

PAINTINGS ON PAPER

Nepalese Illustrated Manuscripts



An exhibition on view in conjunction with Asian Art in London

1 November - 16 November 2007

Opening Hours: Monday to Friday 9.30am to 5.30pm
Saturday 3 November from 11am to 4pm
Monday 5 November until 9pm

INTRODUCTION

PAINTINGS ON PAPER: NEPALESE ILLUSTRATED MANUSCRIPTS

Frequently overlooked in collections of Himalayan and South Asian art, Nepalese illustrated manuscripts are a unique source for a rich and highly colourful tradition of Tantric Hindu and Buddhist iconography. Though Nepalese artists also worked on cloth, it was indubitably on palm leaf and paper that Buddhist, and particularly Hindu, Tantric art found its fullest expression.

Nepalese manuscripts also have an historical importance that derives from the Kathmandu Valley's position between North East India and Tibet. Close political and cultural ties to Bihar and Bengal have meant that the Kathmandu Valley absorbed North East Indian religious movements such as Buddhism and various Tantric practices, as well as their associated artistic traditions. Whereas many of these traditions died out in North India, in Nepal they continued to develop and overlap, producing often colourful and syncretic results. Though Nepal's influence on Buddhism and Buddhist art in Tibet is only partially understood, it is being recognized as increasingly significant. Nepali artists are recorded in Tibet from an early date and are understood to have played a key role in Tibetan artistic movements.

NEPALESE BUDDHIST MANUSCRIPTS

Buddhism started to spread in Nepal probably as early as the 3rd century BCE, becoming firmly established under the Buddhist Lichchhavi dynasty (330 – 879/80), whose origins were in North East India. After Buddhism was extinguished in India in the 13th century, probably in part due to the Muslim invasions of the 12th and 13th

centuries, the Kathmandu Valley became the major centre of Mahayana Buddhism and its associated artistic traditions. As a result, almost the entire Buddhist literary canon in its original Sanskrit form is known solely through Nepalese manuscripts.

Artistically, the earliest surviving Nepalese illustrated Buddhist manuscripts are modelled on the contemporary Pala palmleaf manuscripts of North East India. From the very earliest stages, however, Buddhist manuscript illustration in Nepal showed subtle differences in palette, draughtsmanship and design from the Indian parent model, and continued to develop along its own trajectory after the collapse of Buddhism in India. Early Nepalese illustrated manuscripts have a softness and fluidity that distinguishes them from contemporary Indian work. In the 15th and 16th centuries, the almost cool classicism of earlier centuries gave way to a more florid style, marked by deep hues and heavily ornamental grounds.

Of the Buddhist literary canon, the *Pancaraksa*, the 'Five Protective Hymns', was perhaps the most frequently copied and illustrated text in Nepal, and is still used as a sacred text on which oaths are sworn by Hindus and Buddhists alike. Each of the hymns came to be personified as individual goddesses, who were typically depicted at the beginning of the appropriate hymn. A palmleaf *Pancaraksa* manuscript in the exhibition (no. 7), dated 1397, contains all five of the original paintings showing the goddesses richly bejewelled and set within decorative aureoles.

Though understudied, the significance of the religious and cultural influence of Nepal on Tibet is increasingly recognised. Nepal also was the major refuge for the Tantric, or Vajrayana (literally 'Thunderbolt'), forms of Buddhism that had flourished in the monasteries of North East India. Tantra, the quest to channel divine energy through ritual and contemplation, had permeated both Hindu and Buddhist traditions in North India. The Kathmandu Valley subsequently played

a key role in the emergence of Vajrayana Buddhism in Tibet, as well as in the development and revival of its associated artistic traditions, where it became the predominant form of worship.

Nepali artists were found in Tibet as early as the 7th century, and were frequently employed by Tibetan monasteries, particularly in southern and central Tibet, to paint *thangkas* and murals. One of the practices most frequently associated with Tibetan manuscripts, the copying of sutras in gold ink on paper dyed blue-black, in fact had its origin in Nepal. Three examples of Nepalese manuscripts in this format (nos. 3, 4 and 6), copied in beautiful ornamental Ranjana script, are included in the exhibition. The direction of influence was not reversed until the late 17th century, after which point the mountainous backdrops, pastel palette and Chinese-style figural types of Tibetan painting were increasingly popular in Nepalese Buddhist texts. By this stage, however, traditional Buddhist manuscript illustration had been eclipsed by new forms of manuscript illustration, largely given over to Hindu and mixed Hindu-Buddhist subjects.

NEPALESE HINDU MANUSCRIPTS

Hinduism and Buddhism probably appeared in the Kathmandu Valley around the same time, and coexisted under rulers of both faiths. Hindu devotional cults spread and became popular not long after their appearance in India, and the worship of Shiva, Vishnu, and the Goddess, appear to have flourished in the so-called 'Transitional' Period (879/90-1200). Like Vajrayana Buddhism, Hindu Tantrism fell on particularly fertile ground in Nepal, and eventually came to permeate most forms of Hindu worship. The oldest manuscript in the exhibition is an extremely early Hindu Tantric text, belonging to the Kaula sect that sought refuge in Nepal from the Ghaznavid Muslim invasions of North India in the 11th century (no. 1). Copied in the 12th century, the text is devoted to the pot-bellied Tantric goddess Kubjika,

who is shown in ecstatic union with her consort in two extraordinary paintings on both fore-edges of the manuscript.

During the Early Malla Period (1200-1482), Nepal came to be divided into three city-states, Bhaktapur, Kathmandu and Patan, which were presided over by Hindu kings. Close links with the Maithila region in Bihar were responsible for the great growth in the cult of Vishnu, and there was a marked increase in the overall number of Hindu illustrated manuscripts. Though the Malla kings were religiously tolerant, the removal of royal patronage spelt the decline of Buddhist institutions and artistic traditions, a process that became pronounced in the Late Malla Period (1498-1769 CE).

During the 17th century, new styles, formats and subjects transformed Nepalese manuscript production. Mughal and Rajput styles began to exert an influence on Nepalese painting, and typically North Indian subjects such as *ragamalas* (no. 26), illustrations of musical modes, and erotic manuals (no. 13), entered the Nepalese repertoire. These developments were accompanied by changes in format, most notably the introduction of the *thyasaphu*, the Nepalese folding book made from rectangular sheets of paper sewn together along the long edges. Paper had been introduced in Nepal as early as the 13th century, and was in widespread use by the 15th century. During the 17th century, palm leaf, which had been imported into Nepal at least as early as the turn of the 11th century, fell completely out of use.

Hindu devotional manuals were some of the most popular and colourful *thyasaphu* manuscripts from the 17th century onwards. Of the Hindu devotional cults, Shaivism was particularly deep-rooted, going back to at least the 5th century when the Shaivite complex at Pasupatinath outside Kathmandu was founded. Shiva's wrathful manifestation, Bhairava, was particularly revered, and to this day is perhaps the most popular of the Hindu pantheon in Nepal.

Many manuscripts from the same period deal with averting illnesses and other afflictions caused by demons called *grahas* and *bhutas*, through astrological observation and invocation to an appropriate deity (nos. 27, 29 and 32). Typically, these manuscripts depict the demons at their mischief making, as well as a mixed pantheon of Hindu and Buddhist gods. The artist's pattern book, invariably in *thyasaphu* format, is a phenomenon unique to Nepal and an invaluable testament to the development and spread of Buddhist and Hindu iconography in the visual arts (nos. 15 and 23). Dating mostly from between the 17th and 19th century, they were used by painters, metalworkers, woodworkers and other artisans as a visual reference book for deities and their accoutrements, *mandalas* and *yantras*, as well as purely ornamental designs.

