

# LOKEŚVARA IMAGES PRESERVED AT THE NEPALESE BUDDHIST TEMPLE CATURBRAHMA MAHĀVIHĀRA IN BHAKTAPUR

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Avalokiteśvara,<sup>1</sup> from its origin, has been a well known Bodhisattva<sup>2</sup> throughout the world of Mahayana Buddhism. It is also one of the most popular deities of the Buddhist pantheon in Nepal. Nepalese Buddhists use 'lokeśvara'<sup>3</sup> with almost the same meaning as 'Avalokiteśvara'. We can see the various images of Lokeśvara in the courtyard and struts of temples. In the Buddhist temple of Caturbrahma Mahāvihāra, twenty-one forms of Lokeśvara are engraved in its struts. They are valuable iconographical materials to understand the variety of Nepalese Lokeśvaras. However, they have never been researched in detail. As the first step towards the further iconographical study of Avalokiteśvara, this paper aims at illustrating the images and inscriptions of these Lokeśvaras, and explaining their relation to those of the one hundred and eight Lokeśvaras of the famous Buddhist temple Seto Matsyendranath in Kathmandu. Before entering into the main subject, I would like to explain briefly about the variety of the images of Avalokiteśvara.

## Images of Avalokiteśvara

The oldest description of Avalokiteśvara is found in the twenty-fourth chapter<sup>4</sup> of the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra* which was compiled in India

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<sup>1</sup> It is said that the older form of the word 'Avalokiteśvara' (a compound of 'Avalokita' and 'Īśvara') is 'Avalokitasvara', and the former supplanted the latter under the influence of Īśvara (Śiva, the Hindu god)[Tsukamoto 1986: 26]. 'Avalokitasvara' ('Kuan yin' in Chinese translation) is given in an old Central Asian Sanskrit manuscript, and it consists of 'Avalokita' and 'svara', which mean 'contemplating sounds' [Mironov 1927: 241-252].

<sup>2</sup> In Mahayana Buddhism, 'Bodhisattva' means all the people who train themselves in the way to spiritual enlightenment in order to save sentient beings.

<sup>3</sup> They also use 'Lokesor' in the corrupted form.

<sup>4</sup> The title of this chapter in the Sanskrit version by Kern and Nanjio [1909] is 'avalokiteśvara-vikurvaṇanirdeśaḥ'. In the Chinese version by Kumārajīva (*Miao fa lianhua jing*)(Taishō no. 262), this is the twenty-fifth chapter.

by the latter half of the second century A.D.<sup>5</sup> According to this description, Avalokiteśvara always releases people, who pronounce his name, from perils. Avalokiteśvara teaches the law to sentient beings, taking the form of incarnations such as Brahmā, Indra, goblins etc. The expressions of Avalokiteśvara as a savior, which correspond to the passages of the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra*, remain in the caves excavated from the sixth to the eighth centuries in the western part of India (Ajanta, Ellora, Aurangabad and Kanheri, etc.).<sup>6</sup> For example, in the seventh cave in Aurangabad, Avalokiteśvara holds a lotus bud in his left hand, and shows the gesture of granting the absence of fear (*abhaya-mudrā*) in his right hand. On the right and left sides of Avalokiteśvara, four scenes of perils are engraved.

In the Pāla dynasty, which dominated over the northeastern part of India from the eighth to the twelfth centuries, numerous images of Avalokiteśvara appeared.<sup>7</sup> Some of representative images that have two hands and multiple hands are as follows: the first one (a possession of the Indian National Museum in New Delhi) has two hands, showing the gesture of fulfilling of the vow (*varada-mudrā*) in his right hand and holding a lotus in his left hand;<sup>8</sup> the second one (a possession of the Indian Museum in Calcutta) has two hands, displaying the gesture of granting the absence of fear in his right hand and holding a lotus in his left hand;<sup>9</sup> the third one (a possession of the Indian Museum in Calcutta) has two hands, showing the gesture of turning the wheel of the law (*dharmacakra-mudrā*) and holding a lotus in his left hand;<sup>10</sup> the fourth one (a possession of the Indian Museum in Calcutta) has four hands, displaying the gesture of fulfilling the vow and carrying a rosary in his right hands, and holding a lotus and a vase in his left hands. It also has the third eye which is originally a characteristic of the Hindu god, Śiva.<sup>11</sup> the fifth one (a possession of the Indian National Museum in New Delhi) has six hands; one of his right hands shows the gesture of fulfilling the vow, and the other right hands hold a jewel and a rosary. His left hands hold a lotus, a lasso, and a vase.<sup>12</sup>

