

## JEWELS FROM THE LAND OF SNOWY MOUNTAINS: NEPALESE FOLK JEWELLERY FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE NÁPRSTEK MUSEUM

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**ABSTRACT:** The article is a contribution to the still understudied topic of Nepalese folk jewellery. For this purpose, a set of seven pieces of Nepalese folk jewellery from the collection of the Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures in Prague was processed. These include two necklaces (*kantha*), two pairs of earrings (*mendog kogde* and *dhungri*), two nose studs (*phuli*), and a *pancharatna* bracelet dating from the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Attention is paid to the material, techniques, ornament, and jewellery styles of specific Nepalese ethnic groups. X-ray fluorescence (XRF) spectroscopy was used to find out what elemental composition the materials that were used in the making of the jewellery had. The text is supplemented with photographs and relevant data from the short-term field research in Nepal in 2022, which took place in the capital Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, Muktinath, and Lo Manthang.

**KEYWORDS:** Nepal – Newar – Sherpa – Gurung – Magar – jewellery – Náprstek Museum

### Introduction

The majestic highest mountains in the world with their eternally snow-capped peaks rising into the sky, the windswept plateaus with turquoise lakes, with rivers, forests, and fertile lowlands – such a diverse natural environment is home to an equally diverse population. But it is above all the mountains, covering much of Nepal, that have shaped the history and culture of its people. The mighty mountains have largely restricted travel and communication between ethnic groups, so most people have remained in their secluded environment and maintained their culture and the jewellery-making style is not excluded. This isolation led to the preservation of traditional types of jewellery but also helped to encourage local innovation.

In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the Malla dynasty, whose rulers were known for their considerable support of art and architecture, dominated the Kathmandu valley region, and contributed significantly to the cultural flowering of the country for the next 600 years. From the 19<sup>th</sup> century until 1951, Nepal was ruled by the autocratic Rana dynasty. Following the declaration of Indian independence, a revolution took place in Nepal that ended the Rana regime in 1951. It was only at this time that the country began to open up more to the outside world. The long isolation associated with political upheavals, and the lack of both archaeological and written sources, has meant that Nepalese jewellery, especially folk jewellery, is still an understudied topic. There is thus little comparative material available. Moreover, Nepal is a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, and multi-religious state, which makes it difficult to study the subject more comprehensively.

The aim of this article is to contribute to the expansion of knowledge on Nepalese jewellery through a small but significant collection of Nepalese folk jewellery from the collection of the

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National Museum – Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures in Prague, which includes two pairs of earrings, two necklaces, two nose studs, and a bracelet. For a better understanding, the topic is briefly introduced with historical context, then research is presented of the most important sources for study and introduces the most commonly used materials, techniques and ornament of Nepalese jewellery. The text is enriched with relevant data, and especially photographs, from two weeks of field research in Nepal in 2022, conducted in the capital Kathmandu, as well as in Bhaktapur, Muktinath, and Lo Manthang. The fieldwork focused on the wearing of traditional folk jewellery in everyday life as well as on festive occasions. In addition to observations, short interviews were conducted with several wearers and makers of folk jewellery. The range of jewellery in Nepali jewellery shops and antique shops was also observed. Since the field research was only short-term and thus could not provide more comprehensive data, it plays only a complementary role in this paper.

## Resources to study Nepalese jewellery

As mentioned in the introduction, there are insufficient sources to study Nepalese jewellery. The most comprehensive professional publication devoted exclusively to Nepalese jewellery is the book *The Jewellery of Nepal* (1999) by the goldsmith and jewellery designer Hannelore Gabriel, who undertook sixteen research trips to various regions of Nepal. The author documented a considerable amount of folk jewellery worn for both everyday and ritual purposes. The introductory chapters provide information about the geography and religion of the country, the functions and history of Nepalese jewellery. Other chapters are dedicated to symbolism, materials, and local jewellery makers. A substantial part of the book consists of chapters dealing with the jewellery of the main ethnic groups (Newar, Tibeto-Burman, Middle Hills Group, Tibeto-Nepalese, Indo-Nepalese, Tharu). An important part of the book is the rich photographic documentation, which was the main and a valuable source for the correct identification of Nepalese jewellery from the collection of the Náprstek Museum.