Tantric text with erotic illustrations on fore-edges
12th century

Palmleaf manuscript, 491 folios, 5 lines of Sanskrit in black Nepali Nagari script to the page, 2 initial folios list contents in later Newari hand

4.8 x 31.7 cm

This visually powerful and extremely early Nepalese Tantric manuscript bears two paintings of the Goddess Kubjika, depicted in ecstatic union with her youthful consort, one on each of the fore-edges of the stacked leaves. The paintings are of extreme iconographic importance, constituting two of the three known depictions of the goddess dating from the medieval period. Here she is portrayed as black, pot-bellied, six-faced and twelve armed, adorned with snakes, jewels, human bones and a garland of severed heads.

The title of the work is the 'Doctrine of the Lame Goddess', in reference to one of the names of Kubjika, who was the principle deity of the Kaula Tantric cult. The work is a massive devotional guide to various cycles of female powers such as Yoginis and Shaktis, and constitutes one of the major canonical scriptures of the cult. The manuscript is a complete copy of the 3rd of 4 total chapters or *khandas*, and runs to 2,900 verses.

The Kaula Tantric cult sought refuge in Nepal from the Ghaznavid invasions of the early 11th century. This event is referred to in the work, which curses the invaders from beyond the Indus and describes their leader (*i.e.* Mahmud of Ghazna) as the incarnation of the demon-king Ravana. The study of Kaula Tantrism, its history, rich history, literature and iconography, is still in its infancy. This copy of the 'Doctrine of the Lame Goddess' is roughly contemporary with the earliest dated manuscript, which was written in 1180. As no critical edition of the text has been published, the present copy would be vital in the establishment of an authoritative version.



Hymn in praise of Sitatapatra

c. 1200

Loose-leaf paper manuscript, paper dyed blue-black, 15 folios, 5 lines of gold and grey Ranjana script to the page, each folio pierced with two string holes, painting of Avalokitesvara on f. 1r

9.5 x 33 cm

According to the colophon in this beautifully copied 12th- or 13th-century manuscript, the text is a hymn in praise of Sitatapatra, the Buddhist goddess of compassion and the female counterpart to Avalokitesvara. The opening folio contains a fragment of a painting of Avalokitesvara; despite the corrosion, the quality of the painting and the freshness of the colours are evident. The preceding folio, now missing, would have contained an image of Sitatapatra herself.

The text is copied in five lines of very elegant, alternating, gold and grey Ranjana script, on paper dyed blue-black. The practice of dying paper black-blue probably originated in Nepal in the 12th century, though only a handful of manuscripts survive from before the 16th century (see Jeremiah P. Losty, *Art of the Book in India* (London 1982), pp. 34-5). A hymn in honour of the Bodhisattva Manjusri, also copied in gold Ranjana script on blue-black paper and illustrated in a very similar style, is in the Los Angeles County Museum (see Pratyapaditya Pal, *Art of Nepal* (Los Angeles 1985), no. P5, pp. 199-200).



Astasahasrika Prajnaparamita
(Perfection of Wisdom Sutra in 8,000 Lines)

Commissioned by King Laksmikirti
11th – 12th century

Palmleaf manuscript, 186 folios, 6 lines of Sanskrit in three columns of black transitional Nagari script, each folio pierced with two string holes, single wooden cover

5 x 53.5 cm

This is an extremely early Nepalese palmleaf manuscript with a colophon identifying it as the gift of 'King Laksmikirti'. Though no king with this title is recorded, it is possible that it was an alternative name for Laksmikamadeva, ruler of Nepal from 1095-1115 CE. The text is copied in beautiful 'transitional' Nagari script, itself an indication of an early date, and is entirely in keeping with a royal manuscript.

The *Astasahasrika Prajnaparamita*, or *Perfection of Wisdom Sutra in 8,000 Lines*, is one of the key texts of Mahayana Buddhism. It is generally thought to be the oldest of any of the versions of the *Prajnaparamita* literature, guides to the release from worldly existence in 8,000-, 10,000-, and 100,000-verse recensions.



Hymn in honour of Prajnaparamita
4 paintings
13th century

Loose-leaf paper manuscript, 32 folios, 5 lines of Sanskrit in gold Ranjana script on blue-black paper to the page, occasional rubrication in red, two *pothi*-style squares in centre of page ruled in gold, occasionally filled in red, 4 illustrations

9 x 30.4 cm

This hymn to the Buddhist goddess of wisdom, Prajnaparamita, is a very early example of a Nepalese manuscript copied in gold script on blue-black paper. While this format became quite common after the 16th century, medieval examples are extremely rare. Contrary to popular belief, which has the format originating in Tibet, the dyeing of the pages blue-black seems to have started in Nepal. The earliest such manuscript is a Nepalese hymn to Vasudhara in the British Library, dated 1185 CE (see Jerry Losty, *Art of the Book in India*, no. 11, pp. 34-35 & pl. VI).

The manuscript contains four charming illustrations in a 13th-century style, showing the goddess Prajnaparamita (ff. 1r, 2r) in two forms, the Buddha, and a further deity (ff. 20v, 21r). For a roughly contemporary illustrated manuscript in gold script on blue-black paper, see five folios from a Buddhist text in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (discussed and illustrated in Pratyapaditya Pal, *Art of Nepal* (Los Angeles 1885), cat. no. P5, pp. 199-200).



Astasahasrika Prajnaparamita
(Perfection of Wisdom Sutra in 8,000 lines)
 Nepal Samvat 359 / 1239 CE

Palmleaf manuscript, 258 folios, 6 lines of Sanskrit in black *kuṭila* script to the page, folios numbered, pierced with two string holes in centre, fragment of original string remaining, double margins ruled at either end, 6 central panels for uncompleted illustrations, original boards repainted with deities and Buddhas

44 x 5.2 cm

This is a dated and extremely well preserved example of an early Nepalese palmleaf manuscript in beautiful *kuṭila*, or 'hooked', script. The text, missing only a single folio, is a copy of the *Astasahasrika Prajnaparamita*, the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutra in 8,000 Lines*. This is generally considered to be the oldest of any of the versions of the *Prajnaparamita* literature, guides to the release from worldly existence in 8,000-, 10,000-, 18,000-, 25,000- and 100,000-verse recensions.

The colophon of the manuscript records that it was completed on 'Wednesday, the full moon day of the bright half of the month of April (Vaisakhya), under the highly propitious constellation of Anuradha, in the year 1239 AD (Nepal Samvat 359), during the reign of the king of kings, the highest lord, the highest king, the glorious Abhayamalladeva'. Abhayamalladeva ruled from 1216-1255 CE, and was known to have been studious as a young man.



Hymn in honour of Tara
13th - 14th century

Loose leaf paper manuscript dyed blue-black, 7 folios, Sanskrit in 4 lines of gold Ranjana script, wooden covers

29.5 x 4.5 cm

These beautiful leaves, from a hymn in honour of the female Buddha Tara, are an early example of the Nepalese tradition of Buddhist sacred writings on blue-black paper. The measured, gold Ranjana script is indicative of a date in the 13th - 14th century. The earliest dated example of a manuscript on blue-black paper is a hymn in honour of the goddess Vasudhara dated 305 Nepal Samvat / 1105 CE, now in the British Library (see Jeremiah P. Losty, *Art of the Book in India* (London 1982), no. 11, pp. 34-35).



