



THE RESTORATION OF
TYMPANUM OF MAIN DOOR AND STRUTS OF ITUMBAHA
AT KATHMANDU

PROJECT APPLICATION | NOVEMBER 2014
SUBMITTED TO THE SUMITOMO FOUNDATION



THE KATHMANDU VALLEY PRESERVATION TRUST

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cover: **Itumbaha's Tympanum and Roof Struts** | 1999
The center image is of Tympanum of Main Door. On the right is the closeup photograph of damaged Roof Struts.

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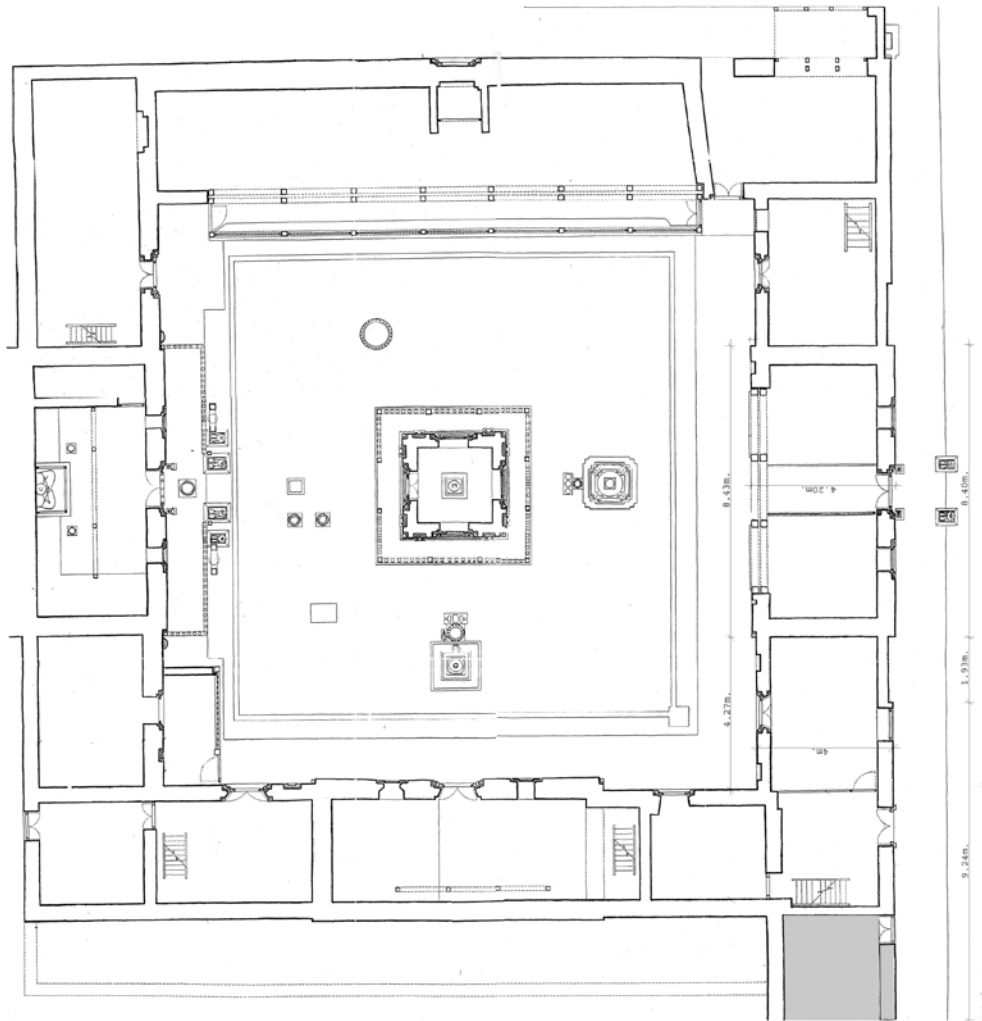
Kathmandu

Detail of the core area with four of the seven main monasteries (*mūbāhā*) of the central section (*dathutva*) of the city:

- 7 Makhanbāhā
- 8 Itumbāhā
- 9 Janabāhā
- 10 Mubaha

- 8a Kayagunani
- 8b Bakunani
- 8c Tārānani
- 8d Sasunani
- 8e Dhanajucaitya,
- 8f Yetkhabāhā
- 11a Tunchenbāhā (a branch monastery of Savalabāhā)
- 12a Laykubahi (a branch monastery of Sikhamūbaha)





Ground Floor Plan Itumbaha | 2001



Itumbaha East Wing | 2001
Existing condition of courtyard facade before restoration.