Another useful publication is undoubtedly John Clarke's monograph *Jewellery of Tibet and the Himalayas* (2004), in which a separate chapter can be found dedicated to Nepalese jewellery. The author deals mainly with the connections between jewellery and religion, its symbolism and the reasons why and how it was worn. Attention is also paid to the material, techniques, and jewellery makers. The text is accompanied by photographs of jewellery from British museum and private collections.

As secondary literature on the subject, recommended reading can be Jane Casey Singer's book *Gold Jewellery from Tibet and Nepal* (1996), which, however, presents mainly Tibetan jewellery and focuses on the iconography of Tibetan amulet boxes. The connection with Nepal is presented by Newari jewellers who made jewellery for Tibetan customers. Photographs of Nepalese jewellery can also be found in the monograph by Manfred Giehmann et al. *Himalayan Treasures: Adornments from Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan, Ladakh & Arunachal Pradesh* (2023). Briefer texts about Nepalese jewellery are most often found in publications presenting museum or private oriental jewellery collections, such as the books *Jewellery from the Orient: Treasures from the Dr. Bir Collection* (Seiwert, 2009), and *Ethnic Jewellery from Africa, Asia and Pacific Islands* (Van der Star, 2002).

No less important visual sources for the study of Nepalese jewellery are historical photographs, although they are limited in number, and their author or dating is usually not traceable. Several photographs of Nepalese women demonstrably dating from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup>

centuries are by photographer A. Hefferan, about whom we only have information that he took photographs approximately between 1890 and 1920.<sup>2</sup>



**Fig. 1.** Nepalese woman with a *kantha* necklace; early 20<sup>th</sup> century. (Photo: A. Hefferan).



**Fig. 2.** Nepalese bride with *kantha* and *tilhari* necklaces; 19<sup>th</sup> century. (Photo: A. Hefferan).

<sup>2</sup> Hefferan, A. (active ca. 1890s-1920s), 1996.

## Material, jewellery techniques, and ornament

Gold and silver were used predominantly in the production of Nepalese jewellery. However, gold is only found in very modest quantities in Nepal. This metal in the form of gold dust was previously obtained from Tibet and is currently imported mainly from India. In Hinduism and Buddhism, which are the dominant religions in Nepal, gold symbolises the sun, fire and the masculine principle and is also associated with the Hindu sun god Surya. For this reason, its possible alloying is often understood as desecrating the sacred metal. In the Ayurvedic system of medicine, which is still practised in Nepal today, its healing powers are also recognised. It is recommended as an aphrodisiac and is particularly beneficial for the head – the most sacred and purest part of the body, making it the most suitable metal for head ornaments. Nepalese jewellery is made of gold alloys of various purity, most often alloyed with silver and copper. Twenty-two carat gold is the most desirable for jewellery, but jewellery containing only twenty percent gold can also be found.<sup>3</sup> Silver is considered the second purest metal and a symbol of the moon deity. Like gold, it has an important purifying function and is part of traditional medicine. Since there are no silver deposits in Nepal, in the past it was traded from China via Tibet and is currently imported mainly from India. China was the main supplier of silver to Nepal at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, coins from India were also an important source of silver, which were either melted down or themselves became part of various types of jewellery.<sup>4</sup>

Base metals and their alloys were also used to make jewellery, most often copper, brass (an alloy of copper and zinc), bronze (an alloy of copper and tin), nickel silver (an alloy of copper and nickel, zinc and possibly other metals), and sometimes iron.

