

The Collective Sponsorship of the Renovations of the Svayambhūcaitya in the Later Malla Era, and Its Documentation in Historical Records

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Introduction: *Ghaṭanāvalīs* as a Particular Form of Historiography

Unlike most other regions of South Asia, Nepal has preserved a rich archive of historical sources that not only informs about the political vicissitudes of kings and kingdoms as well as the exploits of courtly elites, but which also sheds light on the organization and administration of society, the application of law and order, the practices of religious traditions on the ground, economic conditions, material culture, and so on. These sources owe their survival partly to the clement climate that allows palm leaves and paper to survive unharmed for centuries, as well as to the peripheral location of Nepal, which has shielded it from many of the ruptures and upheavals experienced in India proper, including those going along with the hegemony of British colonialism and the installation of Sultanate kingdoms. While these Nepalese sources include standard historiographical sources, such as chronicles, inscriptions, mythological histories and a vast array of legal documents whose systematic study is only beginning now, there are also less well known historiographical genres that have been largely neglected. This includes the so-called *ghaṭanāvalīs*, that is, diary-like series (*āvalī*) of records registering ritual events and other incidents (*ghaṭana*).¹ These are not courtly or commissioned texts written in an elite idiom, i.e.,

1 *Ghaṭanāvalī* is a Sanskrit term that these vernacular texts do not employ self-consciously to refer to themselves. Since such works are typically written down in folding books (New. *thyāsaphū*) with concertina-style folds in the manner of a harmonium, they are instead often simply known as *thyāsaphū*. An alternate designation is *chāta* (cp. Yogesh Raj's contribution to this volume).

Sanskrit, and their subject matter is not the succession and acts of kings, as is typically the case in historiography in the Himalayan region of the subcontinent owing to the influence of the rich historiographical tradition of Kashmir, of which Kalhaṇa's *Rājatarāṅginī* is only the most prominent example. Rather, the *ghaṭanāvalīs* are notes kept anonymously by private individuals, written in an often idiosyncratic form of the vernacular. In the main these individuals are priests recording events they regard as noteworthy, often because they participated in them, or were involved or had a stake in them otherwise. Rather than kings and other courtly actors, the principal agents of these texts are the priests and their associates, and the main subject matter is the rituals, and ultimately the deities towards whom they are directed. The often unrelated events are recorded in chronological order as they happen. They may be interrupted by drawings, figures to keep accounts, and other unrelated jottings. Rather than being crafted works, *ghaṭanāvalīs* are then open collections of notes in the manner of a diary. However, *ghaṭanāvalīs* are often more circumscribed than that, and may focus upon particular shrines or cults in a more structured and organized manner (for which they may draw upon simpler *ghaṭanāvalīs* and the raw data found there). Examples are the *Sako Chronicle* that centers on the Vajrayoginī temple of Sankhu (New. Sako), or a still unpublished chronicle dedicated to Buṅgadyaḥ, which is reported to record particular events in the course of the annual and twelve-yearly chariot festival (*yātrā*) of this deity. *Ghaṭanāvalīs* often include inauspicious incidents necessitating pacification (*śānti*) rituals. A particular focus is upon damage brought about by storms and lightning, or by military pillage, or simply by the passage of time, and the ensuing restoration efforts, which may extend to the complete rebuilding of the affected structure.

It is obvious that these texts are of great historical interest. They offer an entirely different perspective from courtly historiography, and with their emphasis on cults and rituals they provide invaluable tangential information on the religious and social history of Nepal. For the authors of these texts, recording past practice was not just of historiographic interest but could also serve to record precedent relevant for the future. This is notably the case with the particular *ghaṭanāvalīs* I want to turn to in this paper, namely accounts chronicling past renovations of the Svayambhūcaitya of Kathmandu.² Though they are

2 For a consideration of these chronicles as a particular form of historiography, see von Rospatt 2002.

technically not legal documents, they have a prescriptive facet insofar as it is understood that future renovations are to follow the precedent of the recorded renovation. This concerns not only the minutiae of rituals accompanying the renovation but also the details of collective sponsorship that I focus upon here.

The Periodic Renovations of the Svayambhūcaitya and the *Ghaṭanāvalīs* Recording Them

The Svayambhūcaitya—the expression *caitya* is commonly used in the Nepalese tradition instead of *stūpa*—is the most important shrine for the tradition of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism that survives in the Kathmandu Valley among the original inhabitants, the Newars. This *caitya*—a massive hemispherical dome mounted by a *harmikā* that is crowned by thirteen rings (*cakrāvalī*) and an honorific parasol (*chattra*)—is located about a mile west of Kathmandu on top of a hillock that is usually called Svayambhū, or, in the local vernacular Newari, Seṃgu, Segu, or a variation thereof. Beyond the borders imposed by locality and caste, all Newar Buddhists accept Svayambhū as the center of their religion and, by converging there, express their identity. While the historical beginnings of the Svayambhūcaitya are not documented—there are only very few (and inconclusive) sources attesting to its existence in the first millennium—it is likely of great antiquity and may have been erected in the place of a pre-Buddhist sacred site, as part of the process of introducing Buddhism to the Valley, possibly some two thousand years ago.³

Over the course of the one to two millennia that the *caitya* has existed it has been rebuilt and updated over and over (von Rospatt 2011, 2013). There are records of this beginning in the 13th century. They bear out that between the 13th and 19th centuries the *caitya* was extensively renovated at irregular intervals, on average twice a century. These extensive renovations entailed that the entire structure of the *caitya* above the dome was dismantled and discarded, that the dome itself was cut open in order to allow for the replacement of the massive wooden pole of more than twenty meters' length traversing the whole edifice (New. *yaḥsim* from Skt. *yaṣṭi*; Tib. *srog shing*), and that the *caitya*, stripped down in this manner, was then rebuilt with new

3 For details see von Rospatt 2009.

materials. These were elaborate operations and required the participation of a large number of qualified craftsmen, artisans and priests as well as their helpers. But the most precarious and labor-intensive undertaking was the transport of the massive tree to function as new *yaṣṭi*. It is of subtropical hardwood (*sāl*) not found in the Valley and had to be cut on the banks of the Trishuli Ganga or its tributaries, at an altitude some 3000 feet below the Kathmandu Valley. Towing it from there across the mountain range enclosing the Valley required hundreds of workers taking turns to pull the *yaṣṭi* in separate campaigns spread out over more than a year. Besides labor, the *caitya*'s rebuilding required materials such as wood, bricks, copper and considerable amounts of gold for gilding select parts, such as the *chattrā* and finial, the shields surmounting the *harmikā*, the thirteen rings above, or even the niches set in the dome as has been the case since the renovation of 1918.

Given the scale of the traditional economy of Kathmandu (which in the later Malla era consisted of little more than a town with surrounding land dotted by villages) these are massive costs. Normally, for the upkeep of cults and shrines there are—as elsewhere on the subcontinent—landed endowments, recorded in deeds and other documents. However, in the case of the Svayambhūcaitya there was no endowment of land that could have covered these enormous expenses and provided for the necessary labor.⁴ This is so because the *caitya* was not routinely renovated after a stipulated period of time, but only irregularly (as mentioned above, on average twice a century) when the need arose after it fell into disrepair, and when donors came forth. Besides, it would have been next to impossible to ‘bank’ the annual yield from endowment lands so that they would have built up over several decades into funds large enough to cover the enormous expenses needed. In the absence of a regular endowment, varying sponsors backed the different renovations and took the initiative to lend support or even initiate a

4 This was already pointed out by B. Kölver (1992: 107f.), and I found confirmation when surveying the documents archived by the Guthi Samsthan (and microfilmed by the NGMPP). These documents were catalogued in the 1990s by a team of Nepalese scholars, employed as part of a project funded by the German Research Council and overseen by Kölver. I went through all catalogue cards relating to Svayambhū, and found that the vast majority of the more than thousand such documents record the donations of ornaments. While there are some records of endowing land for the purpose of whitewashing the *caitya*'s dome, there is no evidence of endowments dedicated to keeping the Svayambhūcaitya in repair. This accords with the evidence of the chronicles and other historic materials, which never give the slightest indication that such endowments might have existed.

renovation. It is often difficult to reconstruct the details but the sources evince a trend, namely that Tibetan lamas (who themselves had varied backgrounds and differing school affiliations) often played a dominant role as donors, and even instigators, in renovations undertaken between the 13th and the 16th centuries. (As mentioned, no information is available for renovations performed before then.)

