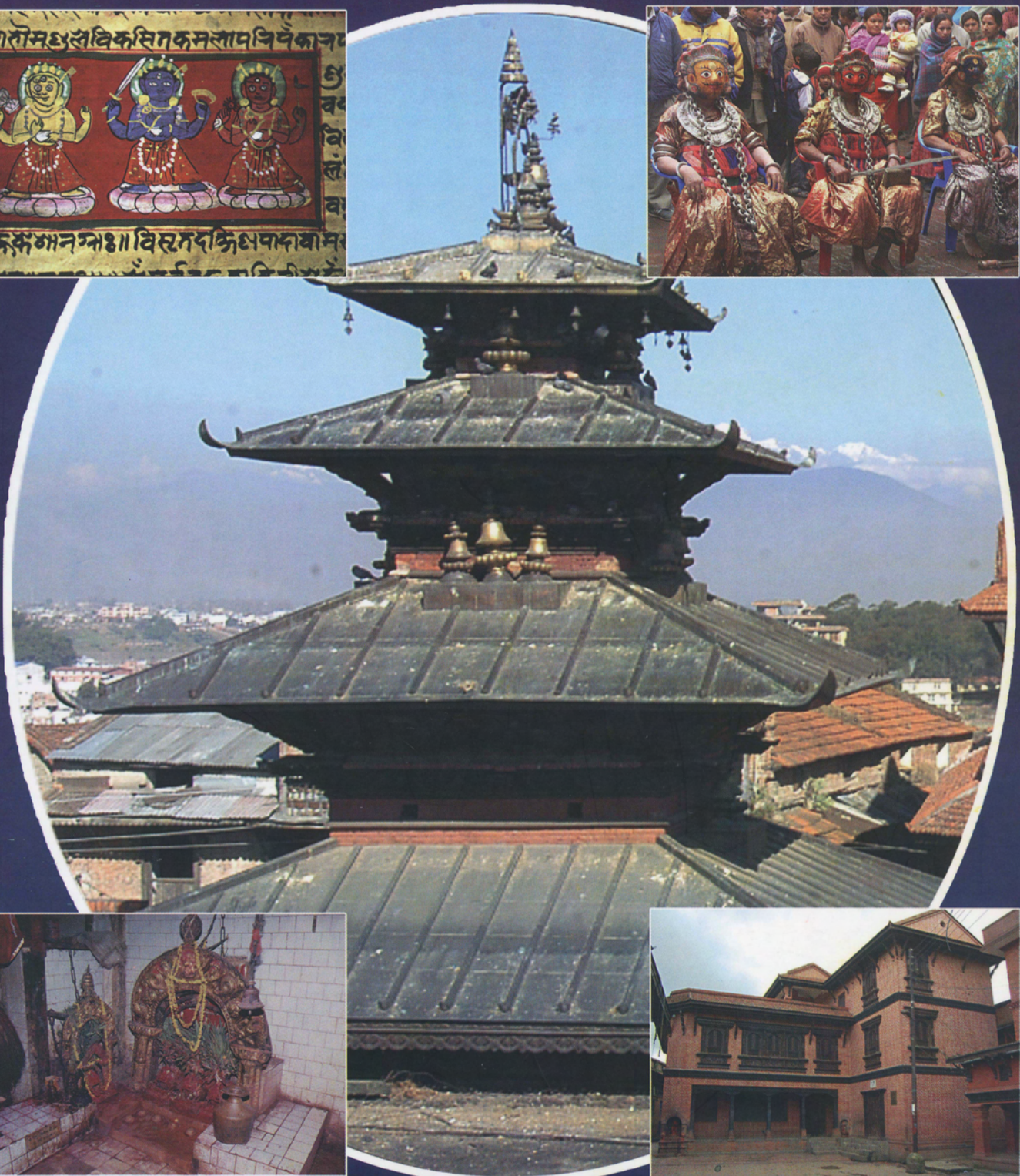


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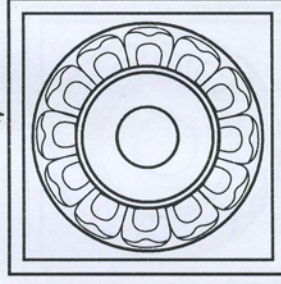
स्मारिका, २०६८

SOUVENIR 2011



हरिसिद्धि, ललितपुर

# दबू स्मारिका २०६८



# DABU Souvenir 2011

२०६८ कार्तिक १० गते

• नेपाल संवत् १९३२, कछला, पारु •

2011, October, 27

३६ ग्रुप युवा क्लव परिवारका कार्यकारी सदस्यहरू

अध्यक्ष

रूपेश महर्जन

उपाध्यक्ष

किशोर महर्जन

सचिव

हरिगोपाल महर्जन

कोषाध्यक्ष

अनन्तराज महर्जन

सह-सचिव

विनोद महर्जन

सह-कोषाध्यक्ष

नविन महर्जन

सदस्यहरू

अष्टराज महर्जन

उत्तम महर्जन

किरण महर्जन

केदार महर्जन

जितेन्द्र महर्जन

दिपेन महर्जन

निर्मल महर्जन

प्रविन श्रेष्ठ

बद्री महर्जन

बाबुकाजी महर्जन

मदन महर्जन

रमेश महर्जन

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लक्ष्मीनारायण महर्जन

बिक्रम महर्जन

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शालिकराम महर्जन

शिद्धिराम महर्जन

श्रीगोविन्द महर्जन

सानुकान्छा महर्जन

सुजिव महर्जन

सुरेश महर्जन

स्मारिका प्रकाशन समिति

संयोजक

हरि गोपाल महर्जन

प्रधान सम्पादक/कला निर्देशक

अशोकमान सिं

सम्पादक

केदार महर्जन

लेख संकलन

हरिगोपाल महर्जन

अनन्त राज महर्जन

शिद्धिराम महर्जन

रूपेश महर्जन

विज्ञापन संकलन

श्रीगोविन्द महर्जन

निर्मल महर्जन

नवीन महर्जन

किशोर महर्जन

कम्प्युटर डिजाइन

अनिस सिंह

रिड एण्ड राइट पब्लिशिङ हाउस

डल्लु आवस, ४२८०७००

प्री प्रेस

स्क्यानप्रो (सि टी पी) हात्तिबन

मुद्रण

जगदम्बा प्रेस हात्तिबन



प्रकाशक:

**३६ ग्रुप युवा क्लव हरिसिद्धि ललितपुर**



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# Seeing the Unseen: The Dance of the Harasiddhi Gods<sup>1</sup>



Prof. Linda Iltis  
University of Washington  
Seattle, USA

There is an old Newari song which says:

"Sway madu pyākhā swo, swo!  
Sway madu, kane madu, sa jakka tāye du.  
Thwa dune sunānā hayakala ni!"

"Look, look at the dance that can't be seen!  
Can't watch it, can't see it, only a voice is heard!  
Who is making this happen inside of me?"

(Paramanda Vajracharya, n.d.)

The intended message of this verse is that you have to look deeper than the surface appearance of the performance, into the heart, to really see the inner meaning of the dance.

After spending many years videotaping, interviewing, reading 16th-17th century Newari inscriptions and manuscripts, trying to find out what the meaning of Jala Pyākhā is, I still don't know. I have met with equal frustration in attempting to know the "meanings" of other Newar dance dramas as well. But I think the verse, "look at the dance you can't see" helps prepare one for seeing the meaning of Newar pyākhā traditions, as having much more than meets the eye.

Thirty years ago, I became interested in the classical Newar dance drama traditions in Nepal, because I wanted to know the meaning of a specific ritual dance drama called Jala Pyākhā.

Jala Pyākhā is performed in the town of Harasiddhi located about one mile south of Patan. The Newar families who live there call the town Jala;

and the Jalami, or

"people of Jala" number about 5,200.<sup>2</sup>

Located on a hilltop, surrounded by rich farm land, the entire town of Jala is a sacred site, and leather shoes may never be worn inside its gates. There are occasions when the entire town observes religious precepts as part of the rites of worship for the Jaladyaḥ, or gods of Jala.



Figure 1: Kiśi, the elephant god, makes his entrance under the canopy in the center of the temple square. Wooden lamp stand in background.

At the intersection of the main roads entering through the town's four main gateways stands the temple of the Jaladyaḥ, facing east. Both the center of physical movement and the symbolic and conceptual center of the town's identity, it is one of two remaining examples of a four-tiered pagoda temple in Nepal.<sup>3</sup>

To the southeast of the temple is a large ritual bathing tank (dyaḥ pukhu) surrounded by a wall lined with stone inscriptions. The temple veranda also has several stone inscriptions. Extending eastward from the temple veranda is a large open square with a 20 ft. tall wooden lamp stand,

<sup>1</sup> This article is based on two previously published articles (Iltis 1987, 1990) and one conference paper (Iltis 1989). Since then, Sakala Bahadur Maharjan of Harasiddhi has published two important and clearly written works about Harasiddhi and Jala Pyākhā (Maharjan 2006, 2008). I wish to thank Kedar Maharjan for inviting me to publish this.

<sup>2</sup> This census data is cited from Maharjan (2008).

<sup>3</sup> Nala Bhagavati is the other one.



and four post holes in the corners of the square for erecting a suspended ritual canopy (ilāng). This is the lāchi open square where the Jala Pyākhā, or ritual dances of the Jaladyaḥ, are held (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Kiśi, the elephant god, makes his entrance under the canopy in the center of the temple square. Wooden lamp stand in background.

*"Harasiddhi samo nasti nāṭya Brahmanda Mandale No dance drama in the world is equal to Harasiddhi"*

(Chronicles: Bhasavamsavli, Rājabhogamāla, Wright(1887:132), and Hemlāl Jośi 1950:13-14).

According to historical chronicles and oral tradition, Jala Pyākhā is reputedly the oldest and most famous dance drama of Nepal (see chronology Appendix 1). It still has the largest royal (now state) land endowments of any of the Newar ritual dance groups, and its private community sponsorship was widespread throughout the Kathmandu valley and beyond, as far east as Dolakha (132 km east of Kathmandu Valley), where a tall dance platform, dabu, and shrine house is still standing (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Harasiddhi dabu and temple in Dolakha

There are 29 Newar Jyāpu priest/performers and many additional ritual support staff who perpetuate the ritual tradition of Harasiddhi. The full dance drama is held twice a year, on the full moon of Maṅsir (late December) and the full moon of Phāgun (early March). The dances used to be held every day for a full three months running, until, as one priest told me, this became economically difficult and "not even a dog would watch!" (See Appendix 2)

Now there are only two full 18 hour performances of the drama.<sup>4</sup> Although this is a Newar tradition, songs and dialogue are sung not in Newari, but in dyaḥ bhāy, the "language of the

gods," which is a kind of mantra language, the meaning of which is understood only by individual performers. These sung dialogues are interspersed with stylized cari songs, which to an outside observer seem to be related to the carya giti, or caca mye of the Newar Buddhist Vajrācāryas. But the Jala dyaju priests themselves insist it isn't song or mye, but rather deva bhāṣa (god language) accompanied by preta boli (spirit musical syllables).

I wanted to find out more about Newari drama or pyākhā because drama is a medium through which individual and group identities, together with expressions of shared values and perceptions, can be expected to readily emerge. One might logically expect a ritual drama about gods to tell us at least something about the religion, the character of those gods, what they look like, and their relationship to humans who worship them. In fact, it was a Buddhist Vajrācārya in 1981 who told me that if I wanted to know something about the Goddess Svasthānī, I should go see the dances of Harasiddhi, so I did. Before even seeing the Harasiddhi drama I was emphatically warned by other Nepalis not to go. The secretary in the Kathmandu office where I received my mail said:

"Oh! Linda! Whatever you do, don't go. Don't you know? That's where...well...people tDISAPPEAR. They steal children, and they have.... HUMAN SACRIFICE! PLEASE, don't go!!

Of course her comments had the opposite effect. That did it, I had to go see this thing. It is well known that rumors are often started by a fear of the unknown or for other malicious reasons. In this case, it is surprising how little educated residents of Kathmandu understand the cultures of the adjacent villages so close by. I learned that a school teacher was actually to blame for publishing this false malicious rumor in a children's textbook that was widely read throughout Nepal.<sup>5</sup>

When I first saw the Jala Pyākhā, I was filled with a mixture of admiration, curiosity, and awe. In this small Newar town, at 1 a.m., the

4 Besides the full performances of the drama, there are other special occasions when some of the Jaladyaḥ deities and priests are invited to perform for sponsored special occasions during pañcabali pujas, and the sponsored 10th day of Dasain, mohani. These are short performances of just the cabi and sacrifices.



beautiful masked dancers descended from the pagoda temple to a crowd-filled square illuminated by the fully lit lamp stand and the full moon's light, and danced one by one, glowing with symbolism.



Figure 3: Tāmnadya: Rṣīśvara in lamplight grants fertility to his first worshipper

"Wow! Who is that?"