Nepalese folk jewellery is decorated with precious stones or imitations rather modestly. Although Nepal is quite rich in various types of minerals, coloured glass is more common on jewellery, as the colour of the stone is more important to the local population than its material. In addition, glass and plastic were considered exotic innovations in the past and were therefore often preferred over expensive materials. Even some jewellery of the so-called royal Kumari is set with glass stones.<sup>5</sup> However, wealthy city dwellers, who are influenced by Indian fashion like to wear jewellery with precious stones. People living in villages prefer traditional necklaces made of glass and gold beads. Beads are one of the most popular jewellery materials in Nepal and are worn by women, children, and men, rich and poor people. Beads can be made of expensive materials, such as high-purity gold, coral, as well as from common materials, such as various types of seeds. However, most are made of glass and most often they are imported multi-coloured seed beads. Glass beads in the past came from various sources, their production also took place in Nepal, but in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries they were mainly imported from Europe and China. At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, beads from the Czech lands also reached Nepal. Later, they were traded mostly from India, where imitations of beads from Europe were made. Currently, seed beads from Japan and Taiwan are preferred.<sup>6</sup>

Repoussé is the predominant technique in Nepalese jewellery, followed by granulation and gilding, and some types of jewellery are cast using a lost wax process. Small jewellery or their

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<sup>3</sup> Gabriel 1999, p. 51.

<sup>4</sup> Clarke 2004, p. 40.

<sup>5</sup> Gabriel 1999, p. 54. Kumari is the worship of young pre-pubescent girls as incarnations of the goddess Durga. In Nepal, a Kumari is a girl selected from the Shakya caste. There are usually several of them, but the most famous is the so-called royal Kumari living in the Kumari Ghar palace in Kathmandu. The selection process is almost identical in complexity to that of the Dalai Lama. Her reign ends with the first loss of blood, usually the first menstruation.

<sup>6</sup> Gabriel 1999, p. 187.



**Fig. 3.** A boy wears a silver *vajra* (Tib. *dorje*) pendant and a silver earring in his right ear. The *vajra* is a universal symbol of divine spiritual power. It is a powerful weapon of the thunder god Indra and destroys all ignorance, the cause of human suffering; Muktinath, Nepal, 2022. (Photo: Tereza Hejzlarová).



**Fig. 4.** *Kirtimukha* made of lapis lazuli, coral, and bone on a ceremonial head-dress; antique shop in Lo Manthang, Nepal, 2022. (Photo: Tereza Hejzlarová).



parts are often shaped using bronze dies with negative forms of the pattern. A gold or silver sheet lying on a matrix is covered with a lead sheet or grains of rice, which are hammered into the matrix. The resulting pattern is usually further refined with chasing tools. Two types of jewellers worked in Nepal – villagers, who only engaged in this artistic craft as a sideline, and urban ones, for whom jewellery making was their sole occupation. The best jewellers were considered the Newar, who worked in state workshops in Tibet, as reported by European travellers from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>7</sup> However, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Thirteenth Dalai Lama (1876–1933) banned Newar jewellers from working in state workshops, which was related to a programme to support an independent Tibet. Nevertheless, their jewellery work enjoyed great popularity and even survived the Chinese occupation in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The skills of Newar jewellers were particularly admired in connection with the technique of filigree and setting of precious stones.<sup>8</sup> In the past, the Buddhist Newars formed their caste system, with some modifications, according to the highly stratified Indian society. Interestingly, jewellery making was a traditional occupation of the Buddhist Bajracharya, a priestly caste comparable to the Hindu Brahmin caste. In this way, Newar jewellers were spared the low status that is otherwise common for practitioners of this craft, especially in Indian Hindu society.<sup>9</sup>

The ornamentation of Nepalese jewellery mainly uses motifs of deities from the Hindu and Buddhist pantheons, mythical creatures, and various symbols related to the religion in question. The rich ornamentation thus offers anthropomorphic, theriomorphic, plant, and geometric motifs.

Of the deities, the goddess Durga is often depicted on Nepalese jewellery. She takes the form of a beautiful female warrior, usually with eight arms holding her attributes or weapons, with which she destroys demons. Her mount is a lion or tiger. Durga is associated with protection, motherhood, strength, destruction, and wars. The most frequently depicted mythical creatures include *kirtimukha*, one of the protective creatures, of which only its head depicted and its hands in which it clutches snakes. It usually has an open mouth from which large fangs protrude [Fig. 4].