Pancaraksa (Five Protective Goddesses)

5 paintings and painted wooden covers
 Jyestha Nepal Samvat 517 / May-June 1397 CE

Palmleaf manuscript in *pothi* format, 120 folios, each folio pierced by two string holes, five lines of Sanskrit in black Nepali Nagari script to the page, 5 paintings, the last in fragmentary condition, bevelled wooden covers with illustrations of the 5 goddesses and 5 Jina Buddhas on the interiors

39.8 x 5.4 cm



Few firmly dated, 14th-century Nepalese paintings or illustrated manuscripts have survived. The detailed colophon on the final folio of this *Pancaraksa* states that it was completed on Aaitabaar, the full moon day of Jyestha 517 / Sunday May-June 1397. It was sponsored by, or perhaps written by, a certain Vajradhara Acarya Srimat Brahma who lived in the *vihara* (monastery) of Sri Sathagalakadatasya. The manuscript was copied during the reign of Jayadharmamalla (b.1367, d.1408), one of the three sons of the great Jayasthitimalla. The last words of the colophon state that the scribe was completely true in his copying of the original exemplar.

The *Pancaraksa* was one of the most revered Buddhist texts in Nepal. It consists of five *raksas*, protective spells, each of which was personified in the form of a female deity. The beginning of each *raksa* typically begins with an individual illustration of the goddess, all five of which have survived in this manuscript. The many-armed and richly adorned goddesses are shown in graceful postures. The combination of strong outline and delicate shading gives the paintings the sensitivity typical of

the highest quality Nepalese manuscript illustration. The goddesses' names are given on the following folios, set between pairs of star-shaped clusters of *oms*. For another rare, dated, 14th-century depiction of the *Pancaraksa* goddesses, see the figures or a *paubha* (painting on cloth) in the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, published in Pratapaditya Pal, *Desire and Devotion: Art from India, Nepal and Tibet in the John and Berthe Ford Collection* (London 2001), cat. no. 125, pp. 214-215.

The paintings of the goddesses and their consorts, the Jina Buddhas, on the interiors of the wooden covers, probably date to around a century later. The somewhat square-headed, deeply-shaded figures, intense decoration and strong palette of dark green, yellow and red intense decoration, bear close comparison to the same features on the covers of a 15th-century *Pancaraksa* in the Doris Wiener Gallery, and on a 15th-century *Dharanisamgraha* manuscript in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (both illustrated in Pratapaditya Pal, *The Arts of Nepal*, vol. 2, *Painting* (Leiden 1978), pl. 37, 38).

Mahamayuri from the Pancaraksa
14th – 15th century

Folio from a palmleaf manuscript, 6 lines of Sanskrit in black Nepali Nagari script, single polychrome illustration, two string holes on either side of painting

31.9 x 5.4 cm

This painting of the goddess Mahamayuri has lost none of its freshness and immediacy. The goddess's slender form and the pleats on her clothing have been executed with draughtsman-like precision and fluidity.

The *Pancaraksa* was one of the most revered Buddhist texts in Nepal. It consists of five *raksas*, protective spells, each of which was personified in the form of a female deity, a painting of whom would normally grace the beginning of each *raksa*.



Mahasitavati from the Pancaraksa
15th century

Folio from a palmleaf manuscript, 6 lines of Sanskrit in black Nepali Nagari script, single polychrome illustration, two string holes on either side of painting

5.5 x 31.5 cm

This vibrant leaf from a *Pancaraksa* manuscript shows the six-armed, three-headed goddess Mahasitavati seated on her lotus throne. The *Pancaraksa* was one of the most revered Buddhist texts in Nepal. It consists of five *raksas*, protective spells, each of which was personified in the form of a female deity, a painting of whom would normally grace the beginning of each *raksa*. Mahasitavati was believed to provide protection against the malign influence of the planets and wild animals.



A pair of painted covers for a Devimahatmya manuscript
Nepal, 15th century

Wooden covers for a palmleaf manuscript, with carved and bevelled edges with a single string-hole, exterior painted plain green with a red border, interior painted with three and five lotus-throned deities

45 x 267 mm

The bright colours and fine detail on these remarkably well-preserved 15th-century wooden covers have lost little of their original freshness. The ground of ornamental foliate scroll and wide-eyed deities, set within bright red aureoles, are very similar to those on the covers of a Shaivite manuscript in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. The same features are also found on another *Devimahatmya* manuscript, dated 1477 CE, now in the Newark Museum (illustrated in Pratyapaditya Pal, *The Arts of Nepal*, Part II, Painting (Leiden 1978), pl. 12).

The interior of one of the covers contains three illustrations of the goddess Durga; the first shows her beating a drum atop her lion vehicle, the second seated, and the last in blue form on a leopard. The other cover shows Shiva and Uma flanked by Ganesha and Brahma on the left, and Vishnu and Skanda on the right.

Provenance: Parkham Place Gallery, Australia, 1999



Devotional miscellany
32 illustrations

Nepal
666 Nepal Samvat / 1546 CE

Palm-leaf manuscript in *pothi* format bound with original string, 68 folios, 6 lines of Sanskrit in black Nepali Nagari script, folio-numbers in margins, occasional rubrication highlighted with orange *kunkuma* pigment, protective chalk between some leaves, 32 illustrations, wooden covers with illustrated interiors

4.4 x 17.3 cm

This beautifully preserved devotional miscellany contains 32 fresh and detailed illustrations of numerous deities. The style retains the decorative simplicity of 15th-century manuscripts and show none of the florid ornament that marked the Newari style in the late 16th-century. The miscellany is also an unusually late example of a manuscript made from palm-leaves, which by this time had almost entirely fallen out of use in favour of paper.

The principal text in the miscellany is the *Devimahatmaya*, a eulogy of the Great Goddess in her various manifestations, and one of the central texts of Hindu culture. The other texts in the miscellany are also devotional works, such as the *Ganapatistotra*, in honour of Ganesha, and the *Indrakisistotra*, in praise of Indra.

As well as the 32 miniatures throughout the manuscript, mostly of the Goddess in her manifestations, there are depictions of various deities painted on the interiors of the original wooden cover. On the top cover, these are of Ganesha, Candi, three forms of the Goddess, and Kaumari; on the bottom, Varahi, Camunda, Mahesvari, Brahmani, and further manifestations of the Goddess.



Guide to Mandalas and Yantras

6 polychrome diagrams, 5 drawings

17th century

Thyasaphu (concertina) paper manuscript, 14 folios, 4 double-page and 2 single-page polychrome diagrams, 5 double-page drawings, 2 single-page fragments of a polychrome diagram and drawing, water staining and ink damage

12 x 23.8 cm

The verso of these leaves from a concertina manuscript contain brightly painted double- and single-page *yantras* and *mandalas*, meditative diagrams for the visualization of deities. The reverse consists of drawings of the same *yantras* and *mandalas*, with written instructions placed in the appropriate elements. This would suggest that it was intended as a manual for an artist or a priest. For a contemporary *mandala* manual in a very similar style, see Pratapaditya Pal, *Art of Nepal* (Los Angeles 1985), cat. no. D17, p. 167.



Five leaves from an erotic manual
20 paintings
 c. 1600 - 1650

Thyasaphu (concertina) paper manuscript, two illustrations on the verso and recto of each folio, rodent damage along joins of folios, fading and loss of pigment

Folio 27.3 x 9.6 cm

Illustrated erotic manuals were among the Rajput-Mughal subjects that found their way into the Nepalese repertoire in the 17th century. These five folios, with two paintings of couples on the verso and recto of each folio, probably illustrated the *Ananga Ranga*, the most popular of such manuals to have entered Nepal. Apart from the occasional Rajput-style turban, these erotic paintings are executed in an entirely Nepalese idiom. The style of painting, marked by heavy-featured facial types and alternating monochrome blue, red and green grounds, are typical of the mid-17th century. The simple furnishings in each pair of lovers' chamber have been charmingly differentiated; each of the alcoves containing water vessels and goblets is a different scalloped design, and the rugs and cushions the lovers lie on are varying combinations of colourful stripes and patterns. For slightly later leaves from a Nepalese erotic series, see a folio from the Victoria and Albert Museum, published in Pratapaditya Pal, *Arts of Nepal, vol. 2: Painting* (Leiden 1978), pl. 186, and two paintings in the Ajit Mokerjee Collection, New Delhi, published in Phillip Rawson, *The Art of Tantra* (London 1973), pll. 81-2.



