śivagala, canigala and vandigala

(Three Toponyms from Medieval Bhaktapur)

- Yogesh Raj

This paper attempts to find the origin and extent of three place-names from medieval Bhaktapur.[1,2,3] The three place-names are *sivagala, canigala* and *vanigara*.[4] Though widespread in the official use in the numerous medieval legal land grants or land sale palm-leaf documents, these names are not in use anymore. Canigala is a key place of action in the *Gopalarajavamsavali*.

There have been some speculations over identification of these names before (Shrestha 2001), but his manner of approach was brisk and the conclusions were but hasty.

The use of legal documents in toponymical studies has been largely an unknown enterprise in Nepalese history writings. Regmi (2051 VS), Tiwari (2000) and now Shakya (2001) can be cited as exceptions. In this paper, a corpus consisting nearly 2000 palm-leaf land sale and land grant documents[5] has been scanned in order to solve the problem of origin and extent of the three place names. Out of this corpus, a total of 800 documents come from Bhaktapur or medieval *khvapa*. The latter makes the raw material for our study.

Students of Nepalese history and culture are not unfamiliar with these documents. However, it would fit our purpose to mention a few characteristics of the material : (1) all of these documents are necessarily dated; (2) the documents had legal status, thus are quite understandably, highly formal and (3) the language used is strictly stylized.[6] These characteristics of our materials make our study credible.

All of these documents have a common way of providing the address of the principal subjects: it begins with reference to the largest dwelling unit followed by references to three other units of decreasing size and familiarity. Each of the preceding units is larger and inclusive of units following it. The first units mentioned are desa bruma, pur referring the city, an urban cosmos for the medieval period. The other smaller units following it could be sthana (for location of the city), tola (for location of the sthana) and -che (a particular yet generic suffix for a name of a house/residential unit) or -ksetra (for a particular and often atypical name of a plot of land).

We find that medieval Bhaktapur was divided into three sthanas: sivagala canigala and vandigala. It is but rare to find such consistent sthana divisions in medieval Kathmandu and Patan.[7] It is noteworthy to find a single sthana denoting whole of other Newar settlements such as Sanga (sremgirapura-sthana), Banepa (vanikapuri-sthane), Nala (narampari-sthane), Thimi (tribhairava-sthane), Panauti (punyavati-sthane) to cite a few.

Here our methodology is first to identify the tola name following a particular sthana, list of all the tolas within the same sthana, and then to guess the extent of the sthana. Lists of the tolas falling under the three sthanas are given in Appendix 1. A map is quite helpful in

visualizing the boundaries of the three sthanas (map 1). It is clear from the map that the entire eastern part of the medieval Bhaktapur was under vandigara -sthana division. Rest of the city was axially divided in to two sthana divisions: the upper (north) was under sivagala -sthana and the lower (south) was under canigala -sthana (refer to the map 1).

There are several complications. Firstly, we find that a few tolas seem to belong to two of the sthanas such as tiprakochem (> tibukchem) falling under both sivagala (purnima 97:5, NS 480) and canigala (pasuka 4/1:8, NS 740) as well as golamande (>gomarhi) falling under both sivagala (BSTT 4:15, NS 765) and canigala (pasuka 4/9:NS 727). The problem is solved if we interpret the anomaly as a simple consequence of a fact: the mutual boundaries of the sthanas ran through these tolas. The uncommon -che and subjects of given transactions in the tolas would make our interpretation tenable.

While one cannot also rule out a possibility of time-born changes in the size and shape of an administrative sthana unit causing certain tola falling under one sthana anytime transferred to other sthana later. Thus the second complication in our method is temporal in nature. It seems natural to assume a dynamic shift/organic growth in the extent of the sthana divisions. Reliable speculation on the origins of the sthana names at this stage could augment our ability to understand how the size and shape of a specific sthana changed over a couple of centuries.