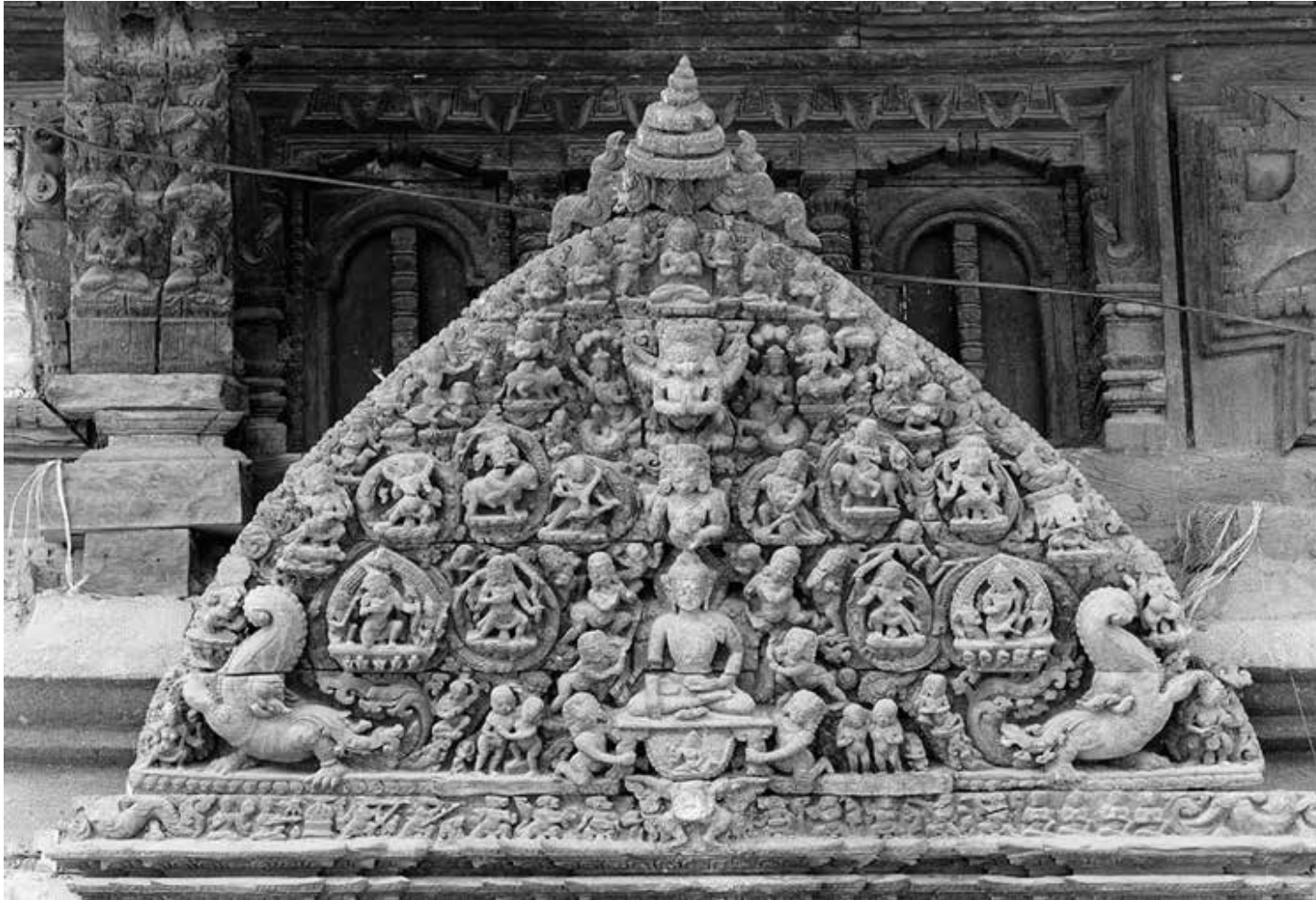
Aerial view of Itumbaha | 1999
Itumbaha before restoration. The Baha is located 300 meter north of Kathmandu Darbar Square.





Aerial view of Itumbaha | 2006
Three wings of Itumbaha after restoration. .





Main Door Tympanum of Itumbaha | August 1999
The "Victory over Mara" tympanum (*toran*), installed in 1627
above the entryway of Itumbaha in Kathmandu.
Photograph S. Klimek, August 1999.