Karandavyuha (Compassionate Acts of Avalokitesvara)

Nepal Samvat 265 / 1645 CE

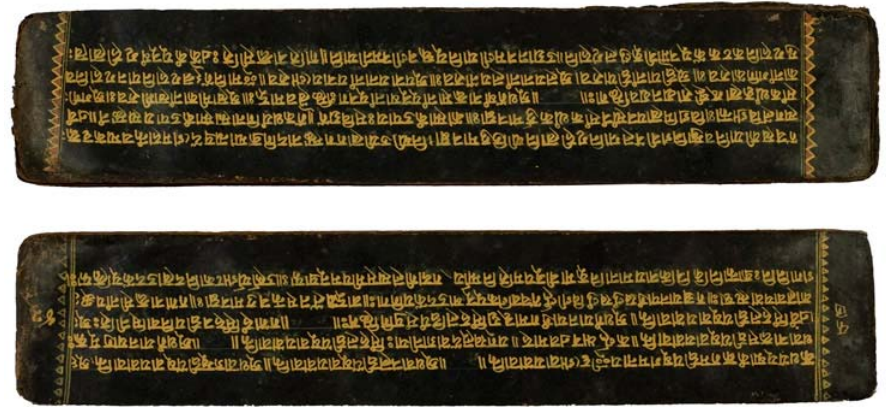
Loose-leaf paper manuscript, paper dyed blue-black, 92 folios, 5 lines of Sanskrit in yellow Ranjana script, margins ruled in yellow, complete

8.5 x 42 cm

The elegance of this copy of an important Tantric Mahayana Buddhist Sutra is in accordance with the status of the patron of the manuscript. According to an unusually detailed colophon;

‘In the year Samvat 765 (1645 CE) ... in the great Dharmakirti monastery, the Head Monk Sri Purnacandra made for himself, his wife, a veritable goddess of Auspiciousness, Bhikuni, his eldest son Kalyana and his wife Bhagini, and for the middle son Jayakusala and his wife Helamani, and his youngest son Jayadharma and his wife Sumangali, and for his grandson Ratnasri ... this Mahayana *sutra* called *Karandavyuha*, the first Nirvyuha (called) Ratnaraja ... written while dwelling in the Cakravahara monastery, by Manjudeva son of Elder Manideva, the Vajracarya, the sacrificer priest Kutudeva the Vajracarya...’

The *Karandavyuha* is concerned with the compassionate acts of Avalokitesvara, the most-widely revered of the Bodhisattvas. The *sutra* can be seen as an assimilation of Tantric practices into Mahayana Buddhism, and is the earliest work to deal with the most important Buddhist *mantra* ‘Om mani padme hum’. Recitation of this *mantra* is one of the means by which the devotee can attain rebirth in Sukhavati, the dwelling-place of Amitabha Buddha.



Pattern book**13 double-page, 40 single-page drawings**

17th century

Thyasaphu (concertina) paper manuscript, treated with *haritala*, 68 folios, 40 single-page and 13 double-page drawings in black ink, Newari inscriptions in red and black Newari script on verso

7 x 19.5 cm

The extraordinary wealth of ornamental detail in this Nepalese pattern book suggests that it belonged to a highly accomplished metalworker. The drawings fall into two categories; the first consists of technical cut out patterns of figures, dragons, limbs or sacred paraphernalia such as crowns, necklaces and umbrellas, often with the appropriate dimensions included. The second are abstract foliate, flame and animal patterns, most likely meant as designs for metal engraving. Some of these patterns, such as the triple roundel of intertwined horses, show great ingenuity of design.

The five images, all graceful double-page depictions of Buddhist deities and bodhisattvas, are showcases for the artists' draughtsmanship. The subjects are Manjusri, the green form of the Goddess Tara, Amoghasiddhi Buddha (Buddha of the North), and Padmapani (Lotus-Bearing) Avalokitesvara. Artisans' pattern books were popular in Nepal from the 17th century onwards, and are a unique source for the dissemination of iconography. Few such pattern books contain drawings that match the quality and precision of these, however. For contemporary pattern books, see Pratypaditya Pal, *Art of Nepal* (Los Angeles 1985), nos. D6-12, pp. 158-164.



Astasahasrika Prajnaparamita (Perfection of Wisdom Sutra in 8,000 Lines)

4 paintings

c. 1650 - 1700

Loose-leaf paper manuscript, treated with *haritala*, 100 folios, 6 lines of Sanskrit in black Newari script to the page, margins ruled in red, two central areas left blank in imitation of *pothi*-format manuscripts, 4 paintings, 4 leaves missing (213-214, 312-14), excellent condition

11.5 x 49 cm

This extremely elegant volume from a copy of the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutra*, contains 4 paintings in a classical, well-proportioned style marked by thick pigments, neat rows of well-proportioned figures, and monochrome grounds. The slightly square heads and bold colours look forward to 18th-century illustrated manuscripts such as a famous *Devimahatmya* manuscript, a leaf of which is in the Los Angeles County Museum (illustrated in Pratyapaditya Pal, *Art of Nepal* (Los Angeles 1985), cat. no. P31, p. 75). The style is much more restrained, however, and the figures retain something of the elongated elegance of early 17th-century illustrated manuscripts. The folds on the costumes, and the appropriate hand gestures of the figures, have been rendered with particular refinement. The quality of the painting is matched by the beautiful, crisp Newari script which has been carefully copied using rules.

The *Astasahasrika Prajnaparamita*, or *Perfection of Wisdom Sutra in 8,000 Lines*, is one of the key texts of Mahayana Buddhism. It is generally thought to be the oldest of any of the versions of the *Prajnaparamita* literature, guides to the release from worldly existence in 8,000-, 10,000-, and 100,000-verse recensions. The *sutra* is in the form of a debate at Rajagriha, for which 1,250 monks gathered to hear the Buddha. The illustrations show Buddha conversing with various disciples, as well as a Hindu god arriving at the debate atop a cloud.



Architectural manual

10 drawings of temples

Nepal Samvat 804 / July - August 1684 CE

Thyasaphu (concertina) paper manuscript, treated with *haritala*, 27 folios, Newari in black Newari script, 10 drawings of *stupas* in black ink, further diagrams and depictions of deities

21.5 x 8.7 cm

This architectural digest contains numerous depictions of types of Buddhist temples (*caitya*), the largest of which spreads over 6 folios. Further illustrations include *stupas*, altars and various deities, including a 12-armed Samvara. The compilation was probably intended as a manual for an artisan, or possibly a priest. Such sketchbooks were popular from the 17th century onwards and were typically in concertina format, which allowed for the spreading of diagrams over multiple folios.

Judging by the various styles and composite texts on the reverse of the folios, the manuscript appears to have been compiled from several works. The verso of the second folio in the manuscript bears a colophon dating the work to the fortnight of Sravya (July-August), Nepal Samvat 804 / 1684 CE. The other texts and drawings in the manuscript are of a similar style and period. For a later collection of drawings of *caityas* and other architectural details, see a manuscript dated 1892, in Los Angeles County Museum of Art (illustrated and discussed in Pratapaditya Pal, *Art of Nepal* (Los Angeles 1985), cat. no. D25, pp. 176-77).