The common morpheme gala (or gara) in all three toponyms, both as a free and a bound type, refers to an architectural unit mostly used as residence for divinity and for mortals. It is not difficult thus to interpret siva-gala as 'abode of siva', cani-gala as 'abode of cani' and vandi-gara as 'abode of vandi'. We may even speculate that in the beginning these three names referred to three temples or god-houses located at three further points of the medieval Bhaktapur city (these temples - following the classical Hindu settlement pattern-could well have been at the hearts of three distinct Lichhavi and post-Lichhavi semi-urban settlement[8]) and that as time passed, the horizontal expansion of each of the settlements[9] resulted in the formation of the first unified urban cityscape and the three names came to denote three larger settlement parts of the whole.[10] Interesting also is the fact that while in the Lichhavi period the units were named (ma-kho-prm, ma-kho-dulam and khr-pr-bru) after the charcteristics of their natural landscapes, the toponyms under discussion suggest that by medieval period, Bhaktapur was already modeled after the classical Hindu urban pattern.

cani-gala, in the period the Gopalarajavamsavali (written around NS 509), hereafter GV, was being compiled, was a strategically important fortress that doyas and other invaders frequently attacked. Shrestha (2001) associates the name to the present day casukhya located east of tibukchem (<tirpakochem), which still serves as an entry point to the city from southeastern direction. He links cani-gala to candi-gala or 'abode of candi'. casukhya does have a candesvari temple. Altough the inscriptional evidence from the site at the present cannot be stretched earlier than NS 800, it does appear to be a good first approximation ! canigala then onwards appears to have spread to the south and to the west. Refer to the map 2.

The earliest attested date for siva-gala is NS 125, much older than cani-gala yet the former occurs only in the GV. Unlike other religious sites, which also had security functions and were often places for depositing precious riches such as gold and grains, siva-gala in all probability was purely a religious site. Shrestha (2001) identifies it with the virabhadresvara temple situated in present day gomarhi (<golamande). The basis for his conclusion are :(a) virabhadresvara is principal deity in vira-saiva cult that was in its zenith during 7th-11th century AD Nepal, (b) the site is historically important as a sivadeva-amsuvarma inscription has been found there and (c) two of the legal documents link golamande with siva-gala. See Shrestha (2001:30, 31n). Basis (a) and (b) are conjectural and (c) is untenable. The 'proofs' were not convincing to shrestha himself. He accepted that a separate study was necessary. The growth of the extent of siva-gala can be seen in map 3.

vandi-gara has been associated to the present vane layku at Dattatreya Square of the eastern part of the town (Sharma:2057 VS:66-68). He suggests an etymology

for the latter as vane layku <vane rajakula <vanhi raja (ya) kula or "ancestry of a certain Brahmin named Vanhiraja". His interesting conclusion that there had been a case of a parsing error (reading vanhi rajakula instead of vanhiraja kula) leading into a semantic shift, however, is inaccurate. The ritual phrase 'vanhi rajakula bhattaraka' reported in use during all the rituals may simply mean" the deity at the *vanhi rajakula*. Instead, in all likelihood, *vandiva-gala ~ vandima-gala* could be meaningfully derived from vam deva-gala or "abode/ fortress of the devas of/coming from the east". vanhi rajakula and its older attested form vande rajakula could be then "the royal ancestry of the devas of the east". These devas, known better in the chronicles of the Nepal Valley as doyas or dos were powerful people of the medieval period. These doyas had entered the Valley from the east. Vajracarya (2021VS) found that the ruling elited of the tirbhukti pradesa in the south was generically termed as doyas by the people of the valley. He did not know why. Also, he wondered if this term was in use in the historical materials of Mithila and/or Tirhut. I have attempted to find answers to these questions elsewhere (raj:2002). Also, I have shown that doyas ~ devas are till today linked to the vanbi rajakula > vane layku. It supports my etymology elicited above. The evolution of the toponym could be visualized in map 4.

Appendix 1 (a)

A list of tolas that falls within sivagala sthana as attested in the medieval documents .

