easily transferred to different contexts across the rituals and even the religious "borders" of Hinduism and Buddhism. The Newar marriage pattern as outlined in the tables above holds true, by and large, for both Hindu and Buddhist marriages. Even if Newar Buddhist life-cycle rituals include the salutation to the Three Jewels and Vajradhara or the *gurumaṇḍalapūjā*, and recite different mantras, the basic pattern of *sūryārghya*, *saṃkalpa*, *kalaśārcana*, core ritual elements, *upacāras* to the deities (in the *maṇḍalapūjā*), *visarjana* etc. remains the same.

Moreover, many rules can be changed, ritual elements can be added or reduced without losing the characteristics of a Newar ritual. The very citability of ritual elements in various contexts has led to considerable changes over the time. Yasuhiro Tsuchiyama (2005: 51-94), for instance, demonstrated that the chief significance of the old Indian consecration rite (*abhiṣeka*) in the Vedic sources lies in the transfer of power and glory (*varcas*) to the offerer. The term also retained this significance when it was transferred to the consecration of statues. In more recent ritual texts, the Gṛhyasūtras, *abhiṣeka* came however to

be mingled with the ritual bath (*snāna*) and consequently was no longer distinguishable as a Vedic ritual element in its own right. This also holds true for Newar rituals, and we can add that in this context *abhiṣeka* is "just" the sprinkling of water at deities, paraphernalia or participants.

Other examples for the transformation of ritual elements are: the old ritual of the bride and groom putting on new clothes, which is replaced by festive clothing before the ritual or the offering of a length of cloth and clothes to one another during the ritual; the *pūrṇapātra* that might have been transformed or substituted by the measuring vessel; the three so-called Tobias nights of celibacy after marriage (Slaje 2000) that have been transformed into the *caturthī* ritual after the wedding, the triple Vedic circumambulation of the fire that has become the circumambulation of the husband by the bride, or the carrying of the fire which may have been transformed into the carrying of torchlights.

It now becomes evident that a finite number of ritual elements and rules can produce an almost infinite number of combinations and that this dynamic also allows the introduction of new sub-rituals (e.g. *svayaṃvara*) or rituals, as well as deviations within the rituals. In other words, with this generativity in rituals and thus their potential grammaticality, it is possible to describe "syntactical" structures in a ritual. As such we note the following:

Syntactical Structures

Framing: many rituals are framed by the elements *saṃkalpa* – *visarjana*.
Repetition: some acts, especially the recitation of mantras, are repeated three times (Dkv$_3$ 32^r, 32^v, 33^r, 33^v, 35^r, 40^r, 68^r, 68^v; Dkv$_4$ 8^r, 19^v; SvV p. 1; VPS p. 56), most prominently the circumambulation of the groom by the bride (SvV p. 5; VPS p. 58).

Reduplication: sometimes ritual elements are doubled, partly so when interrupted by other ritual sequences. Thus, we find *annasaṃkalpa* at the beginning of a ritual, but also at the end (see App. 2 for references).

Seriality: ritual elements recur in sequences, e.g. *matā-phã-tācā-pūjā*, the worship with lamp, measuring vessel and iron key(s): the worship with the lamp (*sukūda*) appears independently of, but also very often together with the measuring vessel and the iron keys (see App. 2 for references). Likewise ritual elements that take place on an *āsana* are very often linked with the act of pulling the person concerned by the hands to that seat (*lāsālāva yane*), or the entering of the house with a special welcome ritual (*lasakusa*). Similarily, ritual elements at the beginning of a specific ritual often follow a common pattern.

Substitution: the replacement of one ritual element by another viewed as equal in value: in the Annaprāśana normally a *haṃsa* (lit. "goose") is required, but every now and then substituted by a duck (Gutschow / Michaels 2008: 46).

Option: the optional or alternative employment of a number of ritual elements viewed as equal in value. This holds especially true for the recitation of many mantras that are often listed after a prescribed act.

Transformation: see the examples mentioned above.

Fusion: the merging of two or more different ritual elements, e.g. *abhiṣeka* that also is *snāna*.

Reduction: abbreviations of the combinations of ritual elements. Thus, often the texts have *candanādi* ("sandalwood etc.": Dkv₃ 21ᵛ, 22ᵛ, 24ʳ, 25ʳ, 27ʳ *et passim*) which means that a sandalwood paste for *tikā* is offered together with the act of scattering rice, a sacred thread, a piece of cloth, flowers and other *upacāras* (cf. for instance Skv p. 1). What is abbreviated in the text is mostly also abbreviated in the ritual practice. Likewise *adyādi* ("today etc."; Dkv₃ 28ᵛ; Dkv₄ 2ʳ *et passim*) as abbreviation of the *deśa-kāla-saṃkalpa*.

Extension: likewise rituals such as *śrāddhas* can be extended and performed in a very elaborated form.

Omission: the elision of stipulated ritual elements, more the rule than the exception. The most prominent example is *homa* in the marriage ritual, which is prescribed in almost all handbooks but increasingly omitted in practice.

Transfer (of ritual elements to another ritual): as mentioned above, many Vedic elements have been transferred into a Buddhist context, the *homa* again being the most complex and prominent example.

As far as the meaning of ritual elements is concerned, we refrain from laying down just one such function because rituals and ritual elements mostly have several meanings and not just one (cf. Michaels 2006). It cannot easily be said whether music or ornaments are regarded as auspicious (*maṅgala, śubha*), because they might also be seen as prestigious or fashionable. It can also not easily be said whether the bel-fruit symbolises progeny because there are several other interpretations as well. Likewise it seems impossible to reduce the act of stepping on stones (*aśmārohaṇa*) to simply warding off evil. The most striking example for this argument is the use of the mantras, as outlined in the previous section. Even these verbal ritual elements cannot be reduced to a certain meaning.

All this is not enough to write a "grammar" of Newar Vedic life-cycle rituals, but it points in the direction of how rituals could be analysed in future. The analysis should start with the identification of ritual elements and then proceed to the description of a coherent and stringent albeit open system of rules for applying and combining them.

Moreover, it is even possible to write a historical "grammar" of such rituals that combines the textual and the practical ritual traditions: seen from a Vedic point of view and given the many missing ritual elements that are mentioned in the Gṛhyasūtras, the Newar Hindu marriage seems lacking, but considering the ritual practice and the numerous folk ritual elements that have been included in the Newar Great (textual) Tradition, it amounts to an enrichment on various levels. It is this combination of context and text, of great, folk and local traditions, the merging of Hindu and Buddhist religions that makes Newar culture a truly rewarding subject for ritual studies.