Candradvipavatara (The Descent to the Island of the Moon)
3 full-page painting, 2 double-page yantras
Caitra Nepal Samvat 818 / March – April 1698 CE

Thyasaphu (concertina) paper manuscript, treated with *haritala*, 7 lines of Sanskrit in black Newari script to the page, 3 full-page paintings, 2 double-page polychrome *yantras*, margins decorated with garlands of white skulls on black and red grounds, attached wooden covers with loose wooden spine

8.5 x 21.3 cm



The three opening paintings in this splendid astrological-astronomical work are examples of the very finest of Nepalese painting and portraiture. The manuscript opens with a beautiful painting of Ganesha with his consort atop a lotus throne. The painting is full of charming detail, such as the folds on the god's trunk, the ornamental pillars and snarling *makaras* on the shrine, and the rats, the god's vehicles, emerging from beneath the drapes along the bottom of his throne.

The next folio is taken up with an awesome triad of deities: Bhairava, the ferocious aspect of the god Shiva, is flanked by the boar-headed goddess Varahi and a tantric version of the Sarasvati, the goddess of wisdom. As in the opening painting, there is a backdrop of steep green mountains with snow-clad peaks, evidence of the influence of Tibetan *thanka* painting in the period.

The third folio is a beautifully painted testament to the patron's status and piety. Dominating the page is a portrait of the patron himself, dressed in a fine *jama*, Mughal embroidered sash and jewelled turban. Around his neck hangs a Sri Yantra medallion, a mark of his Tantric affiliation, while on either side of his head two pairs of celestial attendants float on Chinese-style blue clouds. His maturity is indicated by the redness of his upturned eye, and his status by the magnificent throne of fierce snow-lions. On his right, his pale-skinned wife also splendidly attired but seated lower than her husband, offers a betel leaf from a golden dish. On the left, dressed in a yellow floral *jama*, sits a more youthful version of the patron, presumably his son. In quality, the portrait is far superior to most of the contemporary portraits of royal

donors. One of the very few portraits that compares in quality is a donor portrait from a devotional manuscript in a private collection dated 1681-4 (see Pratyapaditya Pal, *The Arts of*

Nepal, Part II, Painting (Leiden 1978), pl. 191 & pp. 127-8). The remarkably similar style, facial types and ornamental detail, including a pair of celestial attendants and a throne of snow-lions, may suggest that the manuscript was illustrated by the same artist. The patron has been subsequently identified as King Srinivasamalla of Patan; the similarities between the two portraits and the evident quality of the painting suggest a royal origin is likely for the patron of the present manuscript also.

At the end of the verso of the manuscript, there are two double-page *yantras*, the first of which is a large polychrome star of overlapping triangles set within further stars and rings of lotus leaves. The second is an ink drawing of the central section of the first *yantra*, with a key to the symbols in each of the points of the star. A macabre garland of white skulls runs down the outer margins of the entire manuscript.

A colophon on the verso names the text as the *Candradvipavatara*, composed by a certain Sri Kanthanatha. The date of completion is given as Nepal Samvat 818 / 1698 CE, on Friday, the second day of the bright half of Caitra (March-April; the beginning of the year), at the conjunction of the asterisms Revati and Brahma. The scribe was a Daivajnadevadasha, who ends the work with praise for his teacher, saying that his foot water is the Ganges, his body Sadasiva, his abode Kasi (Benares), and his speech the *summum bonum*.

Pancaraksa (Five Protective Goddesses)
5 paintings
 c. 1700

Loose-leaf paper manuscript, paper stained yellow with *baritala*, 156 folios, Sankrit in Newari script, 5 paintings, ink sketches on interiors of wooden covers

8.5 x 33.2 cm

The 5 paintings in this well-preserved *Pancaraksa* are excellent examples of high-quality Nepalese painting of the late 17th/early 18th century. In this period, the influence of both Tibetan and Mughal traditions combined to form a style that was simultaneously soft and lively. The calligraphic quality of the script, unusual in Nepalese manuscripts, is also probably the result of the influence of luxury Tibetan manuscripts. The scribe has also added ornamental features to the manuscripts, such as the florets around the painting of the goddess Mahamantranusarini. It was also probably the scribe who was responsible for the drawings of a Sakyamuni Buddha and various *caityas* (shrines) on the interiors of the wooden covers. The *Pancaraksa* is a collection of rituals invoking the protection of the five protective goddesses. It is among the oldest of Buddhist hymns, and has enjoyed great popularity as a Tantric text throughout the past millenium.



Pancaraksa (Five Protective Goddesses)**6 illustrations**

Early 18th century

Loose-leaf paper manuscript, 18 folios, 7 lines of Sanskrit in gold Ranjana script on blue-black paper to the page, two *pothi* squares in centre of page pierced with two string holes, borders of lighter blue, 6 illustrations

11.5 x 47 cm

The vivid paintings in this grand copy of the *Pancaraksa* are an interesting blend of Tibetan and Newari styles. While the artist has largely followed Tibetan iconography in the depiction of the Buddhas and goddesses, the bright palette and proportions of the figure belong to the Nepalese tradition. It is likely that the manuscript was executed by a Nepalese artist for a patron in Tibet, where Nepalese painters were esteemed. The vehicles and paraphernalia appropriate to each deity have been rendered in detail and with imagination, particularly in the aureoles that surround each seated deity. These are filled with a bestiary of *makaras*, lions, snakes and elephants, each crowned with Garuda seizing two *nagarajas* at the apex.

The *Pancaraksa*, is a highly revered Buddhist series of invocations of the Five Protective Goddesses. These paintings show two of the goddesses, Mantranusarini and Mahayuri, as well as four of the goddesses Buddha companions.



Mudras of the Diamond Realm
216 illustrations
 18th century

Thyasaphu (concertina) paper manuscript, treated with *haritala*, 54 folios, 8 lines of Sanskrit in black Newari script to each folio, c. 36 syllables a line, 216 painted illustrations of hand gestures and ritual utensils and one miniature of a *vajra* deity, complete

8 x 18.3 cm

According to the accompanying Sanskrit text, the beautifully copied and colourful *mudras*, symbolic hand gestures, in this manual are associated with the Vajradhatu *Mandala*. The Vajradhatu *Mandala*, or the 'Mandala of the Diamond Realm', is the realm inhabited by the five Dhyani or 'Wisdom' Buddhas, and is one of the most popular *mandalas* in Vajrayana (Esoteric) Buddhism.



Tantric texts
9 paintings
 1716 - 1800 CE

Thyasaphu (concertina) paper manuscript, treated with *haritala*, 30 folios, Sanskrit and Newari in black Devanagari and Ranjana script, 9 illustrations, wooden covers

8 x 21.3 cm

The 9 deities depicted in this Tantric manual are in the sharp, colourful style typical of the 18th century. The iconography particular to each deity, such as the elaborate *vahanas*, or mounts, have been rendered with great care and an eye to variety. The opening illustration is of the four-headed Goddess, and the following eight are the manifestations of Bhairava, the wrathful aspect of Shiva, whose worship is widespread in Nepal. For contemporary devotional paintings in a similar style, see a pair of paintings of Kali and Ugrarata in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (published Pratapaditya Pal, *Art of Nepal* (Los Angeles 1985), nos. P 32-33, pp. 224-227).

Following the paintings are 7 folios of a ritual text in Newari, followed by a text in praise of Shiva as the Lord of the Dance and a final work entitled the *Karpurastotram*, in praise of the goddess Kalika, written by Mahakala. According to the colophon the text was completed on the '11th day of bright half of Caitra 924', corresponding to March-April 1800 CE. A single Tantric text on the reverse, however, bears a date of Marga 836 Nepal Samvat / November-December 1716 CE, indicating that the manuscript was completed over a period of 84 years. This final text concerns sacred sounds, and according to the colophon is the 9th chapter of the *Patyamgira Maha Tantra*, or the 'Tantra of Counter Spells'.