1. alaco (ASK:395, NS 853)
   > inaco
2. ilacha (P102:58, NS 821)
3. etache (BSTT 1:12, NS 795)
   > itache
4. kupalache (Pa 4/9:9, NS 714)
5. kvathandu (S-T: 183, NS 876)
   kvathanabhu (BSTT 1:16, NS ......)
   > kvathandau
6. khanima (P 84:28, NS 653)
   khanimam (P 97:24, NS 680) khanimam (P102:57, NS 820) khanimha (ASK:16, NS 820) khanimam (Pa 3/4:6, NS 822) khalama (Pa 4/2:8, NS 832) khanima (Pa 4/2:8, NS 833) khanima (P 102/61,

NS 836) Khauma (ASK:150, NS 888)
   > khauma
7. godamada (ASK:48, NS 744)
   godamamde (Pa 3/3:6, NS 755) godamamde (BSTT 4:15, NS 765) golamamde (S-T:190, NS 771) golamandi (ASK:45, NS 780) golamamde (BSTT 4:15, NS 785) godamamde (ASK:69, NS 801) golamamde (S-T: 197, NS 810) golamamde (P 102:55, NS 819) gvalamamdhe (S-T:195, NS 877) gvalamamde (S-T:185, NS 878)
   >gomarhi
8. godasade (ASK :25, NS 806)
9. cadvara (S-T:185, NS 878)
10. cochem (P 79:42, NS 652)
    cochem (BSTT 1:5, NS 702) cocham (Pa 3/3:6, NS 706) cochem (BSTT 1:6, NS 729) cochem (BSTT 1:10, NS 776) cocchem (Pa 3/12:6, NS 778) cochem (S-T:181, NS 801) coche (BSTT 1:16, NS 857)
    > cochem
11. tipurakoche (P 97:5, NS 480)
    > tibukchem
12. tupalache (P 99:15, NS 534)
    tuparachhe (PA 4/9:9, NS 714) tupalacche (Pa3/ 4:7, NS 764) tupalacche (BSTT 4:15, NS 785) tupalaccha (Pa 3/4:6, NS 822) tupalacche (Pa 3/ 4:6, NS 826)
    > tulachem
13. teche (S-T: 196, NS 871)
14. toche (BSTT 4:23, NS 887)
15. tyache (P 99:57, NS 873)
    tyache (ASK:67, NS 873)
16. thamkarachhe (BSTT 4:6, NS 710)
    thakarachee (Pa 4/9:9, NS 714) thamkalache (ASK:379, NS 782) thamkarachhe (Pa 4/4:7, NS 797) thamkalache (BSTT 1:14, NS 832)
17. tharache (ASK : 168, NS 879)
    > thalachem
18. thasache (ASK :25, NS 796)
19. dathu (ASK :352, NS 883)
    > dathu tvah
20. duvu (ASK : 355, NS 8—)
    duvu (P 102: 61, NS 8—)

21. bilache (ASK : 61, NS 719)

bilacha (S-T:186, NS 728) biracha (S-T :140, 181, NS 777) bilacha (P 102:59, NS 824) bilacha (P 99:50,NS 847) bilache (ASK: 44, NS 862)

> bilachem (in front of present day Padma High School)

22. mulacha (ASK: 368, NS 57-)

> mulachem

23. yamcha (BSTT 1:4, NS 683)

yamche (S-T:183, NS 700) yamche (BSTT 4:8, NS 710) yamche (S-T:186, NS 763) yamche (BSTT 1:13, NS 820)

23. yamthalache (ASK : 52, NS 796)

> yamthali

24. yampalacha (P 85:31, NS 666)

yapalacha (P 97:40,NS 753)

25. yache (S-T:189,NS 855)

yache (ASK:168, NS 879)

> yache

26. yotache (ASK: 367, NS 674)

yotache (P 97: 23, NS 679)

27. ramgaracha (S-T: 189, NS 855)

28. svache (ASK: 357, NS 866)

Appendix 1 (b)

A list of tolas that falls within canigala sthana as attested in the medieval documents.