5. Scholars have discussed that the compilation was completed by the latter half of the second century A.D. at latest [Kubo 1987: 17-21].

6. Mallmann [1948: 135-156] first pointed out this fact.

7. For example, Mallmann [1948: 162-175], Sakuma [1991a: 109-146], Sakuma [1992: 95-108] and Sakuma and Miyaji [1993: 109-132] refer to the iconographical characteristics of Avalokiteśvara of the Pāla dynasty.

8. This is illustrated by Asher [1980: Pl. 161] and Huntington [1984: Pl. 11].

9. This is illustrated by Saraswati [1977: Pl. 52].

10. This is illustrated by Banerji [1933: Pl. XVd] and Sakuma [1991: Pl. 5].

11. This is illustrated by Banerji [1933: Pl. XIIa] and Huntington [1984: Pl. 40].

12. This is illustrated by Saraswati [1977: Pl. 72].

Further, other iconographical materials are found in India. One of them is the *Sādhnamālā*,<sup>13</sup> which is a collection of meditative practices (*sādhana*) consisting of visualizing the image of a deity. Although the images serve as the basis for reaching spiritual enlightenment in each *sādhana*, their iconographical characteristics seem to have close relation to the images of Nepalese Lokeśvara. This text has three hundred and twenty *sādhanas* consisting of the pantheon of the Tathāgata, bodhisattva, and goddess etc., according to the edition of B. Bhattacharyya. More than thirty *sādhanas* utilize the following Avalokiteśvaras: Śaḍakṣarī, Siṃhanāda, Khasarpaṇa, Hālāhala, Vajradharma, Padamanarteśvara, Rakta, Lokanātha, Māyājālakrama, Nīlakaṇṭha, Pretasaṃtarpita, Trailokyavaśaṃkara, and Hariharivāhana. Among these images, Lokanātha and Khasarpaṇa have simple and standard images which show the gesture of fulfilling of the vow in one hand and holding a lotus in his other hand. On the other side, more complicated images are found with these Avalokiteśvaras as well. For instance, Hālāhala has three faces and six hands. One of his right hands shows the gesture of fulfilling the vow, the other right hands carry a rosary and an arrow, and his left hands hold a bow, a white lotus, and the breast of his wife (*Śakti*). A trident is put at his right side, and a skull cup is at his left side. These two attributes originally come from the Hindu god, Śiva.<sup>14</sup>

As mentioned above, Avalokiteśvara was originally a savior for people, and its representation remains in the western part of India. The images have two hands and simple poses such as showing the gesture of fulfilling the vow or showing the gesture of the absence of fear in one hand and holding a lotus in the other hand. Iconographically, the images of Avalokiteśvara in the Pāla dynasty and the images in the *Sādhnamālā* have more varieties than those of Avalokiteśvara in Ellora, Ajanta and Aurangabad etc. The varieties of Nepalese Lokeśvara seem to increase in the Pāla dynasty as well.

In Nepalese Buddhism, Lokeśvara is very popular as well as Mañjuśrī.<sup>15</sup> The four main temples of Lokeśvara are located in the Kathmandu valley, Bugma Matsyendranath in Patan, Seto Matsyendranath in Kathmandu, Nala Matsyendranath in Banepa, and Chobhara

13. After each *sādhana* established individually, the *sādhanas* were compiled as a collection. A Sanscrit edition is given by Bhattacharyya [1962]. One of the manuscripts (Add. 1686 in Bendall [1883:174]) documents the date: Nepal Saṃvat 287 (A.D. 1167). The other manuscripts which are not used by Bhattacharyya [1962] are mentioned by Sakuma [1990a]. A study on the text of *sādhanas* of Siṃhanāda-Avalokiteśvara in the *Sādhnamālā* is done by Sakuma [1990b].