Artist's patternbook
49 full-page drawings, 16 double-page drawings
 18th century

Thyasaphu (concertina) paper manuscript, treated with *haritala*, 42 folios, 6 pages of mixed Sanskrit and Newari in Newari script, 49 full-page drawings, 16 double-page drawings

8 x 19 cm

The eclectic range of deities in this pattern book shows that the same artists worked under Buddhist, Shaivite and Vaishnavite patronage. Depicted are some of the most popular subjects in all three religions; these include the 8 forms of Bhairava, Shiva's wrathful manifestations, the eight Matrika or 'Mother' Goddesses, the female Buddha Tara, Buddha Sakyamuni, and ten double-page drawings of the avatars of Vishnu.

The unusual designs sketched in yellow on black and red-brown grounds suggest that the artist may have been an engraver, metalworker or wood-carver. Among these are swirling cloud patterns, Tibetan-style multi-tongued flames, and a tiger chasing a deer. Artisans' pattern books were popular in Nepal from the 17th century onwards, and are a unique source for the dissemination of iconography among artists and between different media. For a discussion of the phenomenon, see M.L.B. Blom, *Depicted Deities, Painters Model Books in Nepal* (Groningen 1985).



Pancaraksa (Five Protective Goddesses)

Copied in reign of Jayapraksamalla (1735-46 and 1752-68)

Loose-leaf paper manuscript, paper dyed blue-black, 160 folios, five lines of gold Ranjana script to the page, ff. 3v-4r in three lines of large gold script, each folio pierced with two string holes, incense-covered wooden covers with cloth protectors on ends of top cover, interiors decorated with paintings of 5 goddesses and their consorts

7.7 x 34 cm

The marvellous covers of this 18th-century *Pancaraksa* manuscript are completely encased in a thick layer of orange and yellow incense, a testament to centuries of ritual use. A colophon at the end of the manuscript confirms that the manuscript was a pious gift to a monastery from a certain Caitrakala Viswatadeva and his wife Anapurna, bestowed during the reign of Jayaprakasamalla (1735-46 and again 1752-68).

The interior of the top cover bears images of the five protective goddesses who are the deifications of each of the five protective hymns that make up the work. The goddesses' five male counterparts, the Jina Buddhas, are represented on the interiors of the bottom manuscript. The clear, bright paintings on monochrome green grounds are typical of the mid-18th century. The manuscript is copied in gold Ranjana script on paper died blue-black. The opening pages of text (ff. 3v-4r), in imitation of Tibetan manuscripts, are copied in three lines of outsize script.

The *Pancaraksa* was one of the most frequently copied and read Buddhist texts in Nepal. The high esteem in which it was held was reflected by its use, until modern times, as a sacred text on which oaths were sworn.



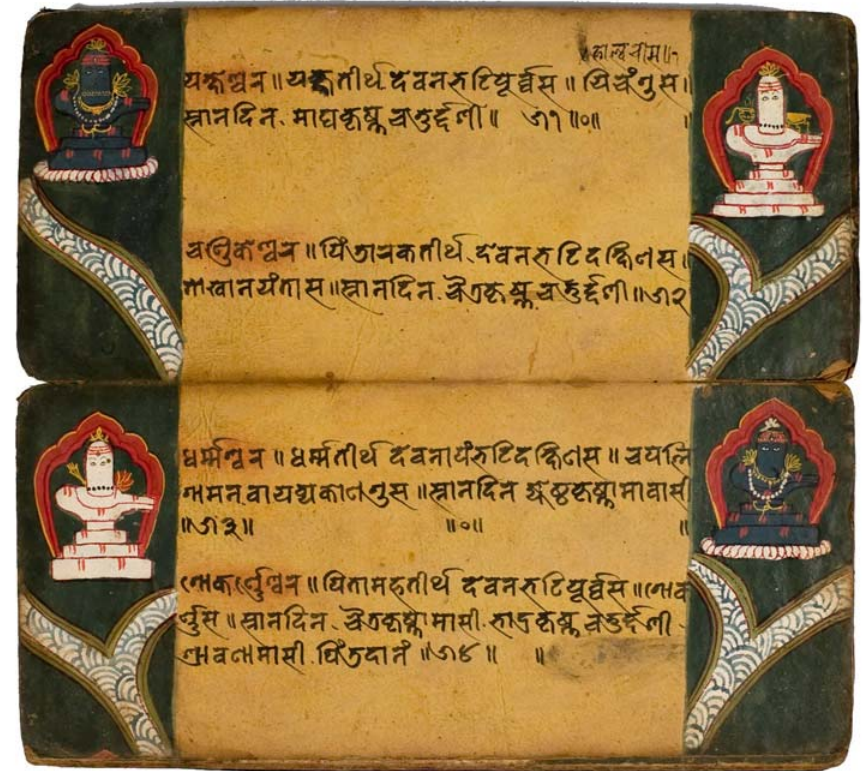
Shaivite guide to the sacred bathing places
3 full page paintings, 66 marginal illustrations
c. 1750

Thysaphu (concertina) paper manuscript, treated with *haritala*, 82 folios, Newari and Sanskrit in black Newari script, 3 full page illustrations, 66 marginal illustrations

9.5 x 21 cm

The beautifully illustrated opening and closing folios provide visual evidence that this guide to 64 *tirthas*, or 'sacred bathing places', associated with the God Shiva, was commissioned by a high-ranking patron on taking a vow of pilgrimage.

On the opening folio, a richly-dressed ascetic and a noble of the warrior class stand in worship of a *lingam*, which is surrounded by



offerings and Shiva's triad; this consists of his vehicle, the bull Nandi, a trident, and the *damaru* drum, representing his powers of volition, cognition and action. On the final folio, on either side of Shiva and his consort Uma, stands a noble devotee with his wife engaged in the act of taking a *srata*. This was a vow that usually involved the assuming of ascetic garb, dietary regulations, the recital of mantras, and visiting a sacred place at an astrologically auspicious time.

The text and accompanying illustrations were clearly intended as a guide for the noble devotee on his pilgrimage. Running down both margins are illustrations of the different *lingams* in which Shiva is manifest at each of the bathing spots; most of these are at the confluence of sacred rivers, though some are also ponds and lakes. The accompanying text gives the mantras, rituals and auspicious visiting times of the various *tirthas*.



Ragamala
86 paintings
 c. 1750

Thyasaphu (concertina) paper manuscript, stained with yellow *baritala*, 80 folios, 3-6 lines of Sanskrit in black Devanagari script, 86 illustrations, further text added to last 20 folios of verso, complete

75 x 21 cm

Ragamalas (illustrations of musical modes) were one of the Rajput and Mughal artistic traditions assimilated by Nepalese painting in the 17th and 18th centuries. The 86 illustrations in this manuscript are rare witnesses to a strikingly independent Nepalese tradition. Much of the iconography was probably adapted from devotional manuals as well as epic literary sources. Many of the *ragas* are shown as deities and their consorts, rather than the customary noble men and women of the Indian tradition. The concertina format and painting style, with its bright figures, deep-green ground, and mixture of Hindu and Buddhist iconography, are typical of devotional manuals of the period (see e.g. the covers of a Shaivite mss., illustrated in Pratypaditya Pal, *The Arts of Nepal*, Part II, Painting (Leiden 1978), pll. 65-66).



The illustrative cycle ends with two splendid double-page paintings. The first is of a group of six pan-Indian and purely Nepalese musical deities, with their corresponding birds below. The final double image shows Shiva and his consort, Uma, flanked by two four-armed deities beating drums, while below, the noble patron of the manuscript and his wife make offerings. The Shaivite flavour of the manuscript is also evident in the numerous *lingams* that appear in many of the illustrations. For a contemporary manuscript in a very similar style that also includes a donor portrait, see the cover of an illustrated manuscript showing the patron alongside 5 *yoginis* in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (M.84.221.6, gift of Jerry Heymann).