1. ikhacho (BSTT 4:23, NS 887)

2. ichu (S-T: 191, NS 850)

> ichhu

3. itakhalacha (P 97: 31, NS 690)

yitasaracha (S-T: 183, NS 699)

4. kupalacha (BSTT 2:2, NS 696)

5. kvachhe (Pa 4/9:9, NS 727)

kvacche (Pa 4/2:1, NS 796) kvache (ASK : 69, NS 801)

> kvachem

6. gvalamamdo (Pa 4/3:8, NS 727)

gvalamamdo (Pa 4/3:8, NS 727) gvalamamdo (Pa 4/9:9, NS 727 golamamdhi (ASK : 440, NS 747) golamamdhi (P 99:62, NS 842-889)

>gomarhi

7. ghatakha (Pa 3/3:6, NS 702)

> ghahkha

8. codulache (ASK : 519, NS 819)

9. jolamamda (ASK: 356, NS 663)

10. tekhaco (S-T:190, NS 696)

tekhaco (ASK: 410,NS 804) tekhaco (P 102:64, NS 844) tekhaco (ASK: 126, NS 864)

> tekhaco

11. tacapala (S-T: 180, NS 805)

> tacapala

12. talamande (Pa 3/9:6, NS 646)

talamamdhe (S-T:197, NS 663) talamamdi (Pa 3/10:6, NS 671) talamande (Pa 3/10:6, NS 671) talamande (Pa 4/4:9, NS 697) taramamda (ASK: 397, NS 781) talamande (S-T: 183, NS 791) talamande (P 102:58, NS 821) talamande (Pa 4/2:8, NS 832)

> tamarhi

13. talamram (Pa 4/9:9, NS 747)

14. tasamate (ASK: 55, NS 875)

15. tiprakvachem (Pa 4/1:8, NS 740)

tiprakvachem (Pa 3/3:6, NS 755) tiprakvachem (BSTT 2:5, NS 759) tiprakvachem (P 102:55, NS 819) tiprakvachem (BSTT 1:13,NS 820)

> tibukchem

16. tupalacha (P 97:23, NS 674)

> tulachem

17. tebhuco (ASK : 519, NS 875)

temuco (ASK: 414, NS 875)

> tepco (?)

18. dalache (S-T: 194, NS 850)

19. biracha (ASK: 31, NS 793)

> bilachem

20. bodoracha (P 84:28, NS 653)

borache (P 102: 64, NS 844)

> bolachem

21. magalachhe (ASK:27, NS 710)

    mamgulacha (ASK: 64, NS 776)

    >mamgalachem

22. malache (ASK : 368, NS 57-)

    marache (ASK : 505, NS 820)

    > malachem

23. mamde (Pa 3/9:6, NS 538)

24. yibilacha (P 97:17, NS 651)

25. racako (Pa 4/9:9, NS 695)

    lacako (PA 4/3:9, NS 697)

    > layko

26. lamkolache (P 102:54, NS 791)

    > lakolachem

Appendix 1 (c)

A list of tolas that falls within vandima sthana as attested in the medieval documents.

1. kavacandra (Pa 4/2:9, NS 783)

2. kvathanadum (P 99:10, NS 531)

    kvathanadu (P 101: 24, NS 591) kvathandum (P 97:27, NS 681) kvathandhu (S-T: 182, NS 813) kvathandu (P 102: 56, NS 819) kvathandu (S-T: 191, NS 850) kvathandu (S-T: 198, NS 874)

    > kvathandau

3. gharhache (P 100:13,NS 560)

    gadachem (ASK:465, NS 599) gadache (S-T: 188, NS 678) gadache (S-T: 183, NS 717) gadache (S-T: 184, NS 813) galachem (P 99:55, NS 867)

    > galchem

4. gulam (ASK:23, NS 528)

5. jela (BSTT 1:3, NS 679)

    jela (ASK : 92, NS 736) jela (P 102:59, NS 829) jyara (P 102: 65, NS 844) jela (P 99:52, NS 851)

    >jelam

6. tavacapada (P 101:24, NS 591)

    tavacapadu (ASK : 465, NS 599) tavacapada (P 97:16, NS 639) tavacapada (S-T: 193, NS 717) tavacapara (Pa 3/2: 7: NS 723) tavacapala (S-T: 190, NS 771)

tavacapala (P 102:56, NS 819) tavacapala (S-T: 193, NS 850)

    > tacapala

7. tavalacha (P 97: 18, NS 658)

    tavalacha (P 97:21, NS 671) tavalache (BSTT 1:9, NS 774) tavalache (ASK:126, NS 864) tavalache (S-T:198, NS 874)

    > taulachem

8. thulam (ASK:358, NS 705)

9. dyarhache (ASK: 217, NS 560)