By contrast, from the renovation begun in 1591 onwards the Newars took care of the renovations largely (or even exclusively) on their own, while Tibetan sponsorship faded into the background. The Newars did so in a concerted collective effort that is well documented in the mentioned *ghaṭanāvalī*-type texts for all seven major renovations undertaken between the end of the 16th and the beginning of the 19th centuries. While these sources include architectural aspects in passing, they focus on the rituals, and register—with a level of detail that differs from text to text—the principal rites performed in the course of a renovation, starting with the felling and transport of a tree to function as new *yaṣṭi*, continuing first with the extraction of the *caitya*'s divine essence and its dismantling, and then treating the establishment of the new *yaṣṭi* and the rebuilding of the *caitya*, before ending with the transference of the divine essence back to the *caitya* and the extended consecration ceremony sealing the renovation. The entries are precisely dated and, with some exceptions, chronologically arranged.⁵ They track the progress of the renovation work, including problems and complications encountered in the process. The brief summaries of the rituals include particulars and notably register the participants, that is, the priests who officiated, the caretakers who assisted them, the *jaḥmāns*, who functioned as the rituals' patrons, other sponsors including the involved Tibetans, the king and concerned officials, etc. The texts also note the propitiatory rituals performed in conjunction with the main ritual action and the animals sacrificed in the process.

The earliest such chronicle is embedded in a well-organized *ghaṭanāvalī* (which I refer to in the following as *Chronicle 1*). It records

5 The entries in the chronicles are introduced by specifying in astrological terms the time—in truth it is a time window—when the ritual was performed. This relates the entries to the notes priests make in preparation ahead of complex ceremonies. These notes name the ritual and state the auspicious time (New. *sāit*) for its performance as obtained from an astrologer. They may also include further information such as the names of the patrons (New. *jaḥmān*, Skt. *yajamāna*) which the priest needs to recite when declaring the formal intention (*saṃkalpa*) of performing the given ritual. Such notes may be kept after the rituals' performance as historical records of sorts. Probably, suchlike notes served as sources for the *ghaṭanāvalī* type chronicles examined here.

two closely related renovations; the first was carried out from 1591 to 1595, the second one only a few years later from 1601 to 1604, after the newly rebuilt *caitya* had been badly damaged by lightning. *Chronicle 1* is clearly closely related to the matching inscription commemorating these “twin renovations”.⁶ As is characteristic for medieval Nepalese inscriptions, the Sanskrit text of this inscription is followed by its rendering in the Newar vernacular. This vernacular portion is considerably longer than the Sanskrit segment and includes mention of the different communities of Kathmandu and their overseers contributing towards the renovation. It also covers the central tree’s transport to Svayambhū. The inscription was in all likelihood commissioned by the principal sponsor of the renovation (who was a close associate of the king) and focuses on the larger details of sponsorship. The matching chronicle, on the other hand, was presumably authored by one of the participating priests and reflects his perspective and concerns. These two sources (and a further less developed account) bear out that the two renovations shaped the pattern of collective sponsorship that turned the renovations of Svayambhū in the later Malla era into great communal events involving significant segments of the Buddhist community. The mechanisms at work here are not unique to the renovations of the Svayambhūcaitya but characteristic of Newar society and the complex web of inherited obligations and privileges that—through the institutions of *guthi* and family—tie the different segments of Newar society together and make for its extraordinary cohesiveness. Hence, beyond its interest for the history of Svayambhū, the material discussed here serves to contribute more generally to the social history of the Malla era. This is particularly valuable as there is (to my knowledge) no other material that would show for this era in comparable detail how the Buddhist segments of Kathmandu’s populace were bound together by a collective task, how Buddhism was woven into the fabric of Newar society, and how it served itself as a force tying different segments of this caste-based society together.

6 On the twin renovations see von Rospatt (2011: 176–181). The inscription has been published by Vajrācārya and Nepāl (1954/55: 46–49) and D.R. Regmi (1966: 46–51, inscription no. 29). B. Bledsoe (2004: ch. 6) offers a detailed analysis of this inscription.

Sponsorship of the Twin Renovations

The chronicles, inscriptions and related sources, such as architectural drawings or Tibetan accounts,⁷ allow to track over almost two and half centuries the origination, persistence and eventual disintegration of the system of collective sponsorship treated in this paper. Rather than presenting an exhaustive account of all the collective contributions to the renovations recorded in my sources (for which see von Rospatt forthcoming: ch. 9), I here offer a summary that captures the principal details and takes the twin renovations as its main point of reference. The mentioned inscription gives at the end a list of the sponsors of the thirteen rings above the *harmikā*. This list concludes with the general pronouncement that the renovation “was [accomplished] collectively by the whole region, [that is,] by the [people] of the areas inscribed here” (lines 50–52). This bears out that the sponsorship of the rings is directly related to the contributions the concerned communities made to the renovation in general, and in a sense epitomizes these contributions. The list starts with the uppermost 13th ring and assigns it to the king, while mentioning that Jayarakṣa acted as caretaker.⁸ It then continues with 12) *Seṃgu* (i.e. Svayambhū), 11) *Votu Bāhāl*, 10) *Lagan*, 9) *Asan* and *Naḥghal*, 8) *Vaṃ Bāhāl*,⁹ 7) *Itum Bāhāl*, 6) *Kel*, 5) *Sikhaṃmuḡuḍi*, 4) *Asan* and *Naḥghal*, 3) *Bhilache*, 2) *Sikhaṃmuḡuḍi*.¹⁰

- 7 For an extensive introduction to the pertinent sources see von Rospatt (forthcoming: ch. 1 and bibliography).
- 8 In the mentioned chronicle Jayarakṣa features as sponsor for the later of the two renovations (267f. and 294f.), and in line 29f. of the inscription Jayarakṣa is identified beyond doubt as the *dānapati* of the earlier renovation, too. Here Jayarakṣa does not feature as sponsor (*dānapati*) in his own right, but as “caretaker” acting on behalf of the king who “owned” the highest and most prestigious ring.
- 9 The evidence regarding the eighth ring is not clear. While the overwhelming majority of sources attribute this ring to Lagan (thereby making Lagan the only community besides *Votu* that would have owned two rings), the inscription ascribes this ring to *Vaṃ Bāhāl* and the sixth ring (which the other sources ascribe to *Vaṃ Bāhāl*) to *Kel* (to which the other sources do not ascribe a ring). This suggests that the ownership of the eighth and also sixth ring fluctuated over time, though it is also possible that the inconsistencies of our sources here simply owe to error.
- 10 All other sources record as sponsor of the second ring the “coppersmiths of *Maru*” or “the houses behind *Maru*”. These attributions are identical because the coppersmiths of *Maru* even now live in three courtyards just behind the ground of *Kāṣṭhamaṇḍapa*. (They no longer practice their traditional craft, but mainly work as gold- and silversmiths.) Even though the inscription’s list registers (adjacent) *Sikhaṃmuḡuḍi* instead of *Maru*, the attribution of the sponsorship of the second tier to *Maru* in the other sources makes perfect sense. It was one of the five localities of Kathmandu providing manpower

and 1) *Votu Bāhāl*, with the implication that in descending order they are each assigned to the remaining twelve rings. Besides funding the fabrication of a new ring, sponsorship entailed the responsibility for the ring's removal when the *caitya* was dismantled, and for the ritual installation of the newly fashioned one when the *caitya* was rebuilt. The sponsors had to act as *jajmāns*, and to provide the materials for the rituals and also for the festive meal (*bhoj*) to be consumed afterwards.