-I asked a Newar friend who came with me from nearby Patan.

"That is certainly some of the eight mothers."

"No, it's not! It's one of the kṣetrapāla, guardian kings of the ten directions."

-Said a local member of the audience.

"No, you're both wrong, it's the Pāndava Brothers, you don't know anything."

-Said another local person.

You must be joking, I thought it was the Pañca Buddha!"

- Said another, while the others laughed.

"You're all māmpakka! You don't know! Didi, it is the Cabi! My father (one of the elderly performers) told me so. Come on Didi, don't listen to these people, come back to the house where we can watch from the roof. My mother will tell you everything."

This type of conversation repeated itself throughout the 18 hour drama, and throughout my fieldwork, providing me with ever-expanding diverging lists of who was who and what was what. The meaning of this pyākhā and others became an obsession for me. I began to wonder about possible explanations of the apparent confusion, or multiple

identities of the gods. Given this kind of response, I initially thought of two diametrically opposed possible explanations for the situation.

1) The tradition was managed by initiated specialists, the priests or performers, who were the unambiguous voice of authority for the tradition and the guardians of privileged expert knowledge to be obtained only by deep study and prolonged participatory observation of performances. The ultimate meaning would be revealed through specialized knowledge of the tradition, perhaps even through a sage-like elder or a written text.  
OR

2) The tradition consisted of secret, separate roles known only by one priest for his own character (one priest per role), nothing is shared, and this would lead to the chaotic interpretation and atomistic individual meanings for performers and audience, not unlike some experimental western theatre in which each performer is told to do one thing without the other performers or audience knowing what or why. This anarchical form seemed unlikely since the drama was known to be old, and the perpetuation of the tradition was inextricably tied to community support.

I eventually learned that Jala Pyākhā is actually neither of these two extremes. Rather, the relationships of performers and audiences to the gods' roles and meanings in the drama create a flexibly structured context which leads to flexible and multivalent meanings. The performers are specialists who embark on a life-long commitment to follow a complex path of personal development based on lineages of changing or fixed roles characterized by their organization into the lineages of 19 dyakḥala, or devagaṇa (gods) including 2 ḍīcamoca (sometimes known as nimhakhica 2 dogs, or śiṣya), and 10 cyābhū (ghosts - see story below about the origin of the cyābhū). This results in not single representations of ideal identities, but a process of shifting, expanding and converging identities and transformations.

## History and Origins

The history and origins of this ritual drama have stimulated great controversies. A working chronology of the Jala Pyākhā is in Appendix 1 below. The identity of the Jaladyaḥ is also a controversial issue. Some of the dance manuals for these dances refer to the town as

5 S.B. Maharjan (2008) suggests that the rumor of stealing children may be related to the fact that young boys with auspicious signs are inducted into the tradition and seem to "disappear" while they are being trained during the first twelve years of training. The first Buddhist monasteries in India were similarly accused of stealing children (when they became monks).



Jatalagrāma, Jantala and even Jyeṣṭhāpūra, the earlier Licchavi-era and medieval Mallakālin names of the shortened form Jaladeśa. The central deity was previously called Jatala Devi or Jantala Devi, Jantara Devi) and the names of the dance, Jatala/Jantala Pyākhā is now shortened to Jala Pyākhā (D. Regmi 1966: 860-61; G. Vajracarya n.d.). In a stone inscription from Harasiddhi Temple Pākocotol, #143(NS 783) the Trīśakti main deities are described as pita (yellow), kṛṣṇa (blue), and rakta (red). The first line reads:

Om namaḥ Harasiddhyai. Yā Devī pita  
varṇa khila durita harā kṛṣṇa varṇa dharāya yā  
devī rakta varṇa tribhuvana namitā khaḍga hastā  
śubāsyā ||

[my transcription from National Archives  
rubbing]

But according to some historical chronicles (vaṃśāsvalis), and to one Newar historian, Āsakāji Vajrācarya, the central deities of the Jaladyaḥ temple are considered to be the Trīśakti, or three śaktis of Brahma (yellow), Viṣṇu (green), and Rūdra (white), who arrived in Nepal in 2675 Kaligata Samvat (426 B.C.).<sup>6</sup>

After taking a trinity form they came to Nepal, and visited all the gods of Nepal on a pilgrimage (Svayambhu, Mañjuśri Boddhisattva, Guhyesvari etc.) and did pūjā. Tired, they thought they would go to the town of Jaladeśa, and hide for a night in an empty place there. After going on a pilgrimage to all the gods of Nepal, they decided to stay in Harasiddhi. At that time, King Vikramāditya [of Ujjain] thought he would go there, and he performed the sahayoga for Harasiddhi which he had seen the Tantric Ācāryas do in a dream. After establishing the sādhana kriya dvāra of the Harasiddhi gods, he founded various dances and pūjā vidhis to please (the gods and the people?). This lineage was subsequently interrupted, and the dances could not be performed. (Ā. Vajracarya 1982: 64-65 [my translation from Newari])

Other eighteenth and nineteenth century chroniclers have likewise placed the origins of Harasiddhi as far back as 426 BCE (2675 Kāligat

Samvat) in association with King Vikramāditya, who brought his Iṣṭa Kūladevata gods (including Harasiddhi) in a vessel, kalaśa, from Ujjain, India to Nepal and established them in Bāneśwar, Nepal. (Devamāla Vaṃśāvalī VS 2013: 90; Bhāṣavaṃśāvalī 1963: 64; Rājabhogamāla 1969: 10; Asakaji Vajrācāryā 1982).<sup>7</sup> There is a famous Harasiddhi shrine in Ujjain, India, though the deity is a single goddess rather than the Trīśakti.

Today, the Trīśakti plus Gaṇeśa are the main deities of Harasiddhi temple in Jala, and Gaṇeśa is the only deity regularly transported from the shrine to the dance platform and other performance locations in a large kalaśa, clay vessel, referred to as Jaladya (See Figure 4, K. Maharjan, n.d.).<sup>8</sup>

Confirming the origins of Jaladeśa Harasiddhi deity in India or Nepal from the early date of 426 BCE would be very difficult to do. While this date may seem far-fetched and fantastic, the vaṃśāvali literature is largely based on oral tradition as are many written histories. We needn't, however, discount all oral tradition as an unreliable source. On the contrary, if we disbelieved all oral tradition, we would have to disbelieve even the Vedas in their frozen written textual form, because they were



Figure 4: Jaladya clay kalash carried by dyabhu. (Photo: Kedar. Maharjan)

<sup>6</sup> Kaligat Samvat 2675 (426 BCE) is the earliest claimed origin date for Jala Pyākhā. Coincidentally, it refers to the near mythological times around the lifetime of the Buddha (estimated either in the 6th to 5th or 5th to 4th century BCE).

<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, the original earlier sources of these later published chronicles are not well-documented.

<sup>8</sup> The clay used to make the kalaśa is from Mhepido, a special pilgrimage site in Kathmandu Valley renowned for its ritually superior clay. There are three additional clay vessels in the Harasiddhi temple that remain in place and are reinstalled every 12 years. Installing of the new kalaśa involves filling the kalaśa with a very pure water specifically from a small double rivulet in the Harasiddhi jungle.



based on an orally transmitted tradition. Oral tradition was the basis of much traditional education, especially for religious practice, throughout South Asia, and in many ways it proved more reliable than written documents, especially when written documents were subject to an author's personal biases, and vulnerable to physical damage, corruption or destruction. The value of oral tradition is that it provides us with a range of cultural information that has remained meaningful to the people who pass on their tradition.

The real and legendary power, beauty and significance of Jala Pyākhā and the god Harasiddhi is widely acclaimed in a large number of royal and donor inscriptions (śilalekha), record books (vahi), ritual manuals (vidhi) and medieval Nepalese manuscripts (thyāsaphu), as well as historical chronicles (vaṃśāvalis). The written accounts are also a reflection of rich oral traditions throughout the Kathmandu Valley. The threads of oral and written accounts and diligent record keeping converge and are re woven as priests and elders of Harasiddhi tell and retell the stories, reflexively considering the information and critically evaluating what they've heard and continue to share.

Thanks to the Jala Dyajus and elder residents of Jala, there are many oral histories and accounts that help us understand and contextualize the origins and nature of Harasiddhi. Documentation of the oral histories together with documentation of physical evidence - inscriptions, manuscripts, iconography, rituals, music, songs, art and architecture reveal stunning relationships and help to contextualize the existence of Harasiddhi as a place and a deity of great power and cultural historical significance.

Our natural desire is to find out the "real or true" origins of things. But in this case, if we accept only one explanation of the origins of Harasiddhi or Jala or the dances, we would be rejecting a great deal of additional information that sheds light on the origins and helps us to understand more. Historians show us that almost all written history is also produced by individuals who include subjective comments and details more often than providing a purely objective account. Listening to the different voices and crosscurrents helps us develop a full picture.

A preponderance of inscriptions and thyāsaphu references dating from the 14th to 17th centuries strongly suggest an even earlier history of

the Jaladeśa community and the Jala dance drama, as they frequently mention renovation of the temple and restarting of the dances. A Licchavi era inscription #11 (Vajracharya 1973:55) on a śivaliṅga in Devpatan, dated Śaka Samvat 402 (480 A.D.) mentions Jolpring, an early name for Jala (see chronology Appendix 1). Another Licchavi inscription #110 (Vajracharya 1973: 419) from Balambu also mentions Jolpring as a place where a king rested and it had very pure water.

### Harasiddhi Main Deity

Although the chronicles and other written documents frequently refer to the central deity as a trinity of Trīśakti, further identification with the Śaktis of Brahma, Viṣṇu and Śiva is less common

among other chronicles, written evidence and people of Jala. Often, Jalami people refer to Harasiddhi being a half male and half female deity (Hara and Siddhi) and point to the androgynous (male/female) mask with the half moustache as the basis (gwe cake du, gwe cake madu); some maintain that it is the combined male/female deity of Harihara. Others say the main deity is the blue form of Ugra Tāra, Nīlatāra, or Nīl Saraswati, consistent with mask iconography and later chronicles that mention Ugra Tāra as the deity who asked Vikramāditya and his minister to create the drama about her and stories from Laṅkāvidhāna (i.e. Rāmāyaṇa) (Bhāṣavaṃśāvalī 1963: 64).

Nevertheless, most people continue to refer to the central deity as either Jaladya, Harasiddhi Bhagavān, Harasiddhi Bhavānī, Trīśakti Devī or simply Mūldyaḥ (main deities). Although D.R. Regmi asserts that this deity form can't be seen, and is secret or "visible only to the initiated" (Regmi 1966: II, 595), the three Mūldyaḥ are iconographically manifest; embodied in three dyaju priests who wear their masks in two separate scene emanations (morning and evening) of three during the Jala Pyākhā (Figures 6 and 7). They also are represented clearly on the gāchi ritual curtain (Figure 9), in an early 18th century mask painter's sketch book (dated NS 821-837 - Figure 8), and by a painting in a copy of a palm-leaf Buddhist Dharani book dating to N.S. 605 (Figure 5).

During the Jala Pyākhā, in the first appearance in the morning, they are Harasiddhi Bhairav or Bhalāndyaḥ (male - yellow), Kāruṇamaya (male - red) and Kumāri (blue - male) and all three have sword khaḍga and shield twāka and wear gajur



Figure 5: Triśakti image in Buddhist dharani collection manuscript copied from palm leaf original dated NS 605 (1485 C.E.), showing androgynous figure on left (from A. Vajracharya's personal library).

headresses (Figure 6). In the second or evening appearance, they are HaraSiddhi (half male/female - yellow), Mūldyaḥ (female - blue), and Kumārī (female - red). In the evening, the blue Mūldyaḥ has a third eye, and carries a sword with a point, and all three wear silver leaf kiripā or kikiṃpa crown-like headresses that flutter when they tremble in possession (Figure 7).

In reviewing some of my unpublished transcriptions from Harasiddhi stone inscriptions, I happened to share one of them, #143 (see Appendix 3), with Prof. Gautama Vajracharya. He immediately noticed a reference to Harasiddhi identified with Śrībhoginī. He considered this to be significant evidence of a possible strong connection with the Licchavi era king Mānadeva, and happily agreed to write an article about this for this volume (see Gautam Vajracharya this volume). This suggests another hidden identity attributed to Harasiddhi by an early king. Some of the kings of Nepal were very interested in tantric practice, and clearly they took pains to keep this tradition alive through several reintroductions, temple renovations



Figure 6: The main 3 Harasiddhi deities during the cā pyākhā (early morning) scene, emanating in male forms - Bhalāndyaḥ, Karuṇāmaya, Kumārī. (Photo: Kedar Maharjan)

and impressive donations and land grants.