10. nu (?) parahe (P 99: 59, NS 884)

11. pola (ASK : 29, NS 550)

12. bodeche (ASK:41, NS 603)

13. magukva (S-T: 187, NS 883)

14. mulam (BSTT 1:3, NS 679)

15. yatache (S-T:195, NS 878)

16. yitiphusi tole (P 100:34, NS 573)

17. yilam (S-T: 184, NS 600)

18. yevalam (S-T: 194, NS 813)

19. yuvara (P 99:49, NS 845)

20. yulam (P 99:5, NS 528)

    yulam (P 97:35, NS 705) yula (ASK:338, NS 771) yulam (BSTT 1:3, NS 771)

21. lamkooo (ASK:224, NS 642)

22. sarana (ASK:187, NS 883)

    > salam Ganedyo

23. salakvalama (S-T: 187, NS 851)

    > sah kulam

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[1] I have adopted the term medieval period as spanning over 889 years with its starting points as the year of advent of the Nepal Era i.e. 879 AD.

[2] I am thankful to Dr Purushottam Lochan Shrestha for his insightful suggestions.

[3] When this article was being written, I came across an unpublished article by Suresh jyoti Shakya on the same. Apparently he was mulling over the same questions. We worked independently. Our questions were same but answer different. His was the first to be published. I duly acknowledge his contribution. See Shakya (2001).

[4] There are several orthographic variations to these names such as

sivagala~sivagara~sivagvala~sivagla~sivama (?) le canigala ~ candigala ~cunigra~ canigla ~ canigara ~ caddigara vandigara ~ varnigala ~ vandima~ vandivagara ~ vandima ~ vamdima etc.

These attested variations neither violate the accepted free variants /1/~/r/ in Newari nor known rules of vowel insertions.

5. This corpus includes 1200 palm-leaf documents collected preserved at The Asa Archives (abbreviated hereafter as ASK), Raktakali; nearly 350 such documents in the four volumes of Bhumi Sambandhi Tamasuk Tadapatra (abbreviated hereafter as BSTT) published by the National archives; over 500 documents published by Mahesh Raj Pant in various issues of Purnima (abbreviated as P), the leading historical quarterly; nearly 100 published in various issues of Pasuka (abbreviated as Pa), a research journal on Newaralogy published by sutham, Bhaktapur. I have also used some palmleaf documents published by S. Lienhard and Thakurlal Manandhar in their Catalogue of the Nevari manuscripts (abbreviated here as S-T). See Lienhard and Manandhar (1986).

