

Lesson I

Sound system and script

Vowels. Classical Newari has six vowel phonemes /a/, /ā/, /i/, /u/, /e/, /o/. Vowel length is generally not distinctive, except for /a/ <> /ā/. It is probable that the difference between /a/ and /ā/ is one of quality rather than quantity – as is the case in Modern Newari, where /a/ is realised as [ə] (or [ɑ], depending on position), and /ā/ as [a].

Tab. 1: The vowel system of Classical Newari

<i>Transcription</i>	<i>IPA</i>	<i>Jørgensen</i>	<i>Corresponding graphemes</i>
a	[ə], [ɑ]	<i>a</i>	अ <a>
ā	[a]	<i>ā</i>	आ <ā>
i	[i]	<i>i, ī</i>	इ <i>, ई <ī>
u	[u]	<i>u, ū</i>	उ <u>, ऊ <ū>
e (ye)	[e], [ẽ]	<i>e, ě</i>	ए <e>, य <ya>, ये <ye>
o (wo)	[o], [ʷo]	<i>o, wo</i>	ओ <o>, व <va>, वो <vo>

NB – As noted above, /e/ and /o/ will be transcribed as **ye** and **wo** syllable-initially, and as **e** and **o** in all other instances. Also, /o/ will always be transcribed as **wo** post-consonantly in those few words where a spelling <o> is not attested. In some formations, where the spelling <ye> is not attested, the verb noun formant {-e} will be transcribed as **ya**. Both /e/ and /o/ appear to be secondary phonemes, having grown out of Proto-Newari diphthongs */i̯a/ and */w̯a/ respectively.

Consonants. The consonant inventory of Classical Newari consists of sixteen stops (including four affricates), six nasals, two flaps, two glides, one sibilant, and one aspirate.

Stops: There are four dorsal, eight apical, and four labial stops. There is a twofold opposition αVOICE, αASP(iration) in all stops; apicals are further characterised by the presence or absence of AFFR(ication). There is no opposition dental <> retroflex; apical stops were probably

realised als alveo-dentals (as in Modern Newari), and they are occasionally represented by retroflex graphemes (but mostly by dentals). Apical affricates are usually represented by the palatal graphemes <c>, <ch>, <j>, and <jh>, and will be transcribed in this course accordingly; they were probably realised as [tʃ], [tʃʰ], [dʒ], and [dʒʰ] (as in Modern Newari).

Tab. 2: The stops of Classical Newari

		-VOICE		+VOICE	
		-ASP	+ASP	-ASP	+ASP
dorsal		/k/	/kh/	/g/	/gh/
apical	-AFFR	/t/	/th/	/d/	/dh/
	+AFFR	/c/	/ch/	/j/	/jh/
labial		/p/	/ph/	/b/	/bh/

NB – In voiced stops, aspiration is strictly speaking realised as breathiness; for the sake of simplicity, and in keeping with Indological convention, this will not be reflected in the transcription.

- 4 *Nasals*: There are two dorsal, two apical, and two labial nasals, all of which are characterised by the opposition α ASP. The dorsal nasals /**n̄**/ [ŋ] and /**ñh**/ [ŋʰ] occur in all positions, including word-initially; in Modern Newari as spoken in Kathmandu and Patan, they have been replaced by /**ny**/ and /**nyh**/ respectively, but /**n̄**/ has been retained in the speech of Bhaktapur. The modern (Ktm.) forms are sometimes encountered as variants in (late) Classical texts.
- 5 *Flaps*: With the possible exception of non-assimilated loanwords, Classical Newari has two flaps /**l**/ and /**lh**/ which are characterised by an opposition α ASP; they are variously spelt als <l> or <r>, and frequently even as <ḍ> or <d> (even in Skr. loans!), although the spelling <rh> (for /**lh**/) is rare. Positional variation is probable, but there is no evidence for any phonological distinction (although that might have been the case for Old Newari). In Indic loanwords, original /r/ is frequently represented by <l>, e.g. <tīla> ~ <tīra> “riverbank”, <nagara> ~ <nagala> “city”, including word-initially (<rakṣā> ~ <lakṣā> “protection”).

Glides: Classical Newari has one palatal glide /y/ and one labial glide /w/. These are of phonological value only before /ā/, the sequences ⟨ya⟩ and ⟨va⟩ being orthographic variants of /e/ and /o/: in some environments, /e/ and /o/ were probably realised with a phonetic on-glide [je] and [wo] (see above).^{*} Before /i/ and /u/, ⟨y⟩ and ⟨v⟩ only occur as variants in loanword orthography, e.g. ⟨ināpa⟩ ~ ⟨yināpa⟩ “request”, ⟨udesa⟩ ~ ⟨vudesa⟩ “object, purpose” (< Skr. **uddeśya-**), and seem to represent a purely phonetic on-glide, or perhaps null-onset.