There are many levels of interpretation concerning the identity of Harasiddhi Devi and the Jaladyaḥ. In Nepal mandala, Mary Slusser (1982: 159,322,340) mistakenly identifies the gods and goddesses as a Navadurgā ensemble, and places stress on rumors of human sacrifice performed in the past (1982: 338-339, 340, 344, 348). The Jala Pyākhā, however, does not include either the Aṣṭa Mātṛkā (eight mothers), or the Navadurgā as characters in their sequence of dances; nor is human sacrifice a part of Aṣṭa Mātṛkā or Jala Pyākhā traditions. Slusser's confusion in part arises from not distinguishing between the many dance forms, or genres of pyākhā. The dance tradition which performs in Patan, referred to by Slusser as "Harasiddhi dancers" (Slusser 1982: 159), may actually be a pyākhā from the village of Techo, that visits Patan annually, involving a



Figure 7: The 3 Harasiddhi deities as Triśakti during the nī pyākhā (emanating in female forms) - Harasiddhi, Mūldya with sword, and Kumārī. (Photo: Kedar Maharjan)

separate group of performers from the Jaladyaḥ priests of the village of Harasiddhi.

After Licchavi era, the next early historical reference we have for the dances is that King Varadeva, son of Narendradeva (7thc.), reintroduced the dances of Harasiddhi and made a rule that they "should be performed first of all before [Rāto] Matsyendranātha" [as part of the worship of that Bodhisattva] (Wright 1877: 152). In the annual ritual calendar of Patan area, Jala Pyākhā is performed on Phāgun punhi, about one month before the renewal bathing ritual of Rāto Matsyendranāth, which occurs on the 1st of dark Baisakh. Currently, before the bathing of Patan's Rāto Matsyendranāth can begin, a Guthi from Harasiddhi comes to first make a Harasiddhi offering called nhawa gha at the bathing platform so that the festivities can begin. This Guthi claims



Figure 8: Photocopy of Mask Painter's manuscript including these images of the Harasiddhi Trisakti female deities (top row) and 3 main male deities in (lower row). This thyāsaphu contains dates of events and kings ranging from NS 821-837 (early 1700s). (Source: photocopy and unpublished summary transcription from Kāśināth Tamot)

that the work and festival of Matsyendranāth cannot begin without Harasiddhi. They also say that this ritual of *nhawa gha* affects which direction the water will flow from the bathing ritual of Matsyendranāth and this divines which area of the valley should expect the best rain water conditions to begin the first planting in the growing season. Harasiddhi Bhairav is also said to be one of four Bhairavas who first carried Matsyendranāth into the Kathmandu Valley and identified the birth place of Matsyendranāth by taking the form of a dog and barking "bhu" at a water location, which is in the current vicinity of Harasiddhi.<sup>9</sup> Harasiddhi is also one of four Bhairavas painted on the four wooden wheels of the large chariot that still carries Matsyendranāth through Patan during the annual festival. Some Jala residents identify the central red male Mūldyaḥ among the three main deities who appear in the morning scene as Matsyendranāth Karuṇamaya.<sup>10</sup> It is worth noting that Matsyendranāth is identified with rain, and Harasiddhi is identified with water as well.

During the medieval period, many years later, the Malla kings of Patan and Kathmandu continued to reintroduce and patronize these dances and to renovate the temple of Harasiddhi Devī. Hasrat (1970: xlvi) notes that the king Ratnamalla



Figure 9: Curtain, gāchi showing Trisakti female deities.

(1482-1520 A.D.) "acquired the throne through the intercession of the Goddess Harasiddhi." Regmi (1966: II, 595) mentions that both kings Śrīnivāsa Malla and Pratāpa Malla made donations to the temple. In NS 783 [1663] Śrīnivāsa Malla donated golden door frames to the temple in the bright half of Bhādra (ibid.) This date corresponds with the (above mentioned) Pākocotol stone inscription #143 which also mentions Śrīnivāsa Malla (see Gautam Vajracharya's translation this volume).

The Harasiddhi temple still has a golden window on the north side with an inscription around it (Figure 10). On the bottom edge, it is dated NS 820 [1700] and says:

Samvat 820 Baisakh suklapaksha  
brihaspativāra kunhu, śrī 3 kuladevīpṛitina Śrī rajaya  
Yoga Narendra Malla Māhārāja [1685-1705] yā



Figure 10: Harasiddhi temple golden temple window on north side of temple. Recently painted over with gold paint. (photo Arun Maharjan)

Jayalakṣmī Devī yā sevaka Śivaharisimha Mulmina<sup>11</sup>  
dunta juro [my partial transcripton]

The current temple is said to have been constructed by Pratāpa Malla (ibid.). A copper plate inscription (dated N.S. 847) describes the goddess as: "red colored, yellow colored, holding a khaḍga, and respected by the gods". Regmi notes several references to the dance drama during the reign of Pratāpa Malla and Śrīnivāsa Malla (Regmi 1966: II, 93-94; 555, 558, 560). The dancers danced on a mūladabuli ("main dance platform") of Jayavāgīśvarī in Deopatan, or Gvaladesa, and on a trisūlidabuli ("trident dance platform") in Kathmandu near the

See also Wright (1877) for the story of Harasiddhi and the arrival of Matsyendranāth. It is interesting to consider a possible connection between the Jala pure water location for the renewal of the Jala Trisakti and the renewal of Rāto Matsyendranāth. In both cases this is a private ritual associated with birth and rebirth of the deities. Bruce Owens (1989: 201 note 65) also discusses the *nhawa gha*, and bathing rituals in detail.

<sup>10</sup> For lengthy studies of Rāto Matsyendranāth and his Buddhist origins, see Owens (1989) and Locke (1973). Asakaji Vajracharya (2024), and the *vamśāvali* in Wright (1877) also give extensive accounts of Matsyendranāth in Nepal.



royal palace, where Nṛpendra Malla witnessed them in NS 800 (1680 A.D.) (Regmi 1966: II, 94).<sup>12</sup>Pratāpa Malla supposedly died while watching the dances "on Caitra śukla <sup>11</sup>, N.S. 794" because he made advances to a young girl who was actually the Goddess Harasiddhi herself. And, after she "rebuked him", he "swooned" and never regained consciousness (ibid.: 93-94).

The medieval kings of Nepal frequently employed tantric Vajrācāryas (Buddhist priests) and Rājopādhyayas (Hindu priests) as scribes and composers of literature and dramas. This is well known in the case of Patan's Śrīnivāsa Malla. Although a few deities in Harasiddhi's Jala Pyākhā are identified with Buddhist deities (Mañjuśrī and Karuṇamaya) by some, the Jala ritual dance drama includes several unambiguously Hindu religious stories and the tradition is currently and historically under Patan Rājopādhyaya Brahman lineage direction, which is considered to be Tantric Hindu.

There is evidence to suggest that Jala Pyākhā inspired the founding of other dance dramas in Kathmandu Valley. In the 16th century, the King Amaramalla of Kathmandu is said to have reintroduced the Harasiddhi dances, and introduced another pyākhā, the Mahālakṣmī Pyākhā (Sikālī Pyākhā), in the town of Kokhana, after the Kīśi "Elephant character of the Harasiddhi Pyākhā had created a severe grain shortage" (Wright 1877: 205; Levi 1905: II, 35) (Figure 1). It is possible that many other kings and priests of Nepal were influenced by the dramatic styles and content of the Harasiddhi dances in the founding of other later ritual performance troupes and traditions as far east as Dolakha and as far west as Pokhara.

### The Value of Oral Tradition

For purposes of this article I am concerned primarily with the history of Jala Pyākhā, as the people and dyaḥju priests of Jala currently understand their own history to be. Since the Jala Pyākhā exists as the product of the lived practices, beliefs, memory and imagination of the Jalami people, their own interpretations of their own origins afford us the opportunity to understand the cultural history of the drama in an appropriately matched cultural context. The oral traditions of Jala are included here to be compared with what is found in other historical sources.

An interview with one of the Jaladyaḥ priests (see Appendix 2), regarding the origins of Jala and the Jaladyaḥ Pyākhā includes a well-known story about a Patan Tantric, named Gayo Juju or Gābā Juju, who is credited with one of the medieval rediscoveries of the dances. For published accounts of this story see also Satya Mohan Joshi (1954) and Nutandhar Sharma (1999). In the account in Appendix 2, the priest also references what he remembered hearing or reading from written thyāsaphus and vaṃśāvalis as sources. Many Jalami refer broadly to the bringing of the deities from Pulcok Mountain in this story as the second reintroduction of the dances.

The dyaḥju who told this account was drawing on both his knowledge of the oral tradition, and his knowledge of Harasiddhi's own written vaṃśāvalī tradition. Although it was not mentioned in this account, other dya:jus mention Vikramapati Rāja and the bringing of Harasiddhi Bhagvan to Bāneśwar. They see the bringing of the Jala Pyākhā deities from Pulcoki Mountain by Gābā Juju, the Tantric Brahman priest of Patan, as a later re-establishment of the tradition following a lapse. This account tells us more about the identity of the town of Harasiddhi as primarily a home of the Jala gods. We also understand more about the identity of the Jala people as founders, ritual protectors, and human receptacles of the Jala dya: and their dances. Once in 12 years, the main deities of Jala Pyākhā re-enact the flying of the deities down from Pulcoki Mountain to Harasiddhi, by wearing large wooden wings fashioned from tree branches. The Patan Brahman who oversees initiatory aspects of Jala Pyākhā attends the event when the embodied dyaḥjus are welcomed by the Dyabhu (carrier of the kalaśa) and his wife (K. Maharjan, n.d.). In contrast to the inscriptions and vaṃśāvalis which present us mainly with post-establishment details and patronage information from the perspective of kings and scribes outside of Harasiddhi, we have a portrait of the historical and cultural meaning of Jala Pyākhā from an insider's perspective. Although other historical documents positively identify Gayo Juju as a Brahman priest, the splitting of this character into two (in this version of the story), a king (Gayo

<sup>11</sup> Yoga Narendra Malla is from Patan. Reference to Śivaharasimha, possibly (King of Kantipur) 1609 - 1620?

<sup>12</sup> A special ritual is still performed inside Paśupatināth temple when the Jala Pyākhā is brought to Jayavāgīśvarī in Deopatan, where the famous Śiva temple of Paśupatināth is located. A string is tied between Paśupatināth śivaliṅga and the Harasiddhi kalaśa. The music is played suddenly, and at that instant, a goat is sacrificed and the thread is cut (K. Maharjan n.d.).



Juju) and a priest (Gābā Juju), in this context seems to be a deliberate attempt to include a discussion of the roles of both royal patronage and Tantric Ācarya Brahmans in the founding of the tradition. Both elements can only add to the authenticity of a tradition.

### Stories and Characters

Both the people of Harasiddhi and Wright's chronicle say that the drama includes all the gods of Nepal. The range and variety of characters certainly seems to suggest this. The dramas reenact a variety of stories, some religious, some historical, some Buddhist, and some Hindu. The people of Jala claim there are stories from *Adbhūta Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata*, *Svsthānī Purāṇa*, and *Svayambhū Purāṇa*. One manuscript<sup>13</sup> in the National Archives of Nepal, dated N.S. 847 contains both a portion of the *Gomayeju* and *Navarāja Svsthānī* story together with a brief discussion of the Harasiddhi dances and items needed for the dances.<sup>14</sup>

The drama includes stories about the legendary founder *Vikramāditya Rājā* (Figure 11) and his minister, *mantri*, *Buddhisena*, and another royal ally, *Rājā Siṃha*; there are *cabi* or *kṣetrapāla* kings of the 10 directions; *Tāmnadyaḥ Ṛiṣiśvara* (Figure 3, who grants fertility for children), *Kaumahādyah* and *Agindyaḥ*, *Kuvera* with his *yomari* (a fig-shaped molasses dumpling), *Sikuca Mahādyā* or *Mañjuśrī* and his two wives *Pulcomāju* and *Dilcomāju* (both mountain deities), a red *Gaṇadya*<sup>15</sup> or *Gaṇeśa* and his two wives *Karṇakeśarī* and *Suvarṇakeśarī* (or *Riddhi* and *Siddhi*) (Figure 12), and a large elephant deity named *Kiśi* or "Elephant" (Figure 1).<sup>16</sup>

The complete sequence of dances lasts from midnight to In the afternoon, there are several scenes identified with *Rāmāyaṇa*, including *Rāmcandra*, *Lākhye*, *Nāgin*, *Sugrīv*, *Sukrabīra*, *Tāra*, *Hanumān*, *Nārada*, *Vetāl*, and *Mālinī*. about 10:30



Figure 11: Vikramāditya Raja in sword fight with king of the four directions.



