



VĀBĀHĀ

Foreword

The monastic courtyard of Vābāhā in Patan caught our attention in early 1992 in the context of the Patan Conservation and Development Programme, initiated by the German Technical Cooperation and integrated into its “urban development through local effort” project. In March the Director General of the Department of Archaeology, Dr. Shaphalya Amatya agreed to carry out the repair and restoration of the partly collapsed ridge turret (*phucā*) of the tutelary shrine (*kvāpāchē*) as a pilot project. The Sarvasaṅgha of the monastery submitted a formal request and in November Radhe Shyam and Indra Kaji Śilpakār started to produce the missing parts of the turret at their workshop in Bhaktapur on the basis of design drawings made by Bijay Basukala. Prayag Joshi designed the seismic strengthening with a ring beam composed of three layers of planks following discussions on site with Walther Mann, a leading structural engineer from the Technical University of Darmstadt in Germany. The rear wall was dismantled and renewed in February 1993, the turret installed in August and the roofing completed in September. The total cost came up to 1.3 million rupees.

This pilot project offered a unique opportunity to dismantle the Licchavicaitya and to retrieve two concealed Licchavi-era architectural fragments from the 18th-century platform below the *caitya* proper. To raise the platform to the present level of the courtyard, it was dismantled on February 15; the *caitya* was dismantled on May 17 and reconsecrated on May 26, 1993.

The project also served as a welcomed opportunity for Gyanendra Joshi to survey the monastic courtyard and the two branch monasteries, Vābāhā Dunebāhā and Lakhi-dābāhā. Nutandhar Sharma made a provisional inventory of 14 inscriptions. In May 1993 he prepared a complete photographic documentation of the consecration ritual – a highly valuable resource that is presented in the present book at length.

This work was compiled for a project report in February 1994 but never published. In January 2021 we thought

it would be worthwhile to expand the original survey and produce a fully illustrated report of the consecration rituals. With the support of the Gerda Henkel Foundation Nutandhar Sharma identified and transliterated 41 inscriptions in summer 2021 and provided the synopses. Rajendra Shakya revised the transliteration in October 2022. Critical terms of old Nevārī were discussed with Manik Bajracharya, who also provided the translation of a couple of *stotras* in Sanskrit, which are often found at the beginning of a larger inscription. Regarding the orthography, we follow, with the exception of the presentation of the inscriptions (pp. 175-202), the conventions developed by Bernhard Kölver and Ishwaranand Shresthacarya for the edition of the illustrated dictionary of architectural terms in *Newar Towns and Buildings* in 1987.

Bijay Basukala prepared measured drawings of the three *caityas*, dated to 1728, 1750, and 1886, and Ashesh Rajbansh contributed perfect photographs of the shrine’s details and the *caityas*, taken on October 11. The outcome is the most detailed documentation of a monastic courtyard of the Newar urban culture of the Kathmandu Valley.

David Haney helped in improving the English of the first chapters. The synopses of the inscriptions are of a preliminary character. The translation of classical Nevārī is always a challenging task.

Patan - Bhaktapur - Abtsteinach, November 2022

Opposite
Aerial view of Patan,
taken by Erwin Schneider,
December 13, 1971