INTRODUCTION

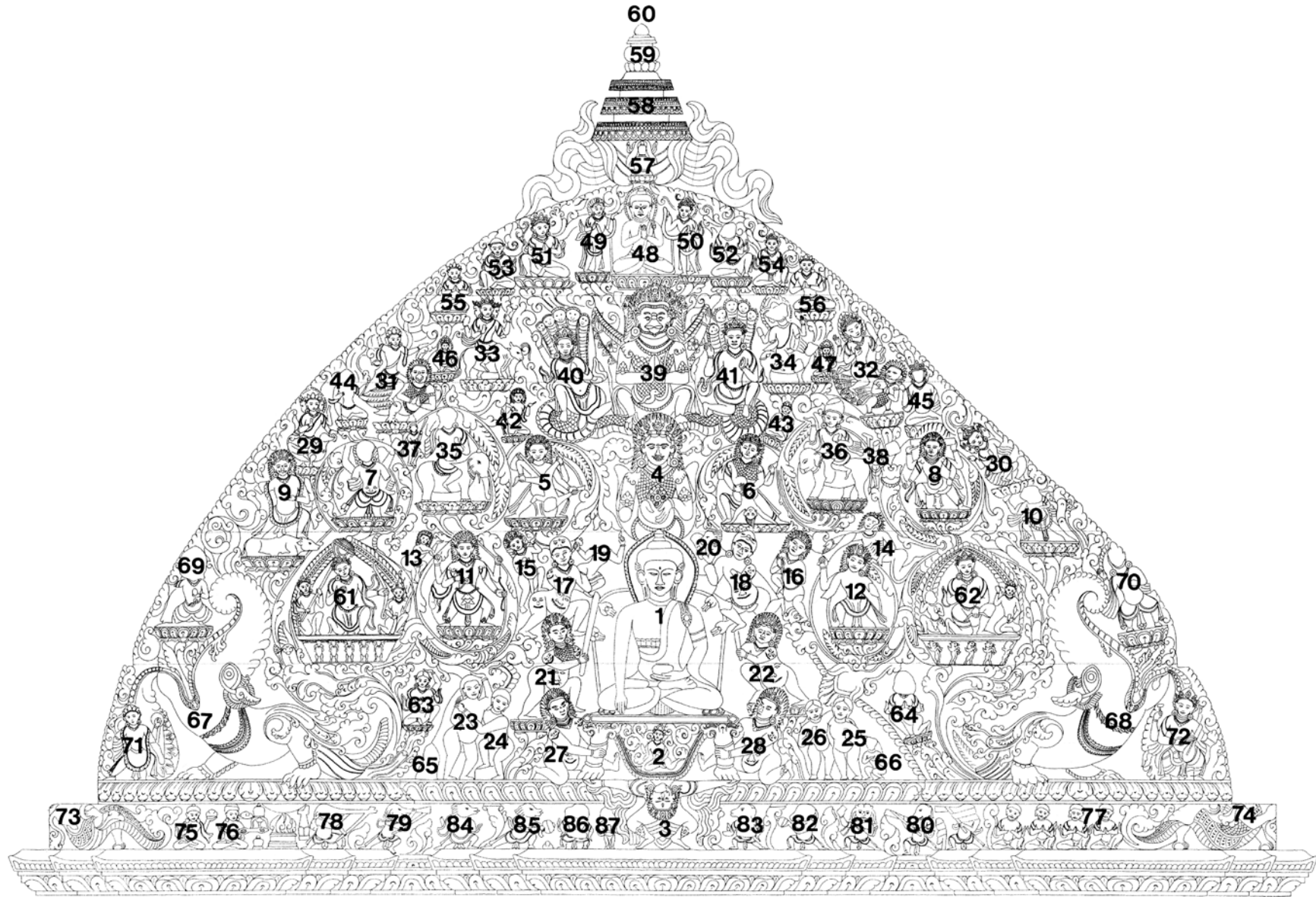
Most international attention paid to the architectural heritage of the Kathmandu Valley is focused on its World Heritage sites. While beneficial, this attention is paid at the expense of other significant sites, which remain largely neglected. Despite the march of insensitive modern development, a number of historical monuments of outstanding historical and artistic importance survive in the core of this capital city. Until now overlooked by preservationists, who in broad strokes describe Kathmandu as “lost”, hundreds of individual monuments and a dozen townscape ensembles survive, many deserving of documentation and international preservation efforts.

Itumbaha, one of the five principal Buddhist monasteries of the Kathmandu Valley, is one such worthy site not only for its ritual importance in Newar Buddhism, but also for its wealth of early woodcarvings and its retained architectural configuration, which remains largely intact and dates back to the 13th century. Itumbaha preserves its original two-story configuration and roof form as well as numerous building components including carved windows, pillars, and roof struts from the 13th century. The courtyard is dotted with additional votive structures, some of great artistic importance such as the 17th century *caturmukhi caitya* (lit. “four faced stupa”).

In 2001 the World Monument Watch included the Buddhist monastic complex of Itumbaha in its list of the 100 most endangered sites in the world.

The Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust is currently applying for funding for a 9-month project, which offers the opportunity to complete the restoration of the Tympanum of Main Door and Roof Struts of Itumbaha monastery located in the heart of Kathmandu in a rapidly developing area north of the Darbar Square. The cluster of early Buddhist architectural monuments in and around this monastic quadrangle represents the last opportunity to save an ensemble of historic structures of exceptional artistic importance. Of some 83 Buddhist monasteries in the old city, only three preserve their historical shape without modern encroachments. Due to the fact that the monastery’s ownership is still controlled by the sangha, the monastic community of elders makes it one of the very few monuments in the city where interventions are still possible and feasible. Additionally, the lack of vehicular access in and around the outer courtyards of Itumbaha guarantees the restored complex an appropriate atmosphere and provides respite from chaotic modern Kathmandu.