Figure 12: Gaṇeśa and his two wives *Karṇakeśarī* and *Suvarṇakeśarī* (or *Riddhi* and *Siddhi*), *ḍīcamoca*.

pm the following evening, and includes approximately 40 characters in all. The dances are performed twice a year, 3 months apart on the full moon of *Maṅsir*, or *Yomaripunhi* and full moon of *Phāgun*, or *Holipunhi*. As noted above, the *Jala Dyajus* claim that at one time the dances used to be performed throughout the three month period between the full moons. Every twelve years, the *Jaladyaḥ* go on tour, by invitation, to other locations in the valley to perform their dances. The places visited include *Gvaladeśa* (*Deopatan*), *Dhulikhel*, *Patan* and

13 *Padmapurāṇa Uttarakhaṇḍa*, including 1) *Svsthānī Kathā*, and 2) *Harasiddhi Nṛtya viṣayaka Sāmagri Sūcī*. Nepal German Manuscript Preservation Project (NGMPP), microfilm reel no. 134/4 dated N.S. 847. There are several other Harasiddhi dance texts in the National Archives as well. They are written in classical *Nevari* (*pracalita lipī*) script, with some portions in *ranjana lipi* script.

14 For a translation of the *Svsthānī Vrata Kathā* including the *Gomayeju* and *Navarāja* story see *Iltis* (1985). The story of *Navarāja* involves an elephant, or *Kiśi*, who is possessed by the god *Harihara* and who selects *Navarāja* as the new king. The *Jala Pyākhā* also includes a *Kiśi*, who has two deities painted on its ears (possibly *Harihara* - *Śiva* and *Viṣṇu* combined?). However, no one in Harasiddhi suggested that this *Kiśi* was the same identity as the *Kiśi* of the *Svsthānī* stories.

15 Usually red *Gaṇeśa* is Buddhist. The mask of this *Gaṇeśa*, includes an image of *Nāsaḥdyah* (*Nṛtyanāth*) in the center of the trunk.

16 The *Kiśi* is dark blue but according to one *dyaju*, he is really white, and he turned dark because he went into the *dyahpukhu* (ritual tank).

17 According to preliminary investigations of the dance manuscripts for *Jala Pyākhā*, the dances are to be performed at least in *Gvaladeśa* and *Kathmandu*. Several manuscripts describe a ritual to be performed at *Gvaladeśa* (at *Paśupatināth*). *Axel Michaels* also has heard that these dances are performed in the old palace gardens (*Bhāndarakhala*) near *Gauśala* in *Deopatan*.

*Reinhard Herdick* also has heard of a *Jala Pyākhā* dance performance in *Kirtipur* (*Herdick*, 1987). During this last decade, they have visited both *Dhulikhel* and *Gvaladeśa*.



Kathmandu.<sup>17</sup>

There are nineteen major scenes, during the Nhī Pyākhā (day drama), which occurs from dawn to the end of the drama. Prior to this, there is a Cā Pyākhā (night drama) which takes place from 2 a.m. to dawn, and includes five scenes. The Cā Pyākhā includes the dances of the cabi, or kings of the directions. After this the musical instruments are changed and the invisible Nāsa:dya: invocatory dance marks the official transition to the Nhī Pyākhā. The cabi kings, together with the three Mūldya: (main deities, or Triśakti), are also brought down during Cālā, the last day of Mohani (Dasera Festival - in October), to receive pañcabali (five animal sacrifice). The same group is brought down whenever a pañcabali is offered on other special sponsored occasions. The following is a sequential list of the characters as they appear in the full Jala Pyākhā performance:

### Cā Pyākhā - Night

Cabi - 10 kings, who perform in the 5 directions. All have sword and shield (twāka). All wear gajur on head. All are male. These include:

- 2 red masks - Mūldyaḥ and other king (northeast)
- 2 yellow masks - Bhalādyāḥ - and yellow king (southeast)
- 2 red masks Vikramāpati and other red king (center west)
- 2 blue masks - two male kings (some say Kumārī?) male iconography (southwest)
- 2 - green masks - male iconography (some say Nārāyaṇ or Vaiṣṇavī) (northwest)

### Nhi Pyākhā

Nāsa:dya: - invisible - empty stage

Tāmnadya: Ṛṣīśvara- white mask with dark lines - a Ṛṣi who grants fertility

Nagā Nā - two yellow masks - a male narrator/guru with female listener/student<sup>18</sup>

Barmu - orange mask with lines - bathes in river, brushes teeth (wā śilegu) and is scared by Kiśi the elephant<sup>19</sup>

Kiśi - dark blue - Large elephant who gives birth to two children. He is dark because he entered the

temple pond in Harasiddhi. The features of this mask are very reminiscent of Nāsadyaḥ iconography. Special large cymbals kaita play during this dance.

Kiśi jhawa - Sikuca Mahādyāḥ and Dhilacomāju (Dhīcomāju) - two yellow masks - A couple who herd the Kiśi.

Pulcomāju, Dhilacomāju, and Sipuco Mahādyā/ Mañjuśrī/Haykemha - brown, and two yellow masks - two wives of Mañjuśrī

Kiśi maca - two yellow masks - two elephant children who are born from Kiśi. Wives of Gaṇeśa (Ridhi and Siddhi)

Gaṇadya/Gaṇeśa - red mask with Nāsadya: painting on trunk - Considered to have Kiśi's head, he teaches the Kiśi maca elephant children to play (alternatively considered to be his two wives Karṇakeśarī and Suvarṇakeśarī).



Figure 13: Some of the Cabi - kṣetrapāla kings of 10 directions, including Vikramāpati (middle red).

Kau Mahādyā:, and Agindya: - white and red masks - Mahādyāḥ chases Agindya

Hanuman and Taku Taku - Red monkey with buck teeth, and 2 unmasked dancers with initiation blindfolds. Some say they are all Rākṣāsas (demons) Tāḍaka with two sons (Mārīca and Subāhu).

Nārad and Mantri (Rāja Siṃha- minister) with Two kings - Red; and red, and yellow.

Vikramāpati Rāja (Vikramāditya), 4 Kings and Nārad/Minister - red; red, yellow, blue,

<sup>18</sup> According to S.B. Maharjan (2008:26) they are Vālmiki and Bhāradvāja (the narrator of the Ramayana).

<sup>19</sup> According to Maharjan (2008:26) this is Buddhisenā or Vīrsenā.



green - Vikramāpati defeats the kings

Rām̄candra/Buddha - red

Lākhyā with Rām̄candra - red - Rām̄candra fights and defeats Lākhyā - red (Some say this is demon Mārīca, some say Māra)

Rām̄candra, Sugrīv, and Nārad - red - Nārad has Rām̄candra and Sukravīr become ritual brothers

Bāli Rāja/Nāgin and Tāra (wife) - 2 yellow masks

Harasiddhi (Bhalādyā), Mūdyā, Kumārī, 2 cabi (kṣetrapāla), Sugrīv, Rām̄candra Bāli, - yellow, blue, red, red, yellow, red - Sugrīv fights and defeats Bāli Rāja (Nāgin) after Bāli is stunned by Rāma's arrow.

[Animal Sacrifice]

Betal / Hīphadyāḥ and Kuvera - Betal licks up all the leftover blood after the sacrifices.

Sugrīva, Tāra, Nārad, Mālinī, Hanumān, Rāja - blue - Mālinī gives flowers to Hanuman, who gives them to Rāja

Indra Rāja and Airavat Kiśi - Indra makes the elephant run back and forth

### The Performers

The ritual actors in this pyākhā are the priests of the Jaladyāḥ temple. There are 29 priests. These priests are Jyāpu, or Maharjan (Newar farmer caste). But in this predominantly Jyāpu Maharjan community they constitute almost a caste within a caste. They are accorded higher



Figure 14: Kaumahādyāḥ (Mahādeva), with ḍamaru earrings, plays a ḍamaru (daba daba) drum.

status, economic support, and religious worship by their fellow villagers (Figures 15). Their positions are inherited for life. The eldest son of a priest inherits the ritual responsibility of his father. He becomes a priest, and plays the role of one of the characters or gods in the drama. Most of the priests change their role (pāta hilegu) in the ritual drama once every twelve years, progressing through a lineage sequence. Other priests become one deity or serve in one capacity their entire lives. Thus in becoming a priest of Jaladyāḥ, one becomes one of the Jaladyāḥ. These men who become dyajus are neither simply priests of the gods or actors portraying the gods; but rather, in assuming their roles, they embody the Jaladyāḥ deities, and are recognized and treated as such by the entire community for the rest of their lives.

### 19 Dyaḥkhala

Depending on their family lineage, the dyajus are either inducted as a member of the 19 dyaḥkhala, or as a member of the 10 cyābhu (see below). There are 4 priests among the 19 dyaḥkhala who don't change roles: Mūdyā, Bhalādyā, Gaṇadyā, and Betāl. The other 15 priests of the 19 dyaḥkhala do change roles every 12 or 24 years as vacancies arise. They learn dance first and music later. Induction (once in 12 years) of junior novices, ḍīca, involves selection and training in seclusion of young boys. They are trained by their predecessors and progress through a lineage based on that of their predecessor teacher and matched or paired with that teacher in a supportive (often female) role to the teacher's male role. If vacancies require, they will progress in the following 12-year cycle to play the role of their teachers, while the teacher advances to the role of his teacher. Before their first ever public dance performance, the novice dyajus must wear a flower hat and perform in a flower dance (see S.B. Maharjan 2008).

In the drama, the pair of novices is born from the ears of Kiśi, the large blue elephant, as Kiśi moca or elephant babies (Figure 16). Both are then paired with Gaṇadyā (Ganesh) as his two wives (Riddhi and Siddhi).<sup>20</sup> The two ḍīca are also paired with Hanuman as Taku Taku and appear to

<sup>20</sup> In Tantric practice, Ganesh grants success as riddhi and siddhi.



Figure 15: Two senior priests of the Jaladyah membership (now deceased).

be learning as tantric adepts while wearing ritual fringe blindfolds in that scene. As *dīca* they may also play the supporting female role in *Naganā* (narrator scene) or *Tāra* (nicknamed *Kholamoca*, or “cry-baby”) the wife of *Bāli*, who cries when he decides to go to battle. After advancing out of the *dīca* roles, 12 to 24 years later, they are eligible for additional initiation, especially with respect to *Nāsadyah*, the god of music, dance, drama and charisma, and they play lead roles for 12 to 24 years, before being reabsorbed into the role of *Kiśi* the elephant. Another 12 to 24 years later they will begin musician roles, singing and playing the *preta boli* on the 2 *poṅga* (small copper trumpets).

The expansion and reabsorption of the priests out of and back into the *Kiśi*, via training with *Gaṇadya*, is significant because the *Kiśi* appears to have iconographic linkage with *Nāsadyah*. The metal lotus in his trunk is referred to as *Nāsadyah*. The red *Gaṇadya* has a *Nāsadyah* image on his trunk, and initiation for *Nāsadyah* is imbedded in the progression of the lineage sequence.

The *Kiśi* seems to both give birth to and reabsorb the priests as they shift in time through their roles, by creating the elephant babies, teaching them as they go along, and then reabsorbing them, before they re-emerge as musicians, playing the telescoping copper trumpets, *poṅga*.<sup>21</sup> Playing the *ponga* requires great skill and stamina, involving the vocalization of *reta boli* mantra on the trumpets.



Figure 16: *Dīca moca* or *Kiśi moca* (1988).



Figure 17: Red *Gaṇeśa* with *Nāsadyah* on trunk.

The reabsorption of the priests into the elephant, *Kiśi*, with subsequent progression to mastery of *mantra preta boli* for the entire drama, is also significant. Prior to this, the individual priests have learned a selection of parts, each involving a secret language of the gods, song and/or dialogue, that they alone sing from behind their mask; and they alone know the meaning of it (until they pass on that meaning on to their incoming student initiate, *dīca*). Now they begin learning the *mantra* music to move all the gods through their prescribed actions. During this time they also begin learning the vocal pieces. The musical accompaniment is led by several of the *cyābhū*, who have permanent positions as cymbal- and drum-playing musicians, and lead vocalists. The progression to these musician roles is especially significant since it suggests an added inner level of meaning is finally attainable which approximates finally learning how all the separate parts fit together to create the meaning of the entire drama by age 80. It is as though they don't know what they do when they do it, but they eventually come to know what they have done. But practicing *siddhi* (*sithi danegu*) is part of regular annual ritual practice of all the priests. Beginning in August each year they will spend time at the *Harasiddhi* temple learning the tantric practices. Playing the *poṅga* requires great skill and stamina, involving the vocalization of *preta boli* mantra on the trumpets.

<sup>21</sup> It is possible that these long trumpets also have an abstract association with elephants, as is mentioned in other Indo-Tibetan traditions of long horns being like the trumpeting trunks of the elephants who hold up the universe; however, I never thought to ask this at the time.



## 10 Cyābhū

The cyābhū have specific roles in the tradition, some of which never change. These include: Kumāridya, 2 damokhī drummers (siṅgh cyābhū and nhugu cyābhū), player of large cymbals (kaīṭa), player of small cymbals (tā), carrier of Jaladya kalaśa (Dyabhu), treasurer (Dabari), and caretaker of jewelry as well as Lākhye and Rāja Sāhi performer (Kisabari), Bāli, and Sugrīv (Sukravir). In contrast to the other priests who change their roles, the single roles of the cyābhū give them a depth of experience and a more focused perspective.