Snakes and mythological *nagas*<sup>10</sup> are ancient symbols of fertility, good, and evil. They are highly revered in Nepal. In addition to their association with water and fertility, they are also protectors of the treasures, including gems and precious metals, just like Chinese dragons.

A prominent motif that can be found especially on Newar bracelets is the *makara* – the riding animal of the goddess Ganga and the god Varuna. It also appears on the banner of the god of love and amorous desire, Kama. It is considered a water creature, often a crocodile, and sometimes it is depicted as a fish with an elephant's head. The connection of the *makara* with water symbolises abundance and fertility.

Of the zoomorphic motifs, the peacock and butterfly are also often depicted on jewellery. The peacock is a symbol of happiness, prosperity, longevity and can protect against the evil eye. It is also the mount of the god of war, Kartikeya. The butterfly, along with flowers, is a frequent motif of Newar ceremonial jewellery. In addition to marital happiness and prosperity, it symbolises the male element, and a flower near it symbolises the female element.

The flower is the most widespread motif of Nepalese women's jewellery and is particularly dominant on head ornaments [Figs. 7–8]. It is a symbol of femininity, fertility, and the womb.

<sup>7</sup> Clarke 2004, p. 45.

<sup>8</sup> Clarke 2004, p. 45, also Seiwert 2009, p. 152.

<sup>9</sup> Gabriel 1999, p. 64.

<sup>10</sup> *Nagas* are usually half-human, half-serpent semi-divine beings in both Hindu and Buddhist mythology.

On nose studs, the flower is often transformed into the form of a star [Fig. 12]. Cosmic bodies are also very popular motifs. The Sun (Surya) and the Moon (Chandra) are most often depicted, as the embodiment of the opposites of the masculine and feminine principles. In Buddhism, they symbolise wisdom and compassion. On Nepalese jewellery, the crescent moon often forms a kind of cradle for the sun disc with rays [Fig. 11].

## Nepalese folk jewellery from the collection of the Náprstek Museum

The Náprstek Museum's collection contains a set of seven pieces of Nepalese folk jewellery from the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The collection includes two necklaces (Inv. Nos. 57238 and 43695) and earrings (Inv. Nos. A13045 and A13046) from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as earrings (Inv. No. A20021ab), two nose studs (Inv. Nos. A20019 and A20020) and a bracelet (Inv. No. A20018) from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The museum acquired these jewellery items by purchase in the 1990s, and by transfer in 1948. More detailed information about the originators is not available.

Individual pieces of jewellery were identified primarily based on available literature and Internet sources. Hannelore Gabriel's publication *The Jewelry of Nepal* (1999) was used for more precise identification, thanks to which it was possible in some cases to reveal the origin of the jewellery from an ethnic perspective. This is often complicated by the fact that the jewellery styles of a particular ethnic group are adopted by another ethnic group.

The collection of Nepalese jewellery was also subjected to measurements using X-ray fluorescence analysis in the Department of Collection Management and Care of the Náprstek Museum using a portable VANTA spectrometer, which allows for elemental quantitative analysis of samples. This allowed the identification of the material, i.e. the metals from which the jewellery was made.