Identification of 87 figures and items:

- 1 The Buddha in his earth-touching gesture
- 2 Sujata, the milkmaid with a plate of curds, symbolizing spiritual nourishment
- 3 Bhumidevi, the Earth Goddess as witness to the Buddha's countless acts of sacrifice
- 4 Mara, the manifestation of time, death and desire
- 5-28 Twelve pairs of demons and demonesses, Mara's minions, threatening the Buddha and trying to seduce him
- 29-36 Mara's four divisions represented by the four main gods of Hinduism, Brahma (29, 30), Vishnu (31, 32), Shiva (33, 34) and Indra (35, 36), accompanied by tiny figures (37, 38) with umbrellas as signs of royalty.
In an alternative explanation, the four deities pay homage to the Buddha, securing the sacred space around the Bodhi Tree.

The upper level of the tympanum is dedicated to the universal support and victory over Mara's army of demons:

- 39 Garuda presides over the entire scene;
- 40, 41 His talons grasp a pair of snake bodies, Naga and Nagini
- 42-47 Three pairs of small deities
- 48 Vairocana, the "radiantly bright" Buddha stands for the centre of any spatial configuration, depicted with the Wheel of the Dharma gesture, the pose associated with the explaining of the Teachings of the Buddha
- 49-56 Four pairs of devotees

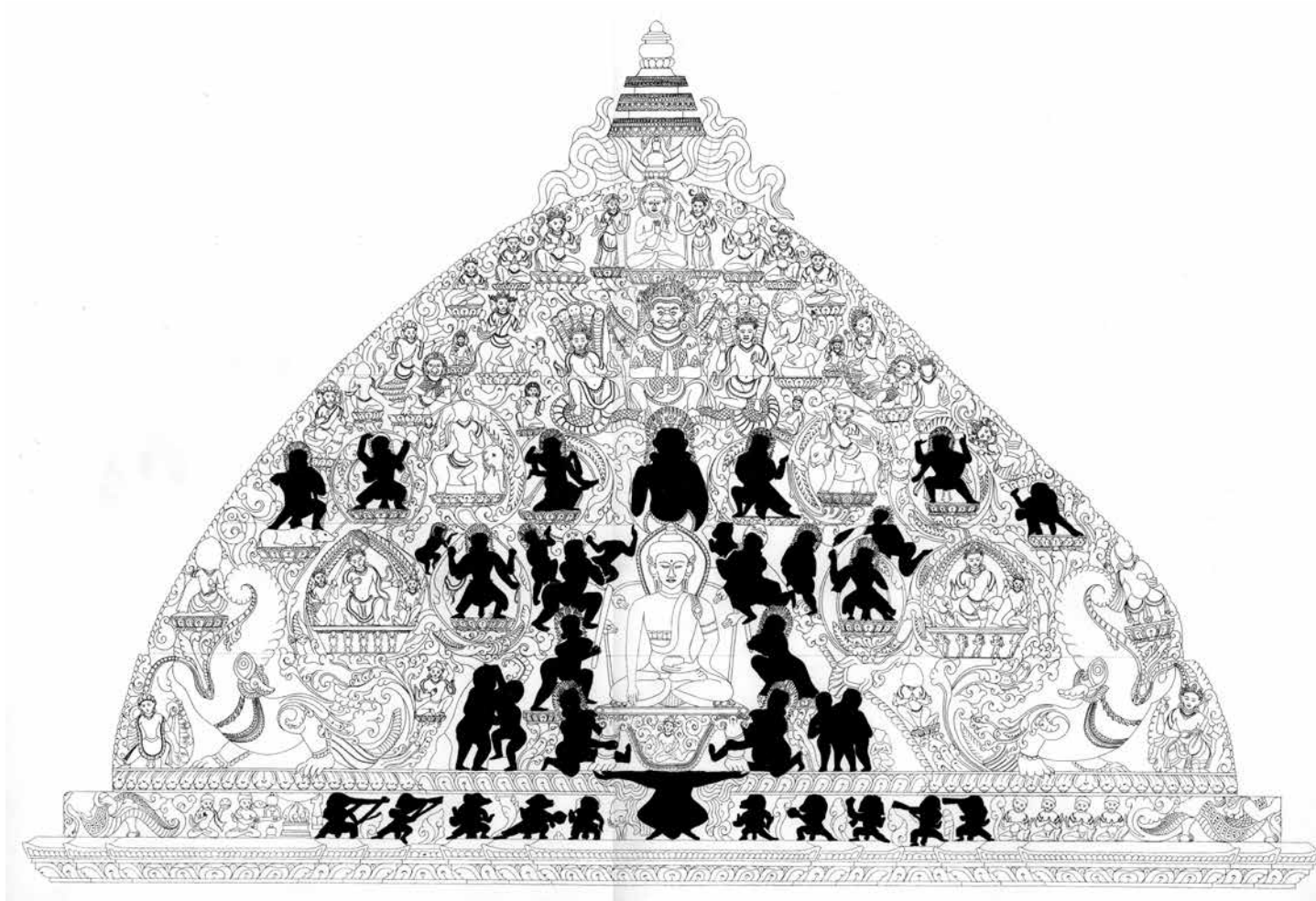
The tympanum is crowned by a pinnacle:

- 57 Stupa (chaitya or Newari chibhadyo) symbolizing the Buddha and his Teachings
- 58 Threefold umbrella
- 59 Kalasha (treasure vase)
- 60 Cintamani (wish-fulfilling jewel). The vase spreads abundance, the jewel stands for the Three Jewels, that is the Buddha, his Teachings (dharma) and the spiritual community (sangha).