The cyābhū have managerial roles as well as instructional and musical leadership roles. They are the public ceremonial face for the group when they make arrangements to visit other communities to perform. Because the cyābhū receive greater compensation, one might be tempted to conclude that they have seniority, but this isn't always the case, since seniority in Jala Pyākhā is based on total years served in as a dyaju, rather than age. There is an interesting story about the origins of the 10 cyābhū. According to the former Pradhan Pancha of Harasiddhi, the cyābhū lineages of the 8 Ghosts or "Cyā Bhūta," who are the senior members of the dyakhala (god performer group), emerged in the following way:

There was a trader named Mādan in Jaladeśa (Harisiddhi) who did business. He raised and trained a son, and sent the son out of the country to do business. But meanwhile, a bhūt (ghost) watched him as he left on the road. That bhūt took the exact form of the son and came to his parent's home.

"Why did you come home?" The parents asked.

"I'm not feeling well. I'll go another time." Said the bhūt. Then he slept with the bride of the son, and had 8 sons (cyābhūta).<sup>22</sup>

When the real son finally returned home, the parents didn't believe he was the real son. He went to the king for help, saying, "I can't get my parents to believe I am the real son. Please help me." They all met at the Tundikhel kharika bhot (tree). The king brought a karuwa vase with a spout. He told them both to go into the vase and come out the spout hole, and whoever could do that was the real son. The real son said, "Prabhu, I can't possibly do such a thing!" The bhūt said, "Ha! I can do that easily!" The bhūt went in and the king closed the openings, thus killing the ghost and revealing the true son.

Still, there were the eight sons of the ghost (cyābhūta); and to contain them, the king founded the town of Jeṣṭāpura (Harasiddhi) in NS 77 (957 A.D.) so they could be contained and kept from eating people.<sup>23</sup> He built a temple with 10 rooms, 8 for the cyābhūta and 2 for the 2 dogs (Sumba, Nisumba) who serve them. Each cyābhūta should be served 4 manas of liquor every day, and the dogs lick out the bowls. He then endowed 1200 ropanis (151 acres) of land to do the rituals.

Eventually the cyābhūta caused trouble, escaping from their rooms and eating children. And the king brought Harasiddhi Pūjā and dances to control the ghosts. After that, everyone in Kathmandu Valley felt indebted to the God Harasiddhi, and they began inviting the ritual dance group to do the dance ritual in their local communities.<sup>24</sup> The performers were given further support from specially earmarked local taxes in addition to endowed gifts. And the kings of Bhaktapur, Kathmandu and Patan made a special agreement to continue support of this tradition.

### Performance Structure

Before the main dance sequence begins, the lamps are lit, and the musical piece for the invisible dance of Nāsadyaḥ, the god of music and dance, is performed. Suddenly dramatic masks appear out of the darkness, and the first possessed dyaju descends from the temple.

Jala Pyākhā follows a repeating structural pattern for each of the scenes. The deity enters the

22 Cyābhūta is a double entendre meaning 8 ghosts (plural), and also 8 born.

23 The person who told me this story (the Pradhan Pañca of Harasiddhi) said it was a condensation of a song which actually mentions this date. The song is sung in the Harasiddhi Salaca Pyākhā (Horse Dance). Thus we have one drama referring to and substantiating the origin of another. I have seen a similar story plot published as one of the origin stories of the Kirāṭa people (Chemjong).

24 Here we have an exact reverse portrayal of Harasiddhi actually in the role of saving children rather than consuming them. The stories of human sacrifice always refer to stealing children. In a story about the Goddess Candeswari of Banepa, the young Harasiddhi is asked to watch the baby daughter of the goddess while she goes to wash clothes in the river. When she returns she asks, "Where is my daughter?" Harasiddhi matter-of-factly replies, "I already ate her!" So she cuts off his tongue.



square from the temple shrine room, which functions as a preparatory green room on these occasions. At the same time, a beta or curtain bearer holds the curtain between the dancer and the audience. The curtain is a full-size curtain; but since there is only one curtain bearer, he actually wears the curtain over his shoulders, hanging down his back, and stands facing the dancer with the curtain facing the audience (Figure 9).

The curtain is painted with images of three deities. The central main deity or *mūdyah* is blue and three-eyed, holding a skull cup in one hand and making the gesture of offering with the other hand, which also holds a sword. The deity to the left is yellow, and the deity to the right is red. These three deities seem to represent the *Trīśakti* already mentioned.

But the curtain can and does represent many things depending on the context. Its function is similar to the *gunungan* in the Javanese shadow puppet theater, which is that of a central axis mundi which marks the cosmological structure, and can be used to represent a tree, a mountain, a rock, fire, or some magical force. It also functions as the central focus of the ritual, representing the god of music, *Nāsadyaḥ* in other *pyākhā* traditions. In one scene, *Sugrīv* must jump over a special separate *gāchi* that is kept rolled up and held on the ground as a power source. As *Sugrīv* crosses this *gāchi* he instantly becomes empowered to do battle. The *dyaḥju* who embodies *Sugrīv* must do a complex, expensive, time-consuming initiatory ritual to prepare to cross over this curtain. The meaning of the curtain changes depending on how it is displayed. In any case, the curtain is used for all entrances and exits of the characters, and marks the beginning and end of each main scene.

Full embodiment of a *dyaḥju* for performance occurs inside the temple, away from the audience devotees. With family assistants, *ponbi*, helping, it involves placing a lampblack *mohani tikka* on the forehead, bowing to the dance bells, *gaṅgara*, for success (*gaṅgara siddhi*), and jumping up airborne, with a 180-degree turn in the air while putting the mask on at the exact instant that the invocation music is initiated. Witnessing the instantaneous embodiment of a *dyaḥju* is literally heart-stopping. The transformation is abrupt, powerful and beautiful.

When a masked- *dyaḥju* embodied by a god descends from the temple and enters the *lāchi*



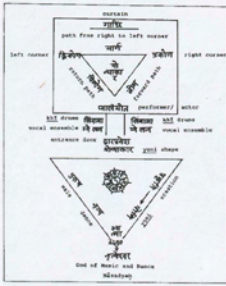
Figure 18: *Kaumahādeva* dances with hops and jumps, as he chases *Agni* away.

stage area, he stands behind the curtain while a brief vocal and instrumental piece is played and sung by the musicians and/or the masked-*dyaḥju* himself. Following this, the curtain is taken away, and the *dyaḥ* dances a dance (Figure 18).

The *Jala Pyākhā* style of dance differs from many of the other classical Newar *pyākhā* dance styles, and the music is equally unique. There is one turning motion which is similar to other dance traditions, and the beginning of the dance is usually marked by a short accelerating beat sequence.

When the embodied dancer stops and assumes a *namaskāra* pose facing the *Jaladya kalaśa* in the east, the worshipping begins. The people of *Jala* fill the area surrounding the dancers and offer white and red cloth, rice, and flowers. This lasts for about five to fifteen minutes. Then the dancer performs a solo song, with expressive gestures (*mudrā*) and miming, in the "language of the gods." The songs are very slow, with glides and forceful attacks, accompanied only by the rhythmic *tā* cymbals. Sometimes a chorus may interject choral sections into the song. This miming and gesture sequence can be long or short, and devotees may attempt to worship the *dyaḥ* during this time.

When the dancer completes this sequence, the drum, cymbal and trumpet music resumes, and another dance is performed. This dance may or may



2Figure 19: Dance stage arrangement pictured in Jośi and Śākya (1970: 7 [my English captions added], similar to the layout for Jala Pyākhā.

not be followed by additional miming sequences, and by additional dances. Finally, the curtain is brought out again, and the character exits with musical accompaniment. Additional characters in a scene may enter together with the other character, or separately with the curtain. According to Rājendra Śreṣṭha, a student of classical Newar dance forms, the choreography used appeared to emphasize a triangular pattern (Shreṣṭha, n.d.). This triangular pattern (reproduced in Figure 19) is diagrammed in a published edition of *Vikrama Carita*, an early 18th century drama written by King Bhūpatīndramalla (1696-1722 C.E.) (Jośi and Śākya 1970: 7).

The first dances of the evening are the dances of the kings of the ten directions to establish the dance area. Five pairs of dancers perform a set of dances, each pair by turn dancing to two of the ten cardinal directions, with sword and shield, wearing masks colored appropriately for the respective direction.<sup>25</sup>



Figure 20: Nāgin (Bali Rāja) with halo-like headress (left) sits in front of the musicians, while Tāra, the khwola moca crybaby (right) weeps.



Figure 21: King Vikramāditya fighting the kings of the 4 directions.

The music for this portion is entirely different from the other music played for the main dances. Before the main dances begin, the *kāha bāja* long copper trumpets are sounded in the south by a special ensemble. Finally, the priests who are not dancing begin to play the music for the main dance sequence, sitting in the western part of the square directly below the temple entrance, and the lamps are lit on the east side of the *lāchi*. The first musical piece is for the invisible dance of *Nasadyaḥ*, god of music and dance. The three main deities are also included and paired. *Bhalāndyaḥ* with yellow-masked king, *Karunamaya* with red-masked king, and blue *Kumari* with blue-masked king. These pre-dances are accompanied by the *pañca bāja* musical ensemble located on the north side of the square in the *Taḥ Capā* building, and *damokhī* (or *dyaḥkhī*) drums and *chusya* cymbals played on the western side of the square in front of the temple facing the un-raised dance platform, or *lāchi*.

The compact paper and clay masks of the *Jaladyaḥ* are highly stylized, and each face is

25 One manuscript, NGMPP microfilm reel no. E 372/2 gives a mantra for the Guardians of the Directions, *kṣetrapāla mūlamantra*, in connection with a *Harasiddhi Tridevata Stuti*.

26 Unlike the masks of the *Navadurgā* of *Bhaktapur* which are destroyed and re-made each year, these masks are not destroyed. The masks are maintained and retouched with clay and fresh paint only once every twelve years. An unpublished *citrakar* painter's manual for the *Jala Pyākhā* shows the iconography and names of each mask.



Figure 22: Pulcomāju (left), haughty first wife of, Sikuca Mahādyā, or Mañjuśrī (center) and Dhilācomāju (right), the good humble second wife. Both wives are mountain goddesses in the Kathmandu valley.

unmistakably unique and expressive.<sup>26</sup> The first mask to appear is that of Tāmnadyaḥ Rikheśvara who carries and twirls a silver yomari in one hand. The association with copper (tāmra = copper) and the yomari, a symbol of wealth, suggests a possible connection with Kuvera, god of wealth, who appears in local legends in connection with the yomari (Anderson 1971: 215). He may also be the patron deity of pyākhā.<sup>27</sup> The Kiśi (Figure 1) is perhaps the largest mask of all the Newar Pyākhās. Two men dance inside while one guides from outside. Kiśi is said to reside in the forest near the town of Jala. The headress of Nāgin (Bali Rāja) is like a giant halo with small silver bodhi leaf-shaped decorations attached (Figure 20). Two different styles of eyes are also apparent in the masks; some characters have white outlines around the pupil, while others have black outlines.

The identities of some of the characters are obscure, such as Taku Taku.<sup>28</sup> However, one of the dances includes a sword fight between King Vikramāditya and the kings of the directions. The stylized sword twirl in this dance is reminiscent of sword technique used in other South Asian martial arts traditions (Figure 21).

There are also scenes which include Gaṇeśa, Mahādeva, Agnideva (Figure 23),

Rāmcandra chasing Lākhye (Marica?), Rāmcandra making ritual friends with Sugrīva (Figure 25), and Sikuca Mahādyāḥ or Mañjuśrī and his two wives Pulcomāju and Dhilācomāju (Figure 22), who represent two of the four sacred mountains surrounding the Kathmandu Valley. The elder wife is selfish and haughty, while the other wife is simple and gentle. Mañjuśrī, caught in between, attempts to please both, but always returns to the gentle wife and pats her on the shoulder.

#### Performer-audience relationships as ritual

Since the performers of Jala Pyākhā are actually the Jaladyaḥ themselves, the relationship between "performers" and "audience" in this context is actually a relationship between gods and devotees. If we view them as just performers, then they remain undistinguished conceptually from other performers in the world of theatre. The primary distinction is that they are embodied priests rather than actors, and the priests do not become the Jaladyaḥ just for a day, a moment, or a few years; they become a Jaladyaḥ for life. Most other performers in other pyākhā, such as the Gā Pyākhā of Patan, or the Mahākāi Pyākhā of Bhaktapur, take on the role of gods only for the duration of one performance or series of performances; and they may perform a different part next time, (i.e., the following year), or never perform again. But with the Jaladyaḥ, initiation for replacement characters may

27 The presence of Kuvera as the first masked dance, and his association with riches and wealth, also suggests an importance attached to this character with respect to the performance of pyākhā, a word which literally means "seeing a dress-up, or costume disguise." In Sanskrit theatre, Vaiśrāvaṇa (Kuvera) is the master of disguise, and in Tamil, South Indian and Sri Lankan classical dramas, he is represented as Vesamuni. One of the Siṃhala dance traditions named ves, like pyākhā refers to disguise, or dress up (see also Perthold 1930: 27, 64-65, 74-75).

