

Part II

The Monastic Community (*saṅgha*)
The Monastic Courtyard (*bāhā*)
and its Tutelary Deity (*kvāpādyah*)

The Monastic Community (*saṅgha*)

Legendary Origin and Membership

According to Chattra Bahādura Kāyaṣṭha, the Sūryabrahmā Saṃskārita Vajrakīrti Mahāvihāra, Vānta- or Vābāhā was founded by one Sūryavarman, one of his ancestors whom Bahādura Kāyaṣṭha believes to have lived some time during the early Licchavi period (5th to 8th centuries). In his opinion, Sūryabrahmā represents the corrupt form of Sūryavarman,⁴⁷ *varman* referring to a noble attached to the royal court. His argument suggests that the monastery is connected to the community of Kāyaṣṭha of Bakūbāhā, a quarter south of Vābāhā. Accordingly, Kāyaṣṭha Nara-siṃha, referred to in the inscription number four, dated 1678, as “*bhāro*”, and his son Mādhaḥva Siṃha, are the descendants of Sūryavarman, as are the Kāyaṣṭhas who presently reside at Bakūbāhā.⁴⁸ On the occasion of Holi Pūrṇimā, the full moon in March, the Kāyaṣṭhas still perform the anniversary ritual of the golden snake (*nāga*), which was donated by them to add to the finial of the Kvāpāchē. The inscription refers in fact to a gilt umbrella (*suvarna chatra*).

Chattra Bahādura’s speculation is not based on any evidence. It reflects the inclination of the literate members of the upper castes to construct a symbolic narrative of their own descent. The Kāyaṣṭhas belong to the group of high caste Chathariya, but they belonged to the rather lower-ranking officials at the court of the Newar kings, and were engaged as scribes. In many families such legends are recalled or constructed to explain the origin of a specific monastery, deity, or sacred object. In this case it is worth mentioning that a Hindu Chathariya makes an offering to a Buddhist monastery. There seemed to be no conflict for a Hindu to participate actively in a Buddhist context. Religion has always been tied to the specific local context. The feeling of belonging is instrumental in overriding religious restrictions.

When asked about the origin of the Vajrācāryas, the *saṅgha* members of Vābāhā explain that their ancestor

migrated from Sākhu, thus, their ancestral deity is Vajrayoginī, which is kept and worshipped at the Digichē.

A similar story is told about the origin of the group of Śākya. The prevailing assumption is that their ancestors migrated from Oṃbāhā in Kathmandu and in that context their ancestral deity is Caṇḍamahāroṣana of Śāntipur, the sanctuary on Svayambhū Hill. The “Fierce (*caṇḍa*) and Great (*mahā*) Wrathful (*roṣana*) One,” is also known as Acala. A replica is kept and worshipped at Dunebāhā, the branch monastery (*kacābāhā*) adjoining Vābāhā’s courtyard toward east.

Śākyas as well as Vajrācāryas form one lineage each and are thus exogamous with (in 2021) 30 Vajrācāryas and 33 Śākyas who act as caretakers of the tutelary deity.

Both the Śākyas and the Vajrācāryas explain and confirm that in the past their communities were famous for tailoring for the royals. They had been appointed as royal tailors and this tradition continued up to the end of the monarchy.

The Śākya trace their origin to one Jagatmuni, who in 1858 founded Dunebāhā as a branch monastery of Vābāhā where he installed a replica of his ancestral deity. At that time he brought an ancient text along, the Prajñāpāramitā, which dates to 1161, and had it read out. Jagatmuni had four sons, namely Dhanacamuni, Cakramuni, Jagamuni, and Paraśamuni. Everyone of the Śākya lineage traces his origin to one of these four brothers.

In summer 1992, Nutandhar Śharmā, a member of the team engaged in the restoration of Vābāhā, counted 56 members of the monastic community, from both the Vajrācārya and the Śākya. Amṛtarāj Vajrācārya acted as the *thapāju*, the eldest of the group, and the four remaining elders were Vajrarāj Vajrācārya, Keśavarāj Vajrācārya, Lakṣmibahādur Śākya, and Bhaktabahādur Śākya. Amṛtarāj is believed to be the great-grandson of the couple depicted on the stele, which was installed by Amṛtajyoti and Lakṣmījyoti (the inscription says Devajani) in 1728 whom he called his ancestors, as *pitṛdevata*. His father was Bhīmajyoti, his

List of the members of the Sarvasaṅgha of Vābahā according to seniority:

- 1 Ṭhākura Māna Śākya – Jāvalākhel
- 2 Dharmā Rāja Vajrācārya – Vābahā
- 3 Vikāsa Māna Śākya – Sātadopāṭo
- 4 Sucitra Māna Śākya – Cākupāṭ
- 5 Giri Māna Śākya – Kvālakhu
- 6 Nilaratna Vajrācārya – Vābahā
- 7 Bāburāja Vajrācārya – Vābahā
- 8 Keśava Māna Vajrācārya – Vābahā
9. Lilārāja Śākya – Dyaḥbahāl
- 10 Herendra Māna Śākya – Bakhunḍol
- 11 Birendra Māna Śākya – Bakhunḍol
- 12 Gautam Rāja Śākya – Nyākhācoka
- 13 Prakāśa Māna Śākya – Jāvalākhel
- 14 Pradīpa Śākya
- 15 Subhāṣa Śākya – Jāvalākhel
- 16 Kumāra Śākya – Nyākhācoka
- 17 Ratna Rāja Vajrācārya – Vābahā
- 18 Triratna Vajrācārya – Vābahā
- 19 Pharendra Māna Vajrācārya – Vābahā
- 20 Birendra Vajrācārya – Vābahā
- 21 Surendra Śākya – Vābahā
- 22 Rāju Vajrācārya – Vābahā
- 23 Sureśa Vajrācārya – Dyaḥbahā
- 24 Rājīva Vajrācārya – Vābahā
- 25 Jñānendra Vajrācārya – Vābahā
- 26 Rājan Vajrācārya – Vābahā
- 27 Ravindra Vajrācārya – Vābahā
- 28 Dhruva Rāja Vajrācārya – Vābahā
- 29 Amṛta Śākya – Vābahā
- 30 Śrīrāja Vajrācārya – Vābahā
- 31 Chūmana Śākya – Vābahā
- 32 Oṃrāja Vajrācārya – Vābahā
- 33 Sudhira Māna Śākya – Kvālakhu (son of Giri Māna)
- 34 Śālina Śākya – Cākupāṭ (son of Sucitra Māna)
- 35 Surendra Rāja Śākya – Dyaḥbahā (son of Lilā Rāja)
- 36 Ravindra Rāja Śākya – Dyaḥbahā (son of Lilā Rāja)
- 37 Bavina Vajrācārya – Vābahā (son of Bābu Rāja)

- 38 Vineśa Śākya – Sātadopāṭo (son of Vikaśa Māna)
- 39 Sanama Śākya – Nyākhācoka (son of Gautama)
- 40 Saceta Māna Śākya – Bakhunḍol (son of Herendra Māna)
- 41 Sakeśa Vajrācārya – Vābahā (son of Nilaratna)
- 42 Suvina Śākya – Cākupāṭ (son of Sucitra Māna)
- 43 Sobhi Māna Śākya – Vābahā (son of Keśava Māna)
- 44 Kavira Māna Śākya – Kvālakhu (son of Giri Māna)
- 45 Herendra Māna Śākya – Vābahā (son of late Herakāji)
- 46 Ujjvala Vajrācārya – Vābahā (son of Rāju Vajrācārya)
- 47 Svarṇima Vajrācārya – Vābahā (son of Ratna Rāja)
- 48 Satiśa Śākya – Vābahā (son late Lekha Māna)
- 49 Nieśa Śākya – Nyākhācoka (son of Gautam)
- 50 Viman Śākya – Bakhunḍola (son of Birendra Māna)
- 51 Surava Māna Śākya – Jāvalākhel (son of Subhāṣa)
- 52 Sacina Vajrācārya – Dyaḥbahā (son of late Puṣpa Rāja)
- 53 Āśiśa Vajrācārya – Vābahā (son of Triratna)
- 54 Viveka Vajrācārya – Vābahā son of Birendra)
- 55 Nhūja Vajrācārya (son of late Sānu Rāja)
- 56 Sudima Vajrācārya – Dyaḥbahā (son of Sureśa)
- 57 Sandeśa Vajrācārya – Vābahā (son of Ratna Rāja)
- 58 Sugandha Māna Śākya – Vābahā (son of Pharendra)
- 59 Samrāṭa Śākya – Kvālakhu (son of Sudhira Māna)
- 60 Iroja Śākya – Vābahā (son of Surendra)
- 61 Srjita Vajrācārya – Vābahā (son of Rājīva)
- 62 Lakṣmaṇa Vajrācārya – Vābahā son of Jñānendra)
- 63 Śrīnava Vajrācārya – Vābahā (son of Rājīva)

The cycle of the worship in the morning and *ārati* in the evening changes every fortnight. It starts the first day of the fortnight and ends on black or full moon day. The *pālovāla* member gets 1,000 Rupees for *pūjā* expenditures. If the cycle is not accepted from the *pālovāla* family, he has to pay a 2,500 rupee fine. As to the present cycle the five senior most male members did not take their turn and paid their fine.

grandfather Dhanajyoti. The annual death ritual in memory of the ancestral couple is still performed on the eighth day of the dark half of the month of Bhādra (September).

The Houses of the Saṅgha

In summer 1993 the project team mapped the ownership of nine Vajrācārya and eight Śākya houses. The central axis through the shrine almost exactly divided the Vajrācāryas of the northwest from the Śākyas of the southeast.

A generation later, this clear division is no longer valid. The ruin (no. 2) owned by Birendra Mān Śākya is now owned by a Vajrācārya. More importantly, two house owners (the present numbers 17 and 21) apparently do not belong to the *saṅgha*.