Navagrahasastra (Guide to the Planets)
13 double-page paintings, 37 illustrations
 Nepal Samvat 875 / 1754-55 CE

Thyasaphu (concertina) paper manuscript, treated with *haritala*, 124 folios, 8 lines of Newari in black Newari script, titles, margins and rules in red, 13 double-page paintings and 37 single illustrations

13.5 x 30.5 cm

Though this huge work is largely astrological and astronomical, it illustrates a vast panoply of gods, goddesses, *dakinis*, female spirits, and *bhutas*, mischievous spirits, as well as the planets and the signs of the zodiac. Typically for Nepalese manuscripts of the period, both Hindu and Buddhist deities are depicted. The paintings, characterised by bold monochrome grounds and a synthesis of local, Buddhist and Rajput elements, are large and extremely well-preserved examples of the bold mid-18th century style.

The pictorial cycle opens with a double-page illustration of the twelve signs of the zodiac, followed by another double-page painting of the planets with their various symbols. These are succeeded by 28 individual paintings of the *naksatras*, the lunar positions that are the bases of the Hindu lunar calendar, each shown on their respective vehicle. After further individual paintings of the planets, the remainder



of the cycle is taken up with double-page paintings of deities and scenes from Nepali folklore. The top half of these illustrations show a selection of Hindu and Buddhist gods such as Bhairava, Ganapati, Mahakala, Uma Maheswari, Kumari, Sarasvati, Vajrayogini, as well as a Buddha and a Guru. Below these, *bhutas* are shown causing mischief among mortals; wreaking havoc for pious ladies feeding Brahmins, and disrupting the washing of clothes and hunting. The *bhutas* are named according to their mischievous activities and, presumably, one of the purposes of the work was to avoid their interference through the invocation of the appropriate deities. One of the double-page paintings is occupied by a bold painting of Bhairava, the wrathful aspect of Shiva, surrounded by his wrathful attendants, or *ganas*, and a host of tiny dancing skeletons. Curiously, a further scene shows an episode from the *Mahabharata*, the meeting of Bhimsen and King Kubera, the significance of which in this context is not clear.

On the reverse of the manuscript is a further double-page painting showing Uma Maheswari surrounded by the gods of the directions on their various animal vehicles. A colophon at the end of the manuscript gives the title of the text as the *Navagrahasastra*, or the 'Knowledge of the Nine Planets', and gives the date of completion as Nepal Samvat 875 / 1754-55 CE.



Santisara (Epitomy of Peace) by Dinakara Bhatta
Nepal Samvat 880 / 1759-60 CE

Unbound paper manuscript, treated with *haritala*, 160 folios, 8 lines of Sanskrit in black Newari script to the page, lines ruled in red, diagrams and tables on f. 1v, wooden covers, interior of top cover illustrated with paintings of auspicious symbols

9 x 40 cm

This complete astrological work is largely taken up with ways of avoiding the malign influence of illness-causing demons (*grahas*). On the interior of the top wooden cover is a painting of seven auspicious symbols. The work ends with a table of contents and a colophon, giving the title of the work as the 'Santisara', or the 'Epitomy of Happiness', the name of the author as 'Dinakara Bhatta', and the date of completion as Nepal Samvat 880 / 1759-60 CE.



The Appeasement of the Grahās
21 paintings
 Nepal Samvat 907 / 1787 CE

Thyasaphu (concertina) paper manuscript, treated with *haritala*, 89 folios, Newari in black Newari script, opening double-page painting, 9 full-page paintings, 11 half-page paintings, further diagrams and tables, wooden covers

10 x 25 cm

This classic Newari astrological text is accompanied by 21 sophisticated paintings in a colourful mid-18th century style. Following the opening double-page illustration of the *mandala* of the 9 protective animals, are 8 full-page paintings of the Matrika, or 'Mother', Goddesses with their subordinate deities and creatures. These are followed by 11 superbly macabre illustrations of the *grahas*, malignant demons, whose appeasement by astrological means is the main purpose of the work. The *grahas* were held responsible for illnesses in children in particular, and are here depicted as sinister theriomorphic entities looming over diminutive supine infants. The accompanying text gives details of diagnosis, appeasement and prevention. A final full-page painting shows a serpent deity, and the text concludes with numerous tables and diagrams.

On the verso are three further astrological texts and an ownership inscription bearing the date Nepal Samvat 907 / 1787 CE.

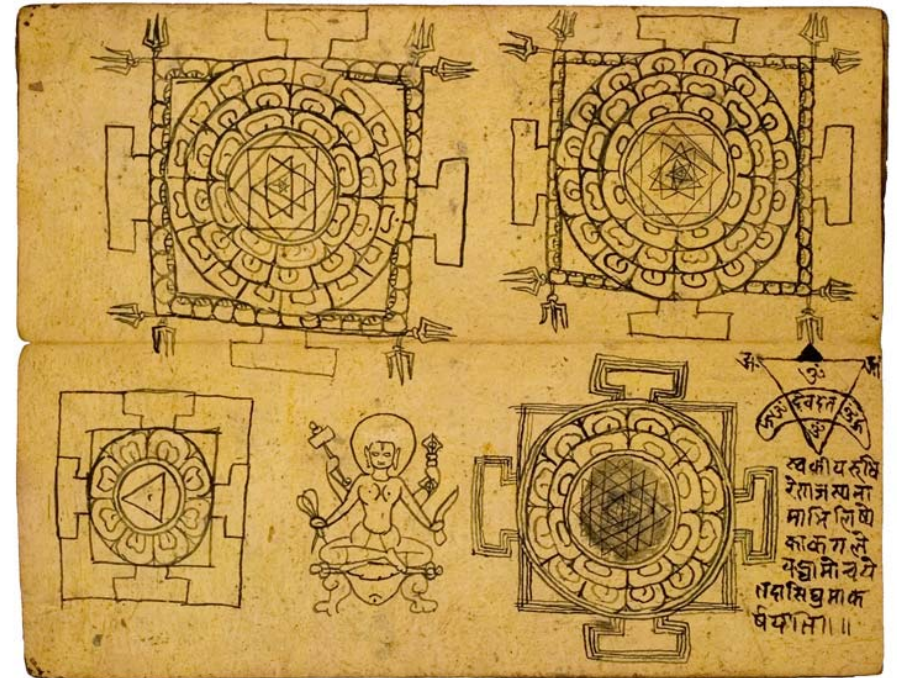


Yantras and mandalas
5 double-page yantras and mandalas, 45 diagrams and
illustrations
c. 1800

Thyasaphu (concertina) paper manuscript, treated with *haritala*, 39 folios, Newari and Sanskrit in black Newari script, 5 double-page *yantras* and *mandalas*, around 45 smaller *yantras*, *mandalas*, depictions of deities and diagrams

11 x 28.5 cm

This impressive manual, containing numerous *yantras* (symbolic representations of divinities) and *mandalas* (cosmological plans), was probably a patternbook for an artist or a priest. Most of the diagrams and drawings are associated with forms of the Great Goddess, such as Camunda and Tara, or aspects of Shiva. Some deities, however, such as the large Tantric deity with multiple animal-heads, are harder to identify and may be local manifestations of gods. Artists' patternbooks were hugely popular in Nepal from the 17th century onwards and constitute a unique source for the transmission of iconography. Few patternbooks, however, deal exclusively with *yantras* and *mandalas*. For contemporary Nepalese model books, see M.L.B. Blom, *Depicted Deities, Painters Model Books in Nepal* (Groningen 1985).