The lower register is characterized by protective deities and creatures:

- 63-66 Two pairs of devotees
- 61, 62 Moon (chandra) and Sun (surya), demonstrating the nature of all forms of life
- 67, 68 Makara, hybrid aquatic creatures – the pearls they spew represent water drops that ensure the rains
- 69, 70 A pair of fierce supporting figures, possibly guardians of the Law (dharmaraja)
- 71, 72 Two guardian deities
- 73, 74 Dragons carved in Tibetan-Chinese fashion
- 76 Vajracharya priest tending a sacred fire
- 75 Attendant to the priest
- 77 Four devotees, possibly representing the donors of the tympanum
- 78-86 Army of eleven musicians





Identification of 35 figures, including two monkeys and ten musicians - half human, half animal - of the retinue of Mara, who occupies the central position above the Buddha-to-be. The scene is organized symmetrically, with 17 figures on both sides, all of them turning toward the Buddha.

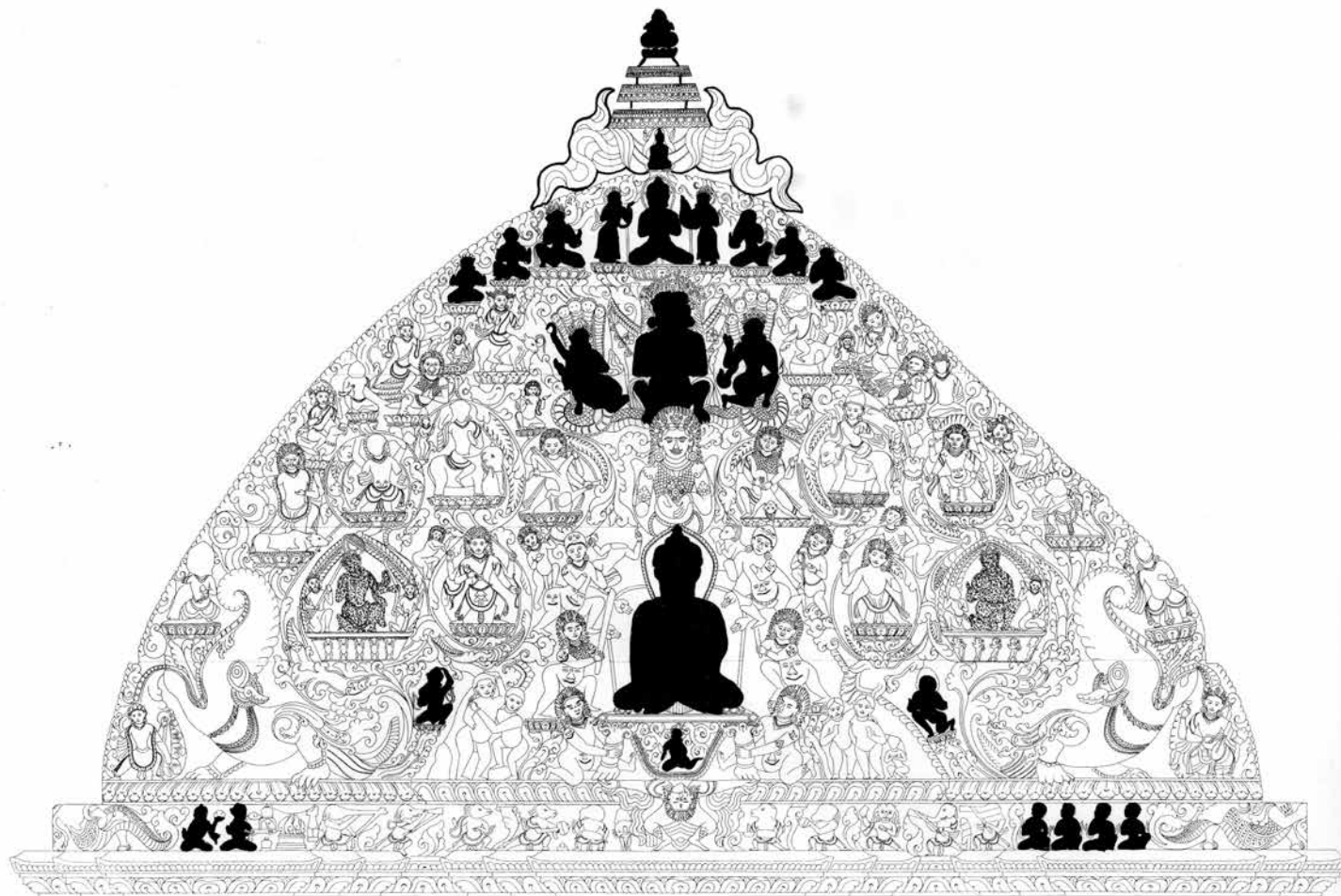


HISTORY & ARTISTIC SIGNIFICANCE

Itumbaha is one of the very few monasteries in Kathmandu that preserves the original square plan of a traditional Buddhist monastery. However, it is not only an invaluable architectural monument but also an active monastery with a history of some eight centuries or more. As one of the eighteen “main monasteries” (*mu baha*) of Kathmandu, it is at the forefront of Newar monasticism and an important force for Newar Buddhism at large, because, as in other Buddhist societies, the backbone of Newar Buddhism is its monasteries. Traditionally, they function as repositories of Buddhist learning in the widest sense, guarding ritual and tantric traditions. Furthermore, with their shrines and consecrated images of Buddhas and other deities, the monasteries serve as temples for the Buddhist community. In addition, their