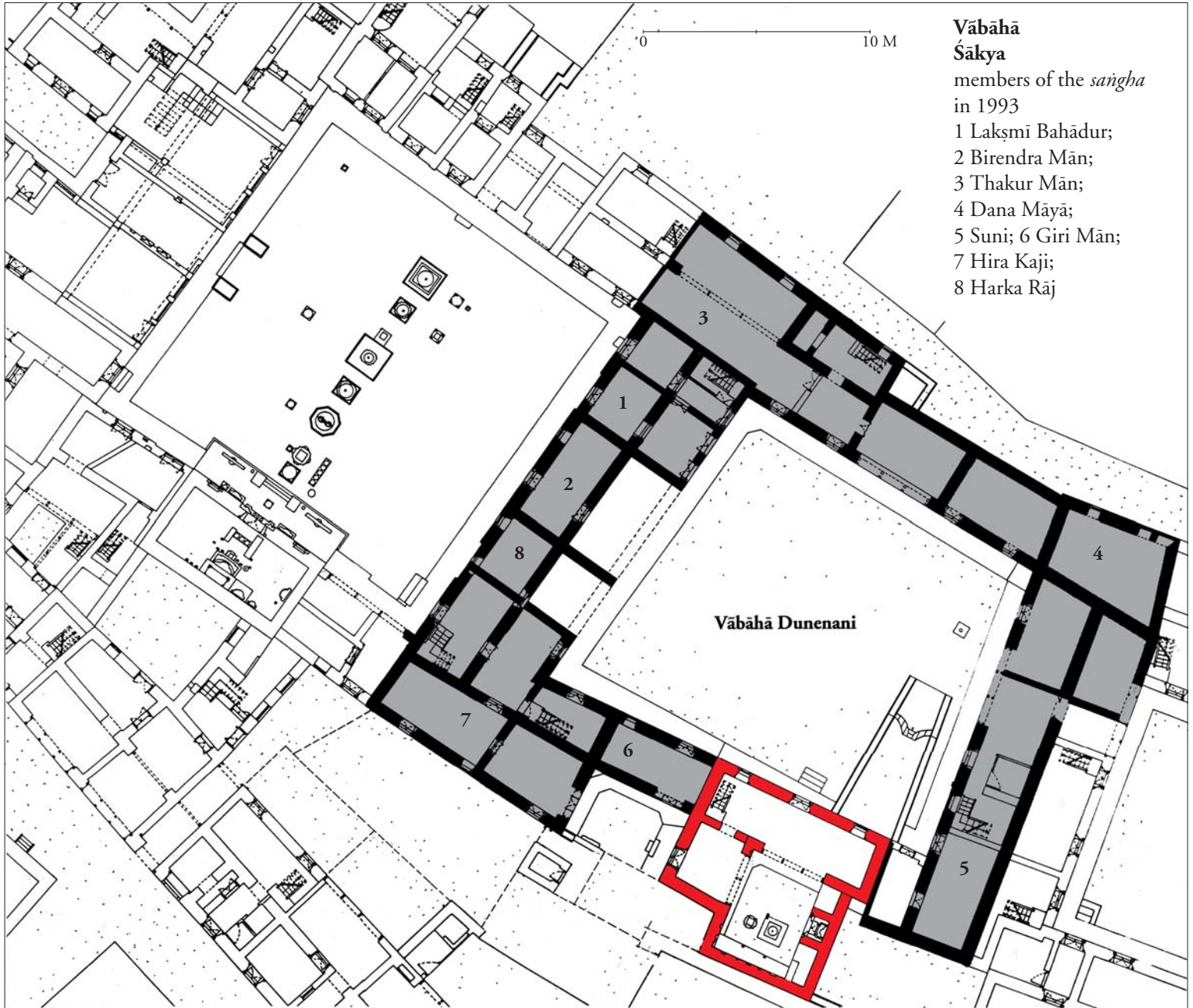
Of the 23 houses mapped around the courtyard in 1993, 13 have been dismantled and rebuilt, in some cases doubling the bulk of the earlier structures. In 2021, only four houses predated the year 1950.

The oldest house is that of Rajib Vajrācārya (son of Kanak Ratna) (no. 5) whose grandfather built it in 1944, as attested by the inscription. One floor was added to the house in the 1990s. Babindra Vajrācārya's house (no. 6) was probably built in the 1960s, similar to Śrī Ratna (son of Panna Ratna) Vajrācārya's house (no. 7). Raju Vajrācārya's (son of Khadga Rāj) house was dismantled and rebuilt in 2005. The house of Amṛta Rāj Vajrācārya (presently no. 17) was inherited by his daughter Tīrtha Māyā, who married Daugal Vajrācārya who belongs to the *saṅgha* of Kvābāhā. She keeps worshipping the tutelary deity of Vābāhā and carries on her tray small, ca five cm high, representations of her father and mother. Her husband bought a small portion of the neighboring house and built the largest house of the courtyard in 2010. The remaining part of the house (presently no. 21) was bought by Jagat Rāj Śākya from Mahābauddha in Kathmandu and rebuilt in 2012.

Thakur Mān Śākya's house (prev. no. 3, see the site map) was rebuilt by his son. Lakṣmi Bahādur Śākya's son Chuma rebuilt the house (prev. no. 1) in 2016. Siddhi Rāj Śākya's son Ratna Rāj bought the house of Birendra Mān (prev. no. 2), which had been in ruins for decades, and rebuilt it in 1995. The son of Harka Rāj Śākya (prev. no. 8), Gautam, rebuilt his house in 2008. The house of Hira Kaji Śākya (previous no. 7) dates to the 1960s.

House number nine belonged to Āsa Māyā Vajrācārya, a childless widow, who donated the entire plot covering 34 square meters to the *saṅgha*. The house had long since been used to provide access to the Āgā of the Kvāpāchē and when it was dismantled in 2002, part of the ground floor was converted into a separate room (*koṭha nirmāna*) in order to house the icon of a Buddha (*bhagavāna murti*).





Vābāhā

List of houses owned
by Vajrācārya and Śākya.

Recorded by Niels Gutschow and
Nutandhar Śarmā in October 2021

Houses built from 1594 to 1950

- 1 The Kvapāchē dates to 1594; the shrine was provided with a tympanum in 1634, then repaired and roofed again in 1654, and the struts made in 1680. Presumably, the building received in its present shape around the end of the 17th century; the ridge turret was renewed in 1993.
- 2 The house of Birendra Mān Śākya preserves part of the columned ground floor arcade, and windows with triple openings dating to the second half of the 17th century.
- 3 The house of Hirendra Mān Śākya, son of Giri Mān, which dated to about the end of the 17th century, collapsed in the 2015 earthquake; however, the ground floor survived. Hirendra now lives in Bakundol.
- 4 One of the two houses of Jñānendra Vajrācārya, son of Bikram Rāj, built ca 1925, was inherited by his father from his elder brother Vajrarāj who died childless.
- 5 The House of Rajib Vajrācārya, son of Kanak Ratna, was built in 1944 as testified by an inscription above the second floor window. Bikram Raj and Kanak Ratna were brothers.

Houses built from 1950 to 2000

- 6 The house of Babin Vajrācārya, son of the brother of Nila Ratna, built ca 1960.
- 7 The house of Ratna Vajrācārya, son of Pannā Ratna, built ca 1970.
- 8 The house of Phalendra Śākya, son of Barta Mān, built ca 1980; he later extended it in order to use part of the small lane for his staircase and to add a shop to the south.
- 9 The Digichē, built in 1682, was dismantled in ca 1982 and then rebuilt as a reinforced concrete structure, using late 19th-century windows salvaged from demolition sites.
- 10 One of the houses of Gyanendra Vajrācārya (see 4), built in 1993.
- 11 The house of Ratna Rāj Vajrācārya, brother of Babin. He bought the plot from Trilok Mān Śākya, whose whereabouts are unknown.
- 12 The house of Gautam Śākya, son of Harkha Rāj, built ca 1995.
- 13 This was the house of Asa Kaji Vajrācārya, Jñānendra's father's brother. Since he died childless, his eldest brother's son sold the house to Asta Āvale.

Houses built from 2001 to 2020

- 14 The house of Bikas Śākya, son of Thakur Mān, built in 2001.
- 15 The house offered by Āśā Māyā Vajrācārya, was dismantled in 2005, and rebuilt as a "God-house" (Bhagavānchē).
- 16 The house of Rāju Vajrācārya, son of Khaḍga Rāj, built ca 2010.
- 17 The house of Amṛta Rāja's daughter Tirtha Maya, who married Dhaugal Vajrācārya from the Kvābāhā Saṅgha, built in 2012.
- 18 The house of Sanu Kaji Śākya, built in 2013; the ground floor arcade was not kept.
- 19 The house of Chuman Śākya, son of Lakṣmī Bahādur, built in 2016.
- 20 The house of Dharma Rāj Vajrācārya, built in 2018. In 2021 he donated a silver chain for the Buddha.
- 21 The house of Jagat Rāj Śākya from Mahābaudha, Patan, who bought the plot from Harka Rāj, built in 2019.
- 22 The house of Satiś Śākya, son of Lekh Mān, built in 2019.
- 23 The Kacābāhā of Vābāhā, collapsed in the 2015 earthquake and was rebuilt in 2020.

a The house of a Mānandhar, who sold the house to a Jośi in 2005.

b The house of Āśā Rām Āvale, who bought it from a Citrakār, built in 2018.

Vābhā
 Location of of 23 houses
 owned by Vajracārya
 (rendered grey) and Śākya;
 Kvāpāchē, Digichē,
 Bhagavānchē, and Kacābhā
 rendered yellow.
 Mapped by Niels Gutschow
 in October, 2021



Vābhā

Rajib Vajrācārya demonstrates the 102 cm long pole (*gābhāsī*), literally the “wooden bell” and the clapper, donated in 1871. The pole is clanged 108 times in the morning to indicate the beginning of worship and again in the evening to conclude it. Photographs by Niels Gutschow, October 9, 2021



The Courtyard (*cuka*) and the Shrine Building (Kvāpāchē)

The first reference to the Sūrya Varman (also named °*dharmā*, °*brahmā* or °*varṇa*) Śaṃskārita Mahāvihāra dates to 1442. Presumably the courtyard had at that time the same size as today and the shrine was housed in a three-story structure. The members of the monastic community, the *saṅgha*, shared the plots within the quadrangle, with the houses being two bays deep (ca 5 to 6 m). Today the courtyard is accessible on all four sides through covered passages.

For 1596 the renewal of the roof is mentioned in an inscription (no. 1) and for 1634 the offering of a tympanum (no. 2), installed above the doorway. In the middle of the 17th century King Siddhinarasiṃha Malla initiated a reorganization of the Buddhist monasteries. The king “added” Vābāhā to the twelve principal *bāhās* and “laid out the rules,” as an early 19th-century chronicle tells us.⁴⁹ It seems quite possible that in this context not only Vābāhā but also Jyobāhā (also called Dyaḥbāhā) and Dhaubāhā – all three located in the northeastern sector of the city – were revived or even resettled.

The aforementioned tympanum was replaced by one in brass in 1873 and kept in the Digichē until it was recovered in 2005 to crown the doorway made in the house adjoining the shrine building to provide access to a chamber called Bhagavānchē where a new icon of the Buddha was installed (inscription no. 34: *murti sthāpana*).

At the time when the doorway’s tympanum was donated, which features Śākyamuni Buddha, framed by Prajñāpāramitā and Padmapāṇi to represent the Three Jewels (*triratna*), the shrine must have already attained its present shape. Twenty-two years later, the *sarvasaṅgha*, the members of the monastic community, established a gilded deity (*devatā*) and provided it with a tympanum (in wood) in 1658. It is probably this icon or a much earlier one that is kept as a treasured, worn-out relic in the sanctum of the

shrine. A similarly worn-out icon of Karuṇāmaya and fragments of the tympanum and the pillars of the throne are also kept. Twenty years later, in 1678, an inscription in stone (no. 3) recalls that the temple (*devalā*) was raised (*thakasyam*) and that masons covered the roof with tiles and added a roof turret which was crowned by a gilt finial (*gajū*). Even a triple-layered ceremonial umbrella was added and a flag. Four years later, one more umbrella was added to the finial and in 1680 six struts were installed (inscription no. 5) to support the eaves of the roof; this was most probably done to replace earlier struts, since in Newar architecture the roof must be supported by struts. Renewing the roof tiles after a period of 78 years is not unusual. However, in all probability, an entirely new building was erected that was topped by a turret of the style many of Patan’s monastic quadrangles of the *bāhā* and *bahī* type. The motifs of the cornice above the ground floor, and the details of the prominent first floor window with its five openings (*pasukājhyāḥ*) can be dated to the end of the 17th century, but the two small latticed windows suggest a later, early 18th century origin. The early 18th century shape of the building is still preserved today.

Twenty years after the offering of the struts, one member of the community must have donated his plot within the quadrangle in 1700 for the erection of a three-storied Digichē, a “house (*chē*)” which shelters the ancestral deity (*digidyah*) of the lineage of Vajrācāryas. With this initiative, the reshaping of the courtyard over a period of 30 years began.

First, a *caitya* was set up in 1727 by reassembling four Licchavi-era 7th century fragments, of which two remained invisible within a wide platform. The original, probably six-tiered pinnacle was replaced by a eleven-tiered one, reflecting contemporary dogmatic requirements. It remains unknown whether a fragment of a Licchavicaitya was there before, for a *caitya* was always a constitutive element of a monastic courtyard. A pillar with the statue (*sālik*) of the donor couple stands right behind the *caitya*’s platform. Eighteen months later the courtyard was paved.