**Fig. 5.** Two *kantha* necklaces; NpM,  
Inv. Nos. 57238, 43695. (Photo: Jiří Vaněk).

### ***Kantha* necklace [Fig. 5]**

Origin: Gurung, Magar, Nepal

Dating: first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

Materials and techniques: gold, coral, metal toothpick, cotton, wire, *repoussé*

Measurements: l. 52 cm

Provenance: transfer, NCC,<sup>11</sup> 1948; NpM, Inv. No. 57238

Analogies: Gabriel 1999, p. 97; Van der Star 2002, p. 183

### ***Kantha* necklace [Fig. 5]**

Origin: Gurung, Magar, Nepal

Dating: first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

Materials and techniques: gold, felt, cotton, wire, *repoussé*

Measurements: d. 27 cm

Provenance: transfer, NCC, 1948; NpM, Inv. No. 43695

Analogies: Gabriel 1999, p. 97; Van der Star 2002, p. 183

The smaller necklace consists of three golden fluted beads and two coral beads, the larger one consists of twelve golden fluted beads, separated by three layers of red circular felt. The gold beads are made using the *repoussé* technique. Both necklaces are wrapped with wire on either side, where the row of beads ends, and attached to a cluster of cotton thread that forms a string. The smaller necklace also has a metal toothpick decorated with green glass attached to the cotton string.

Gold bead necklaces are very popular in Nepal. Although they can vary greatly in appearance, most come in three basic forms: rounded beads with pronounced points, large, fluted beads, and barrel beads with small points. Red felt inserts cut into a circle are a standard feature of these necklaces. Necklaces made solely of gold beads and red felt inserts (*kantha*) are particularly popular amongst the Gurungs and Magars,<sup>12</sup> who often combine them with coral or turquoise [Figs. 1–2, 5]. In eastern Nepal, the beads are fluted, while in the Pokhara area they have pronounced points.<sup>13</sup> In another type of necklace, which is very popular amongst Indo-Nepalese people, numerous rows of seed beads are supplemented with large hollow gold sheet beads. It is either a single cylindrical bead (*tilihari*) placed in the centre [Fig. 2], or nine beads (*nau gedi* – ‘nine beads’) alternately distributed along the entire length of the necklace. These types of necklaces are worn only by married women [Fig. 6].

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<sup>11</sup> The National Cultural Commission (Národní kulturní komise) was the heritage protection authority of post-war Czechoslovakia, which was responsible for the preservation and accessibility of newly acquired cultural property.

<sup>12</sup> The Gurungs, also called Tamu and Magars, are a Sino-Tibetan ethnic group living in Nepal and India. The Gurung religion is dominated by shamanistic elements along with Bön and Buddhist rituals. Most Magars are Buddhists, some also Hindu.

<sup>13</sup> Gabriel 1999, p. 97. For the process of making these traditional gold beads, see *How to make tilhari ? traditional Nepali jewelry*, 2020.





**Fig. 6.** A woman wearing a necklace of colourful seed beads and a gold earring with a traditional stylised *makara* design. The necklace features gold beads imitated with yellow seed beads; Muktinath, Nepal, 2022. (Photo: Petr Horký).

### ***Mendog kogde ear discs* [Fig. 7]**

Origin: Sherpa people, Nepal

Dating: first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

Materials and techniques: brass, *repoussé*, glass

Measurements: d. 7.6 cm

Provenance: transfer, NCC, 1948; NpM, Inv. Nos. A13045, A13046

Analogies: Gabriel 1999, pp. 114, 132; Van der Star 2002, p. 178

Ear discs made of brass sheet in the form of a rosette with small plant motifs (leaves and flowers) were created using the *repoussé* technique. The centre of each disc is decorated with a circular red glass stone, around which four other circular stones of opaque red glass are placed. Sherpas often replace the red glass on this type of ear discs with turquoise or they can be completely stoneless.

### ***Dhungri earrings* [Fig. 8]**

Origin: Tibeto-Burman, Nepal

Dating: second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

Materials and techniques: brass, *repoussé*, glass

Measurements: d. 4.5 cm

Provenance: purchase, private individual, 1991; NpM Inv. No. A20021ab

Analogies: Gabriel 1999, p. 105

The earrings were made of brass sheet in the form of a flower created by *repoussé* technique. The centre of the flower is decorated with a faceted red glass stone, around which smaller faceted red and green stones are alternately placed. An additional fastening at the top of the flower is used to hang over the ear to prevent the earrings from tipping downwards.