14. Foucher [1905: 22-42] and Bhattacharyya [1924: 32-52] refer to the iconographical characteristics of the Avalokiteśvaras in the *Sādhnamālā*.

15. For instance, the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* (Chanting the Names of Mañjuśrī) is familiar with the Nepalese Buddhists [Tachikawa 1986: 83].

Matsyendranath to the east of Kirtipur.<sup>16</sup> Among these temples, Seto Matsyendranath is also known as the temple of the one hundred and eight Lokeśvaras,<sup>17</sup> and the main building preserves these paintings. A few Avalokiteśvaras of Indian origin such as Ṣaḍakṣarī, Siṃhanāda, Khasarṇa etc. can also be seen among them.<sup>18</sup>

### Lokeśvara Images of Caturbrahma Mahāvihāra

Caturbrahma Mahāvihāra (CM) is located very close to Durbar Square in Bhaktapur city which is about fifteen km east of Kathmandu (fig. 1).<sup>19</sup> On the east and north sides of the building<sup>20</sup> one can see struts in which the Lokeśvara images and inscriptions are found.<sup>21</sup> The struts of other deities are located around the court of this temple.<sup>22</sup> On one of the struts of this temple is written the date, Nepal Saṃvat 610 (A.D. 1490).<sup>23</sup> The numbers in figure 2 indicate the location of the struts of Lokeśvara (this is a conceptual picture). Table 1 describes the images and inscriptions of Lokeśvara (all the images are made of wood and about 1 m high. They have one head and two hands except images nos. 12. and 23. No. 23 is a lion rampant. I have given the reconstructed Sanskrit in parentheses. The inscription numbers in the Table 1 are identical with the struts in figure 1 and the plates which are given in the end of this article.)

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16. These four temples of Lokeśvaras are derived from the religious centers which were founded by Gorakhnath, who is a well known yogi of Kaula school. One opinion maintains he lived toward the end of the eleventh century [Lock 1980: 427-428][Tachikawa 1986: 64].

17. Bhattacharyya [1924: Pl. XLIII-LXIX] and Amoghavajra [1982: 2-28] illustrate the line drawings of the 108 Lokeśvaras of Seto Matsyendranath.

18. Sakuma [1991b] mentioned the Avalokiteśvaras of the *Sāadhanamālā*, which are illustrated in the 108 Lokeśvaras of Seto Matsyendranath.

19. Locke [1985: 447-451] refers to this temple. I have traced figure 1 from the map of Lock [1985].

20. The south and west sides of the building attach to a adjacent buildings, and there are no struts with images on these sides.