In addition to sponsoring the rings and contributing in further ways, the principal donor communities collectively assisted in the grand reconsecration ceremony sealing the renovation. This is the most elaborate ritual of the whole renovation. It is structured around a fire ritual lasting up to twelve days and nights (*ahorātra*), which is preceded by months of preparation and followed by days of elaborate concluding rituals. The *ahorātra* ceremony is an extraordinarily elaborate and complex affair, and beyond the officiating priests, these rituals required caretakers who arranged for the myriad offerings and props needed, and who assisted with practical matters during the rituals' performance as well as before and afterwards. This support was provided by the same communities who sponsored the rings and were at the forefront of contributing towards the renovation. Members of these upper caste communities often took higher tantric initiation, which surely must have been a prerequisite for assisting in the esoteric fire ritual, from which non-initiates are excluded as a matter of course. The communities participated by "taking care" (*citā yāka*) of a particular day and/or night shift for which they assumed charge, providing (and presumably paying for) the *pūjā* materials and organizing the exterior aspects of the rituals—a duty that may have included the actual act of casting the various offerings into the fire on command of the priests. These care-taking functions are typically assumed by the *jajmāns*, and the arrangement of communities assuming responsibility by turns bears out that even while the Bares of Seṃgu formally functioned as *jajmāns* (see below), the Buddhist population of Kathmandu at large was in a sense the true patron of the renovation. This arrangement also meant that the consecration did not only seal the renovation ritually, but that for the care-taking communities it also came to seal their participation and cap the support they had offered before in the course of the renovation.

for pulling the *yaṣṭi*, it shouldered a quarter of the work on the tiers, and it assumed responsibility for two of the eight shifts for building up the *garbha* and the *harmikā*.

Chronicle 1 recording the twin renovations provides the following details, which I have tabulated at the end of this section. For a start, it was the king's prerogative to assume responsibility of the first day and night of the fire ritual, which coincided with the ritual birth of the deity (*jātakarman*). However, on his behalf the *dānapati* Jayarakṣa (identified here simply as the “caretaker from Votu Bāhāl”) assumed responsibility (12,7–13,1) just as he had done for the ring of the king.¹¹ The people from Lagan took care of the next twenty-four hours when the rite of bestowing sight (*dr̥ṣṭidāna*) upon the deity was performed (13,1f.). For the third day and night it was the turn of the people of Vaṃ Bāhāl to “tend to the *homa*” (New. *mi chuya*) (13,2f.).¹² On the fourth day, when the name-giving rite was performed, the people from Bhote Bāhāl took over; in the night the people from Sāracha looked after the *homa*. The people of Sikhaṃmuḡuḍi served on the fifth day and night, dedicated to the rite of the first feeding of fruit (*phalaprāśana*). The sixth day, which saw the first feeding of rice (*annaprāśana*), was attended to by the people from Gvālapasala; that night Jina Bhāro of Gaṅṭhiche was in charge. The people from Makhān and Daṃdache¹³ functioned as caretakers on the seventh day and night, when the ritual tearing of the throat (*kaṅṭha khuya*), a little-known rite of passage,¹⁴ was performed (13,7). On the eighth day and night, featuring the rite of tonsure (*cūḍākaraṇa*), it was the turn of the people from Itum Bāhāl and the adjacent locality of Nyeta (13,7–14,1). The people of Votu Bāhāl were on duty on the ninth day and night during which the ritual of imposing the vows (*vratādeśa*) of the *upanayana* initiation was carried out for the deity (14,1f.). On the tenth day and night, which included the final rite of passage, namely the wedding (*pāṇigrahaṇa*), the people of Kel did duty (14,2f.). For the next twenty-four hours of the *pratiṣṭhā* ritual, which “firmly establishes the deity”, the people of Asan and Naḡghal rendered service (14,3f.).

11 The text does not specify here that it was Jayarakṣa who acted on behalf of the king. However, in line 50 of the inscription Jayarakṣa is explicitly identified as the king's caretaker, and below in the chronicle (17,2–4) it is specified that Jayahaṛṣa (= Jayarakṣa) provided the items for the *ahorātra yajña* on behalf of the king. The identification of Jayahaṛṣa as the caretaker of the king bears out that the donor generally acted on the behest of the king, who was ultimately in charge.

12 On this ritual see von Rospatt (2010: 204 n. 18).

13 Daṃdache (lit.: “house of punishment”) could refer to a neighbourhood with a police station. It may have been located close to Makhān Bāhāl, so that the police station would have been even then in the same area as the present central police station in Hanumān Dhokā.

14 On this ritual see von Rospatt (2010: 250).

Finally, on the last day, the people of Votu Bāhāl once again acted as caretakers, attending to the *abhiṣekas* bestowed upon the deity as well as to the concluding rituals (14,5). Thus, “the consecration of Svayambhū was accomplished by (all) these people collectively” (14,5f.). To repeat, this arrangement gave the principal sponsoring communities a stake in the consecration ceremony and transformed them from mere bystanders to active participants. Importantly, ten of the twelve day-and-night shifts were taken care of by the same communities who already sponsored rings. That is, the first to third day-and-nights were catered to by respectively the king, Lagan and Vaṃ Bāhāl. The fifth and the seventh to twelfth day-and-night shifts were taken care of by respectively Sikhaṃmuguḍi, Makhan, Itum Bāhāl with Nyeta, Votu Bāhāl, Kel, Asan with Naḥghal, and again Votu Bāhāl. This means that of the patrons of rings (who were the principal local sponsors of the renovations) only the Bares of Seṃgu and the coppersmiths did not serve as caretakers in the concluding consecration ceremony. While the former were already involved as religious specialists and hence did not serve as caretaker, the coppersmith may have been excluded from the consecration ceremony because of the lack of higher tantric initiations, or simply because of their lower status compared to the other donors—they owned the second lowest and, given the elevated status of the first ring (see below), least prestigious tier. However, at subsequent renovations the coppersmiths of Maru were allowed to act as caretakers, albeit first only for the preparatory rituals including the empowerment rites, and not for the *ahorātra* ritual itself. In 1758, by contrast, they were permitted to participate in the consecration ceremony proper, and even took care of the fourth night.

While the sponsorship of the rings and the shouldering of shifts at the consecration ceremony tabulated below were the prerogative of the upper caste Buddhist establishment, the mentioned chronicle provides details of how other communities contributed towards the twin renovations. To start with, it records that the tree cut to function as *yaṣṭi* was pulled towards Svayambhū by the people of Kathmandu, who were organized into groups by locality. In the earlier of the twin renovations there were five localities—namely Thathui Puiṃ, Asan, Votu, Makhan and Maru—each of which took a turn of six days and five nights during which their residents went out and provided the manpower for towing the *yaṣṭi*. In the case of the later renovation there were seven (or possibly eight) localities—viz. Manasu Bāhāl (?), Jyātha Bāhāl, Tamṃgali, Hnūgal, Kohiti, Mājhipāt and Yalākṣa—whose residents took turns

pulling the *yaṣṭi*. The populace involved in hauling the *yaṣṭi* was not identical with those who subsequently participated in the rebuilding of the *caitya*. It may be safely presumed that they were not recruited from the upper castes. Many may have been oil pressers (Sāymi), who were already in charge of the technical aspect of the pulling operation, and who may have felt a particular affinity to Svayambhū and Buddhist cults, as Sāymis traditionally do. Others were presumably recruited from the fold of the Jyāpus (lit. “workers”) who form the backbone of Newar society and typically labor as peasants. While they may have received some remuneration, their obligation to render service probably derived from the complex system of duties based upon *guthi* membership (and caste and locality) that characterizes Newar society.¹⁵ At any rate, there is no evidence that their labor was corvée enforced by the government.