In 1728 another *caitya* and a *dharmadhātumaṇḍala* were sponsored by the same donor couple (inscription no. 10), however on a level that appears to be thirteen cm higher than the pavement laid a year earlier. On that same level, in 1734 a third *caitya* was built by a Śākya family in the shape of a Śikharakūṭacaitya with seven circles of lotus leaves. A new pavement is recorded 28 months later. Inscription number 12 acknowledges that the shrine and the courtyard (*pivane* = outside) were paved with oiled tiles. Moreover, the decaying walls of the house of the monastery (*bāhāgrha*) were restored (*danāva*). It cannot be said what exactly was restored but it must be assumed that maintenance was carried out, which at most other sites is described by the term *jīrṇoddhāra*. This was probably the time when the latticed windows on first floor were introduced.

In 1742 the western entrance to the courtyard received two lions as guardians and in 1750 the family who had a *caitya* donated in 1734 had the doorway of the shrine covered in gilt copper repoussé. In 1773 the two small blind windows framing the shrine doorway received panels in stone. In the same year a new “Akṣobhya Buddha Bhagavāna” in stone replaced the “worn-out” old one (inscription no. 17). In 1857 another icon representing the Kvācapāladevatā was presented, made of gilt copper. The old one in stone was kept and the new one in copper simply placed in front. This configuration is still preserved today.

An intensive building phase followed from 1873 to 1890. Within 17 years, the original wooden tympanum was replaced by one in brass in 1873 (inscription no. 21), two bell-stands were erected on the plinth of the Kvāpāchē, a ritual firepit was built, and in 1882 the fourth *caitya* was set up in the form of a Jvālāvalicaitya. In 1890 a large sceptre (*vajra*) was placed on top of the *dharmadhātu-maṇḍala* and a large bell-stand installed on the plinth (no. 26). From that year until 1993, only one substantial offering was made by covering the latticed door leaves that provide access to the sanctum, with brass repoussé in

1925. About 30 years later, a framed niche to the left of the doorway was created to incorporate four prayer wheels without an inscription, mirroring a Tibetan influence which surfaced again fifty years later.

A new phase of interventions and offerings started in the fall of 1992 when the Patan Conservation and Development Programme decided to initiate a pilot conservation project. The roof turret (*phucā*) had partly collapsed and the roof of the shrine had been covered with corrugated iron sheet. The aim was, not to dismantle the base of the turret but to consolidate its support on third floor level without introducing steel beams. The latticework for the upper portion of the turret and the roof was made by the carpentry workshop of Indra Kaji Śilpakār and Radhe Shyam Śilpakār from Bhaktapur. The pinnacle in the shape of a *caitya*, topped by a ceremonial umbrella, was reinstalled in May 1993.

While designing and implementing that project, it was suggested to the community of Vajrācārya and Śākya that the the Licchavicaitya be dismantled and the platform raised to the present pavement level in order to regain the platform’s former, 18th-century height of 45 cm. Moreover, two Licchavi-era elements, concealed within the platform, were to be lifted in order to form the base of the newly assembled *caitya*. This effort was undertaken to confirm the unique importance of this outstanding example in the history of Newar architecture.

Four years later in 1997, a new era of beautification began with the encasement of the *bāhā*’s ground floor by a grill of iron bars (inscription no. 33). A Śākya couple acted as donors. For the first time, the monastery’s name was provided in the inscription as “Om̐bāhā.” The grill created a kind of cage that provides a sense of security in times of rampant theft. Except for the copper plate inscriptions, there is, however, no object of artistic or historical value on the elevation of the shrine building that would justify such a visually imposing intervention. The idea of the cage is therefore not based on rational considerations; rather, it

seemed to be mandatory as an expression of care and reverence. As the shelter of the tutelary deity, the shrine building is seen as a vulnerable object in need of protection at times of great social, political, and economic change. Since the 1960s, theft has resulted in great losses in the public sphere; while on the other hand, the monastic communities and the caretakers of temples were sometimes entangled in selling the very treasures that they were entrusted with. These treasures had usually been exhibited once a year during the month sacred to Buddhists, Gūlā (approx. August), in the arcade of one of the wings of the quadrangle. In the beginning of the 21st century this was rarely observed and during the pandemic it was given up altogether.

Early in the 1970s Kathmandu's Karuṇāmaya temple at Janabāhā was engaged with artistic grillwork featuring lotus flowers that were gaily colored in blue and yellow. This served as a prototype followed by many monasteries. In about 2010, at Tabāhā in Patan a high fence was even made around the 17th century triple-tiered temple and surrounding votive objects. Beyond aspects of security, these fences and grills must be seen as another structural layer, encasing sacred objects that ask for veneration. Modernity enabled industrial production to offer new building material for beautifications. Such efforts provided welcome opportunities to accumulate merit. As a result, unrefined, raw corten rods imported from India are seen as the appropriate material to serve the purpose of beautification.

In 2002 the tympanum was repaired by replacing one panel in the upper left section, and in 2005 the former house of the deceased and childless Āśā Māyā Vajrācārya was dismantled and rebuilt as a reinforced concrete structure without the historic sloped roof to house the God-House (*bhagavānchē*) for an icon of the deity (using the general term *bhagavāna murti*, not the term Śākyamuni Buddha). The façade was made up of regular bricks (*desiapā*) painted red. At the first floor level, two early 20th-century windows of upright proportions were

installed. From the income of the deity's shrine 3.5 lakh (350,000) Rupees were spent and 40,000 Rupees were offered by five individuals. The wooden tympanum which was removed from the principal doorway in 1873 was then reinstalled above the simple entrance of the newly created room. In 2009 a Śākya family from Dyaḥbāhā donated a canopy above the Licchavicaitya and had prayer wheels (*māne*) affixed to the four supporting steel pipes. A couple of years later, the community of Vābāhā joined in this effort to accumulate karmic merit by affixing four prayer wheels at of the *dharmadhātumaṇḍala*, and a canopy and prayer wheels on steel pipes around the Śikharakūṭacaitya and the Jvalāvalicaitya. Offering prayer wheels has become popular in recent years. In 2008 Śraddha Vajrācārya, at that time the *bāhā*'s eldest *thapāju*, introduced a small pavillion for a large prayer wheel measuring 90 by 90 cm within a roofed structure to the left of the shrine's plinth before he passed away in 2020.

In 2015 a shrine dedicated to a manifestation of Mañjuśrī, Āryanāmasaṅgīti, was erected on the level of the courtyard to the right (west) of the plinth, supported by a pillar of molded bricks, which supports the inscribed marble panel praising the karmic merit (*punya-kāryā*) of 31 named donors. In a similar manner to the cage created for the shrine building itself, the newly erected independent shrine of the transcendent Bodhisattva was encaged by steel bars on all four sides, creating an outer transparent box measuring 116 by 109 cm.

The latest occurrence of an offering is recorded on August 9th, 2021, when a family of Vajrācārya offered a long banner in brass to the Kvāpāchē, which extends from the finial on top of the roof turret beyond the eaves of the lower roof, and features Śākyamuni Buddha at the bottom.



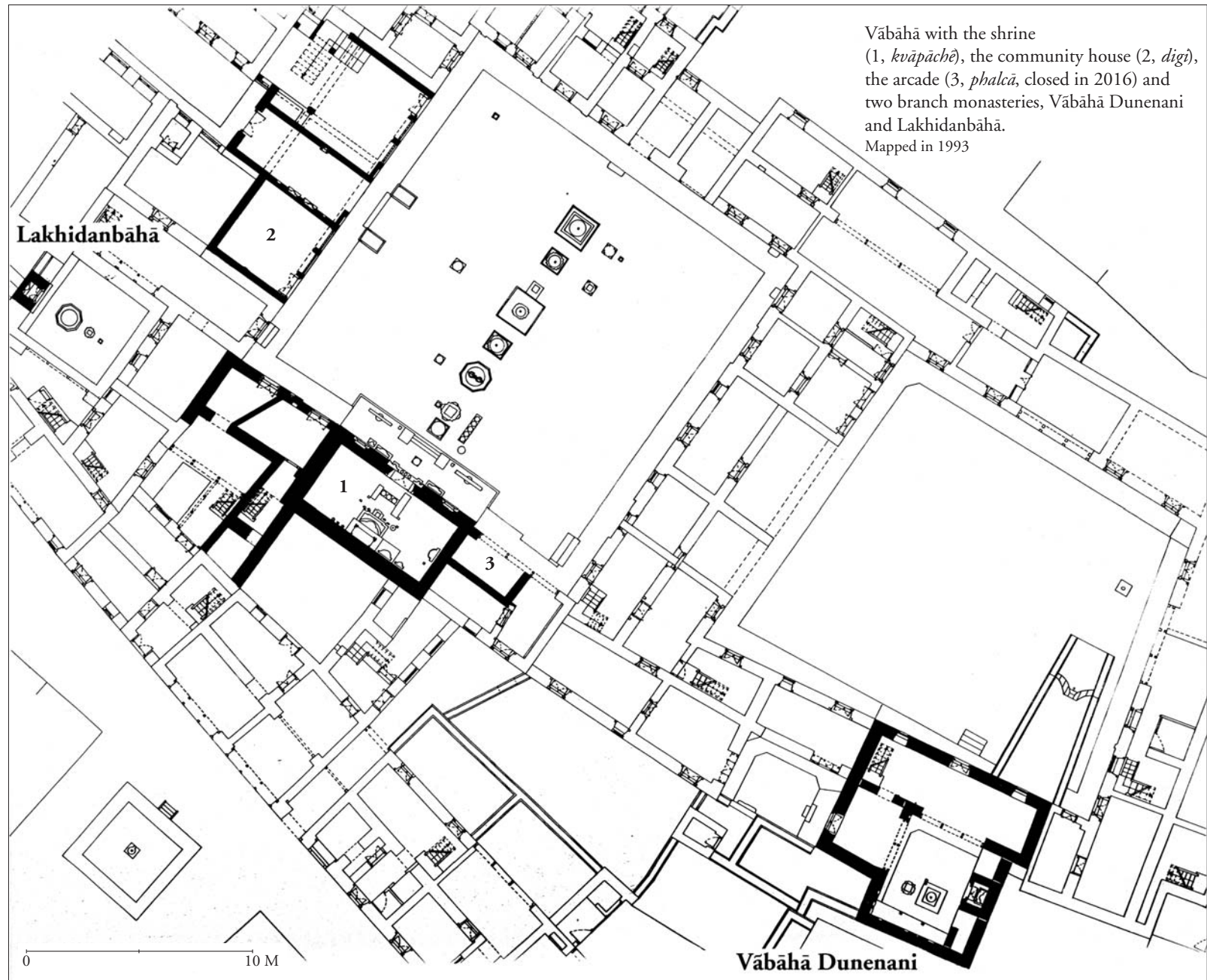
Vābhā

View of the courtyard
towards southwest.