Pushpachintamani (Wish-Bestowing Jewel of Flowers)

Probably Bhaktapur

c. 1800

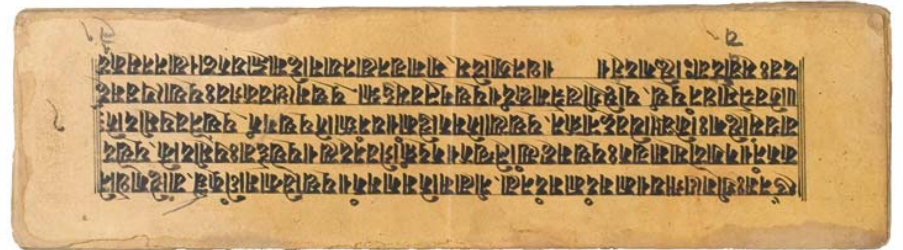
Unbound paper manuscript, treated with *haritala*, 81 folios, 5 lines of Sanskrit and Newari in black Ranjana and Newari scripts, painted wooden covers showing cranes and dragon

6.8 x 25 cm

This unusual work deals exclusively with the significance of flowers, covering topics such as the correct method and times for making flower offerings, the rewards to be expected, as well as malefic flowers to be avoided.

The work is divided into four chapters, each one drawing on a different devotional tradition. The first chapter, dealing with flower offerings in the context of public ritual, is drawn from Shaivite sources such as the *Sivarahasya* and the *Sivapurana*. The second chapter, drawn from Vaishnavite literature, details the flower offerings that lead the way to the worlds of Vishnu, Surya the Sun-god, and the Grahas, the planetary deities. The third chapter is dedicated to the Great Goddess, while the final one is drawn from various tantric traditions in which the hunchbacked goddess Kubjika played a preeminent role. The tantric sources cited by the author confirm that the compendium was made in Nepal itself, probably in the city of Bhaktapur.

The charming painted wooden covers show a Tibetan-style dragon as well as cranes and floral patterns.



Ritual manual for protection from demons**34 illustrations**

Phalguna Nepal Samvat 952 / February-March 1832

Thyasaphu (concertina) paper manuscript, stained yellow with *haritala*, Sanskrit and Newari in black Newari script, 36 folios, 34 illustrations, leather covers, bottom board protected with goat hair

8 x 18 cm

The 34 illustrations in this manual for warding off malevolent demons are in a charming and lively Nepalese folk style. Typically for works of this type, the manuscript is in concertina format, though an additional folding 22 folios have been ingeniously added by attaching fold-out pages to the right margin.

The manuscript opens with a depiction of a wrathful form of the Goddess between two towering flowers. After two depictions of deities, are 12 *nagas*, serpent deities revered as the guardians of springs, rivers and rainfall. These are in a variety of settings such as rhododendron flowers, shrines, and mountains, with one *naga* playfully emerging from a *makara*-headed waterspout. 12 further paintings show serpent-bodied *grahas*, demons associated with various illnesses. Most of these are animal-headed and shown attacking diminutive sleeping figures, though the last illustration shows one of them being beaten back by a young man. The remaining folios show a panoply of deities, *nagas*, *yantras* and mischievous demons, *bhutas*, many of whom brandish skulls. The closing illustrations are larger paintings of Shiva with his consort, Uma, and the wrathful Bhairava on his corpse vehicle. Stylistically, the paintings are very close to those in a book of dream interpretation in the Jucker Collection (see Hugo E. Kreijger, *Kathmandu Valley Painting* (London 1999), no. 42, p. 108).

The verso of the manuscript is filled with Sanskrit text, ending in a colophon which gives the date of completion as the fourth day of the dark fortnight of Phalguna Nepal Samvat 952 / February-March 1832.



Guna Karandavyahu (Deeds of Avalokitesvara)

24 paintings

May 1833

Loose-leaf paper manuscript, treated with *haritala*, 169 folios, 7 lines of Sanskrit in black Newari script, margins ruled in red ink, 24 paintings, original wooden covers, complete

9.9 x 36.7 cm



This important and beautiful manuscript of the *Guna Karandavyahu* contains the most extensive pictorial narrative known from the text. Although almost all manuscripts of the text have single depictions of Avalokitesvara, the paintings in this copy constitute a uniquely extensive pictorial cycle. The confident execution and intelligent composition point to a senior artist who almost certainly spent time in Lhasa: Tibetan influence is seen most clearly in the round, sharp-eyed faces, the curved Chinese-style temple eaves, and certain features of the landscape such as the painterly tree-crested hills.

Most of the paintings follow the text closely and illustrate popular episodes such as that of Sri Sarthavaha, the merchant stranded on Sri Lanka, which is inhabited by flesh-eating goddesses (*raksasis*). A highly inventive composition shows Sarthavaha with his *raksasi* wife, who is disguised as a beautiful maiden. In the foreground she is revealed in her true, hideous form, while in the background Avalokitesvara appears to Sarthavaha in the flame of a lamp to warn him of his fate. The final scene from this episode shows Sarthavaha and companions escaping from the island on the back of Avalokitesvara's flying-horse

manifestation, while two *raksasis* devour some companions who have fallen off in flight.

Some of the illustrations' relation to the text is harder to discern. The elaborate costumes and prayer-wheels in a painting of a group of Tibetan men and women indicate that it have simply been intended as an ethnographic sketch for a Nepalese patron. The manuscript ends with an unusual triptych of the Buddha, flanked by Prajnaparamita representing Dharma (order), and Sadaksari representing Sangha (righteous assembly). Here Prajnaparamita is shown in her Tibetan form, holding a *vajra* sceptre rather than the Nepalese rosary, and Sadaksari has been depicted as Sangha instead of the more typical choice of Padmapani.

The *Guna Karandavyahu* is the major Newari Sanskrit text dealing with the exploits of Avalokitesvara, the most widely revered Bodhisattva. According to the colophon, this copy was completed in May 1833 in Kathmandu by the scribe Viradatta Deva Vajracarya for a certain Sakyabhiksu Jnanavanta Simha of Manjushrinake Vihara and his family.

Ink, gold, silver and gouache on paper, 62 folios, Hindi in black Devanagari script, headings in illuminated cartouches, 29 paintings, double margins ruled in pencil

22 x 18 cm

This copy of a popular tale contains 29 exquisite miniature paintings, illustrating the beautiful women whose statues surrounded the throne of King Vidramitya. In the story, the throne, which bestows invincibility on its owner, is given to Vidramitya by the god Indra. However, Vidramitya loses the throne, which is only to be recovered many years after his death by another king, Bhoj. The latter is about to assume his place on it, when the statues burst out in laughter. Each statue proceeds to tell Bhoj a story for the sake of humbling him and praising Vikramaditya.

King Vikramaditya was probably the historical king who reigned in Malava, whose name was given to the Vikrama era that begins in 58-57 BC, and is the basis for the most frequently used calendar in Hindu manuscripts. The story was one of the first texts translated into modern Hindi, a task accomplished in 1805 by Lulluji Lal (c. 1763-1825) from a Braj bhasa version of the Sanskrit text.

The illustrations begin with the fourth of the statues, Candrakala, and continue through the 32nd, who is depicted alongside a kneeling figure, presumably King Bhoj. This figure is clad in the distinctive royal Nepalese costume, providing the biggest clue as to the origin of the manuscript. The paintings are jewel-like in their precision and show subtle variations in the costume and posture of each of the figures. The illustrator's subtlety is apparent throughout in individual touches, such as the inclusion of a flower, *pūsṭa*, in allusion to the subject's name, Puspavati (f.21v). The patterns on the embroidered textiles and furnishings have been marvelously suggested through the use of pricked gold and silver, and the figures' veils, jewelry and hennaed hands and feet are rendered in great detail.

Sinahasavatīsi (The 32 stories of the Lion Throne)

29 illustrations

c. 1850