The mentioned chronicle relates (for the earlier renovation) that not only the *yaṣṭi*, but also the wood for making thirty-two logs each five cubits in length (which were needed for the fabrication of the rings and possibly also the *chattra*) was transported by the people of Kathmandu to the top of Svayambhū—presumably from the slopes of the hillock where the wood for the *chattra* was routinely cut, as reported in the chronicles. The text adds that as for the work for the *cakras*, half was done by Yambu, that is, by the people from upper Kathmandu, a quarter by the people of Vaṃ Bāhāl, and a further quarter by the people of Maru. Furthermore, the chronicle relates that for “building up the new dome, (the people from) Votu Bāhāl spent an entire day, then (those) from Maru spent an entire day, and then in cooperation (those from) Vaṃ Bāhāl, Lagan and Bhote Bāhāl (spent an entire day[?])” (9,7–10,1). When “building up the *harmikā*, (the people from) Votu Bāhāl, Itum Bāhāl, Maru, Lagan and Vaṃ Bāhāl built part by part” (10,2f.). Though the collective character of the renovation is attested in this way, the chronicle does not fail to highlight the leading role in the consecration played by the principal sponsor of the renovation, namely Jayarakṣa, *alias* Jayahaṛṣa as he is referred to here. Thus it records that “the venerable Jayahaṛṣa bore the burden of whatever the people could not (supply) collectively” for the consecration ritual (17,2), and the burden of the *pūjā* materials furnished in the name of the king (17,3f.).

15 The system of forced recruitment by locality was operative at the uprising in 1989, overthrowing the Pañcāyat regime. Every Newar household in Patan, where the disturbances originated, was obliged to provide one member for the revolutionary force, no matter whether they shared its political aspirations.

It also stresses the personal engagement of Jayarakṣa in this context, relating that he observed fast together with the priests throughout the *ahorātra* ritual (17,3).

The sponsorship of the thirteen rings captures and epitomizes the pattern of collective sponsorship laid out above. It was the most stable feature of this pattern and persisted, unlike other aspects, until the renovation in the early 19th century. Accordingly I have taken the rings as a starting point for the below table, which serves to present the relevant data of the twin renovations in summary form. It allows us to witness how the sponsorship of the rings by particular localities is expressive of their overall contribution to the renovations (table 1).

Collective Sponsorship after the Twin Renovations

The systematic communal sponsorship of renovations outlined here is not attested for renovations before 1591, that is, before the twin renovations. While some aspects, such as the towing of the *yaṣṭi* by segments of Kathmandu's populace, may have earlier origins, it is clear that the twin renovations shaped the pattern of public sponsorship that was in place subsequently. This follows from the prominence of Votu Bāhāl in this pattern—notably, they owned the first and the last of the available eleven *cakras*¹⁶—which enshrined the leading role this locality played during the twin renovations under the leadership of Jayarakṣa, the principal donor. It persisted for the next four renovations and only became undone at the renovation from 1814 to 1817, when the system of traditional sponsorship had largely disintegrated. The persistence of this pattern of communal contributions over two centuries and more follows from the principle that the sponsorship of a shrine or a part thereof, or even of a ritual, entails the right (*adhikāra*) and duty to sponsor the same part or activity in the future. Thus the donor of a votive *caitya*, or his descendants, have the duty to celebrate the anniversary of the *caitya*'s establishment (*varṣavardhana*) and must restore it, if need be. Assuming responsibility for a *caitya* without historical “owners” obliges one to maintain it henceforth. Accordingly, the descendants

16 The eleventh ring is the highest available ring—the thirteenth and twelfth are reserved for the king and the Śeṃgu Bares respectively. Like the highest and most important ring and unlike the second to twelfth ring, the first ring was ritually established in the framework of a fire ritual, which speaks to its special role as standing at the head of the set of thirteen rings.

Table 1: The rings' sponsors (as recorded at the end of the inscription commemorating the twin renovations), their service as caretakers for day and/or night shifts of the fire ritual (*ahorātra*) of the reconsecration ceremony, and their further contributions to the twin renovations.

Patrons of the rings at the twin renovations (top to bottom)	The patron's service as caretaker for shifts of the <i>ahorātra</i> fire ritual	Further contributions of the rings' patrons to the twin renovations
13) King of Kathmandu	1 st day-and-night (Jayarakṣa acted as caretaker)	
12) Semgu	since Semgu Bares act as <i>jajmāns</i> , they do not serve as caretakers	none beyond their participation as <i>jajmāns</i>
11) Votu Bāhāl	9 th and 12 th day-and-night (final 12 th day may have been of Jayarakṣa)	principal sponsor was Jayarakṣa from Votu; pulling <i>yaṣṭi</i> ; work on <i>garbha</i> and <i>harmikā</i> ; sponsor of Amitābha niche from Votu
10) Lagan	2 nd day-and-night	work on <i>garbha</i> and <i>harmikā</i>
9) Asan and Naḥghal	11 th day-and-night	pulling <i>yaṣṭi</i> ; gilding <i>mūrti</i> of Amitābha (Asan alone)
8) Vaṃ Bāhāl (other sources: Lagan)	Vaṃ Bāhāl: 3 rd day-and-night	Vaṃ Bāhāl: work on <i>garbha</i> , <i>harmikā</i> ; "quarter of the work for the <i>cakras</i> "; home of the sponsors of Ratnasambhava niche and of gilding his statue
7) Itum Bāhāl	8 th day-and-night (together with Nyeta)	work on <i>harmikā</i>
6) Inscription: Kel (all other sources: Vaṃ Bāhāl)	10 th day-and-night	
5) Sikhaṃmuguḍi	5 th day-and-night	provides principal priests (remunerated service, no sponsorship)
4) Asan and Naḥghal	See ring 9)	See ring 9)
3) Bherache (which may have been part of Makhan)	Makhan: 7 th day-and-night	Makhan: pulling <i>yaṣṭi</i> ; Bhilache: sponsor of Amoghasiddhi niche
2) inscription: Sikhaṃ muguḍi (all other sources: copper-smiths of Maru; cf. n. 10)	coppersmiths only served as caretakers at later renovations	pulling <i>yaṣṭi</i> ; work on <i>garbha</i> and <i>harmikā</i> ; possibly a quarter of the work on <i>cakras</i>
1) Votu Bāhāl	See ring 11)	See ring 11)

of Dhamāṃ Sāhu, the main Newar sponsor of the last renovation in 1918,¹⁷ claimed (oral communication) to have certain (unspecified) rights in the next renovation of Svayambhū, though de facto they were ignored when the *caitya* was newly gilded (and in the process partially repaired) from 2008 to 2010. Similarly, sponsoring particular parts of the Svayambhūcaitya or taking care of a specific shift of the consecration rituals entitled and also obliged the concerned party to assume the same responsibility at subsequent renovations. Fittingly, *Cakrapāṇīs Chronicle* (fol. 41v4) uses the term “owner” (*thuoāpaniseṃ*) when referencing the sponsors of particular rings in course of the early 19th century renovation. Since this type of ritual obligation is hereditary, the thirteen rings of the *caitya* and other parts were sponsored—with some modifications—by the same neighborhoods again and again. Similarly, at the renovations carried out between 1595 and 1758 basically the same groups took care of the consecration rituals on the same day(s) and/or night(s) over and over. The logic of inheriting rights and obligations also applied to the king, who featured prominently in this system through his recurring sponsorship of the uppermost and hence most prestigious ring as well as the crowning finial above, and through patronizing the first and last day of the consecration rituals.