6. Kolver and shakya (1985) introduce (3). See pp 31-51.

7. nogala sthane and tegvala-sthana in Patan and kasthamandapa-sthane in Kathmandu are attested in the medieval documents but they do not seem to encompass whole of the city and we simply do not have other sthana divisions to draw conclusions similar as above for either of the city.
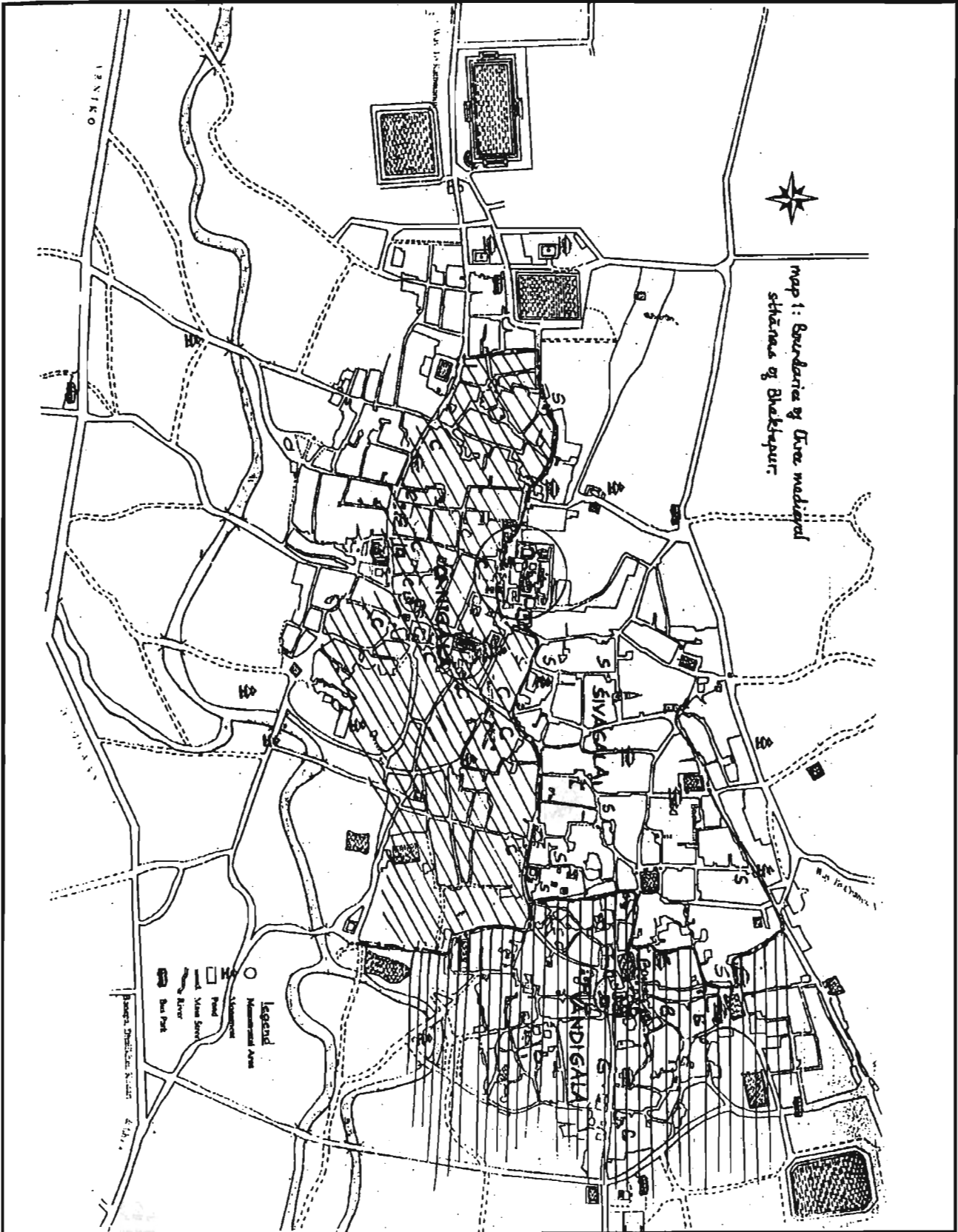
8. That king ananda Deva (NS 267-287) is commonly attributed for the first urbanization of Bhaktapur (by combining minor hamlets and circling the combination, as it were, with the seats of the MotherGoddesses in eight cardinal directions) supports our speculation. The locations of the Licchavi inscriptions found so far do tend to sugest that in the post-Licchavi period, there were indeed three principal fast growing hamlets. See also Tiwari (2001), especially map on page 251 for the tri-partite division of Bhaktapur in the Licchavi period.

9. Schreibler (1982) suggests that the horizontal growth of Bhaktapur cityscape continued up to 15th century.

10. There was an opposite shrinking process going on at the same time. Former tala denoting a larger arable farming area shrank into tola, a mere couple of dwelling units. Former seats of power lost their glories and became insignificant market squares (asanimam > asan, tripura rajakula> tibuk-chem). At times, the unbeatable royal palace vanished into the thin air (yuthunimam rajakula). See Raj (2000).

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map 1: Boundaries of the medieval
sthānas of Bhaktapur

Legend

Monumental Area
Bus Park
Royal River
Main Street
Pond

MAP 2: Growth of CANIGALA

Legend
○ Monument
H○ [symbol]
□ Pond
/ River
|| Main Street
▬ Bus Park

map 3: Growth of ŚIVAGALA

legend
○ Monumental Area
☐ HA
Park
Main Street
River
Bus Park

Sivaga Drainage board

STAGE II
STAGE III
STAGE IV

map 4: Growth of Vandigala

Legend
○ Monumental Area
◫ Vandigala
▯ Park
⫽ Main Street
▮ River
▮▮ Bus Park

STAGE II