28 In this scene the central figure has a tongue or two buck teeth and appears to be teaching two young novices who wear only a tantric blindfold, rather than a mask. Some say this is Hanuman, with two novices, others say it is the demoness Tāḍaka (grandmother of Rāvaṇa in the Rāmāyaṇa) training her sons Marica and Subāhu (see also Maharjan 2009:31). However, the central figure has a moustache, and wears pants rather than a skirt indicating that it is male rather than female.



Figure 23: Kaumahadya and Agindya

only be held once every twelve years. The role of a Jaladyah performer extends beyond the stage into his everyday life, and is emphasized during these dances.

While this kind of performance is called a *pyākhā*, its mark of distinction is *Jala* and the identities of the *Jaladyah*. While the people treat priests with respect on a day-to-day basis, the actual ritual invocation, possession, and subsequent dramatization, alters this relationship to one of deity and devotee.

*Jala Pyākhā* provides us with an example of how a drama can completely merge with and become a ritual. The entire *pyākhā* "performance" constitutes the ritual. Each scene in the *pyākhā* drama is also a sub-ritual. The curtain (*gāchi*) is not merely a theatrical prop or representation of the god of music, *Nāsaḥdyaḥ*. The *gāchi* is the Tantric ritual cloth which is held between the devotee and the god in each scene and removed to reveal the embodied gods and goddesses. Each of the deities is invoked in this way and descends from the temple. Each of the gods performs a dance accompanied by mantra syllables, or *preta boli*, which are blown and sounded on two copper trumpets, *poṅga*; the technique of sounding mantras on copper trumpets is frequently used in Newar Buddhist music performing traditions. Mantra syllables are also performed on the two drums, *damokhī* (or *dyahkhī*), which have rams horns representing the god *Nāsaḥdyaḥ* (Figure 20), and the *dabadaba* (or *ḍamaru*) an hourglass drum. The small cymbals, *tā* and medium and large cymbals



Figure 24: Jaladyah priests (left & center) play *damokhī*. Horns on drum represent *Nāsaḥdyaḥ*. Other priests (right) play *poṅga* trumpets, & *chusya*, cymbals. The priest in center (back) plays *tā*.

*chusya* and *kaīta* provide the *tāla* or rhythmic structure of the music and are used for marking choreographic and dramatic changes and effects (Figure 24).

The songs, *carī*, which may be related to tantric *carya* songs (*caca mye*), also utilize ritualized sequences. The dance choreography includes triangular and *maṅḍala* geometric formations which correspond to the cosmological structures associated with the main deity, *Triśakti*, and the greater world view of the Newar people. It is a world view in which *maṅḍalas* are used to help understand relationships of interdependence for the attainment of successful and powerful results in both the spiritual and earthly realms.

When each dance is finished, the people of *Jala* and visiting devotees move forward, bowing to and making offerings of cloth and flowers to the pairs and groups of deities embodied in the *dyajus*. The worshipping continues sporadically, even as the dance and solo gestures and song are being performed. Pressing in from all four sides, the devotees are frequently more concerned with their worship and their opportunity to personally view the gods than with the actual quality of the performance. Occasionally, overzealous devotees may even cause the god to stumble as they bow at the dancer's feet. Worshipping of certain gods in the pantheon sometimes takes a half hour before the solo song begins and additional dances are performed. Each god sings his or her own characteristic song in the language of the gods, with miming and gestures. According to the *Jaladyahjus*, the language of the gods, *dyahbhāy*, is not San-



Figure 25: Sugrīv and Narad discuss strategy



Figure 26: Rāmcandra prays for help.

skrit or any other South Asian language known to them. They do not know how to speak it fluently, but they each know their own song and what it means, because this was taught to them by their teacher predecessors before they inherited their position.

Yet even in this context of proclaimed obscurity, seeing and hearing the dances and songs that can't be seen or heard is the concern of nearly everyone watching or taking part in the Jala Pyākhā. The "language of the gods" gives rise to many speculations about the plots of the stories which the gods show and tell in their dances. The devotees discuss alternate interpretations and add words and phrases to describe what the copper trumpets are really saying in each scene as they watch, and the crowd noise intensifies as the day progresses. Even the people who are resting in their homes, will know and visualize which scene is coming up (tāhā waygu) or which deity just came down (kwahān bijyaegu) by hearing the copper trumpet and preta boli language and music.

At the start of the climactic scene in the pyākhā, the Triśakti appear center stage, mirrored by the curtain showing their likeness that is raised to conceal them. Together with Sugrīv, Bali Rāja, and others, the Triśakti Devis described in the historical accounts are seen by all in their full regalia with shimmering headdresses, silver chain garlands, breast plates, and ornate bone aprons. Offering the true pointed sword of siddhi for wisdom and success, Harasiddhi Triśakti provides the means for Sugrīv to destroy Bali Rāja, the foolish demon king of ignorance. Jumping over the special tantric curtain, Sugrīv leaps directly into the battle scene, sword in hand, to defeat and behead Bali Rāja. Immediately following this is the celebration of the success, victory, and renewal of life. Since the Triśakti are all fierce deities, there is a final pañca bali blood sacrifice including sheep, ducks, fish and buffalo. While the Triśakti deities are lifted off the ground to drink the blood of each animal, a separate group of musicians play the pañca bāja offering music to accompany the pañca bali sacrifice. Order is restored, when and the Betāl licks up the blood, Mālīni offers flowers to Indra, King of the Gods, and the elephant Kiśi runs freely on the stage.

## Conclusion

To call this merely a performance is not enough. What is happening is a very serious ritual which, for the Jalami and visiting devotees as well as the Jala priests, involves not only all the gods of Nepal but all the people of Harasiddhi as well. Since the membership of the priesthood is large, nearly everyone is related in some way to at least one of the performing priests, or to a former priest. Whether or not one is related to a living priest, each family comes to worship the Jaladyah, embodied in the dyajus who are the central identity of this sacred community.

Even though the town of Jaladeśa is a small place, the Jala Pyākhā which defines it, is much greater than the sum of its parts. The Jaladya and its unequalled dances have shaped and transformed the culture and religious art of Nepal throughout history, taking birth, migrating, flying up and down, and giving help to those who ask for success in their endeavors.

Although continuity of Jala Pyākhā involves year-round commitments, and lifetimes of personal self-sacrifice and economic investment, the gods of Jala don't appear isolated or set apart from everyday life by twelve year intervals or unusual performances. The priests live their roles as gods of Jala, from one day to the next, whether or not they put on their masks. Embodying the deities they also embody the perpetual blessing of Harasiddhi Triśakti for the benefit of everyone in the three worlds. Ultimately, it may be the shifting circumstances and contingencies of everyday life which casts the strongest shadow on the changing roles and multiple meanings of the identities of the Jaladya, or prevents us from seeing the dance that can always be seen in Harasiddhi.

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## Appendix 1

# Chronology of Harasiddhi Jala Pyākhā

Because of its mention in vaṃśāvalis (chronicles) and diaries of kings, the Jala Pyākhā has truly gained a reputation in the minds of many contemporary Nepalis as one of the earliest ritual dance dramas which influenced the founding of other later dramas (Wright 1877: 205, Bhāṣavaṃśāvalī ([1963] VS 2020: 64), Devamāla Vaṃśāvalī ([1947] VS 2013: 90), Rājabhogamāla (1969: 10, see also Hemlāl Joshi's "Nepālyā Adī Pyākhā" [1950]). The chroniclers always emphasize that "it is well known that there is no dramatic performance equal to that of Harasiddhi" (Wright 1877: 132), or "Harasiddhi samo nāsti nātyaḥ Brahmānda Maṇḍale." However epigraphic sources referring to the Jala Pyākhā and the temple of Harasiddhi have yet to be fully examined before assessing the antiquity of this drama. As already mentioned above, the later chronicles, (Bhāṣavaṃśāvalī, Devamāla Vaṃśāvalī, and Vajracarya 1982: 64) say the Trisaktī form of Harasiddhi was brought to Nepal in Kāligat Samvat 2675 (426 B.C.). Though the reliability of these accounts of this early period are certainly speculative, and Vikramāditya is also more likely associated with Mānadeva I of the 5th century A.D. (Slusser 1982: 385 n12) it is possible thus far, based on other available sources, to date the Harasiddhi tradition to at least the 14th century A.D. There is a reference in the Gopālarājavāṃśāvalī to Harasiddhi:

Sam[vat] 495 Bhādra śuddhi māsasa, Yahrā Ekātavihārasa Harasiddhi Bhāhrihri khākwo lecāyā lwākhwana, kekwaśina lwaha juwa]

[Nepal Samvat] 495 [1375 A.D.] - During the bright fortnight of Bhādra, at Harasiddhi Bhāhrihri in Ekātavihāra in Patan, the deity came [and possessed someone]; and [everything] which was touched by water used to wash the feet of the deity turned to stone.

(Gopālarājavāṃśāvalī 1985: folio 56 ka [translation in brackets mine])

Although this is a brief reference, we find a clear association with the Goddess Harasiddhi and a performer being possessed in the location of Patan. This is the oldest written reference to the Harasiddhi tradition that I have encountered thus far.

The sources consulted for this study include primarily oral accounts of the tradition, vaṃśāvali literature, pūjā vidhis of the pyākhā, rubbings of dated stone inscriptions from Harasiddhi in the National Archives of Nepal, and published historical sources. The following is a chronology of Jala pyākhā based on my ongoing research and survey of dated references (and possible references) to Jala pyākhā, or Harasiddhi.

The Devamāla Vaṃśāvalī ([1947] VS 2013: 90-92), the Bhāṣavaṃśāvalī ([1963] VS 2020: 63-64), Rājabhogamāla 1969: 10, and A. Vajracarya's, Mallakālina Gā Pyākhā ([1982] NS 1102: 64-65) all attribute the arrival of the Goddess Harasiddhi to Nepal from Ujjain, India, in the year Kāligat Samvat 29 To convert from Kaligat, I am subtracting 3101 to get the Current Era. I realize this is inexact. 2675 (or 426 B.C.). H.L. Joshi (1950) dates the Vikramasena arrival to Kāligat Samvat 2960 or 141 B.C. According to these works, Vikramasena, or Vikramāditya, is also the founder of the Harasiddhi drama. Vikramāpati (local Harasiddhi pronunciation of Vikramāditya) is still one of the main heroic characters in Jala Pyākhā who defeats the kings of the four directions in the current drama tradition, and is associated in oral traditions with the founding of the tradition. Unfortunately, the sources for these dates are not provided in these published works. It is likely, however, that the Devamāla Vaṃśāvalī account is based on the Bhāṣavaṃśāvalī and Rājabhogamāla accounts (both of which are nearly identical), and it is likely that this information may be from at least one other vaṃśāvali which, according to

the Jala priest performers, is still in the hands of a Gā Bahal Rājopādhyaya in Patan (see also S.M. Joshi 1954).

Although there are well-known problems of accuracy of the later vaṃśāvali literature, and authorship, and these issues are well-described and critiqued by historical scholars (see Riccardi 1996, and Whelpton 1998), I include them here because there are at least some concurrences with other documentary evidence that predate them and with ongoing ritual practice and oral tradition. Chronology of references from epigraphic and textual sources

Based on all date-identified sources collected and studied thus far. Except when noted otherwise the following abbreviations are used.

LA=Licchāvikālkā Abhilekha (Dhanavajra Vajrācārya, 1973),

DMV=Devamāla Vaṃśāvalī [1947],

WRV=Wright Vaṃśāvalī [1877],

BV=Bhāṣavaṃśāvalī [1963],

RBM = Rājabhogamāla [1969],

HLJ=Hem Lal Joshi (1950),

HRJ=Hari Ram Joshi VS 2030 [1973],

HSV=(Hasrat 1970)

Nepal National Archives (rubbings of stone inscriptions, manuscripts, and microfilms.

426 B.C.(2675 Kāligat Samvat) Vikramāditya brings his Iṣṭa Kūladevata gods in Kalaśa from Ujjain, India to Nepal and establishes them in Bāneśwar. (DMV, BV, RBM, A. Vajrācāryā 1982)

141 B.C. (2960 Kaligat Samvat) Vikramāditya established the dance (HLJ)

56 B.C. (Vikrama Samvat 1) Vikramasena established drama based on story of Sūtrabir killing Nāgendra. (DMV)

480 A.D. Śāka Samvat (samvat 402) Inscription #11 (LA, p.55); #13 (HRJ, p.40), on a Śivalinga in Devpatan mentions Jolpring (a possible early name for Jala, according to K.P. Malla, 1982).30

631 A.D. Mānadeva Samvat (samvat 55) Inscription #110 (LA, p.419); #108 (HRJ, p.391), in Balambu mentions Jolpring as a place that had very pure water. (a possible early name for Jala, according to K.P. Malla, 1982).