members contribute to the maintenance of Buddhist traditions inside and outside the confines of the monastery. Moreover, through their community of Vajracarya monks, the monasteries provide priestly service for the Buddhist population. The Vajracaryas perform the obligatory life-cycle rituals (including mortuary and post-mortuary rites) and also officiate in other ritual contexts such as house building and healing.

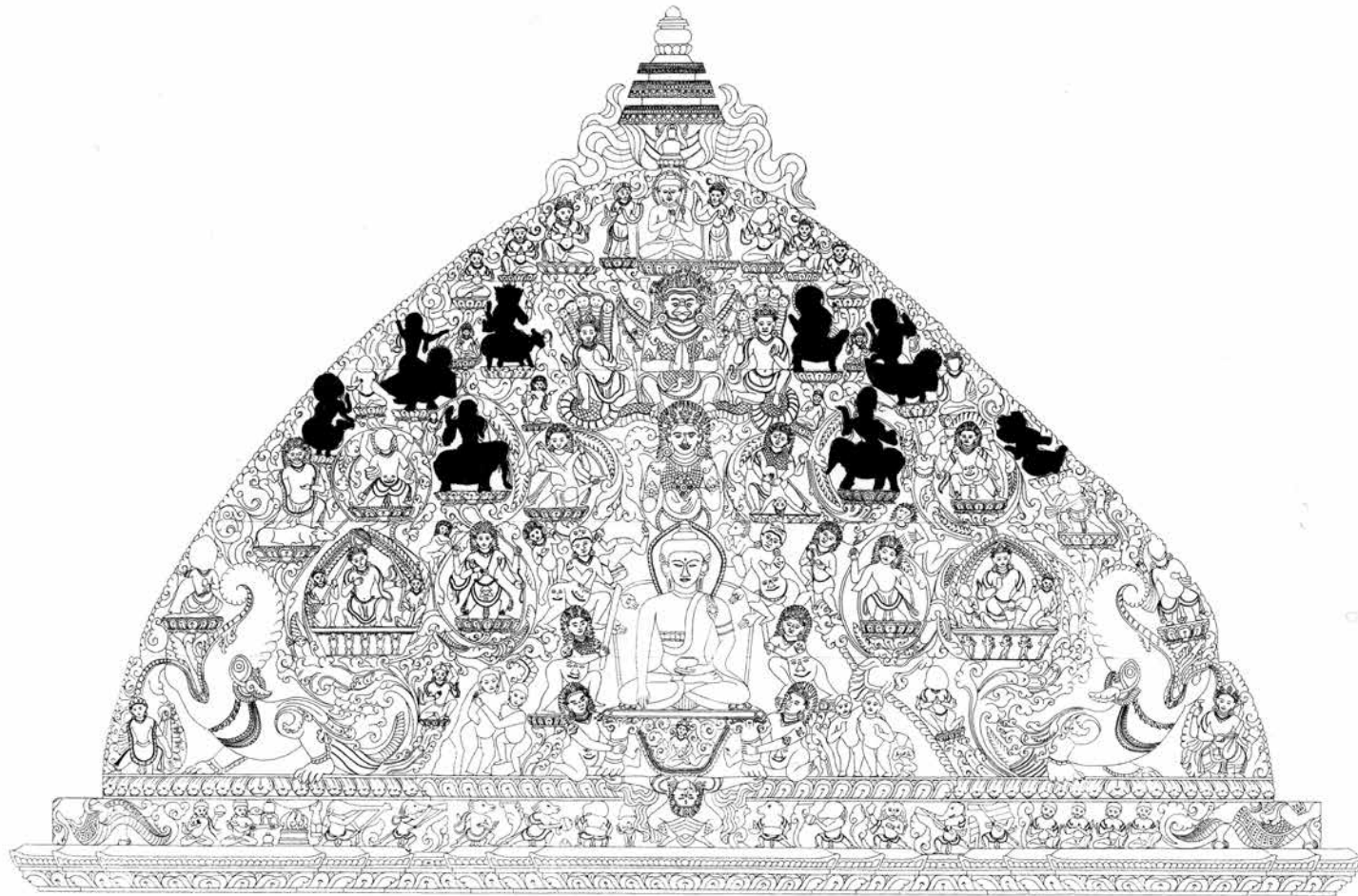
Naturally, the Newar monasteries are most important for the members themselves. Even though they do not live here, the monasteries traditionally function as an extension of their homes, in which they spend much of their time and to which they devote much of their energy. As members, they are collectively responsible for the monastery, taking care of specific duties by rotation. Most importantly, it is periodically their turn, which in Itumbaha lasts for one week, to carry out the daily worship (*nityapuja*) of the monastery’s deities. But even when not obliged by their turn, members come to the monastery frequently for worship and here casually meet friends and neighbours, play cards or other games, and often spend hours in leisure. This is also the place where they celebrate their important family feasts and other functions. In a word, much of their life revolves around the monastery. This is, however, less true nowadays. As a consequence of globalisation, Kathmandu has undergone dramatic changes in the last decades, and its citizens increasingly live in a world determined by consumerism and television. This, of course, undermines the role of the monastery in the daily life of its members. It is to be hoped that the renovation of Itumbaha will send out new signals, conveying a sense of pride and ownership that will invigorate the community.