21. The inscriptions are given in a kind of Newari script.

22. Locke [1985: 449] finds twenty-four Lokeśvaras, the five Buddhas and forms of Heruka on the struts of this temple.

23. This date is reported by Locke [1985; 449, 510].

Table 1

	Inscriptions	Gestures or Attributes	
		right hand	left hand
1.	Śrī-Kamaruda-Lokeśvarāya (Kamalarudra-Lokeśvara?)	a lotus	a trident
2.	Śrī-Amoghapāśa-Lokeśvarāya (Amoghapāśa-Lokeśvara)	the gesture of fulfilling the vow	a rope
3.	Śrī-Siṃhanātha-Lokeśvarāya <sup>24</sup>	a rosary	shawl ?
4.	Śrī-Sadāsara-Lokeśvarāya	joining the hands together	
5.	Śrī-Acaraketu-Lokeśvarāya (Acalaketu-Lokeśvara)	a sword	a rope
6.	Śrī-Ratnadatta-Lokeśvarāya (Ratnadatta-Lokeśvara)	a jewel	a book?
7.	Śrī-Devatā-Lokeśvarāya	the gesture of fulfilling the vow	shawl ?
8.	Śrī-Ciṃtāmaṇi-Lokeśvarāya (Cintāmaṇi-Lokeśvara)	the gesture of fulfilling the vow	a branch
9.	Śrī-Jinadhātu-Lokeśvarāya (Jinadhātu-Lokeśvara)	a reliquary	a lotus bud
10.	Śrī-Maṅjudatta-Lokeśvarāya (Maṅjudatta-Lokeśvara)	a sword	a book
11.	Śrī-Visunucaka-Lokeśvarāya (Viṣṇucakra-Lokeśvara)	a lotus	a club or a book
12.	unclear	unclear	unclear
13.	Śrī-Lokanātha-Lokeśvarāya	the gesture of fulfilling the vow	a lotus
14.	Śrī-Aghyavakate-Lokeśvarāya	the gesture of fulfilling the vow	a lotus
15.	Śrī-Vajranātha-Lokeśvarāya	a thunderbolt	a lotus bud
16.	Śrī-Vajrapāṇi-Lokeśvarāya (Vajrapāṇi-Lokeśvara)	a thunderbolt	a bell with a thunderbolt
17.	Śrī-Padmapāṇi-Lokeśvarāya (Padmapāṇi-Lokeśvara)	the gesture of fulfilling the vow	a lotus
18.	Śrī-Nītenātha-Lokeśvarāya (Nṛtyanātha-lokeśvara)	raised (dancing pose)	held at the thigh
19.	Śrī-Vidyāpati-Lokeśvarāya	a rosary	a book
20.	Śrī-Saṃkhanātha-Lokeśvarāya (Saṃkhanātha-Lokeśvara)	a conch shell	the gesture of granting the absence of fear
21.	Śrī-Visvanikāṃtā-Lokeśvarāya	a wheel	a club or a book
22.	Śrī-Kitājari-Lokeśvarāya (Kṛtājari-Lokeśvara)	joining the hands together	

<sup>24</sup> It is possible to read it as 'Siṃghanātha' as well.

I would like to explain briefly about the relationship between these Lokeśvaras and the one hundred and eight Lokeśvaras of Seto Matsyendranath. In the inscriptions of the one hundred and eight Lokeśvaras, it is possible to find similar names to these of the Lokeśvaras of Caturbrahma Mahāvihāra (CM).<sup>25</sup> Table 2 illustrates these names. (The broken lines denote the same name as Lokeśvara of CM.)

Table 2

Nos. and Names of Lokeśvara in CM	Nos. of the 108 Lokeśvaras
2. Śrī-Amoghapāśa-Lokeśvara	37. -----
3. Śrī-Siṃhanātha-Lokeśvara	89. -----
5. Śrī-Acaraketu-Lokeśvara	29. Śrī-Acalaketu-Lokeśvara
6. Śrī-Ratnadatta-Lokeśvara	31. Śrī-Ratnadatta-Lokeśvara
7. Śrī-Devatā-Lokeśvara	34. Śrī-Devadevatā-Lokeśvara
8. Śrī-Ciṃtāmaṇi-Lokeśvara	14. Śrī-Ciṃtāmaṇi-Lokeśvara
10. Śrī-Maṃjudatta-Lokeśvara	48. Śrī-Mahāmaṃjudatta-Lokeśvara
11. Śrī-Visunucaka-Lokeśvara	12. Śrī-Viṣṇucakra-Lokeśvara
15. Śrī-Vajranātha-Lokeśvara	2. -----
16. Śrī-Vajrapāṇi-Lokeśvara	7. Śrī-Vajrapāṇi-Lokeśvara
17. Śrī-Padmapāṇi-Lokeśvara	3. Śrī-Padmapāṇi-Lokeśvara
18. Śrī-Nītenātha-Lokeśvara	4. Śrī-Nṛtyanātha-Lokeśvara
19. Śrī-Vidyāpati -Lokeśvara	6. -----
20. Śrī-Saṃkhanātha-Lokeśvara	8. Śrī-Saṃkhanātha-Lokeśvara
22. Śrī-Kitājari-Lokeśvara	11. Śrī-Kṛtāñjali-Lokeśvara

I would like to compare these Lokeśvaras with the 108 Lokeśvaras of Seto Matsendranath regarding their gestures and attributes. Table 3 shows the iconographical characteristics of the 108 Lokeśvaras that are mentioned in Table 2. (The order of the numbers of the 108 Lokeśvaras follows that of Table 2.)<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> The inscriptions are written in [Amoghavajra 1982: 2-37].