It is not by chance that the commencement of active Newar sponsorship coincides with the beginning of keeping extensive written records of the *caitya*'s renovations. While it cannot be excluded that there were older records, since lost, it is unlikely that any of the previous renovations were recorded in quite the same detail as the twin and subsequent renovations, for which various records survive. Rather, it seems that as the renovations became large-scale communal affairs involving significant segments of Kathmandu's populace, their profile among the Newars was raised and they started to become the object of extensive historical records. These records also served to register communal contributions, be they labor, the sponsorship of parts, or acting as caretaker of particular days and/or nights of the concluding consecration ceremony. Given the long intervals between renovations, it was necessary to preserve through such records the memory of which communities of Kathmandu were responsible for which elements of the renovation. It was also important that these details be recorded anew every time Svayambhū was renovated because the pattern of sponsorship needs to be perpetuated continuously. A break in assuming responsibility leads

17 See von Rospatt 2011: 201–206.

to rupture, hence the need for proof of how sponsorship was organized at the immediately preceding renovation. In this way the renovation chronicles not only served to record what were monumental events in the life of the participating Newars, but, by registering the contributions of all contributing communities, they also provided a blueprint of how future renovations were to be accomplished collectively. This underscores what I stated at the outset, namely that the Svayambhū chronicles (which, to be sure, are complex sources that served multiple agendas) assumed something of the function of official records, documenting which communities were responsible for which tasks. Even though technically such records had no binding legal force, the concern for prestige and the fear of public loss of face and standing were such that the communities in question felt compelled to honor them and shoulder the given task. Befitting their normative dimension and giving them some official imprimatur, these accounts appear—as far as we can tell, given that they are anonymous—to have been authored by senior priests (or their close associates) serving in the given renovation in their official function as “*ācāryas* of the ten regions” (*digācārya*) on behalf of the king and society.¹⁸

Arguably, the ritual chronicles also functioned in another manner as documents of sorts, namely by attesting to the proper performance of the requisite rituals including the costly offering of sacrificial animals. Such a function would not be surprising given that the priests could, as narrated in the chronicle mentioned in n. 19 (2r2–6), be held accountable if something went wrong. Such a documentary function of the chronicles would, moreover, be in line with the preoccupation of the Newars to keep detailed accounts, in particular of expenses, for all kinds of affairs—clearly in order to disprove allegations of misappropriation and misconduct. Obviously such a function would be particularly pertinent in the case of the renovations principally funded and organized by the Newars themselves, which fits the fact that we only have detailed records for precisely these renovations.

The traditional system of collective sponsorship of the Svayambhūcaitya's renovations started to weaken towards the end of the Malla

18 The “*ācāryas* of the ten regions” (*daśadigācārya*) are traditionally responsible for the performance of Buddhist rituals anywhere within the kingdom when the need arises, hence their designation that puts them in charge of the four cardinal and the four intermediate directions as well as of zenith and nadir. This includes their responsibility for Svayambhū and its renovations. For details see von Rospatt forthcoming: ch. 8.

era when the Valley was suffering under the prolonged siege by the Gorkha troops of Prthvīnārāyaṇa Śāha. At the subsequent renovation concluded in 1817 it had lost much of its traction as the close-knit fabric of Newar society in the Malla era had begun to unravel due to the sociopolitical changes brought about by the takeover of the Valley and its integration into the nascent Nepalese nation state. Instead of the communities traditionally responsible for particular parts, labor or service, a few prominent Newar traders (Sāhu) with close ties to Tibet emerged at that renovation as new sponsors who, together with Tibetan (and Bhutanese) donors, shored up the effort and helped to ensure the successful conclusion of the renovation. This trend continued at the next major renovation a hundred years later, which was financed almost exclusively by Tibetan (and Bhutanese) contributions and funding provided by the Newar merchant Dhamāṃ Sāhu, who owed his wealth to trade with Tibet and China. The most recent renovation, undertaken from 2008 to 2010 in order to newly gild all the *caitya*'s copper fixtures—principally the framing of the niches set in the dome and the sheets covering the *harmikā* and rings above—was carried out on the initiative of a sole sponsor, the Tibetan Nyingma Institute located in Berkeley, California. While the Vajrācāryas of Kathmandu and the Buddhācāryas of Svayambhū acted during that renovation in their traditional roles as respectively priests and patron (*jajmān*), there was no form of communal Newar sponsorship in place. However, this renovation was motivated by the desire of a particular individual, namely Tarthang Tulku, to newly gild the *caitya*, and not necessitated by its disrepair. Hence, it differs structurally from the comprehensive renovations that include the dismantling of most of the structure in order to allow for the replacement of the central post, the *yaṣṭi*. Mirroring the disengagement of the Newar community, there are no traditional *ghaṭanāvālī*-type accounts of this last renovation or the preceding renovation of 1918.

Analysis of the Pattern of Collective Sponsorship

Reviewing the pattern of collective contributions, one cannot fail to notice that—unlike in the case of the ancient *stūpa* sites of India (see below)—the sponsors were not individuals or single families but communities. A seeming exception is the principal sponsor for the twin renovations, Jayarakṣa. But even his contributions became identified

with the community he hailed from, that is, the Bares of Votu Bāhāl. Another apparent exception is the gilding or replacement of the Buddha statues set in the niches, including work on the niches themselves. These were sponsored by individuals including donors who were not from Kathmandu.¹⁹ However, this was so because the renewal of the Buddha statues and their niches was not regarded as an integral part of the *caitya*'s renovation, but as additional work that was understood to be singular and did not translate into any rights or claims.²⁰

The patron communities were organized according to locality and caste, that is to say, they were formed by members of the same caste, living in the same neighborhood. This form of organizing Newar society still persists to this day. Members of the same caste living in a particular neighborhood form an association (*guthi*). Membership is by family and heredity and translates into both duty to contribute labor and service, and privilege to enjoy the *guthi*'s support, for instance, when hosting a marriage banquet (*bhoj*). The *guthis* of the Jyāpu community are particularly robust because the Jyāpus are numerous and form the backbone of the population. The organization of monasteries follows

- 19 The aforementioned chronicle E 1874/2 reports for the earlier of the twin renovations: “The Śākyabhikṣu Śrī Dharma-ju from Pitache of Votu Bāhāl had the niche of the main side made (= the eastern side with Amitābha)” (11,2), and “Bhona from Bhilāche had the niche of Vasigāl made (= the niche of Amoghasiddhi on the northern side with the *nāga* pool called Vasigāl)” (11,2f.). “Together with his nephew Jīānaju, the Śākyabhikṣu Śrī Jinasimha-ju from Bhote Bāhāl of Yaṃgal had (the niche at the place) where one looks down made (i.e. the niche of Akṣobhya on the eastern side, atop the steep staircase, affording the view over Kathmandu)” (11,3f.). Finally, “having had it manufactured in Bhaktapur, the Śākyabhikṣu Śrī Jayaharṣa-ju from Vaṃ Bāhāl had (the niche) of Ratnasambhava made (on the southern side)” (11,4f.). Further below the text relates (14,7–15,1) that the statues of Amitābha, Akṣobhya and Ratnasambhava were gilded respectively by the people of Asan, by ethnic Tibetans (*saṃjapani*) from “Rarija” (?), and by “the owner” from Vaṃ Bāhāl, that is, possibly, by the aforementioned Jayaharṣa who had already sponsored the niche for Ratnasambhava.
- 20 The only true exception I am aware of concerns the shift of the sixth night of the consecration ceremony at the twin renovations. It was attributed to Jina Bhāro of Ghaṅṭiche (lit. “bell house”). The edifice with the giant bell at Hanumān Dhokā was only established in 1797, but the Ghaṅṭiche mentioned here may have stood at the same site, which is located in the larger neighborhood of Sikhammuguḍi, just as Sārache and Gvālapasal (which was in charge of the day shift just before) are. At the next renovation a certain Sūryadeva, who may have been a direct relative of Jina Bhāro, took care of this shift. It is conceivable that these two individuals were particular prominent members of their community, and that their contribution was thought of in communal terms just as Jayarakakṣa's sponsorship was identified with Votu Bāhāl. Note that in 1758 we no longer have a named individual but the coppersmiths of Mājhipat who were in charge of this shift. Possibly they were the descendants of Sūryadeva and Jina Bhāro, who may have been coppersmiths, too.

along the same lines, and they function as caste-based, exogamic units in much the same way as *guthis* do. Even though the sources do not explicitly identify the sponsoring communities as *guthis* this can be taken for granted and is a given in the case of the contributing monasteries.