Nepalese women's earrings are characterised by great variability. Many of them are in the form of discs, which can be of different sizes and have different decorations. However, gold discs are most often decorated with floral motifs using the *repoussé* technique and modestly complemented with glass stones. This type of ear disc is found mainly in eastern Nepal. They are called *mendog kogde* or *godwari* – 'marigold' and amongst Sherpa<sup>14</sup> women they reach large sizes, usually up to 9 cm in diameter.

Another type that Hannelore Gabriel noted in the Tibeto-Burman Middle Hills group jewellery set are *dhungri* earrings. Their size usually ranges between 2 and 4 cm in diameter but can reach a size of up to 8 cm. *Dhungri* are often made of gold or brass (or gilded brass), which imitates gold with its colour and shine. *Dhungri* can also be found among Indo-Nepalese people, for example, where they only reach a size of up to 2 cm.<sup>15</sup> Earrings are also commonly worn by men in Nepal [Fig. 3]. Subin Thakuri, a young Nepalese man, gave us interesting information about why he wears sapphire earrings in both ears and a small gold ring in one ear [Fig. 9]. He also explained the reason people in Nepal have to have their ears pierced in childhood:

<sup>14</sup> The Sherpas ('people from the east') live in the most mountainous regions of Nepal near the border with Tibet. They originate from eastern Tibet and speak the Sherpa language, which belongs to the southern branch of the Tibeto-Burman languages but is significantly different from the Tibetan spoken in Lhasa.

<sup>15</sup> Gabriel 1999, pp. 105, 151.



Fig. 7. *Mendog kogde* ear discs; NpM, Inv. Nos. A13045, A13046. (Photo: Jiří Vaněk).



Fig. 8. *Dhungri* earrings; NpM, Inv. No. A20021ab. (Photo: Jiří Vaněk).



In Nepal, children get their ears pierced for earrings at about one or two years old, because we believe that if the body is not damaged in this way, evil spirits can abduct the child's soul, which would cause illness or even death. My parents didn't get my ears pierced until I was about six or eight. When I started doing business as an adult, I didn't do well at all. A friend took me to an astrologer about it, who advised me to start wearing sapphire earrings to bring me luck. And he was right. Since I've been wearing them, I've been successful in my work. And the gold ring? I only wear it because I like it.<sup>16</sup>



**Fig. 9.** Subin Thakuri with his sapphire earrings and gold ring; Kathmandu, Nepal, 2022.  
(Photo: Tereza Hejzlarová).



**Fig. 10.** Newar woman with *tuki* earrings in the form of a row of gold studs; Bhaktapur, Nepal, 2022.  
(Photo: Tereza Hejzlarová).

<sup>16</sup> Data from field research, Nepal, Kathmandu, 2022.

**Nose stud *phuli* [Fig. 11]**

Origin: Indo-Nepalese, Nepal

Dating: second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

Materials and techniques: brass, gilding, glass, die forming

Measurements: d. 1.1 cm

Provenance: purchase, private individual, 1991; NpM, Inv. No. A20019

The nose stud was made of gilded brass by die forming technique in the form of a crescent moon with a sun disc in the form of a red glass stone. At the bottom there are four flat pendants in the form of leaves hanging on a wire.



**Fig. 11.** Nose stud *phuli*; NpM, Inv. No. A20019.  
(Photo: Jiří Vaněk).



**Fig. 12.** Nose stud *phuli*; NpM, Inv. No. A20020.  
(Photo: Jiří Vaněk).

**Nose stud *phuli* [Fig. 12]**

Origin: Indo-Nepalese, Nepal

Dating: second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

Materials and techniques: brass, glass, die forming

Measurements: d. 1.7 cm

Provenance: purchase, private individual, 1991; NpM, Inv. No. A20020

Analogy: Gabriel 1999, pp. 152–153

The nose stud was made of brass by a die forming technique in the form of a flower turning into a star. The centre of the flower is decorated with a faceted red glass stone.