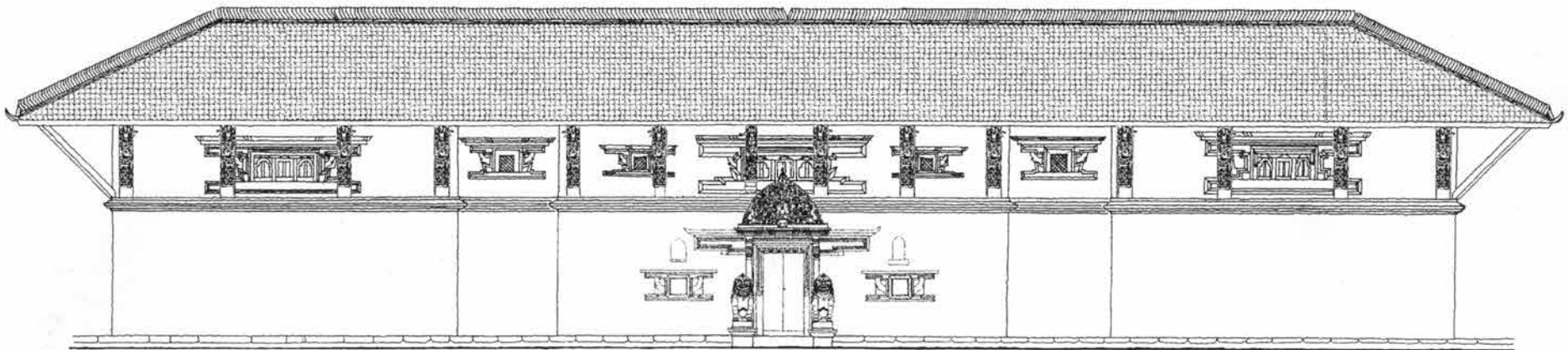
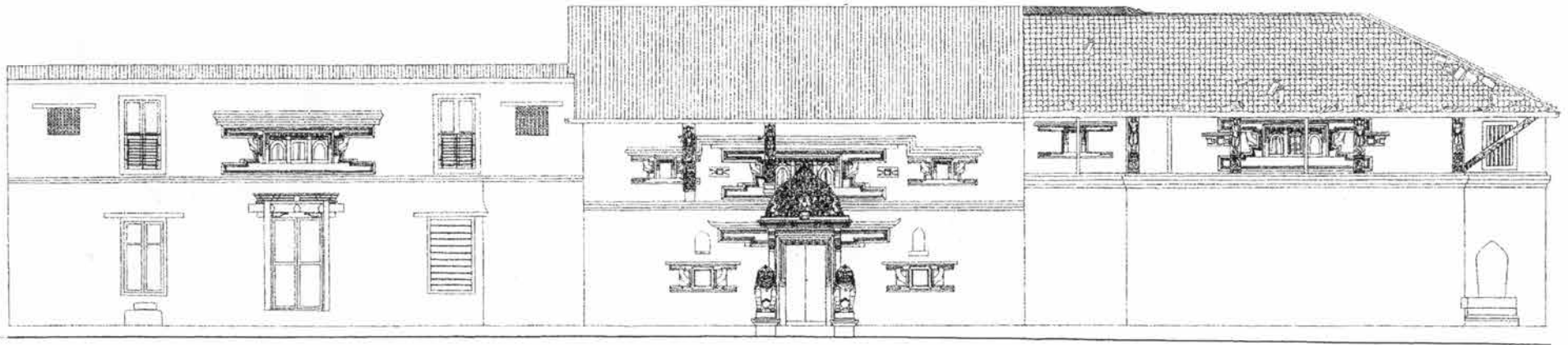
The Buddha in his earth-touching gesture, symbolizing the precise moment when the awakening Buddha vanquished the army of Mara. Below him is the milkmaid Sujata, above him the Sun Bird Garuda, flanked by two snake virgins. In the apex the Buddha Vairocana in his gesture of turning-the-wheel of his Teachings, flanked by four pairs of devotees in the gesture of adoration or presenting scarves. Vairocana is crowned by a stupa, a votive structure symbolizing the Buddha and his Teachings. Auspicious silk ribbons frame a threefold ceremonial umbrella which supports the treasure vase and the wish-fulfilling jewel on top.