The sponsoring communities were distributed quite evenly over Kathmandu, but there was little spread in terms of caste. Rather, the principal sponsors assuming responsibility for particular parts of the *caitya* and shifts of the *ahorātra* consecration at the end were Bares, that is, Śākya, a term the sources analyzed here do not use,²¹ though Sāhus and other Urāys, such as coppersmiths, also played an important role. The prominence of these upper caste Buddhists does not come as a surprise. The worship of Buddhist deities (both exoteric and esoteric) and shrines such as Svayambhū is central to the religious practices and identity of the Bares and Urāys, and since ritual purity and access to tantric initiation depend upon caste status, they were in a privileged position and could potentially participate in the many rituals that required the strict maintenance of ritual purity and that were often restricted to tantric initiates. This concerns in particular the numerous rites of consecration that accompanied the rebuilding of the *caitya* at each stage, and that culminated in the new consecration of the rebuilt *caitya*.²² Of course, the Vajrācāryas were in an even more privileged position as regards access to such rites, but they feature almost exclusively as priests remunerated for their ritual services and not as donors. Indeed, none of the sponsoring communities is explicitly identified as including Vajrācāryas. Rather, if the sponsors are monastic they seem to be Bares alone, and that is so even in those cases where the monastery includes both Vajrācāryas and Bares. The different roles of Vajrācāryas and Bares came to the fore at the renovation in 1817 when the Vajrācāryas of the Sikhāmmuḡḍī monastery refused to contribute

21 On the varying uses of the terms Bare (lit. “venerable”, derived from Sanskrit *vandya*) and Śākya, see Gellner 1992: 67.

22 The importance of ritual purity in the context of the *caitya* and its renovation is vividly brought home by an episode related in a chronicle kept in the National Archives, Nepal (acc. no. 3–270; NGMPP B 100/22: fols. 158v4–159r2) documenting the renovation at the beginning of the 18th century. On the day when the new *yaṣṭi* was raised some Tibetans ventured into the place where the sacred vessel was kept into which the divine essence of the *caitya* had been transferred for the time of the renovation. The Tibetans were caught and had to pay the substantial sum of six *mohars* as a fine. As atonement for the pollution, seven Bares of Senggu fasted for a day and night, and the next day an extensive *homa* ritual was performed.

towards the expenses of sponsoring the fifth ring, leaving the Bares of this monastery to bear these expenses alone, as they had done in the past.²³ In this the Vajrācāryas acted much like Brahman priests rendering remunerated priestly service, while the true patrons were the Bares (and Sāhus and other Urāys) commissioning their services and financing also the labor of many of the other participants, such as woodcutters and carpenters. This accords with the Vajrācārya's perceived identity and role as ritual specialists whose task is not to support Buddhism materially but to guide it spiritually. May it be added that also nowadays the Bares and Urāys, rather than the Vajrācāryas, sponsor most Buddhist activities. This is particularly conspicuous at the *samyakdāna* festival treated at the end of this paper, where the Vajrācāryas function solely as recipients of *dāna*.

The dynamics on display here shed light on the relationship between Vajrācāryas and Śākyas. Since these two groups cohabit in monasteries, interdine and intermarry, they are normally regarded as forming one caste, namely that of householder monks at the apex of the Buddhist caste system. It is commonly understood that within this caste the Vajrācāryas enjoy a privileged position because they alone have access to the tantric *ācārya* ordination that empowers them to act as ritual priests and gurus imparting the highest tantric initiations. The Bares, by contrast, are lesser religious specialists who—together with the Vajrācāryas—function as monastic recipients of offerings from the laity (*dāna*) and assume turns as ritual officiant for the regular worship (*nityapūjā*) in the monastery they belong to. However, as the pattern of sponsorship at the renovations bears out, the Bares are more than lesser religious specialists. Rather, they are at the same time also patrons whom the Vajrācārya priests serve and upon whom they materially depend. And the same structure is also found elsewhere in Newar Buddhism. For instance, the *saṃgha* of Itum Bāhāl is overwhelmingly made up of Śākyas, and the single lineage of Vajrācāryas of this monastery is apparently secondary and there to serve the ritual needs of the Śākyas (von Rospatt 2010/2011). While this relationship parallels the contractual bonds between Brahman *purohitas* and their high-caste (often landed) patrons (*jajmān*), there are also important differences. In the Hindu fold the *jajmāns* are not at the same time religious specialists in their own right, and they do not intermarry (or interdine) with the

23 This is recorded (fol. 36r1–5) in the early 19th century chronicle mentioned in n. 19.

Brahman priests but form a different caste. The same holds good in the Buddhist fold for the Sāhus and other Urāys who function as Buddhist *jajmān* par excellence. By contrast, the Bares are not only patrons but, as ordained householder monks, also religious specialists who share in the same world of elite Buddhist practice as the Vajrācāryas do and hence form the same caste. Still, the renovations of Svayambhū accentuated not what connects Bares and Vajrācāryas but what divides them, namely the split between patron and remunerated priest. It fits this distribution of roles that the Bares of Asan and Naḥghal joined hands with the traders (and not the Vajrācāryas) of those areas and acted collectively with them across the caste divide as sponsors of the fourth and ninth rings of the Svayambhūcaitya.²⁴

Unlike other Bares, the Semḡu Bares' primary identity is that of religious specialists. Nowadays they are known as Buddhācāryas, because—so the usual explanation—in addition to the ordinary monastic Buddhist ordination (*bare chuyegu*) taken by all male Śākyas, they undergo two years after that ordination further initiations (some say the *mukuṭa-* and *ghaṇṭābhiṣeka*) that ordinary Śākyas are not entitled to. On this basis they claim to be superior to them, but inferior to Vajrācāryas who alone are entitled to the full *ācāryābhiṣeka* (New. *ācāḥ luyegu*) that transforms them into Buddhist priests and entitles them to perform *homa* and *śrāddha* rituals for their patrons. The

24 This analysis of the function of Vajrācāryas and Bares in the course of the renovation is at odds with Kölver's claim (1992: 111ff.) that among the sponsors of the rings there is a marked preponderance of monasteries belonging to the *ācārya guthi* (which unites the Vajrācārya priests of Kathmandu), and that hence the Vajrācāryas played a leading role as owners of the rings. As a comparison of the chronicles with the drawing in manuscript C, the source used by Kölver, bears out, this does not represent the sources accurately. Of the thirteen rings only three (or four) belong clearly to monasteries that pertain to the *ācārya guthi*, namely Lagan Bāhāl (ring 10 and possibly ring 8), Itum Bāhāl (ring 7), and Sikhammuguḍi Bāhāl (ring 5). But these three monasteries have mixed communities of Śākyas and Vajrācāryas, and the sources explicitly identify the Bares (i.e. Śākyas) of these monasteries (who do not belong to the *ācārya guthi* which is restricted to Vajrācāryas) as donors. This is confirmed by the aforementioned account of how the Vajrācāryas of Sikhammuguḍi Bāhāl refused to join the Bares of this monastery in sponsoring the fifth ring. Among the sponsors of the other rings there is the mention of further monasteries, but the sources are careful to identify the donors as Bares and some of the mentioned monasteries, such as Asan Bāhāl (4th ring) only have Śākya communities anyway. In addition, we have the mention of donors recruited from the upper lay Buddhist castes beyond the monastic fold, notably the traders of Asan and Naḥghal (ring 4) and the coppersmiths of Maru (ring 2), and it is possible that the mention of neighbourhoods such as Vaṃ Bāhāl, Musuṃ and Votu also included lay Buddhist donors. At any rate, what clearly stands out is that there is no indication in our sources that Vajrācārya communities were among the donors.