(7th c. A.D.) Varadeva (son of Narendradeva) reintroduced Harasiddhi dances and made rule that they should be performed first of all before Matsyendranāth (Bunga Dya) in honor of that Boddhisattva (WRV:152).

604-688 A.D. Varadeva [son of Narendradeva] sponsored the Harasiddhi drama (HLJ 1950).

688 A.D. VS 745 Harasiddhi moved from Bāneśwar to Harasiddhi (DMV).

30 See Gautam Vajracharya (this volume), note iv for further clarification and cautions concerning the identification of Jolpriṅ with Harasiddhi.

697-946 A.D. Viśvaśarma Brahman (of Patan) reintroduced the dances and the tradition continued throughout this time (HLJ).

946 A.D. VS 1003 The Harasiddhi nātak was performed until this time and then abandoned (DMV; HLJ).

957 A.D. NS 77 Founding of Jeṣṭhāpura, (Old name of Jaladeśa) and Harasiddhi temple by Jitinarasiṃha; for the purpose of containing the cyābhūta (8 ghosts). (date in Salaca Pyākhā song, relating the founding of the town - as recounted by the Pradhan Panca Krishna Maharjan, and Tuyusi Maharjan 9/19/89).

1375 A.D. NS 495 During the bright fortnight of Bhādra, at Harasiddhi Bhāhrihri in Ekātavihāra in Patan, the deity came [and possessed someone]; and [everything] which was



touched by water used to wash the feet of the deity turned to stone. (Gopālarājavarṇāśāvalī 1985: folio 56 ka, 64, 112, 158). 1485 A.D. NS 605 "Trisakti Yoginī Harasiddhi nāma Dharani" in Dharani Samgraha (copy dated 1941) copied from a palm leaf MS dated NS 605 in a private collection in Patan. This includes a painting of the Trisakti iconographically identical to the Trisakti of the dance tradition of today.

1482-1520 A.D. King Ratnamalla - of Kantipur (Amara Malla's father) acquired throne through intercession of Goddess Harasiddhi. He goes to see the ānandayātrā of Hari Siddhi (HSV - Hasrat 1970:xlvi,56).

(16th c.) Amaramalla [1530 - 1538] introduced Mahālakṣmī Pyākhā of Kokhana (Sikālī Pyākhā?), after Kīśī (the elephant) of Jala created a grain shortage. (WRV, 205; Levi II, 35; DMV p.55-6; Hasrat 1970:61).

1533 A.D. NS 653 Harasiddhi Nātak Pūjāpaddhati, MS in private collection, Patan, copied in this year from an existing manuscript. Contains information on the pīṭha pūjā (See Joshi 1982: 24).

1554 A.D. NS 674 Approximate birth date of Gayo Juju (Yogendrānanda) Tantric Rājopādhyāya of Patan and reputed founder of Jala Pyākhā (S.M. Joshi NS 1074).

1560 A.D. NS 680 King Amaramalla rediscovered the dance manual of Jala Pyākhā in the Solihya Āgama, and had Garbadatta Brahman reinstate the dances. A yajña was performed for this, and masks of the gods and goddesses were made. The once in 12 years mela to take the gods to Dolakha was begun. Amaramalla added 9 gajuras to the temple. (DMV) 1565 A.D. NS 685 "Sri Jantaldeśa" is illustrated in a painting commemorating the restoration of Swayambhu Caitya (See Slusser 1985:8,20). The temple is shown at the bottom of the painting as a square, with "three standing figures." According to Slusser, "There are three standing figures, now quite defaced. Two of them, coiffed like laywomen in the painting, turn slightly toward a central figure viewed frontally. The three occupy all of the walled enclosure. The town has a single gate toward which two men from the neighboring village head, one bearing a vessel of water and a container of offerings for the goddess, the other following on horseback. Just above the enclosure the artist shows a large temple, most likely that of Harasiddhi for which he could not find space inside the square." (Ibid., 20)

1589 A.D. NS 709 Additional date in Harasiddhi Natak Pūjāpaddhati MS (1533) which marks the time when Gayo Juju presented the MS to his guru.

1608 A.D. NS 728 Harasiddhi Nṛtyārambha Vidhi MS #5-7522, Reel #A1253/1. Nepal National Archives

1654 A.D. NS 774 Pratāpa Malla tried unsuccessfully to reinstate the dances with the help of Laṃvakarna Bhatta, and Narsimha Thakur after the dances had been abandoned. Then he got help of Gā Bahāla's Viśvanāth Upādhyāya, who retaught the dances in an exact manner. (DMV)

1658 A.D. NS 778 Copper Plate inscription mentions Harasiddhi (Regmi 1966 II: 558).

1661 A.D. NS 781 Stone inscription #135, renovation of temple in Harasiddhi (earliest dated stone inscription found in Harasiddhi thus far) [my transcription] Nepal National Archives.

1663 A.D. NS 783 Stone inscription #143, Harasiddhi and Srinivāsa Malla mentioned. [Om namaḥ Harasiddhyai yā Devī pīta varṇā khīla durita bharaḥ kṛṣṇa varṇa dharāya yā Devī rakta varṇa tribhuvana namitā khaḍga hastā śubāyā] Bhadrādyā bhadrā dātrī bhava bhaya hara Śrī Bhoginī bhoga dātrī tām devī nauminityam sakala suvarnarairvadvī tāmuktī dātrīm .... śrī jyeṣṭhā grāma jantalaṃ deśa varachhe... [full text transcription below]

1663 A.D. NS 783 Srinivāsa Malla offered golden door frames to the temple on Bhādra Śukla (Regmi 1966 II: 595).

1663 A.D. NS 783 Sacrifice of 105 lambs, 24 buffalos, dance used mudras, audience watched quietly, dances divinely inspired (Regmi 1966: Thyāsaphu F).

1666 A.D. NS 786 Stone inscription#160 Renovation of Lāchi (name of exclusive area where Jala Pyākhā is performed)

1667 A.D. NS 787 Srinivāsa Malla had a tier built between each of the 9 gajuras of the Harasiddhi Temple. (DMV)

1669 A.D. NS 789 Harasiddhi Dancers were taken to the village of Sānga (enroute to Banepa), during the reign of Pratapa Malla. (Vahī of Harasiddhi Pūjā Sāmagri, MS # I

1696/1177, NGMPP Reel # A 1260/4, Folio 6A-7A)

1673 A.D. NS 793 Platform constructed for performance of dance of Goddess Harasiddhi (Regmi 1966 II: 555).

1673 A.D. NS 793 Stone Inscription #034 in Pūncali, Gā Bahā Patan - describing construction and care of Harasiddhi ḍabuli (dance platform) at that locality - anyone who allows a buffalo

onto the ḍabuli will accrue the [karma of] 5 great sins (pañcamahā pāp).

Sreyastu|| Samvat 793 Māgh śukla pañcamī utara b hādra nakṣatra siddhi yoga somavāsare

thwa kunhu Nārāyaṇa mūrti daykāwa pratiṣṭhā yāṅga dina juro|| punaḥ Śrī Harināth Upādhyā

Śrī Srinivāsa Malla juju yāke Kāśirāma Bhārona ināp yāṅgāwa thana khālāchesa nhayathe

dayāwacoṅga Śrī Harasiddhi Deviyā dabulī daykāwa pratisthā yāṅga dina juro || twa dabuli

sunān na mesana nhuyakāwa senakarasā pañcamahā pāp rākajuro śubhamastu sarvadā||

[transcription assistance from Išvaramān Shrestha, National Archives]

1674 A.D. NS 794 Pratāpa Malla died watching the drama at Hiticok, (near Hanuman Dhoka) after offending the goddess. He began the once-in-12-years mela to bring the dances to Kathmandu palace (DMV, Regmi 1966: II, 93-94).

1676 A.D. NS 796 Stone Inscription #225 Harasiddhi Temple pond wall. Nepal National Archives

1677 A.D. NS 797 Stone Inscription #231 Harasiddhi Temple pond wall. Nepal National Archives

1679 A.D. NS 799 Harasiddhi Goddess is main character in Jatala pyākhā, in last scenes kills demon (Regmi 1966: Thyāsaphu A).

1680 A.D. NS 800 Nṛpendra Malla witnessed dances on Trisulidabali inside Hanuman Dhoka (Taleju courtyard). Earlier performed at Muladabuli near temple of Jayavāgīśvarī, in Devapatan, Māgh was time to visit Kathmandu for Harasiddhi (Regmi 1966: II, 94, Thyāsaphu A folio 21).

1680 A.D. NS 800 During Jitimitra Malla's reign, Asādha kṛṣṇa tritiya, Jalha pyākhana was performed in Mūla cuka (C. Vajracarya, NS 1105: 28).

( ) Nṛpendra Malla started new once in 12 years mela to bring the gods to Devapatan (Gwola deśa) instead of Kathmandu. (DMV)

1680 A.D. NS 800 Stone Inscription #248, Harasiddhi Temple Pond.

1680 A.D. NS 800 Stone Inscription #255, Harasiddhi Temple Pond.

1685/7 A.D. NS 805/7 Stone Inscription#245 Harasiddhi Pākocotol near Temple Pond

1696 A.D. NS 816 Copper Plate inscription in Taleju cok, Bhaktapur. An agreement between Jitimitra Malla and Yoga Narendra Malla to support the Jatalā Pyākhā (Abhilekha Samgraha, Vol. 11, p.10 VS 2020).

(..) Jitimitra Malla 1673-1696 & Yoga Narendra Malla 1685-1705 - accounting book mentions Jatala nāc. National Archives - MS No. B 515/28 Pra 1696/150.

1700 A.D. NS 820 Inscription surrounding golden window at Harasiddhi Temple. Baisakh suklapaksha brihaspativāra kunhu, śrī 3 kuladevīpīṭina Śrī rajaya Yoga Narendra Malla Māhārāja[1685-1705] yā Jayalakṣmī Devī yā sevaka Śivaharisimha Mulmina dunta juro [my partial transcription from photo by Kedar Maharjan]

1700 A.D. NS 820 Stone Inscription in brick wall shrine (in former ruins of Jala Dya:chen (god house) behind Jala Pyākhā Dabu (dance platform) in town of Sānga.

1727 A.D. NS 847 Copper Plate inscription. goddess described as red, yellow and respected by all the gods. (Regmi II 93-94, 555, 558, 560).

1754 A.D. NS 875 Jaya Prakāśa Malla hosted Jala Pyākhā in Gwaladeśa (Deopatan). (MS 1873 Reel H 139/8 folio 24)

1768-1775 A.D. (S. Banda 1962: 38-9 Triratna saundarya gātha) Prithivi Narayan Shah patronized Harasiddhi dancers.

1839 A.D. NS 959 The middle gajur on Harasiddhi temple burned, and Bhimsen Thapa died 9 days later (DMV).

1933 A.D. VS 1990 Big earthquake (Māgh new moon) destroyed the Harasiddhi temple (DMV).

(Date?) Harasiddhi appears on one side of a coin (Regmi 1966: II, 559).



## Appendix 2

## Dya:ju Interview - recorded in Harasiddhi, March 20th, 1982

Participants: The late Cet Govinda Dyaju [CG], and the late Dya:māju of Harasiddhi [DM]. Conducted in Newari with assistance of Rajendra Shrestha [RS], Linda Iltis, [my recording and translation].

RS: Before this god Harasiddhi, what was the historical lineage?

CG: Before Harasiddhi arrived? Before Harasiddhi arrived, a long time ago, we were doing Indra Jātra, you know, Yēyā punhi... That was before Harasiddhi came, and when Harasiddhi Bhagvan (hereafter HB) came what did we do? First, long ago, HB was brought to Pulcoki, wasn't it. And when it was brought to Pulcoki, it was placed in Baregam. And when it was placed in Baregam what happened? I've seen the vaṃśāvalī once, but I don't have it, but when it (HB) was brought to Baregam, a pig cried (squealed). So from there the god was brought to Thaiba, we put it in Thaiba, but when it was put in Thaiba, there also a pig cried. "Oh! So this is also no good, we have to take the god from here. In both these places it has already become inappropriate (dipti jui dhunkala)." And after looking/thinking about it, "now let's take it to Patan (Yele), it won't do to put it any of these small towns (gāme gime), it looks like we should take it to Patan." So we took it to Patan. When we brought it, at that time we didn't have streets (paved roads). When that god came, there was no real main road here to speak of, no paved road, only a little bit of a road. This god was brought when there were not many houses and no cars. And as soon it was brought, a cock crowed. "Hey! A rooster crowed! Now we can't bring it to Patan either." Before, this place here used to be called Jeṣṭāpura Nagara. Jeṣṭāpura was the name of this place, in the early vaṃśāvalī, in the old language. It was called Jeṣṭāpura, and the god was brought here. HB came here, now it isn't Jeṣṭāpura anymore, now this is Harasiddhi, because HB came here, the name Harasiddhi was given to this place. See!