Photograph by Niels Gutschow,
August 1992



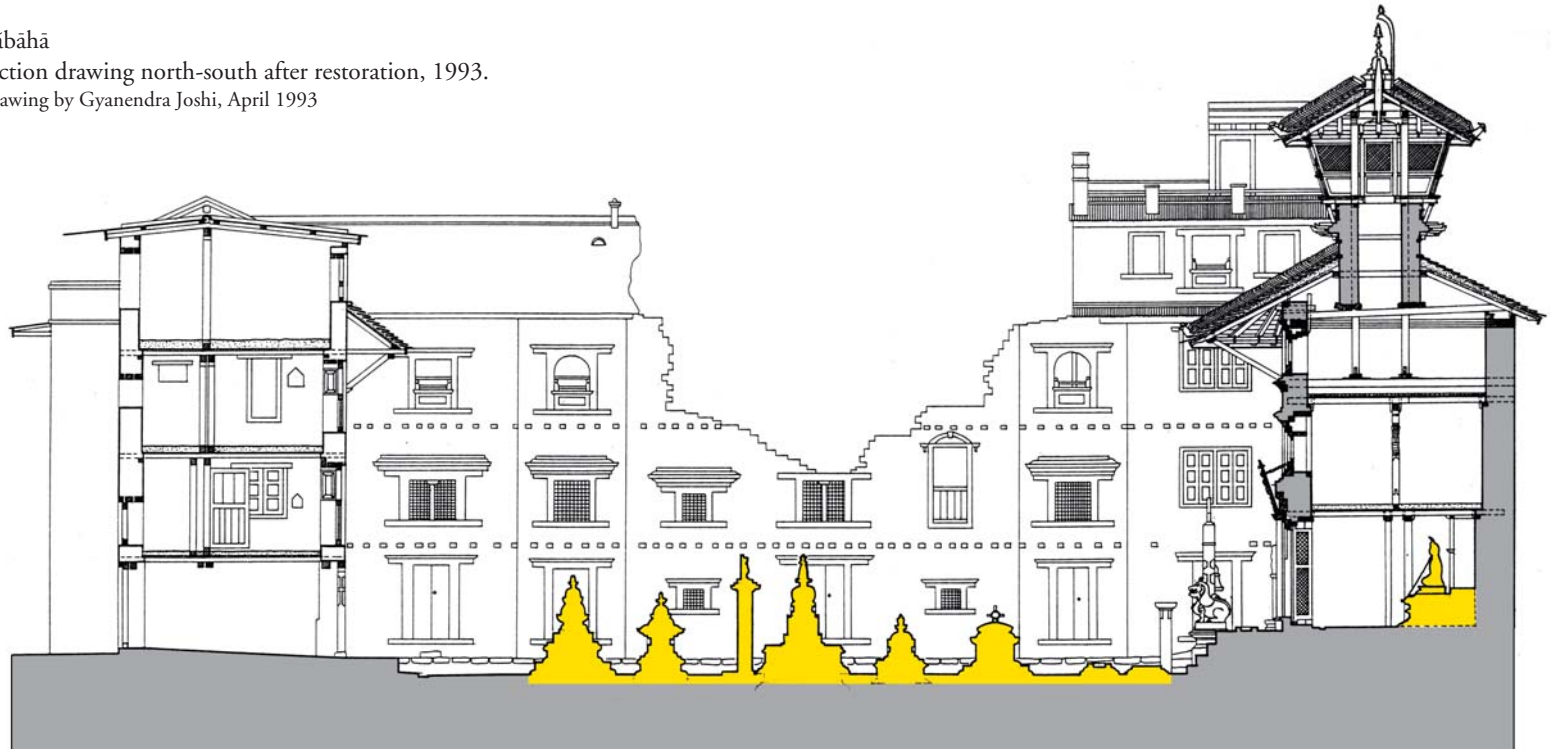
Vābhā
View of the courtyard
towards southwest.
Photograph by Niels Gutschow,
August 1992



Vābhā

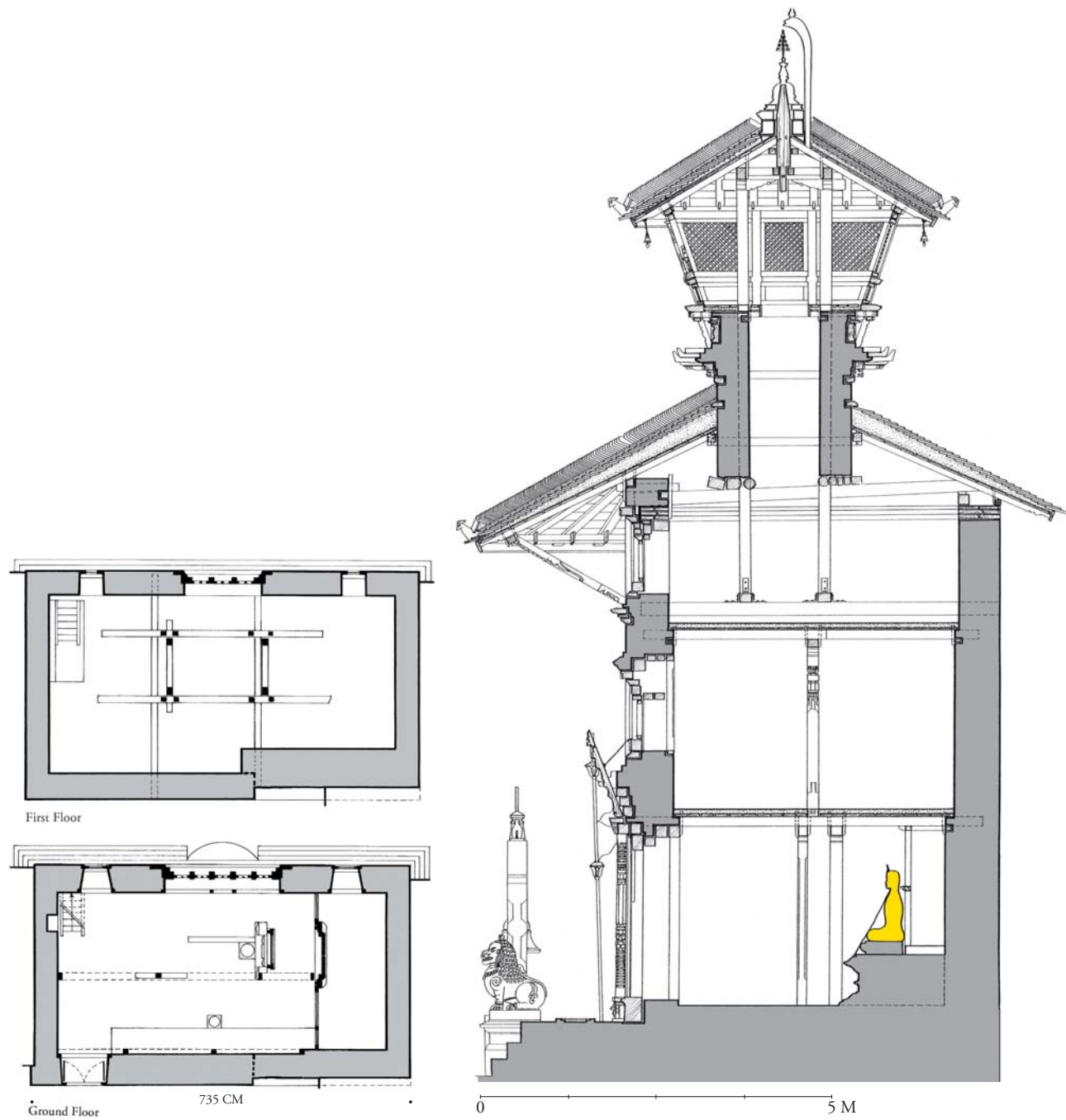
Section drawing north-south after restoration, 1993.

Drawing by Gyanendra Joshi, April 1993

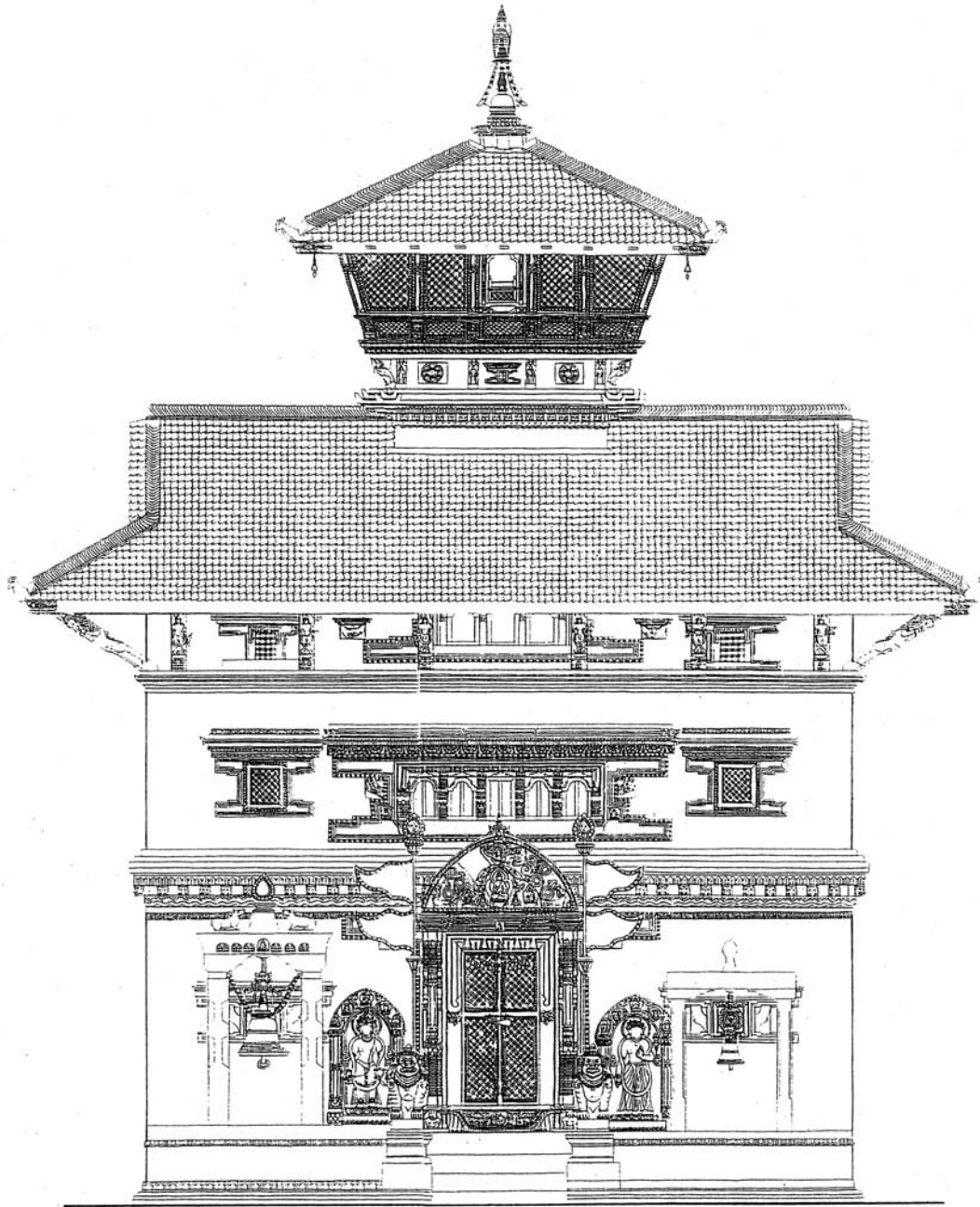


0 5 10 M

Vābhā
Section of the shrine
in its restored shape.
Drawing by Gyanendra Joshi,
April 1993



Vābhā
Elevation of the shrine with
its restored roof turret.
Drawing by Gyanendra Joshi, 1992