Sibilant: There is one unvoiced post-dental sibilant /s/; the orthographic variants ⟨ś⟩ ~ ⟨s⟩ can be observed in all positions, both in indigenous words and Indic loans (note that ⟨ś⟩ usually represents /kh/!).

Aspirate: There is one (probably unvoiced) glottal aspirate /h/.

The consonant system of Classical Newari can be summarised as in *tab. 3*; note that for the sake of systemic coherence, the apical stops have here been described as alveolar (the “pure” stops) and alveopalatal (the affricates) respectively.

Tab. 3: The consonant system of Classical Newari

	stops and affricates				nasals		flaps		glides	sibil.	asp.
	-VOICE		+VOICE		-ASP	+ASP	-ASP	+ASP			
	-ASP	+ASP	-ASP	+ASP							
glottal											/h/
velar	/k/	/kh/	/g/	/gh/	/ŋ/	/ñh/					
alv.-pal.	/c/	/ch/	/j/	/jh/					/y/		
alveolar	/t/	/th/	/d/	/dh/	/n/	/nh/	/l/	/lh/		/s/	
labial	/p/	/ph/	/b/	/bh/	/m/	/mh/			/w/		

Nasalisation. The phonological status of nasalisation is problematic. In most contexts, nasalisation seems not to be phonologically distinctive; on the lexical level, variants are frequent, e.g. **che** ~ **chē** “house”, **khū** ~ **khū̄** “thief”. The variation /ā/ ~ /ā̄/ seems to be predicated on a dialectal difference between Kathmandu/Patan and Bhaktapur, e.g. **lā**

^{*} Given the positional constraints on /w/ and /y/, it might make sense to interpret the vowel system of CN as consisting of four vowels /a/, /ā/, /i/, and /u/, and four diphthongs /ya/ (=e/), /wa/ (=o/), /yā/, and /wā/.

(Ktm.) ~ **lā** (Bhp.) “way, path”. Word-medially, nasalisation is often triggered by a following nasal consonant, e.g. **cone** ~ **cōne** “to stay”.

NB – While nasalisation seems not to be distinctive (in the sense that no minimal pairs can be quoted), there are some nasalised morphophonemes, e.g. the perfective past marker {-**ā**} (*varr.* {-**o**}, {-**a**}) and the emphatic clitic {-**ā**}; see below, §§ 38, 74.

- 11 **Syllable structure and “inherent *a*”.** With the exception of non-assimilated loanwords, the Classical Newari syllable usually has the structure C(g)V(C), with g = glide (/y/ or /w/, only before /ā/ – see above). The existence of closed syllables is problematic: *pace* Jørgensen, Old Newari clearly favoured open syllables, as is attested by the treatment of PTB forms (TAMOT 2002). In Classical Newari, closed syllables seem to have been permitted at least word-medially, as is suggested by spellings such as <ṛājāpanista> “king-PL-DAT” (alongside <ṛājāpanisata>). Word-finally, closed syllables are evidenced by apocoptation of the word-final consonant in the respective Modern Newari cognate – see the note on transcription above.

NB – The cognate Modern Newari forms suggest that “inherent *a*” was fully pronounced in forms such as **gana** “where?” (MN **gana**) or in the dative case marker {-**tā**} (MN {-**ta**:}), but not in the ergative/instrumental case marker {-**n**} (MN {-**n̄**}) or in the locative case marker {-**s**} (MN {-:}). We will thus not be amiss to pronounce <gana> “where?” as [gənə] and <kanyāyāta> “girl-DAT” as [kənyayətə], but <ṛājāna> “king-ERG” as [rajan], and <nagarasa> “city-LOC” as [nəgərəs].

- 12 **The script(s).** The majority of Classical Newari MSS are written in the **pracalita lipi** (“current script”), with **devanāgarī** becoming more common in the course of the 19th century CE. The differences between the two scripts lie not so much in the shape of the individual characters – when it comes to that, the differences are hardly greater than between Devanagari and Gujarati –, but rather in the way that vowel signs (**mātrā**) are added to the consonant characters, and in the shape of certain conjunct characters.

Tab. 4: The basic characters of the pracalita script*

अ	आ	इ	ई	उ	ऊ
a	ā	i	ī	u	(ū)
अ	ॐ	ए	ऐ	ओ	औ
ɾ	!	e	(ai)	o	(au)
क	ख	ग	घ	ङ	
ka	kha	ga	gha	ṅa	
च	क	ज	झ	ञ	ण
ca	cha	ja	jha	jña	(ṅa)
ट	ठ	ड	ढ	ण	ण
ṭa	ṭha	ḍa	ḍha	ṇa	ṇa
त	थ	द	ध	न	न
ta	tha	da	dha	na	na
प	फ	ब	भ	म	म
pa	pha	ba	bha	ma	ma
य	र	ल	व	श	श
ya	ra	la	va	śa	śa
ष	स	ह	क	न	न
ṣa	sa	ha	kā	naḥ	naḥ

*) Eye copies from various MSS of the NVP. Characters not found there have been given in brackets; they are exceedingly rare in Classical Newari texts.