The four main gods of Hinduism who personify the four Maras, placed on both sides of the central axis: on top Mahesvara (on his bull), followed by Vishnu (on Garuda) and Indra (on an elephant), at the outer edge Brahma (on a goose). In deviation from the entire composition, only the pair of Indras turn towards the centre, while the remaining pairs turn toward the right, thus providing a sense of continuous movement.





0 1 2 3 4 5 10 m

East facade of the East wing:

Existing situation and proposed restoration

The building will be rebuilt to its historic floorplan and floor heights employing traditional bricks laid in mud mortar and re-using historic windows.

Drawings Bijay Basukala, 2002



PRESENT CONDITIONS

Between 2002-2005 the Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust restored the west- and south-wings of Itumbaha as part of its Buddhist Kathmandu Campaign. From 2005-2006, Itumbaha's private religious trust (guthi) restored the north wing. The Trust is now proposing to restore the east wing in order to complete the building's restoration. This restoration effort will include the rebuilding of all dilapidated masonry walls, the rebuilding of the roof in traditional style, and the conservation of all historic carved timber elements. In addition, the Trust will incorporate seismic strengthening methods, ensuring that the structure is safeguarded in the event of an earthquake.

Timber structure

Tympanum of the main door has been affected by mainly aging, lack of maintenance & cleaning, and during theft. Roof Struts has been affected by mainly rain water leakage from roof, lack of maintenance & cleaning, and aging.





Roof Struts of Itumbaha | August 1999
Struts with poor condition due to rain water leakage from roof.



PROPOSED RESTORATION: PROJECT OUTLINE

The primary objective of the proposed restoration is to safeguard the Baha's historically important Tympanum of main door and Roof Struts. This will require the careful disassembly of Tympanum and Roof Struts, which will be thoroughly cleaned, repaired and restore in its existing location.

Brickwork

The brick fabric of whole east wing will be extensively repaired and rebuilt. In order to conduct this repair work, scaffolding will be erected. Existing damaged wall will be completely replaced with traditional ma-apa brick, which will be re-laid in an appropriate traditional mud mortar.

Timber structure

Damage of the carved elements of Tympanum and Struts have been determined; the damaged carved elements will be carefully cleaned with plain water and caustic soda. It will be repaired, including lost carved elements and strengthened to restore in its existing location.

The entire project will be coordinated, overseen and managed with local expertise by the Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust. The partnership model by which KVPT works to nurture local craftsmen is unique and has proven to be very successful. KVPT provides the academic and historical research to guide the restoration designs, which are then executed to the highest artistic standards by the best local craftsmen available. In Nepal the historic artisanship and techniques that were originally used to create carving elements survive to this day, and these same methods will be used to restore it back to its original condition.





Roof Struts of Itumbaha | June 2014
Roof Struts of east wing courtyard facade in damaged poor condition due to rain water leakage from roof.



KVPT ACHIEVEMENTS & PROJECTS

The Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust (KVPT) is the only international non-profit organization exclusively dedicated to safeguarding the extraordinary and threatened architectural heritage of Nepal. KVPT was founded in 1991 in response to the UNESCO International Campaign for Safeguarding of the Kathmandu Valley. Over the past two decades, the Trust has identified and helped save over 52 historic buildings including temples, rest houses, monasteries, homes, and step-wells.

KVPT collaborates with community groups, local and international specialists, educational institutions, and the Government of Nepal, Department of Archaeology. Restoration and conservation operations have initiated key research and training programs, and the KVPT office in Patan Darbar Square has become a resource center and clearinghouse for information about architecture and urbanism in Nepal.

The Trust's current project, the Restoration of the Patan Royal Palace Complex, is the organization's largest and most ambitious program of works to date. Launched in 2006 by a fundraising event hosted by Prince Charles, the restoration program is structured in three phases encompassing eleven monuments.

Crucial documentation on the buildings and restoration work on the distinctive architectural and sculptural features of the Patan Royal Palace Complex has been made possible thanks to funding from the Sumitomo Foundation. The Historic Structure Report, partially funded by a grant from the Sumitomo Foundation in 2009, documents existing conditions and includes archaeological surveys, documentation drawings and restoration designs for the two major courtyard buildings of the Complex. Additional projects that the Sumitomo Foundation has funded include the restoration of the Mul Cok Golden Doorway Ensemble, ornately adorned repousse sculptures of the goddesses Ganga and Jamuna; the restoration of the Mul Cok Stone Lions, impressive stone sculptures which flank the entryway into the Palace's main courtyard, the restoration and conservation of Sundari Cok's Ivory window, an exquisite piece of ivory carving; and the restoration of the Gilded Pinnacle of South Taleju Temple.

Thanks to the critical support received from the Sumitomo Foundation and other donors. Once completed the east wing of this Buddhist monastery, will be open to the public as a small museum-displaying artefact of Itumbaha Monastery.





Itumbaha South Wing | 2000 and 2004
South wing courtyard facade before and after restoration.