<sup>26</sup> The iconographical characteristics are based on Amoghavajra [1982: 2-37].

Table 3

Nos. of the 108 Lokeśvaras.	Gestures or Attributes	
	right hand	left hand
37. (eight hands)	raised a lasso the gesture of fulfilling the vow the gesture of granting the absence of fear	a book a trident a lotus a vase
89. (six hands)	a sword a rosary joining the hands together	a book a shield
29.	a sword	a rope
31.	a leaf	a book
34.	the gesture of fulfilling the vow	a palm turned inward
14.	the gesture of fulfilling the vow	a branch
48. (eight hands)	a sword a thunderbolt an arrow the gesture of concentration ( <i>dhyāna-mudrā</i> )	a book a bell with a thunder bolt a bow
12.	a wheel	a club
2.	a thunderbolt (dancing pose)	a lotus
7.	a thunderbolt	a lotus
3.	the gesture of fulfilling the vow	a lotus
4. (ten hands)	raised (dancing pose) a rosary an arrow a lotus the gesture of fulfilling the vow (dancing pose)	an axe a bow a club a bell with a thunderbolt held at the thigh
6.	a rosary	a book
8.	a conch shell	a lotus
11.	joining the hands together	

Concerning gestures and attributes, the Lokeśvaras nos. 5, 8, 15, 17, 19, and 22 of CM respectively have the same figures as nos. 29, 14, 2, 3, 6, and 11 of the 108 Lokeśvaras. Nos. 2, 7, 10, 11, 16, 18 and 20 of CM are not completely identical with nos. 37, 89, 34, 48, 12, 7, 4, and 8 of the 108 Lokeśvaras in iconographical characteristics, but they have common iconographical elements. No. 6 of CM is not identical with no. 31, as long as what no. 6 has in the left hand is not considered a book.

The Lokeśvaras of CM whose names are not found in the 108 Lokeśvaras are nos. 1, 4, 9, 13, 14 and 21. Nos. 1, 4, and 9 respectively have the similar figures as nos. 33, 11 and 15 of the 108 Lokeśvaras.<sup>27</sup> However, nos. 13 and 14 have the same images as nos. 1 and 2 of the 108 Lokeśvaras.<sup>28</sup> No. 21 is identical with no. 12, if what no. 21 has in his left hand is considered as a club.<sup>29</sup>

As mentioned above, not all the Lokeśvaras of CM are identified with the 108 Lokeśvaras of Seto Matsyendranath regarding names or iconographic characteristics. About seventy percent of the Lokeśvaras of CM have similar names to the 108 Lokeśvaras of Seto Matsyendranath. Among those Lokeśvaras, about ninety percent have the same figures or common iconographic elements as the 108 Lokeśvaras. In the future, through research on the inscriptive names and iconographical characteristics of other Nepalese Lokeśvaras, their variety will gradually become clear.

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<sup>27</sup>. No. 33 is Śrī-Kamalarudra-Lokeśvara [Amoghavajra 1982: 10]. No. 11 is Śrī-Kṛtāñjali-Lokeśvara [Amoghavajra 1982: 4]. No. 15 is Śrī-Caityadhātu-Lokeśvara [Amoghavajra 1982: 5].

<sup>28</sup>. No. 1 is Śrīmad-Āryāvalokiteśvara, and no. 2 is Śrī-Padmapāṇi-Lokeśvara [Amoghavajra 1982: 1].

<sup>29</sup>. No. 12 is Śrī-Viṣṇucakra-Lokeśvara [Amoghavajra 1982: 4].