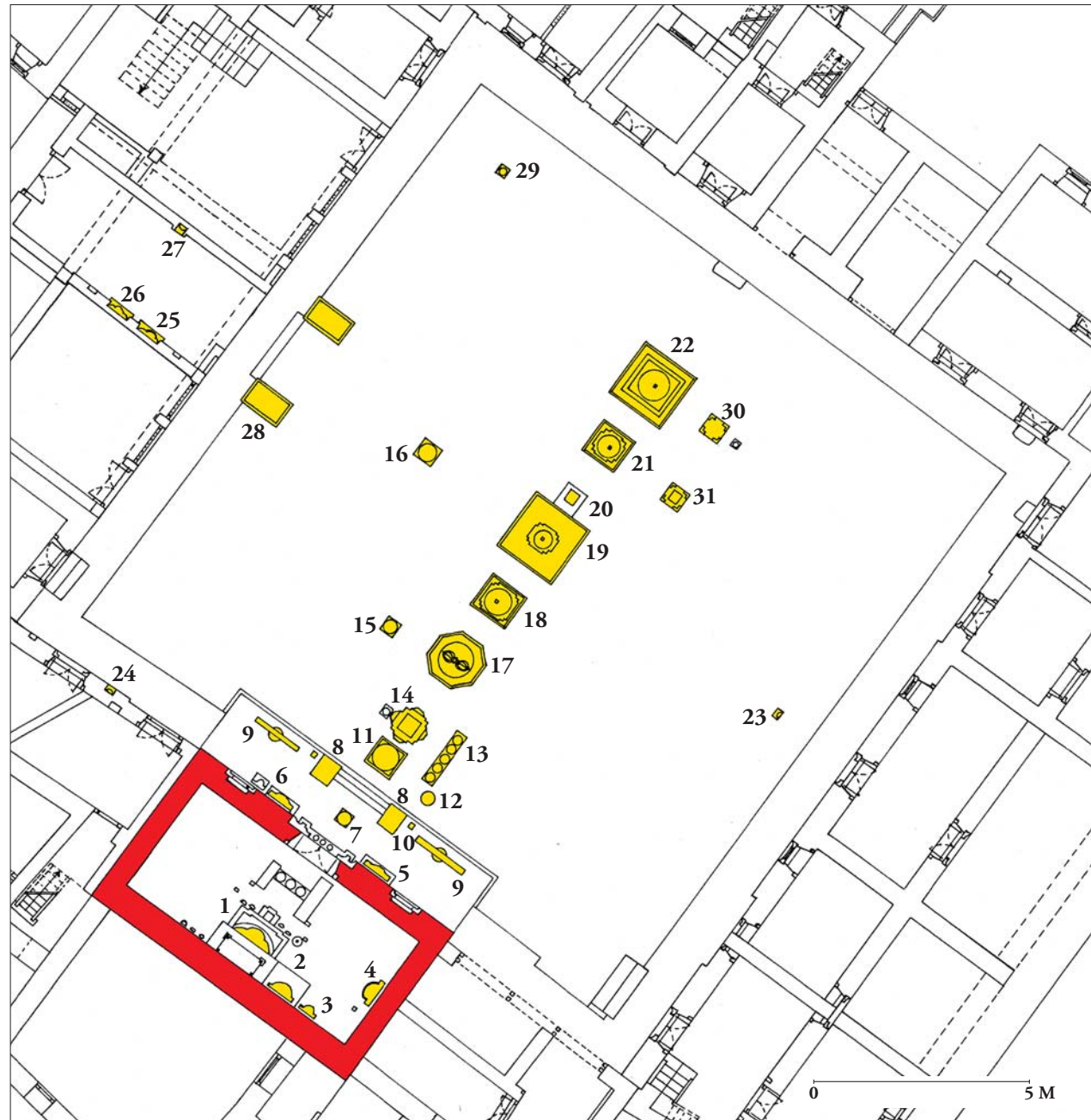


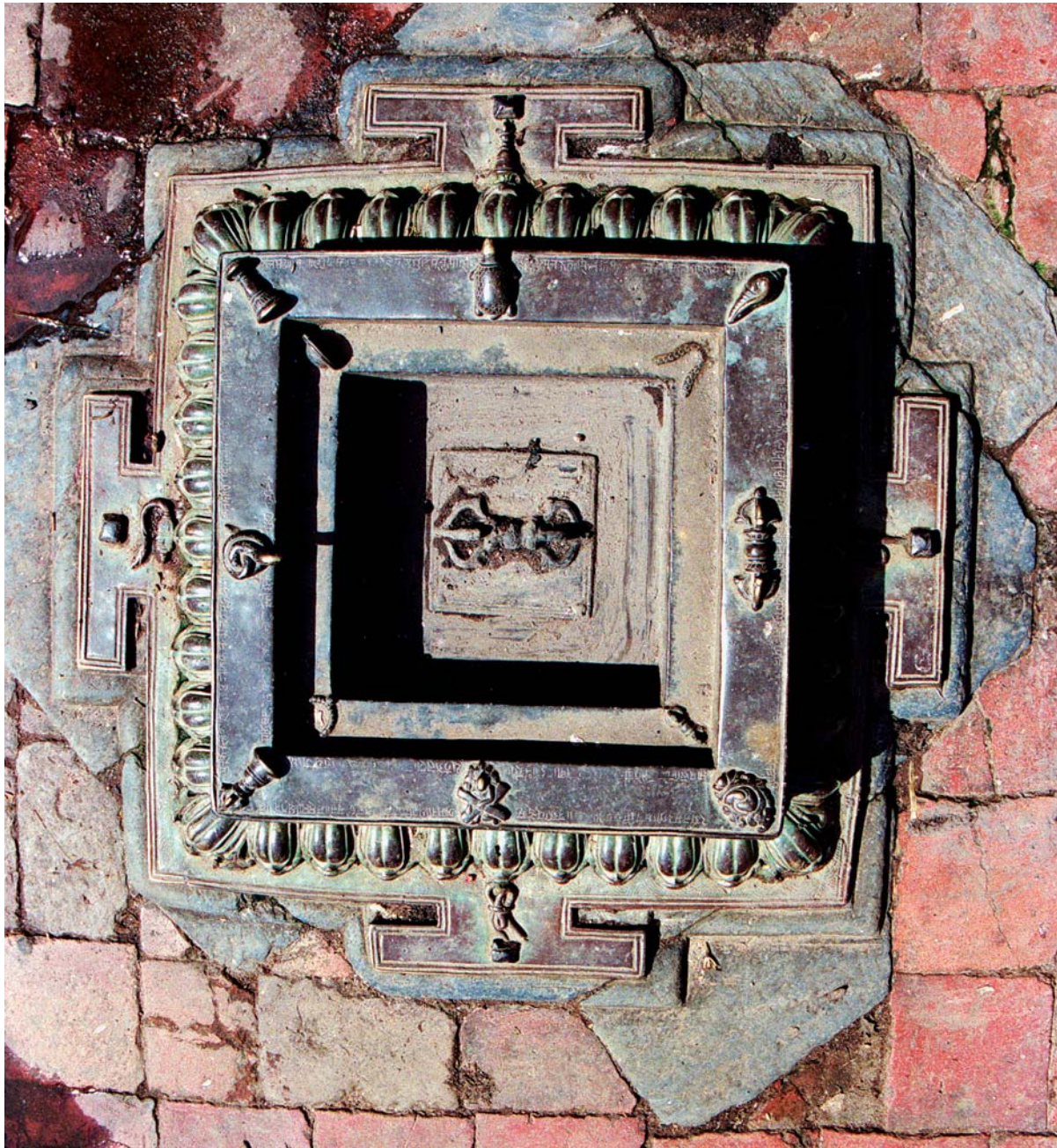
0 2 M

Vābhā

Inventory of deities and votive offerings within the monastic courtyard.

- 1) Akṣobhya (in stone, the *kvāpādyah* dated 1857?);
- 2) Akṣobhya (wood, 15th c. ?);
- 3) Karunāmaya (wood, 14th c. ?);
- 4) head of Dīpaṅkara;
- 5) Āju=Amṛtajyoti;
- 6) Aji=Lakṣmījyoti; 7) *jaḡēsala* (pit for *homa*); 8) pair of protective lions; 9) two bell-stands (1876, 1890); 10) pair of ceremonial flags;
- 11) *mandah* (lotus stone, discarding *pinḍa*); 12) pillar (to support the *kuśibva*);
- 13) stone with five lotus flowers (Pañcabuddha) and *śrīyantra*); 14) *jaḡēsala* (pit for *homa*), 1879; 15) *maṅḍal* (lotus stone); 16) *maṅḍal* (lotus stone); 17) Dharmadhātumaṅḍala, dated 1728;
- 18) Caitya, dated 1728;
- 19) Licchavicaitya, 7th c., reestablished 1727; 20) pillar supporting Amṛtajyoti and Lakṣmījyoti, dated 1728;
- 21) Padmāvalicaitya, 1728;
- 22) Jvālāvalicaitya, 1882;
- 23) stone marking the place to erect Yamadyah;
- 24) Akṣobhya in a niche;
- 25) Gaṇeśa guardian of the gate; 26) Mahākāla, guarding the gate; 27) Hanumān, guarding the gate; 28) pair of lions, 1742; 29) Kṣetrapāla (lost); 30), 31) *jaḡēsala* (pits for *homa*).





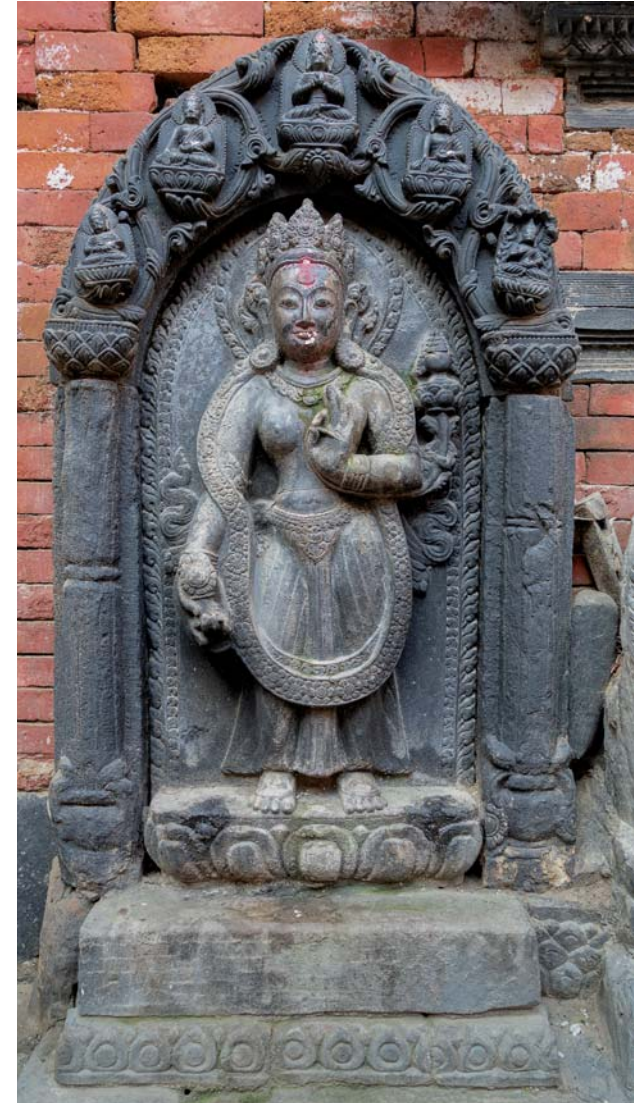
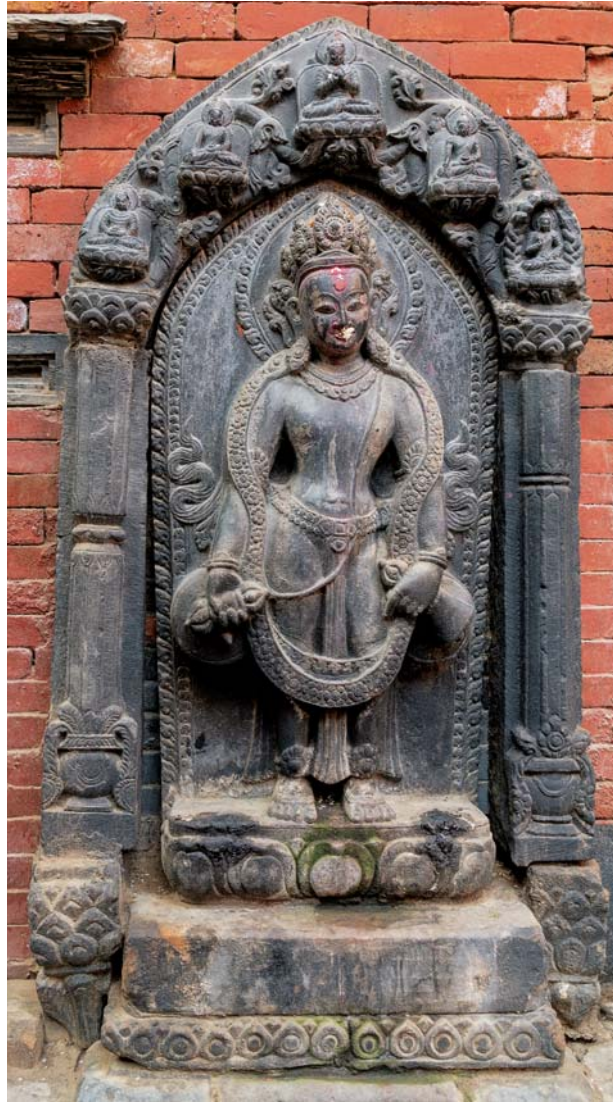
Vābhā