Then, our fathers, grandfathers, and great grandfathers, kings, what did they say? "Now we Thakalis (elders), should get together, because we aren't satisfied with this place. Because HB has come to our place, this Yēyā punhi jātra (Festival of Indra) should not be the proper time to invite [HB ?] (paunta). What should we do?!" So they invited on Yomari Punhi instead, or Thila punhi. From the time of invitation on Thila punhi, until Phāgun it was decided that the god should come down (kwahā waymāgu jula) "swolā pyākhā" for three months the dances were to be performed, according to the Vaṃśāvalī. I can't really say for sure, but we also have to come down for three months....

DM: They come down at this time, and go up at that time.

CG: Yes! It used to be done like that--it was really hard for us--I've heard we always used to do it like this, and it was

hard for us. Even now we should be performing for the full three months, but now we aren't able to do this. Abandoning, little by little, we now perform only on Yomari punhi and Phāgun punhi. Phāgun punhi is really...when we're invited on Phāgun punhi this is when we observe the jātra. Yes, at that time not even a dog would watch. And now we are poor farmers, we don't have any money, we don't have any possessions either. If we spend three months just watching the pyākhā of Harasiddhi Bhagavan we can't earn money, or do anything. We really had difficulties with our religious service (pāla). Because of this, whether it was OK or not it was decided by the Thakalis and elders (bhalādmīta), who met together, that this obligation to dance for three months, was no longer obligatory. "OK it's not necessary, during these three months, not even a dog came to watch." Because of this, we are still poor, we have to go as far as Kathmandu. Some of us have to go to Thankot, to Bhimprik (Bhimpedi?). Now we have development (vikās) opening up here (Brick factory is called Vikās), see. But before we had no vikās, we just had our pāle (religious service). We still don't have a real school to speak of, see. So since that time, we gradually, little by little, abandoned the three months, and now, on Phāgun Punhi, we invite guests and that is when we observe the jātra.

And this man named Gayo Juju, he was a sarkarmha manu, (i.e. governmental official, king), there was a man named Gayo Juju. Gayo Juju was a bahiri juju,31. an old one. And there was one man who was kept in service at that juju's place, he was a Jyāpu, but I forgot his name...

DM: Barmu Jyāpu

CG: Gābā Juju was our bājyā (brahman priest), the Jyāpu was our jāt (caste). I forgot the Jyāpu's name. And this Gayo Juju, what happened to him? First, in Pulcoki, the one called Gayo Juju, and his servant went up to the top to look for wood to cut (śīkāyke chwe māla), isn't it so, and he... [break in tape interrupt]

First, I can't remember that servant's name, if we had the vaṃśāvali we could find out, I thought I could remember but I can't, that Jyāpu is mentioned in the vaṃśāvali. That Jyāpu came one day, and [said] "Hey, I don't understand this, before you used to come quickly, every day, but even though it is late, you haven't brought anything, and the horses are hungry, the elephants are hungry, what happened? Before you used to bring food for the horses and elephants around eleven or twelve, what happened that you didn't bring anything? Aren't you earning your keep here? What has happened to you?" he [Gayo Juju?] said.

"Prabhu! Indeed, I searched around your majesty's place all night long, would I try to deceive you? I went to see and came back, and the day after that I also went..."

"Well, tomorrow you better bring something early."



"Yes, your majesty (kha: sarkār)! I'll bring. But they came to look. In that way, they came down to look, going up, to heaven going up, and coming down. When this happened, o your majesty, I came here..."

"Hey, you, the one who was told to come early, are you again saying I'll be late?! Is that proper for you? Aren't you staying here [in service] or what are you thinking?" he said.

"Yes, your majesty, I went once around your land, and went to look in the forest once, whether I came or not, I am embarrassed to lie to your majesty, but I was too afraid to tell you. And then again the next day, I went, and I thought to myself, now this time I must call for his majesty, but I wasn't sure I could do that, and I watched and watched. Your majesty! I have no other place, but to live in your service, and that is why I, a poor man came to be your servant. I am not a bad man, your majesty! I don't know the names of these gods, the ones who go up to heaven and come down, sometimes they come down from heaven, and again in the same manner they go back up, and again they come down from heaven. It has been going on like this for three days. If our horses are hungry and the elephants are hungry, I swear from my heart it is because of this. Now your majesty I'll get..."

"Are you kidding me? Is this really true?"

"Yes, your majesty! If what I say is not so, your majesty, you can execute me (phasi biu)." he said.

"Did you really see them? If you saw you saw. You saw them didn't you?"

"Yes, I saw!" When Gayo Juju heard him say this, he brought the brahman from Gā Bahā, Gābā Juju, and the three of them, Gayo Juju, the brahman and the Jyāpu went quickly.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Normally the title "Juju" is applied to Rājopādhyāya Brahmins, but it can also mean king. In this version of the story (according to the literal translation), the storyteller seems to identify Gayo Juju as either a king or government official (possibly royal priest), who is separate in identity from another person, Gābā Juju--the famous Rājopādhyāya Brahman Tantric priest. According to S.M. Joshi (1954) and other versions of the story, Gayo Juju is recognized as Gābā Juju the priest. There on Pulcokī, when they went to see, the king said, "OK, where, which way, which place?" "This way, here, here, here. See for <sup>32</sup> Here we see how Gayo Juju (a king?) and Gābā Juju (a priest) are recognized as separate individuals by this storyteller. yourself." he said. "It is just as you said." When this happened, you know the first thing we play [in the drama], that one came down. When it came down, the [Gābā] Juju bound it with śāstras, and it was unable to go anywhere, except stay down, and it said, "Hey, what is this today?" That was the gods talking to each other, they had no idea that the śāstra had bound them, they didn't see anything. "Before, always, yesterday, we could go up to heaven. What happened today that made us unable? We must be bound in a trap of some man. How did this happen that

we are unable to go?" And saying this they kept coming down, and trying unsuccessfully to go back up. Finally all the gods had come down. After coming down, they said, "OK, let's go." And because of the śāstra, they went together with the Juju, the Jyāpu was his student (celā), and the Juju (king) also came, and the gods were bound and brought with them. First they were put in Bāregām, then in Thaiba, then where to take them? They thought they would take them to Pātan, but when they were taken there a rooster crowed, so Harasiddhi Bhagvān came to be here. Otherwise, they wouldn't get to this place. Not to this small village place. Harasiddhi Bhagvān came here, and because of this--we who stay in Harasiddhi, in Newā Bhāṣa say Jala, in Khē Bhāṣa (Nepali), Harasiddhi--the town became known as Harasiddhi.

And at that time, what had to be done for the Harasiddhi Bhagvān? Financial support had to be arranged, it can't be left just like this. So what happened to the Gayo Juju? Gayo Juju said, since this is a major god we have brought here, we should give birta (endowment lands) to this Guthi....

RS: How much birta is given?

CG: When the birta was first given, 860 ropanis (land measure = 108 acres) were given. There was 860 ropanis of land, just think! .... Then the later king took away 200 ropanis (25 acres) and only 660 ropanis (75.3 acres) were left. But there is still 660 ropanis of land left.

DM: It isn't enough!

CG: Nowadays, our cyābhūta, ten people (primary/senior dya:jus) get 30 ropanis (3.77 acres) birta each. Only those ten. Others (19 dya:jus in dya:khalā plus other ritual assistants) get 7 ropanis (.88 acre), some get 3 ropanis (.38 acre), some get 2 ropanis (.25 acre), some get 4 ropanis (.5 acre).

DM: The kāhā players and baucāpin also get land.

CG: The kāhā players get 3 ropanis each, 12 people altogether. And the Nāy (double reed instrument) performers also get only 3 ropanis each. Now the cyābhūta took that and it is gone, but the Nau (blacksmiths) still get 6 ropanis, I'm sure. The cyābhūta and Thekdhars wiped out 6 ropanis, I'm sure. The dohā (dholak player-name of the caste group) also have some land, they have something. And also the torch bearers, get 3 ropanis each for 3 people, so for three people, that is 9 ropanis. We call this torchbearing "musya kaita cyākegu", you may call it tilak in the city. They each get three ropanis each.

DM: You know, when the (god) Lākhya comes down and hits that thing [a torch lamp in the drama]?

CG: That's right, they get 3 ropanis each. They don't need anything, they don't even have to bring oil from home, just light the oil of Śrī Harasiddhi Bhagavan, and when it runs out they go home. We also have to serve them ayla (liquor), and give them blessings, a portion of meat, those torch bearers have to have everything. See! The people who work all have to be given everything. ...



### Appendix 3: Stone Inscription #143 -

Rubbing in Box #5, Lalitpur jilla ko Abhileka Suci, National Archives of Nepal, Siṃha Durbar, Kathmandu.  
Ser. #143 N.S. 783 Stone Inscription of Harasiddhi Mandir Pākocotol [my transcription from rubbing in National Archive of Nepal]

Oṃ namaḥ Harasiddhyai. Yā Devī pita varṇa khila duritaharā kṛṣṇa varṇa dharāya yā devī rakta varṇa tribhuvana namitā khaḍga hastā śubāsyā ||

Bhadrādyā bhadra dātrī bhava bhaya hara śrī bhoginī bhoga dātrī tām devī nauminityaṃ sakala suvarnarivvadi tāmukti dātrīm ||

Yātevde guṇa vasva gena (387 date reverse to 783?) latithau māse site bhādrake nakṣatresya bhagasya sādhyā sahite yoge dine bhāskare ||

Kiṃtughra karane gate dina kare siṃhe vidhosiṃhake vasvāradya muhurta ke hani śubhetatsarvva satsaṃyute ||

Prasāde Harasiddhi mātura mūnā muktyārthi nā he tu nā puṇyā dye Lalitpure sūnagare, śrī śrīnivāse nṛpe ||  
Lokaiḥ saṃ militaiḥ svasakti dhanadairjñāna deva dibhirmyāte syairjalitaṃ suvarṇa racitaṃ dattaṃ kapātaṃ varam ||

Tasya puṇya prabhāvena svācārāḥ santu bhusūrāḥ |  
Eṣātāṃ mangalaṃ rājñā sukāle varṣatu to yadaḥ ||  
Sasyādyo pṛthvībhūyād bhuyād deśaḥ śubhānvita santu lokā guṇairyuktaḥ punaḥ santu sukhānvitāḥ ||  
Nānā puṣpa phalā vṛkṣā gāvākṣīra bahu pradāḥ ||

Bahantu vāyavaḥ sārddhamanda sugandha śitaraiḥ  
|| Atha nepāla bhāṣa swasti saṃvat 783 bhādrapada śukle pratipadyāntithau pūrva phālgunī nakṣatra sādhye yoge kintu ghra karane vasu mūhūrtake ādityavāsare siṃha rāsigate savitarita deva rāsigate candramasī thva kūnhū śrī jyeṣṭhā grāma jantalaṃ deśa varachhe Jñāna devabhāvo, Rāmadāsabhāvo, cintāyāka Jivandevabhāvo, cintāyāka Kṛṣṇarāmabhāvo, cintayāko thākādi rāghava bhāvo, Rāmabhāvo, dhākdrasta pandavabhāvo, dhāka {dras tā} Jugidāsabhāvo, hāmora Indrabhāvo, hāmora Viṣṇubhāvo, Balibhāvo, Govinda Keśabhāvo, Āditarāmabhāvo, Kṛṣṇarāmabhāvo, Bāsiṃhabhāvo, Govindakeśabhāvo, Satyabhāvo, Jasiṃhabhāvo, Busiṃhabhāvo, Viśvarāmabhāvo, Pūnasiṃhabhāvo, Amṛtācandrabhāvo, Govindasiṃhabhāvo, Hākūsiṃhabhāvo, Govindarāmabhāvo, Sidhūrāmabhāvo, Balibhāvo, Devidāsabhāvo, Govindakeśabhāvo, Hākūsiṃhabhāvo, Balibhāvo, Rāmakītabhāvo, Rāmacandrabhāvo, Viśvabhāvo, Hākurāmabhāvo, Śivarāmabhāvo, Sarāmabhāvo, Ratnadevabhāvo, Vijayarājabhāvo, Viśvarājabhāvo, Vacchorāmabhāvo, Jivan ti mayi pini cache .... thvate mungana guṇināna ngādātau likhamāla nghuyāta dhāka ādina .... saṃkalpa dayakaṃ śrīmat śrī śrī Harasiddhi .... Devī ādina śrīmat śrī [ta] devadevādi deśa deśāntara thāpa .... dāsyamāsa vra [ta] gāngāna śrīmat śrī .... kādinam juro śubhaṃ bhuyāt ||