Seṃgu Bares live up at Svayambhū around the *caitya* and are the historical guardians charged with its daily worship (*nityapūjā*) and maintenance. In the case of more complex rituals requiring the offices of a Vajrācārya priest they normally function as *jajmān*, though this does not imply that they materially sponsor the ritual. Rather, traditionally they do not own land and their principal source of livelihood is derived from their service as ritual specialists at Svayambhū. Accordingly, they participate in the renovations by rendering services and do not feature as patrons. The only exception is their sponsorship of the twelfth ring (which is smaller in diameter than the rings below and hence less costly). Just below the ring of the king and above all the rings of the donor communities, its possession confirms the Buddhācāryas' special link with the *caitya* and does not turn them into one of the principal donor communities.

Given the status of the Svayambhūcaitya as the premier shrine of Buddhism—a shrine which, according to the mythological history narrated in the *Svayambhūpurāna*, lies at the origins of Buddhist civilization in the Valley and encases the spontaneously manifesting light of buddhahood—it is not surprising that the rings and other parts of the *caitya*—and the same applies to the shifts of the *ahorātra* ritual—were coveted items for upper caste Buddhists to express their religious allegiance and identity, display their social status and earn prestige (and merit). Even so, the sponsorship of these items and shifts left scope for lower caste groups and communities to also get involved, and their participation was of course essential in a number of ways. Among these groups and communities we can differentiate between 1) the oil pressers (Sāymi) with their particular expertise in rope work that was needed for towing the tree, for erecting the scaffold around the *caitya*, and for raising the new *yaṣṭi*, 2) the laborers towing the massive tree to function as *yaṣṭi* from where it was cut to Svayambhū, 3) the artisans and craftsmen engaged in dismantling and rebuilding the *caitya*, and 4) further specialists for fabricating ritual items, and for providing particular ritual services. Of these four sets, the Sāymis have a clearly defined Buddhist identity, and it seems that their *guthi* assumed responsibility for the mentioned tasks as a matter of course. As for the laborers towing the tree, they were—excluding the early 19th century renovation—drafted from among the communities of Kathmandu. While the details differ from renovation to renovation, it is clear that there was an element of coercion, and that their participation was not entirely voluntary. Regarding the craftsmen and artisans, it appears they were

hired and remunerated for their work. This includes the woodcutters who were needed to fell the trees from which to fashion the *yaṣṭi* and rings of the *caitya*, and who also took care of chopping the old *yaṣṭi* so that it could be removed from the *caitya*. Likewise, carpenters were employed to fashion the new *yaṣṭi* and rings, and also to remove the old wooden rings when dismantling the *caitya*. Moreover, blacksmiths and coppersmiths were put to work to dismantle the iron and copper parts of the superstructure and to fashion—in cooperation with goldsmiths—the corresponding new parts when the *caitya* was rebuilt. Besides the wood- and metalworkers, there were large numbers of workers, such as bricklayers and plasterers, who were engaged to build up the new structure. As for the fabrication of ritual implements, potters, painters (Citakāra) etc. were needed, and for the portering of such items workers (Jyāpu) had to be enlisted. Moreover, lower caste specialists were delivering certain ritual tasks. For instance, at various junctions of the rituals (e.g., when welcoming the *yaṣṭi* in ritual procession) music was played by the butchers (Nāy) blowing their trumpet-like *kāhā*, and by tailors (Kusle) sounding their oboe-like *muhāli*. It can be taken for granted that the fabrication of ritual implements and the rendering of ritual services were also remunerated. These examples shall suffice to show that lower castes, too, participated extensively in the renovations. However, unlike the Bares and Urāy sponsoring the *caitya* rings and the shifts of the extended fire ritual as well as other elements of the renovation, their services were presumably not rendered as voluntary acts of sponsorship. Rather, they were either obliged to render these services—the Sāymis and pullers—or they were contracted and remunerated just as the Vajrācārya priests were. This reinforces the picture that the true sponsors and owners of the renovation were the Bares and Urāy who thus assumed a central function, located at the hub of the caste-based system of obligations and services, in a manner resembling the landed upper caste in the *jajmāni* system.

It is noteworthy that the Bares and Urāy have—as otherwise only the Vajrācārya priests do—an unambiguously Buddhist identity, and that, apart from the king or his representative(s), no Brahmans or Shresthas or other upper caste Newars outside the fold of Buddhism had a stake in the renovations of Svayambhū. (This, incidentally, shows that in the Malla era, and no doubt before, upper caste Newars had clearly formed religious identities.) Even so, whether involved as sponsor, as drafted laborer or as remunerated craftsman, many segments of the population beyond the upper tiers of the Buddhist society

of Kathmandu participated in the renovations and turned them into truly communal events. They at once accentuate the social differences between the participating groups and provide a framework in which the different groups are united by pursuing a common end, viz. to rebuild and renew Svayambhū. Besides such societal ramifications, the communal character of the renovations served to reinforce the central role of the Svayambhūcaitya as the focal shrine for the Newar Buddhist community beyond limitations of caste and locality. In all this the renovations resemble the public religious festivals of the Newars, which generally involve large parts of the populace in a variety of ways commensurate with their social and caste status. In this way, rather than being mere onlookers, they find themselves in one way or another at the heart of the action and identify with the event as well as the cult and deity it serves. Given the fervor with which the Newars typically celebrate such festivals, I suspect that many of the participants—notwithstanding the obvious concerns of the sponsors for prestige and merit-making, as well as the contractual nature of the rendering of obligatory and/or remunerated services—embraced the renovations of Svayambhū with some of the joy, devotion and enthusiasm that such communal events tend to generate.

Another important point clearly emerges from the pattern of sponsorship examined here, namely that the sponsors came, just like the ritual officiants, the Vajrācārya priests, exclusively from Kathmandu. There is one exception to this, namely singular acts of donation that did not entail any rights or claims. Besides the mentioned sponsoring of the niches with the Buddha images set, this includes in particular the donation of a new parasol (*chattra*) crowning the *caitya*. Such donations are recorded independently from complete renovations, and were presumably at times prompted by the wish to make a merit-earning offering towards Svayambhū, rather than by the disrepair of the old *chattra*. At any rate, sponsorship of the *chattra* did not translate into the privilege to be henceforth in charge of this element, and therefore it did not infringe on the traditional rights and duties of the people of Kathmandu to assume responsibility for specific parts of the *caitya* in the case of full-fledged renovations. As a consequence there was in such cases scope for sponsorship from outside Kathmandu, though it seems that even then the permission from the king of Kathmandu was needed. Thus the inscription of a bell in front of the temple of Pratāpapur up at Svayambhū records that it was donated in NS 820 (1700 CE) “by the Great King, the ruler of blessed Lalitpur (i.e. Patan), Yoganarendra

Malla, with the consent of the Great King, the Lord of Kings, the ruler of blessed Kāntipur (i.e. Kathmandu), Bhūpāendra Malla’, after the original bell donated by Pratāpa Malla had become impaired.²⁵

While singular acts of sponsorship, such as the donation of a new *chattra*, were also possible for outsiders inasmuch as they did not affect the ownership of the Svayambhūcaitya, the Buddhists from Kathmandu jealously guarded the privilege and duty to assume responsibility of the renovations and to contribute by sponsoring an element such as a ring, or by acting as caretaker for rituals. For this alone translated into lasting claims on the *caitya*. This is confirmed by Svayambhūvajradeva’s account of how the leaders of the Buddhist community of Kathmandu reacted when King Jayaprakāśa Malla confronted them in the middle of the 18th century with the wish of the Tibetan lama Kaḥ-thog Rig-ḍzin Tshe-dbang nor-bu to renovate Svayambhū (von Rospatt 2011: 191). They rejected that the lama be officially entrusted with this task, claiming (wrongly, as it were) that there was no precedent for outsiders, “not even from Bhaktapur or Patan”, to be put in charge of renovating Svayambhū. It is in line with this that Tibetan sponsors were, despite their substantial donations and—at times—their de facto leadership, excluded from the direct sponsorship of specific parts of the *caitya*, and hence from the rights that would ensue from such direct sponsorship. Thus *Cakrapāṇi’s Chronicle* attests for the early 19th century renovation that when the traditional caretakers of their rings did not assume responsibility, there was no scope for the direct sponsorship of distinct parts by the sponsoring Bhutanese (or other outsiders). Instead, the lama in charge of the renovation entrusted traders (Sāhus) from Nyeta in Kathmandu with this task (fol. 34v7), or the royal caretaker(s) stepped in on behalf of the king (fol. 40r3–6).