Pit (*jagēśāla*) for the performance of fire rituals (*homā*), installed in 1879. A *vajra* motif is carved in the center of the pit where the fire is kept burning during the ritual. On that level, the pit has four motifs in the corners: a wine cup (*pātra*), a walnut (*khasīma*), a garland, and a *vajra*. Four unfired pots (*kacibhā*) are kept here, for various kinds (maximum 18) of grains and pulses (*vivah*) used during the ritual. On the rim of the pit appear the eight recognition symbols of the Aṣṭadīkṣā, the guardians of the universe: *nāga* (for Varuṇa, West), *tvāyadeva* (lamp for Vāyu), *kāpali* (tortoise for Kubera, north), *saṅkha* (conch for Isāna), *vajra* (for Indra, east), flame (for Agni), burning corpse (for Yama, south), and *ghaṅṭa* (bell for Nairṭa). On top of these, the *aṣṭadīkṣā* (eight directional flags of Aṣṭadīkṣā) are displayed during the ritual. The identity of the four symbols on the surrounding metal platform could not be ascertained.

Photograph by Niels Gutschow, August 28, 1992

Vābāhā

A pair of guardians, framing the doorway of the shrine. Left, Vajrasattva (holding *vajra* and *ghaṇṭā*), right, Sarasvatī (holding mirror and – indirectly – vermillion container). The tympanum features Vairocana in the apex, Ratnasambhava and Akṣobhya on the left, Amitābha and Amoghasiddhi on the right. The undated relief of the couple is identified as Āju and Āji, or as Amṛtajyoti and his wife Devajāni, who acted as donors in 1728. Photographs Ashesh Rajbansh, October 11, 2021





Vābāhā

Detail of the two windows framing the doorway of the shrine. Inscription (no. 16) on the inner circle of the lotus flower, enclosing Amitābha, simply mentions the offering of the deities (*mūrti*) in April 1773.

In a rare variation, the central latticework of the windows has been replaced by reliefs depicting lotus flowers carved in stone. Photographs Ashesh Rajbansh, October 11, 2021



Vābhā

The tympanum above the doorway of the sanctum, donated in 1873. It features Vajrasattva in the apex, covered by a ceremonial umbrella, and a finial with the wish-granting gem on top, flanked by fluttering scarves. The central trilobed arch is occupied by the Three Jewels. In the centre Buddha Śākyamuni on his elephant throne flanked by a pair of sacred pots. On his left, Prajñāpāramitā as the manifestation of the Teachings (*dharmā*)

and Padmapāni on his right as the manifestation of the community (*saṅgha*). The arch shows Garuḍa in the center, his talons clutching the legs of a pair of snakes. The one on his right was replaced in 2002. A pair of celestial spirits (*kinmara*) with the hindquarters of birds guards the bottom ends of the arch, wielding flags. The birds' tails create lotus foliage that bears six four-handed female Bodhisattvas.

Photographs Ashesh Rajbansh, October 11, 2021



Vābhā

The tympanum (*torāṇa*), which in 1634 was offered to mark the doorway to the sanctum. It was removed in 1873 to be replaced by an uncarved block of wood, then covered by a new one molded in brass sheet. It was stored in the first floor Āgā and recovered in 2005 to be placed above the doorway of the newly constructed shrine to the west of the Kvāpāchē.

Vajrasattva crowns the arch under a triple umbrella on top of Garuḍa, who clutches the legs of a pair of snakes (to his right *nāgarāja*, to his left his consort,

a *nāgini*). Pairs of lions and dragons confirm the protective character of the scene above three framed niches, which represent the Three Jewels: in the center Buddha Śākyamuni on his elephant throne, to his left Prajñāpāramitā, and to his right Padmapāṇi.

The bottom ends of the arch are guarded by celestial spirits (*kinnara*) with the hindquarter of a bird, which hold banners that dissolve into pearls, thus signifying the flow of water.

Photograph Ashesh Rajbansh, October 11, 2021

Vābāhā

Relief on top of a pillar,
installed in summer 1728.

The effigy portrays Amṛtajyoti
Vajrācārya and his wife
Devajāni, who donated
a new *caitya* and
a *dhamadhātmaṇḍala*.

As was usual, the donor is
depicted larger than his wife,
with his headgear causing him
to appear even larger. Both are
seen in the gesture of
salutation, respect, and
adoration (*namaskāra*).

The composition features a
certain symmetry: him with
his left knee touching the
ground and turning slightly
to his right, her with her right
knee touching the ground and
slightly turned toward him;
their gowns dropping across
the edge of the lotus throne.

Photograph Ashesh Rajbansh,
October 11, 2021



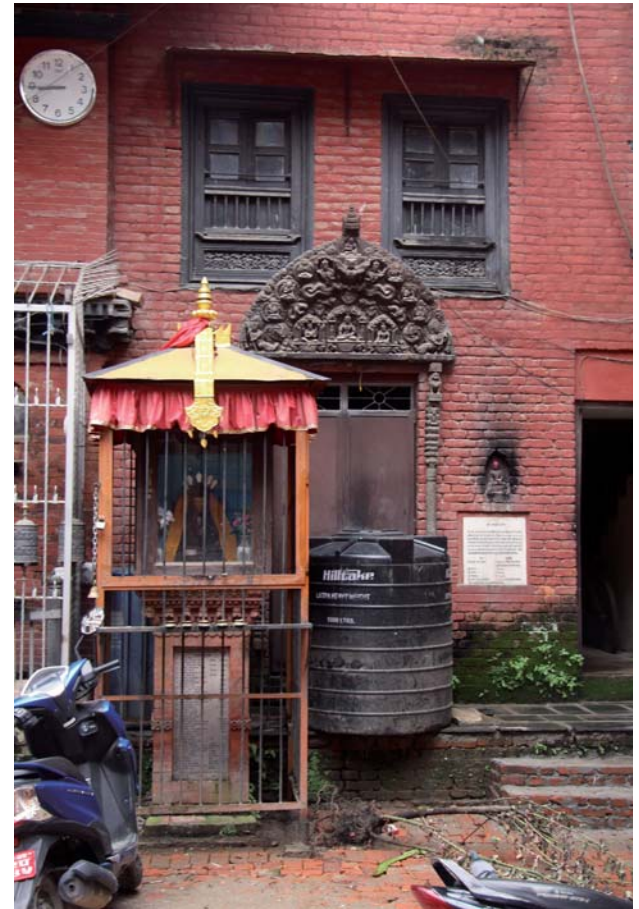


Vābahā

Left, the roofed pavilion (90 x 90 cm) with a large prayer wheel was donated by Śraddha Vajracārya in 2008, at that time the senior of the community's elders. The inscription on the protective grill records its donation by a Śākya couple in Vikram Saṃvat 2054, the 5th day of the month of Āśvina (September 21, 1997).

Right, the roofed shrine of Āryanāmasaṅgīti, established in April 2015 and placed on a pillar. The flag was donated in August 2021.

Photographs by Niels Gutschow, October 26, 2021





Vābāhā

Since the 1990s the courtyard and its built environment has changed fundamentally: The ground floor of the shrine, Kvāpāchē, is encased by a grill of iron rods in 1997, two shrines left (prayer wheel), and right (Āryanāmasaṅgīti) added in 2008 and 2015. The house to the right of the Kvāpāchē was dismantled in 2005 and rebuilt with a Bhagavāchē on ground floor, the banner was installed in August 2021 and a clock affixed to the wall. The roof of the house built in 1944 (yellow, no. 5 on the map) had been

replaced by a fourth story; the house to the left of the Kvāpāchē (no. 18) was dismantled in 2013 and replaced by a five-story house.

A lamp post and a post for electrical and telephone wires were installed in the early 2000s. Three *caityas* are framed by steel pipes bearing prayer wheels; a canopy was added to two of these in the late 2008.

Some 15 motorbikes are parked there in the nighttime; the 18th-century tile pavement (*cikāapā*) was removed in summer 2021, to be paved with large-size red bathroom tiles, produced in India.

Photograph by Niels Gutschow, October 3, 2021

The tentative history of replacements of the tutelary deity (Kvāpādyah), Akṣobhya Buddha Bhagavāna

For the tutelary deity of the shrine a couple of historic layers can be identified. Two wooden deities are kept here, which seem to predate the 17th or even 15th century. A large statue of Karuṇāmaya / Avalokiteśvara survives in a mutilated state, kept unattended as a relic in the southeastern corner of the sanctum.⁵⁰ The second deity represents Buddha Śākyamuni. Its poor state of preservation suggests an early date; however, this icon could also in fact be the “gilded deity” (*devatā*) that the *sarvasaṅgha*, the members of the monastic community, donated in 1658 (inscription no. 3) and provided with a wooden tympanum. Fragments of the tympanum and the pillars of the throne surround are still kept in the sanctum. The fact that both the deity and the throne survive only in fragments suggests a degree of neglect that is difficult to imagine. Another option would suggest that the wooden deity dates to an earlier phase of the monastery’s history and was only replaced at the end of the 18th century, because it was “worn-out”. In that case, the “gilded deity” refers to a different representation of the Buddha, which has not been preserved.

Whatever the case may be, a third statue, this one of stone, representing “Akṣobhya Buddha Bhagavāna” was offered in 1773 (inscription no. 17) by a couple of Citrakāra, the community of painters, because the old one was “completely worn-out”. This icon became visible in February 1993 when another one offered at a later date was removed to allow fundamental repairs to the entire building to be undertaken. Akṣobhya is supported by a full-fledged pedestal with roof moldings with characteristic upswept corners.

In 1857 (inscription no. 19) an extended family of Vajrācāryas offered a deity of fire-gilded copper and pledged the income of some 1,010 square meters of agricultural land for the annual rituals. This icon was placed in front of the older, slightly smaller one in stone and later covered by a cape-like sheet of brass in an effort to garb the deity. At the same time, the pillars of the former throne were replaced by a pair of standing guardians, identifiable as Āju (Vajrasattva

with scepter and bell) and Āji (with mirror and vermilion container). These are worked in copper repoussé, with lotus flowers on top. The missing tympanum was intended to be supported by the lotus pedestals but this was only installed in the 2000s. Mediocre craftsmanship testifies to its recent origin. The cusped arch has Garuḍa at the apex, grasping a pair of snakes (*nāga* and *nāginī*) with his talons. The tails of the snakes end among lotus scrolls without establishing an explicit connection to the foliated tails of the pair of Makara at the bottom of the arch.