Vowel signs are attached to the consonant characters in the following way:

- 13 **āmātrā** is a vertical line added to the right; note the way it is added to characters that are not topped by a horizontal line (also to <ga>, see § 18).

जा	रा	था	धा	ध्या
jā	rā	thā	dhā	dhyā

- 14 **īmātrā** and **īmātrā** are added in the same way as in **devanāgarī**.

ति	ती	त्रि
tī	tī	trī

- 15 **umātrā** is usually a bent diagonal line underneath the consonant character, pointing left in some characters, and right in others.

कु	गु	जु	तु	दु	नु	हु
ku	gu	ju	tu	du	nhu	hu

- 16 **ūmātrā** and **ṛmātrā** are relatively rare; <ṛ> and <ḷ> practically do not occur.

कृ	रृ	कṛ	गṛ	वṛ
kū	rū	kṛ	gṛ	vṛ

- 17 **emātrā** is added to consonant characters in two ways: In most characters, the straight horizontal line on top is replaced with an undulating line; with characters that are not topped with a horizontal line (as well as with <ga>), the sign for **e** is placed to the left (**prṣṭhamātrā**).

के	जे	णे	थे
che	je	ṇe	the

The same system applies *mutatis mutandis* to **ai**, **o**, and **au**.

18



kai



bho



go



cau



gau

The aspirated nasals /**ñh**/, /**nh**/, and /**mh**/ as well as the aspirated flap /**lh**/ are represented by the conjunct characters <ñh̄>, <nh̄>, <mh̄>, and <lh̄> respectively:

19



ñha



nha



mha



lha

Other common conjunct characters include, but are by no means limited to, the following:

20



kṣa



kṣa



kṣmā



jñā



jyā



ñja



ṇḍa



tta



tra



bhra



mhyā



ṣṭa



ṣṇa



stu



stha

For more details, see ŚĀKYA (VS 2030: 39-45).

Exercise I

Here is the eleventh story of the Vetālapañcaviṃśati (= Reading passage 11) as given in MS A (Staatsbibliothek Berlin, Hs. or. 6405). A full transcription is provided in the key to the exercises.

॥ कथं च कादसवर्गाल ॥ ॥ लि (थ) धवधय

संवाचवर्गाल नत्रपमीनरुयकलं रुलदासीं वगालनभालं शीमदात्रा क अ
 यरुन्नरुयमगव॥ रुनखीकानं रुदने ॥ काचिनपूलनाम नमयदस्यवाढ ॥
 धनगत्रया त्राका धर्मधरुनाम दव ॥ थत्राकाया पत्रमद्रूप कोवनसीरु क
 थस सुक्कात्रानीदव रुक्रीयानाम रुन्दलेखा रुक्रीया त्रावावगी रुकायास
 ग कवगी थसक्कासनाम॥ रुक्रीयाकनस उजानमन्दपस रुन्दलेखागी
 सुत्रक सुखयादविश्रीगी लि (थ) त्राकान कीदालपावलस धवसंपालसवाढ

पत्रपथया रुलकागंदाव क्कासुरुदाव पत्रपथया रुल रुकमाणन श्रीमाम्ने
 रुयाववाने३ थसलस त्राकानवेद्य क्काचिनत्राकाव सीकापवालयदाव संकग
 नवाढ साचकलं१॥ लि (थ) धवपदिजनन लि (थ) काव त्राकफलयंदाव निदान
 याचकलं ॥ धनीलि रुक्रीयाकनस रुकिकयासादस गात्रावगीव कीदालपाव
 लस वरुमाया गरुन गात्रावगीया सुवीत्रसखयाव गात्रवैलानखकी क्कासः
 यल२ गदाववली थखंदाव त्राकाकीसु कवायाव वेद्यवान काव उपवालयो

वकलं ॥ लि (थ) रुक्रीयाकनस रुमाकवगीवा ॥ गंमात्रकथायादावलस दून
 स वकीक्रीयाया शकगायाव रुमाकवगीया लाकागस यल२ गं थथरुव
 खंदाव त्राकाविस्मयवालीं१॥ ॥ थखं स वगालन त्राकायाकसयकलं
 शीमदात्राक थसक्कास स्याकामलसवीत्रधर्क ॥ थददाव त्राकानभालं३
 कावगाल रुद गानषुक्रिया वकीक्रीयाशलन यल२ गलीं डाक्री कासनाः
 शीकायधर्क रुकानभालसा उपनीनक्कासं शवीत्रवा सर्वधदव थयास

वीडासिवधमद् सलशकाकामागन थथरुव थगन थयाश्रीकामनामीस
 वीत्ररुला धर्कभालं थथडरुवविशुने वगाल थवधयसंवीनवनी ॥ ॥
 ॥ रुलिनु कादसवर्गाल१समाफ१॥ ॥ ॥