Nepalese nose studs come in many varieties. Their sizes range from tiny studs worn in the nostril to rings placed in the nasal septum, often decorated with medallions of various shapes, which are sometimes so large that they cover the mouth. Small nose ornaments placed in the left nostril (in the Hindu-Buddhist concept on the female side) most often in the form of a flower (*phuli* means 'flower') are especially widespread amongst Indo-Nepalese women. Their size ranges from a few millimetres to 3 cm in diameter and are usually decorated with a single glass stone placed in the centre. High-caste women in general prefer smaller *phuli* than the women of the service castes. In the western part of central Nepal and further west, where Indo-Nepalese share the style of the Magars and Gurungs, the *phuli* has the shape of a seven-pointed star.<sup>17</sup>

***Pancharatna* bracelet [Fig. 13]**

Origin: Newar Nepal

Dating: second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

Materials and techniques: brass, copper, nickel silver, *repoussé*

Measurements: d. 7.7 cm

Provenance: purchase, private individual, 1991; NpM, Inv. No. A20018

Analogies: Clarke 2004, p. 106; Gabriel 1999, p. 37

Bracelet with open ends in the shape of mythical animal heads was made of brass, copper, and nickel silver. The heads of the animals are made of nickel silver, which contains a proportion of silver, and created using the *repoussé* technique. The bracelet is made up of twisted strips of different coloured metals (brass, copper, nickel silver, alloys also contain a certain proportion of iron) and twisted wire (nickel silver).



Fig. 13. *Pancharatna* bracelet; NpM, Inv. No. A20018. (Photo: Jiří Vaněk).

<sup>17</sup> Gabriel 1999, p. 153.

Newar bracelets, which were also popular with Tibetans, are characterised by their open ends in the form of two animal heads. According to various interpretations, these are either the heads of lions, dragons, or mythical *makaras* often called *sinkhwa chura* in local dialect [Fig. 13]. They were usually made of gold or gilded copper and were hollow or cast. Newar jewellers made the so-called ‘five-protection’ bracelet, consisting of protective elements expressed in five different metals – gold, silver, copper, brass, and iron. Wires made of the five metals are twisted together, creating the typical design of this bracelet. The concept of five protections or charms against evil is based on the cult of the *Pancharaksha* – the five protections, also known as *Pancharatna*, the ‘five gems’. The type of metal bracelet with open ends is the most widespread in Nepal, but many others can be found, made of different materials and with different decorations. Children, usually up to six or seven years old, wear simple silver bracelets with open ends that have a protective purpose.

## Conclusion

The aim of this article was to present Nepalese folk jewellery from the collection of the Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures in Prague, and thus expand knowledge on a topic that has so far been insufficiently researched. Seven Nepalese folk jewellery pieces were identified, and attention was paid primarily to their decoration, technique, and the material from which they were made, as well as on determining their origin from an ethnic perspective. The museum collection of Nepalese jewellery thus documents the jewellery craft of the 20<sup>th</sup> century from various Nepalese ethnic groups.

In conclusion, it is appropriate to state that some of the traditional Nepalese jewellery pieces are still worn today. The richest sets of ornaments are worn on ceremonial events, various holidays or festivals. However, traditional jewellery can also be seen on the inhabitants of Nepal in everyday life. These are mainly necklaces made of coloured seed beads, most often red, with gold beads, or necklaces consisting of turquoise, coral, and small pearls. These precious stones are currently only imitations, made of glass or plastic, supplied in abundance from China, Japan, and India. Earrings are also popular, especially gold rings with a very widespread design in the form of a stylised *makara*. Traditional Newar *tuki* earrings in the form of gold studs, which are placed on the helix of the ear, are still worn by old women today [Fig. 10]. Earrings are also seen on men, usually in the form of a gold or silver ring in the auricle or in the upper part of the helix of the right ear. Small children very often wear pairs of protective bracelets made of precious and base metals. It is therefore evident that although the jewellery tradition of these areas has often been severely affected by political and social changes, manufacturers, and wearers of traditional Nepalese jewellery can still be found today.

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