In 1993 the deity had three feather-like ornaments (*kīkīpa*) fastened to an arch behind the crown. In 2021 eleven were counted, of which four were offered by the local women’s group in August 2021. In that year, the sheet of brass had been covered by embroidered cloth and the deity was garlanded with two long necklaces of ancient Nepalese rupee coins bordered by rings of brass and honored by two yellow and white scarfs.

Behind the deity a panel of sheet metal on wood is painted with the five colors of the Tathāgatas (yellow = Ratnasmbhava; blue = Akṣobhya; white = Vairocana; red = Amitābha; green = Amoghasiddhi).

In front of the principal tutelary deity, installed in 1857, is a smaller version of Buddha Śākyamuni crafted in monolithic stone, with a large lotus base, the leaves of which turn both upwards and downwards. This figure appears to have been somewhat too large for the molded base below. This base was probably created in 1658 to support the “gilded deity” offered by the monastic community – in contradiction to the conclusions presented above. The figure in stone replaced an earlier one which was stolen at the end of the 1980s. Thieves broke a hole in the rear wall and stole a number of valuable items from the sanctum. The photograph taken in August 1992 shows a layer of corrugated sheet iron which was installed after the break-in in order to increase security. In recent years the new figure has received an embroidered garb with a large swastika sewed on. A feather-like ornament (*kīkīpā*), a crown, and a necklace was offered to the Buddha by the Vajrakīrti Nāmasaṅgīti Khalah, the local women’s group, on the first day of the month of Gūlā (August 9, 2021).

Vābhā

Two worn-out deities,
tentatively dated to the 14th to
15th centuries, kept as relics
in the sanctum of the shrine
building.

Left, Karuṇāmaya
(or Avalokiteśvara), right,
Śākyamuni Buddha in the
form of Akṣobhya; probably
the original tutelary deity
of the monastery which was
replaced by a gilded icon
in 1658 (inscription no. 3).
Photographer anonymous,
August 2021





Vābāhā
The sanctum with the tutelary
deity, the *kvāpādyah*.
Photograph by Niels Gutschow,
February 2, 1993



Vābhā

Detail of the tutelary deity. The crown of Śākyamuni's gilt head, worked in copper in 1857, has eleven stylized feathers (*kīkīpa*), eight more than in 1992, of which six were donated

in 2021. The wooden tympanum was probably removed in 1857 and was only replaced by one in gilt copper in about 2010,

Photograph Ashesh Rajbansh, October 11, 2021

Objects of the sanctum and
the iconography of the doorway

Comparing photographs taken in August 1992 and October 2021 reveals a number of changes. In 2019 the stepped “altar,” made of reddish bathroom tiles of Indian production, covers the upper level and creates a step on which two representations of Sūrya frame the smaller Buddha in stone. On the left end, the finial of a *caitya* with thirteen tiers is now kept in an orderly upright position, while on the right a panel depicts a donor couple. A scepter is kept on the lower level to the left, with three icons cast in bronze that represent Vasundharā and Hālāhala Lokeśvara on the right.

The framework composed of the cane and willow of the Dīpaṅkara with its gilded head on top was formerly stored at the eastern end of the sanctum; it is now kept in the western end, next to the wooden gong, which was replaced by a new one in 1871 (inscription no. 20).

Of the original wooden doorway that dates to the late 1670s when the Kvāpāchē attained its present shape, only the lintel ends, the outer stepped frame (*purātvā*), and the mediating quarter-round frame are preserved without a sheet metal covering. The bearing frame and the colonettes (*toranṭhān*) were covered with a sheet of brass in 1873, with Vairocana in the central of the five dentils, the “teeth” of the lintel; a plaque depicting Akṣobhya with his earth-touching gesture is nailed to the triple roof molding. At the same time, the wooden tympanum that dates to 1634 was replaced by one in copper repoussé. The inner lobed panel features Buddha Śākyamuni on his lion throne, flanked by Prajñāpāramitā to his right, representing the Teachings of the Buddha and Padmapāṇi, the latter representing the order of monks. The winged sun-bird Garuḍa guards the scene at the apex, clasping a pair of female (in error?) seven-hooded snakes with his talons. Of the seven panels, the one depicting the snake virgin to the right of Garuḍa was replaced in 2005. On that occasion nine copper nails were replaced by screws. Six

female Bodhisattvas (five with identical gestures) mark the lotus scrolls emerging from the feathered hindquarters of the celestial spirits (*kinmara*), who guard the arch at the bottom ends, holding flags. A panel depicting Vajrasattva crowns the tympanum, highlighted by a finial with the usual ceremonial umbrella and fluttering pendants. In a final effort of beautification, the door leaves were covered with repoussé in brass in 1925. Above the Tibetan-style iron lock, a kneeling guardian, wielding a sword with his right arm, is accommodated in a shallow niche. A string with seven bells and inscribed (unreadable) leaves garlands the opening.

Colophon of Aṣṭasahasrikā Prajñāpāramitā written
in Ṭaḍapatra with black ink.

The cover page and end pages are adorned with the goddess Prajñāpāramitā in brass and the inner first folio has depictions of the Avadāna stories.

Folio 242

line no. 2.... śrīmadānandadevasya vijayarājye samvat 281

kārtika śu-/

line no. 3. di 2 likhitamidam rājaputra śrīśrīdhareṇeti || ||

[added later, in Pracalita Nevārī script] śreyo'stu samvat 978 mi/
titi āṣāḍha śudi . aṣṭami . maṅgalavāra . thva khunhuyā dinasa
tharpāju śrī jagatamuni/

juna śrī sūryānanda bhāju pātha yāko jula mahābuddhayāmha
|| śubham ||

Translation:

Written in Rañjanā script:

During the rule of venerable [king] Ānandadeva in NS 281
[CE 1161], on the 2nd day of the bright half of lunar month
of Kārtika, written by Rājaputra [son of a king] venerable
Śrīdhara.

Added later in Pracalita Nevārī script:

On the 8th day of the bright half of the lunar month of Āṣāḍha
in NS 978 [CE 1858] on Tuesday, on this day the elder of the
vihāra (*tharpāju*) venerable Jagatamuni made venerable
Sūryānanda of Mahābuddha recite it. May all be well.



Vābāhā

The sanctum with Akṣobhya as the tutelary deity, the *kvāpādyah*.
 In front a second Akṣobhya and a small panel depicting Sūrya.
 On the left a fragmented wooden statue of Akṣobhya.

Photograph by Niels Gutschow, August 1992

Absolutely essential for the sanctum of a Newar monastery is the custody and presentation of the Prajñāpāramitā text. Literally “the Perfection of (Transcendent) Wisdom,” it is a collection of about forty texts with some 8,000 stanzas. Some of these texts are believed to be the earliest Mahāyāna Sūtras, dating to the 1st century BCE. Its understanding represents an eminent element of the Bodhisattva path. The “cult of the book”⁵¹ causes “lay-folk (to) make an offering for the privilege of a short *darśan* and having one leaf of the manuscript touch the forehead. Viewing is supposed to confer health and protection.”⁵² At Patan’s Kvābāhā the text is recited every day in the morning and in the evening. Read simultaneously by ten people, the reading takes three to four hours. At Vābāhā the daily reading of the Prajñāpāramitā in the month of Gūlā was the duty of members of a *gūthi* headed by Sucitra Mān Śākya, but due to the pandemic this was not done in either 2020 or 2021. The reading extends from the day after new moon in early August to the following new moon. The full moon commemorates the day the Buddha defeated Māra in the process of experiencing his awakening. The text is not understood by lay-people. Hearing the Teachings that provide comfort and protection is similar to viewing and being touched by the book.

The text is kept in a copper box to which plaques of the Three Jewels, the Triratna, are affixed. In a similar manner to a deity, the box is displayed on a pedestal covered by repoussé-work and a backing tympanum, complete with a finial. The box with the text is treated as a shrine, the material representation of the divine. In a further step, the text is personified as a female Bodhisattva. As such the Bodhisattva is regularly seen to the right of the Buddha, representing the Teachings as one of the Three Jewels. In her four-handed representation, the hands of the lower arms display the *dharmacakramudrā*, the turning of the wheel of the Teachings, while the upper hands hold the book and the scepter.

Similar to the Prajñāpāramitā, the Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra, which was compiled prior to the 2nd century CE, must have reached Newar Buddhism at an early date.

Michael Radich has pointed out that it was not only in Chinese and Japanese Buddhism that the texts were treated as a physical vestige of the body, equivalent to the remnants of His corpse after cremation. Thus, the Teachings were declared the “body” of the Buddha (*śarīra*) and in ritual terms treated in the same way as a living Buddha.⁵³

In some Patan monasteries “the entire Nava Grantha (nine tomes) distinctive to Newar Buddhist tradition” are read out: beside the *Prajñāpāramitā* these are the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, *Daśabhūmi*, *Samādhirāja*, *Lankāvatāra*, *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*, *Lalitavistara*, *Suvarṇaprabhāsa*, and *Tathāgatagūhya*.

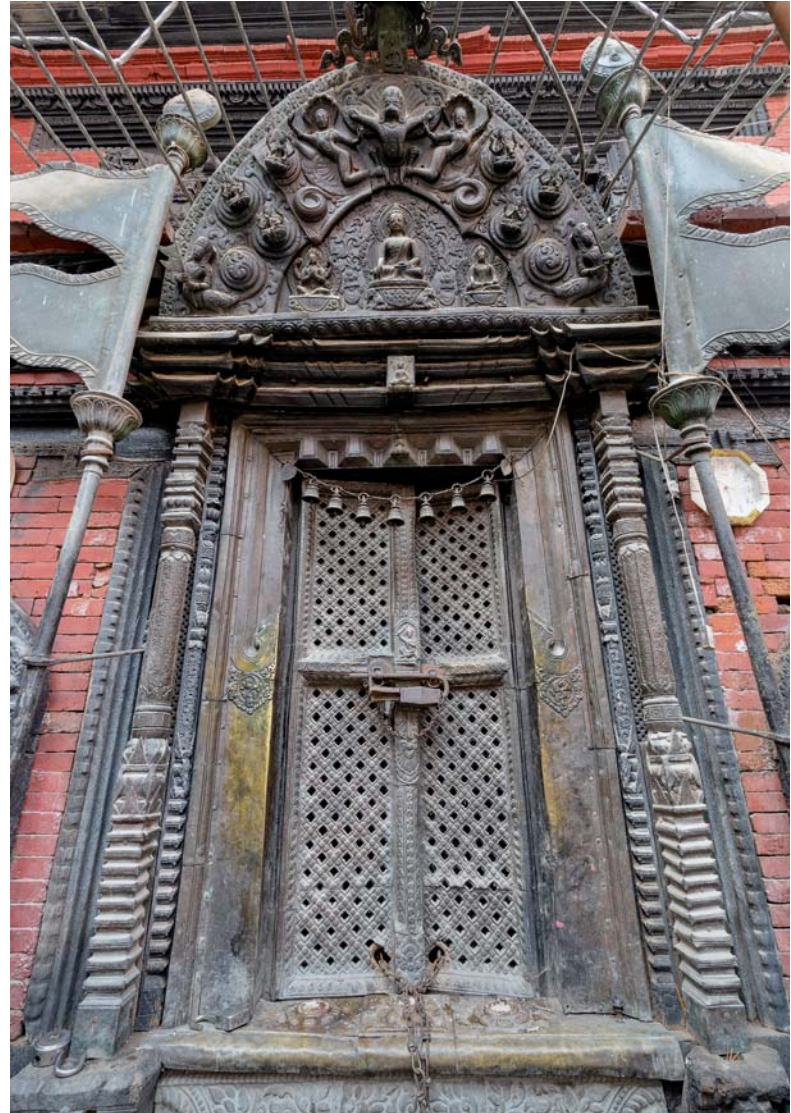
The most common text read out in the month of Gūlā is the *Nāmasaṅgīti* (literally “singing the names [of Mañjuśrī],” which is dedicated to the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī as the embodiment of wisdom and knowledge. This text is dated to the 6th or 7th centuries and is considered to be the root (*mūla*) Tantra of the *dharmadhātumaṇḍala* in Newar and Tibetan Buddhism. Part of the text used to be recited in the early morning by women, at Vābāhā by the members of the Vajrakīrti Nāmasaṅgīti Khalah. This group established a shrine of Āryanāmasaṅgīti in 2015 west of the Kvāpāchē and offered ornaments in early August 2021.⁵⁴

Within the sanctum, high above the pedestal with the box containing the Nāmasaṅgīti, are two frames. The small frame presents the five lines of Āratī Sloka, which is recited during the lamp offering in the evening, the larger frame presents the Daśapāramitā Stotra, which is recited during the morning service.