To take account of the exclusive role of Kathmandu, it has to be borne in mind that Patan and Bhaktapur were until 1768 distinct kingdoms separate from Kathmandu. Even today, some two and a half centuries after the borders between these kingdoms fell with the conquest by Prthvīnārāyaṇa Śāha, there is still a strong sense of distinctness between the cities of the Valley, which are structured as autonomous

25 The present bell bearing the inscription was installed more than 150 years after the donation by Yoganarendra at the time of Jaṅga Bahādura Rāṇā. Hence the inscription on the present bell quoted above in my translation dates only from the 19th century. All the same, it is likely that the phrase “with the consent of the Great King, the Lord of Kings, the ruler of blessed Kāntipur, Bhūpāendra Malla’” was not composed retrospectively but taken over from the inscription on the original bell donated by Yoganarendra.

units independent from each other. Thus the most important deity for the people of Patan is undoubtedly Buṅgadyaḥ, a form of Karuṇāmaya based in Buṅgamati but stationed for part of the year in Patan, whereas Svayambhū does not command the same allegiance as it does among the Buddhists of Kathmandu. On the other hand, the Svayambhūcaitya was (and still is) an integral part of the larger sacred topography of the Valley shared by all Newars, and hence it played (and still plays) an important part in the religious life of Newars also from Bhaktapur and particularly Patan. For instance, Buddhists from Patan traditionally come during the month of Kārtik each morning to Svayambhū for worshipping the *caitya*, a custom still kept up by the many bus-loads of faithful ferried from Patan to Kathmandu daily during that month. Similarly, all the participants in the annual *matayāḥ* procession in Patan are obliged to visit Svayambhū some ten days later when the *pañcadāna* day is celebrated in Kathmandu (Vaidya 1986: ch. 6). This connection to Svayambhū found its expression also on the occasion of the *caitya*'s renovations when the citizens of Bhaktapur, Patan and the Valley's villages converged upon Svayambhū on the day of the new *yaṣṭi*'s arrival, welcoming it with music etc.

Conclusion

As we have seen, different communities of Kathmandu assumed responsibility for different parts of the *caitya*, notably its thirteen rings, taking care of their dismantlement at the outset of the renovation, sponsoring their new fabrication and seeing to their installation and consecration as the *caitya* was rebuilt. Moreover, particular communities assumed responsibility for certain tasks, such as joining hands in hauling the tree to Svayambhū, providing labor for the dismantling and building up of the *harmikā* and dome, and taking turns as helpers for the extended consecration ceremony at the end, including providing the requisite implements and offerings. The dynamics at work here are not unique to the renovations of the Svayambhūcaitya. Rather, other public religious functions, such as the annual festivals (*yātrā*) of deities, are similarly organized as communal events that serve to draw in and give a stake to many participants. An interesting example is the *samyak* festival celebrated in Kathmandu routinely every twelve years, and additionally when a sponsor comes forth (*aicchika samyak*). This festival is dedicated to the cult of the prehistorical Buddha Dīpaṃkara

and serves the ritualized cultivation of generosity (*samyakdāna*). The people, traditionally led by the king, host Dīpaṃkara and the *saṃgha*. The food offered on this occasion is prepared and served collectively, with certain communities being in charge of supplying particular dishes and serving them. At the *aicchika samyak* celebrated in January 2002 (von Rospatt 2012: 232f.), the Śākya of Itum Bāhāl were in charge of preparing and serving radish (*mūla*), the Tulādhar of Nyeta prepared and served rice, the traders of Itum (or of Jhocheṃ?) served molasses syrup, the sweet-makers of Jorucheṃ contributed sweet meats, the Tulādhar of Asan provided stitched *sāl* leave plates (*lapte*) and the potters of Jyatha furnished clay saucers, while the Śākyas of Vaṃ Bāhāl distributed *ṭikā* as a blessing. Vaidya's (1986: 120) treatment of the *samyak* cult bears out that the mentioned communities traditionally make these contributions to the *samyak* festivals of Kathmandu. He adds that Jyā Bāhāl, Nyakhacheṃ and Votu are in charge of rice porridge, and that the Kaṃsakārs of Keltol take care of (unspecified) further items. Though on a far lesser scale, this hereditary arrangement of sponsorship mirrors the traditional system in place for the renovations. Notable is again the absence of the Vajrācāryas (and also the Seṃgu Bares) as donors; they play a prominent role in the (*samyak-dāna*) festival but only as recipients of *dāna*. The Śākyas, by contrast, feature both as donors and also as monastic recipients, which confirms their ambivalent status as both religious specialists and backbone of the donor community.

The pattern of communal sponsorship that can be witnessed here was operative on a much larger scale in the case of the renovations of the Svayambhūcaitya. They served as pivotal events around which the Buddhist community converged. This speaks against a facile comparison of the Nepalese material with the system of collective sponsorship recorded in inscriptions of ancient Indian *stūpas* such as Sanchi (Marshall et al. 1982) or Kanaganahalli (Nakanishi/von Hinüber 2014). For the inscriptions at these sites bear out that the donors were often private individuals or families and not communities. Moreover, whether individuals or communities, the donors were—despite a concentration of sponsors from Malwa in the case of Sanchi—spread far and wide, and they were not tightly connected and woven together into a single society as the donors of Kathmandu were. Nor is there any indication that their contributions entailed lasting obligations and were more than single acts of munificence. By contrast, the donors in the case of the Svayambhūcaitya were not single individuals and

families but communities that were united—and that in an enduring manner—by the common project of renewing their most sacred shrine, i.e. Svayambhū, even while affirming at the same time their distinctness in terms of caste and locale. The web of interrelated obligations at work here is characteristic for the functioning of Newar society. They are not cast in legal code but grounded in precedent.

This helps to explain the keen sense of history that Newars traditionally have, and it explains the prominence of historical sources that record events such as the Svayambhū renovations, and also more quotidian affairs, in astonishing detail. As I have argued above, such sources are not only of historiographical interest but by recording donative and other acts that call for reenactment they can also assume a normative function. Moreover, they have the potential to serve as documents that can be produced if accused of misconduct or embezzlement. In the case of the Svayambhū chronicles, priests held accountable might produce them as documents attesting to the correct and timely performance of rituals, including the proper offering of (costly) animal sacrifices. In this way such sources engage with the past not only because of their intrinsic interest, but also, and maybe more so, because of their potential relevance for the present and future. More than royal chronicles and documents, it is such grass-root records that cast light on the functioning of society and the daily affairs of its members. It follows that we have to pay greater attention to these sources and that reading them carefully pays off in our endeavors to reconstruct the social history of the Newars, and to gain a better understanding of the structure and dynamics of premodern Newar society, an understanding that is all too often dependent upon the insights gained by anthropologists, who only have access to the present.

Abbreviations

New.	Newari
NGMPP	<i>Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project</i>
NS	Nepal Samvat
Skt.	Sanskrit
Tib.	Tibetan

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26 The present article draws upon an extensive study of further sources, for which see von Rospatt (forthcoming: bibliography).

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