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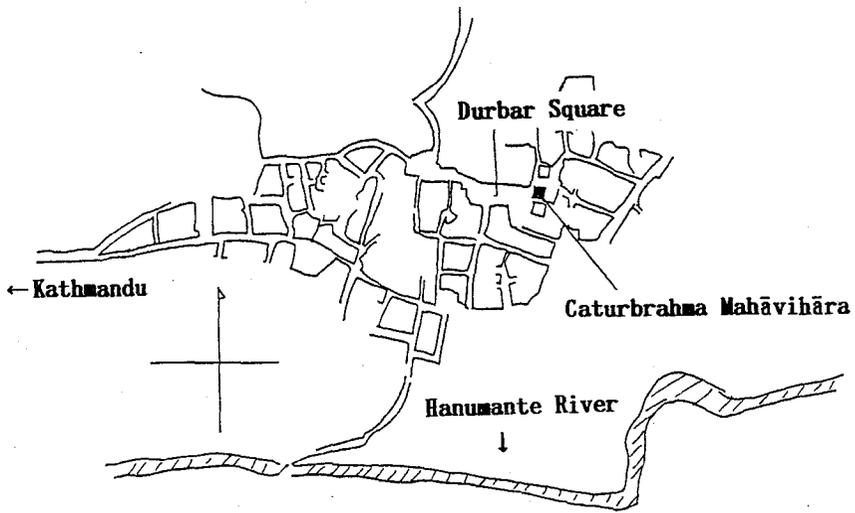