Vābāhā

The sanctum of the shrine with the tutelary deities. The large Amitābha worked in gilt copper dates to 1857. A small Amitābha, donated in 1773, was stolen in the 1980s and replaced ca 1990. The crown and necklace were donated in 2021.



Doorway of the Kvāpāchē

The doorframe received a gilded cover in 1750; the wooden tympanum was replaced by one in brass and the colonettes covered with brass sheeting in 1873. The door leaves were covered with molded brass in 1925.

Photographs Ashesh Rajbansh, October 11, 2021



Vābāhā

To the side of the tutelary deity, a copper box contains the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, dated CE 1161. This is a collection of about 40 texts. The name of the text, literally “the Perfection of [Transcendent] Wisdom,” is associated with the doctrine of emptiness, a central concept of Mahāyana Buddhism.

The copper box is placed on a pedestal, which is covered by lotus vine crafted in brass sheet. Affixed to the front of the box are three plaques representing the Three Jewels (*triratna*), namely the Buddha Śākyamuni framed by Prajñāpāramitā, the personification of the Buddha’s Teachings on his left, and Padmapāṇi representing the community of monks (*saṅgha*) on his right.

An elaborate tympanum graces the box, featuring a lotus flower in a lobed arch, framed by entwined snake bodies and topped by a finial. Photograph Ashesh Rajbansh, October 11, 2021

Colophon of Aṣṭasahasrikā Prajñāpāramitā written in Ṭāḍapatra with black ink.

The cover and end pages are adorned with Prajñāpāramitā. The inner first folio has depictions of Avadāna stories.

Folio 242

line no. 2. [written in Rañjanā script] śrīmadānandadevasya vijayarājye samvat 281 kārtika śu-/

line no. 3. di 2 likhitamidaṃ rājanputra śrīśrīdhareṇeti || || [Added later with Pracalita Nevāri script] śreyo’stu samvat 978 mi/ [added later with Pracalita Nevāri script]

titi āṣāḍha śudi . aṣṭami . maṅgalavāra . thva khunhuyā dinasa tharpāju śrī jagatamuni/

juna śrī sūryānanda bhāju pātha yāko jula mahābuddhayāma || śubhaṃ ||

Translation:

During the rule in the victorious land of venerable [king] Ānandadeva in the year [NS] 281 [CE 1161], on the second day of the bright fortnight of Kārtika, written by the son of a king [*rājanputra*] venerable Śrīdhara. On the eighth day of the bright half of lunar month of Āṣāḍha in the year [NS] 978 [CE 1858] on Tuesday, on this day the elder [of the *vihāra*, the *tharpāju*] venerable Jagatamuni [Śākya] caused venerable Sūryānanda of Mahābuddha to recite it. Auspiciousness.

Vābhā

The Ārati Śloka and the Daśapāramitā Stotra, both framed and exhibited in the sanctum of the Kvāpāchē beside the box containing the Prajñāpāramitā text.

Ārati Śloka

1. antatejo bahirtejo hetukṛtvā mūrṭiprabhū
2. ādharatnam mayāratnam grānu mṛtyourgryāhā
3. ādo kalyāṇa maddhya kalyāṇam parivaśāne kalyāṇa
4. svaartham suvyajane kevalam paripūrṇa pariśud-dham
5. paryavadātam brahmacāriṣam prakāśyānti smaḥ |

The first two lines are uttered during the lamp offering. Then follows:

Oṃ. The manifested celibacy - auspicious in its beginning, middle and end, self-legitimizing, decorous, whole and complete, utterly pure and spotless.

Daśapāramitā Stotra

(This *stotra* is recited during the morning *pūjā* by the priest. It is hung in the larger frame.)

1. dānabalena samudgatabuddha dānabalādhiga tānārasimhaḥ |
2. dānabalasya ca śrūyanti śabdaḥ kārūṇikasyapure praviśānta ||1||
3. śīlabalena samudgatabuddha śīlabalādhiga tānārasimhaḥ |
4. śīlabalasya ca śrūyanti śabdaḥ kārūṇikasyapure praviśānta ||2||
5. kṣāntibalena samudgatabuddha kṣāntibalādhiga tānārasimhaḥ |
6. kṣāntibalasya ca śrūyanti śabdaḥ kārūṇikasyapure praviśānta ||3||
7. vīryabalena samudgatabuddha vīryabalādhiga tānārasimhaḥ |
8. vīryabalasya ca śrūyanti śabdaḥ kārūṇikasyapure praviśānta ||4||
9. dhyānabalena samudgatabuddha dhyānabalādhiga tānārasimhaḥ |
10. dhyānabalasya ca śrūyanti śabdaḥ kārūṇikasyapure praviśānta ||5||

11. prajñābalena samudgatabuddha prajñābalādhiga tānārasimhaḥ |
12. prajñābalasya ca śrūyanti śabdaḥ kārūṇikasyapure praviśānta ||6||
13. balabalena samudgatabuddha balabalādhiga tānārasimhaḥ |
14. balabalasya ca śrūyanti śabdaḥ kārūṇikasyapure praviśānta ||7||
15. upāyabalena samudgatabuddha upāyabalādhiga tānārasimhaḥ |
16. upāyabalasya ca śrūyanti śabdaḥ kārūṇikasyapure praviśānta ||8||
17. prañidhibalena samudgatabuddha prañidhibalādhiga tānārasimhaḥ |
18. prañidhibalasya ca śrūyanti śabdaḥ kārūṇikasyapure praviśānta ||9||
19. jñānabalena samudgatabuddha jñānabalādhiga tānārasimhaḥ |
20. jñānabalasya ca śrūyanti śabdaḥ kārūṇikasyapure praviśānta ||10||

Translation of the first *pāramitā*:

The Buddha has appeared due to the strength of gifting, [he has] attained [the state of] the lion among the men. Whoever listens to the sound [or word] of gifting, enters into the state of the compassionate one.

The first perfection, gifting, refers to *dānabala*, the compassionate one (Kāruṇa) is the Buddha. The following five perfections refer to morality (*śīlabala*), forbearance (*kṣāntibala*), vigor (*vīryabala*), mindfulness (*dhyānabala*), and wisdom (*prajñabala*).

The verses of the Ārati Śloka are also uttered when offerings are made, “often called the *Svasti vākya* in today’s usage,” as Gregory Sharkey explains. They also appear in the *Dīpadāna vākya*, a kind of all-purpose formula sometimes recited toward the end of a personal daily worship.”

The tradition of the Six Perfections was at one time extended to incorporate ten perfections, the Daśapāramitā Stotra. The seventh perfection refers to strength (*balabalena*), the eighth to skill in means (*upāya*), the ninth to aspiration (*prañidhibala*), and the tenth to knowledge (*jñāna*).

The idea and tradition of the Six Perfections as an essential part of the Teachings might have originated in the early era of Mahāyāna which developed in India in the 1st century BCE. It is also the Bodhisattvayāna since it taught the goal of becoming a Buddha through the Bodhisattva Path. Thus, the Perfections outline the stages of the Bodhisattva to Buddhahood. It is all about virtues to be fostered. The original six perfections end up with wisdom or insight. At a later stage four more were added to approach “the state of the Bodhisattva (...) gradually,” as Bernhard Kölver writes: “The Aspiration or Resolve to attain Buddhahood is voiced only in the eighth stage.”

At a later stage of doctrinal development two more Perfections were identified. With diamond and action (*vajrakarma*), the ninth stage enters the esoteric and Tantric realm. According to Kölver, “a Bodhisattva has reached what in a sense is the ultimate stage” with knowledge. “He now begins to use his perfected attainment in the interest of other beings, i.e. he again turns outward to the world, but now, with the perfection of all his achievements.”^{***} The twelfth perfection refers to the jewel (*ratna*). This esoteric turn is difficult to understand and may simply have been “invented” in order to cover the 12 tiers of the Svayaṃbhūcaitya’s finial below its final thirteenth tier, for which no further perfection is identified. Likewise, the 12 tiers are related to 12 of the 16 vowels of the Sanskrit alphabet.^{***}



Nāmasaṅgīti Mañjuśrī

Rarely depicted outside of Nepal, this figure has six pairs of arms, representing the gestures and attributes associated with the Pañcabuddha plus Vajrasattva.

The first pair of hands is placed against the breast in a double *vyakarana mudrā*, the gesture of exposition. The second pair displays the gesture of sprinkling the ambrosia (*tarpana mudrā*); the third pair is placed on his lap, holding the bowl of ambrosia (*amṛtā*); the fourth pair holds a sword on top of a crossed *vajra*, and a ritual staff (*khaṭvāṅga*), topped by a *vajra*; the fifth pair holds a bow and arrow, his standard implements; the sixth pair is placed above his head and displays the gesture of the adamantine circle (*vajracakra mudrā* or *sumeru mudrā*), symbolizing Mount Meru and Nāmasaṅgīti's relationship to Vajrasattva.

Left

Prajñāpāramitā

The female Bodhisattva personifies the text, which stands for transcendent wisdom (*prajñā*) and as such is considered "the Mother of all Buddhas." Her inner pair of hands features the *dharmacakramudrā*, the turning of the wheel of the law, her upper, masculine right hand holds the *vajra*, indicating the essence of indestructible truth and her upper female left hand holds the book conveying transcendental wisdom.

Source: Hans Wolfgang Schumann, *Buddhistische Bilderwelt*, Munich: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1969, pp. 147, 157.

* Gregory Sharkey, *Buddhist Daily Ritual. The Nitya Puja in Kathmandu Valley Shrines*, Bangkok: Orchid Press, 2001, p. 92.

** Bernhard Kölver, *Re-Building a Stūpa. Architectural Drawings of the Svayambhūnāth*, Bonn: VGH Wissenschaftsverlag, 1992, p. 147.

*** Niels Gutschow, *The Nepalese Caitya. 1500 Years of Buddhist Votive Architecture in the Kathmandu Valley*, Stuttgart: Edition Axel Menges, 1997, p. 87.

Vābhā

A sacrificial pit (*yajña*) for the performance of a sacred fire (*boma*) as part of the pavement of the plinth, in front of the threshold of the Kvāpāchē's doorway. To the left of it, a stone with three lotus flowers, symbolizing the Three Jewels of Buddhism, to the right, a large lotus flower and a *śrīyantra*, constituting the *gurumaṇḍala*. At this place torches are burnt on the occasion of Indrajaṭrā and the Śantipūjā is performed on the seventh day after death.

Photograph by Niels Gutschow, October 3, 2021, drawing by Bijay Basukala, October 2021

