

## 7 Cymbals

Four different pairs of cymbals are used to accompany the nine drums, *tāḥ* of different sizes, *jhyālicā*, *sichyāḥ* and *bhuchyāḥ* (Fig. 375). Some *navabājā* groups use in addition a thick brass disc of the gong category (approximately 25 cm in diameter), called *kāypā*, *kāypī* or in Bhaktapur also *tāmāī*. It is played with a heavy stick.



Fig. 375: (left to right) *tāḥcā*, *tāḥ*, *jhyālicā*, *sichyāḥ* and *bhuchyāḥ* (photo: Bernd Karl Rennhak)

Two different sounds are produced, the open, ringing sound *tī̃* and the closed, muffled sound *chu*. In the drumming notation they are represented by capital letters **T** and **C** above the drumming syllables.

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### 7.1 *Tāḥ* and *Tāḥcā*

*Tāḥ* are thick-walled bronze cymbals and were made by Śākya goldsmiths living in the Nāgbāhāḥ area, Patan. The smaller *tāḥ* are called *tāḥcā*. The alloy includes precious metals. Before the last goldsmith skilled in this craft closed his workshop in 1991, I asked him if he would let me document the process of making the instruments but this was politely declined. It appears that the family secret has been lost. The tourist market is flooded with poor quality cymbals. The finest thick-walled cymbals were made by Śākya expatriates in Lhasa. (Figs. 376–378)



Fig. 376: *Tāḥcā* (front, 4 cm in diameter) and *tāḥ* with handles (photo: Bernd Karl Rennhak)



*Fig. 377*

tī



*Fig. 378*

chu

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### 7.2 *Jhyāli* and *Jhyālicā*

*Jhyālicā* are flat brass cymbals, approximately 7 cm in diameter, producing a tinkling sound. They are made by *tamaḥ* coppersmiths. The Navadurgā of Bhaktapur use a large and heavy pair called *jhyāli*. That special sound is perceived as /tī - kal - - /tī - kal - - / when the Navadurgā dancers walk through Bhaktapur at night. (Figs. 379–381)



Fig. 379: Two pairs of *jhyālicā* and one pair of big *jhyāli* used by the Navadurgā (photo: Bernd Karl Rennhak)



*Fig. 380*

Resonant sound of *jhyālicā*



*Fig. 381*

Muffled sound of *jhyālicā*

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### 7.3 *Sichyāḥ*

*Sichyāḥ* (in Kathmandu Newari: *chusyāḥ*) are a pair of brass cymbals approximately 20 cm in diameter and with a wide, flat boss (Figs. 382, 383).



Fig. 382

Resonant sound of *sichyāḥ*



Fig. 383

Muffled sound of *sichyāḥ*

## 7.4 *Bhuchyāḥ*

*Bhuchyāḥ* (in Kathmandu Newari: *bhusyāḥ*) is a pair of large brass cymbals (29 cm in diameter) with a wide, round boss (Figs. 384–386). The finest *bhuchyāḥ* were produced in Kathmandu until 1985. Their incomparable sound was gorgeous and the inside of the boss painted with red enamel. Since then, cymbals of lesser quality have been imported from Bhojpur, a town in east Nepal famous for metal work. Both *bhuchyāḥ* and *sichyāḥ* don't last long as they are easily broken during processions. Excited drunken brutes grab the cymbals and smash them together heads on with full force, without knowing the correct way of playing. These delicate cymbals should be held very



Fig. 384: Bishnu Bahadur Manandhar ('Mr. Bhaktapur') playing *bhuchyāḥ* in the correct manner during a *dhimaybājā* procession, 1991

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loosely. Their flat surfaces meet in a gentle, sweeping manner with the right hand pushing and the left hand pulling. Nobody should be allowed to touch the instruments without proper training.

Prolonged cymbal playing damages the inner ear and may cause permanent tinnitus. I always used small cotton balls to protect my ears. This helped me to preserve my hearing capacity—despite participating as a drummer in countless noisy processions. I strongly recommend this to every player of Newar drums and cymbals.



Fig. 385

Resonant sound of *bhuchyāḥ*  
(cymbals remain in loose contact after the initial stroke,  
producing an additional series of tinkling sounds)





*Fig. 386*

Muffled sound of *bhuchyāḥ*