Figure 1

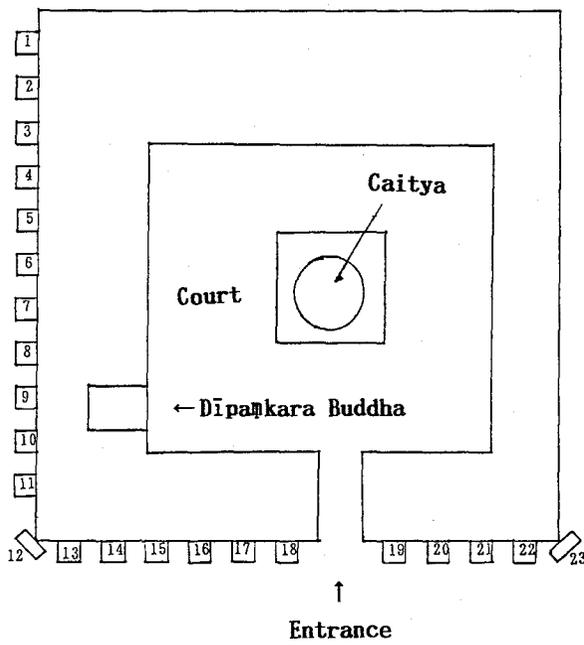


Figure 2



Plate 1



Plate 2



Plate 3



Plate 4



Plate 5



Plate 6



Plate 7

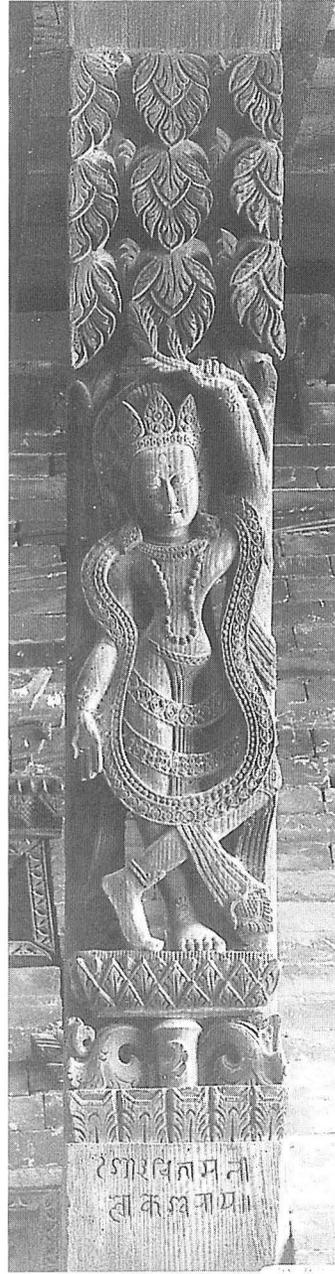


Plate 8



Plate 9



Plate 10



Plate 11



Plate 12



Plate 13

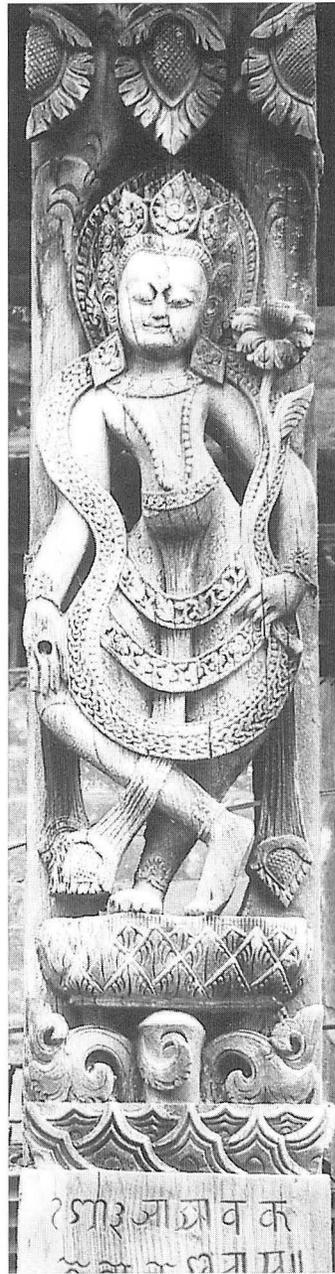


Plate 14



Plate 15



Plate 16



Plate 17



Plate 18



Plate 19



Plate 20



Plate 21

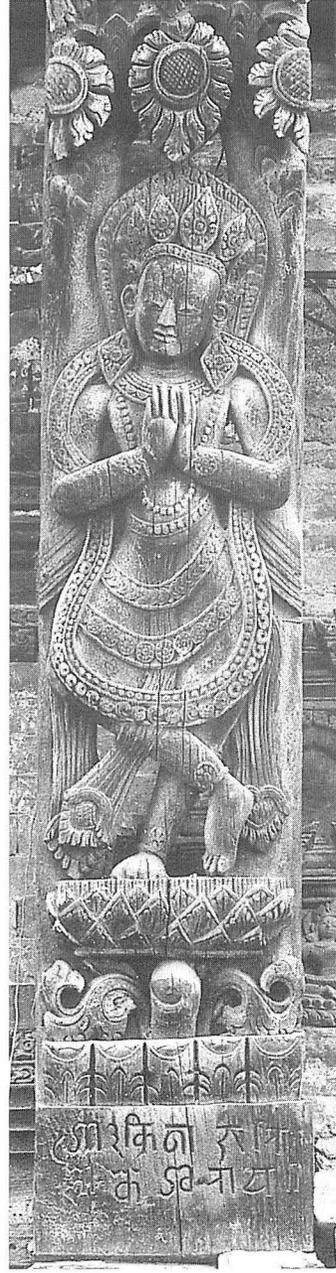


Plate 22

\* I express my gratitude to Dr. Max Deeg, University of Nagoya, for correcting my English, and Prof. M. Tachikawa, National Museum of Ethnology in Osaka, for allowing me to use his photographs for plates 2-7, 10, and 14. (I took the photographs for plates 1, 8, 9, 11-13, and 15-22.). I could see A.J. Gail's *Klöster in Nepal* (Akademische Druk-U. Verlag Sanstalt, Graz/ Austria 1991) which contains the chapter dealing with the struts of Caturbrahma Mahāvihāra, after the first proof of this paper had come out. I regret that I could not refer to this book here. I wish to thank Mr. Kazumi Yoshizaki for suggesting me to refer to the book.

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