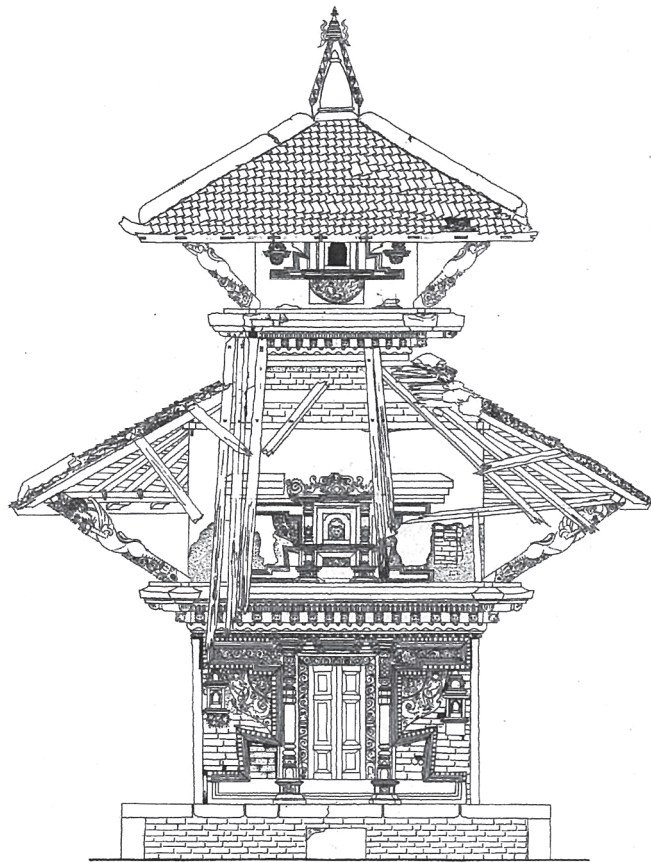


SULIMA RATNESVARA TEMPLE



SULIMA, PATAN

HISTORIC STRUCTURE REPORT

ROHIT RANJITKAR AND ERICH THEOPHILE
KATHMANDU VALLEY PRESERVATION TRUST

SPRING, 1998



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Delineation line



Patan Durbar Square- Monument Zone
(Properties outside but adjacent to
the boundary line are included)



Sulima Ratnesvar Mandir

SULIMA TOL, PATAN

PATAN: CITY MAP

0 50 100 500

Sulima Square circa 1978
Photo courtesy M Slusser





1.0 INTRODUCTION

This rare structure dating to the 13th century is the only pagoda structure known to us in Nepal which preserves both its overall form and numerous carvings from the pre-Malla period. Its artistic and historical importance cannot be overestimated. The Ratnesvara Temple has been in ruins since 1990; the coming monsoon rains will strike the final blow of destruction to the temple.

Although all but the corner roof struts have been stolen, photographic documentation of the lost struts, as well as the surviving wall elements, compare favorably with the earliest documented carvings of the Kathmandu Valley. These include: Saraswati Nani Temple (12-13 c.), Uku



Struts of similar age and style from different buildings. From left to right: Tyagah Chapah, Uku Baha, Indraesvara Mahadev, Yetkha Khwapa Chhe.

Baha (15 c.) and Tyagah Chapah (13 c.) in Patan; the Yetkha Baha Khwapa Chhe and Itum Baha (14 c.) in Kathmandu, and the Indresvara Mahadeva Temple (13 c.) in Panauti.

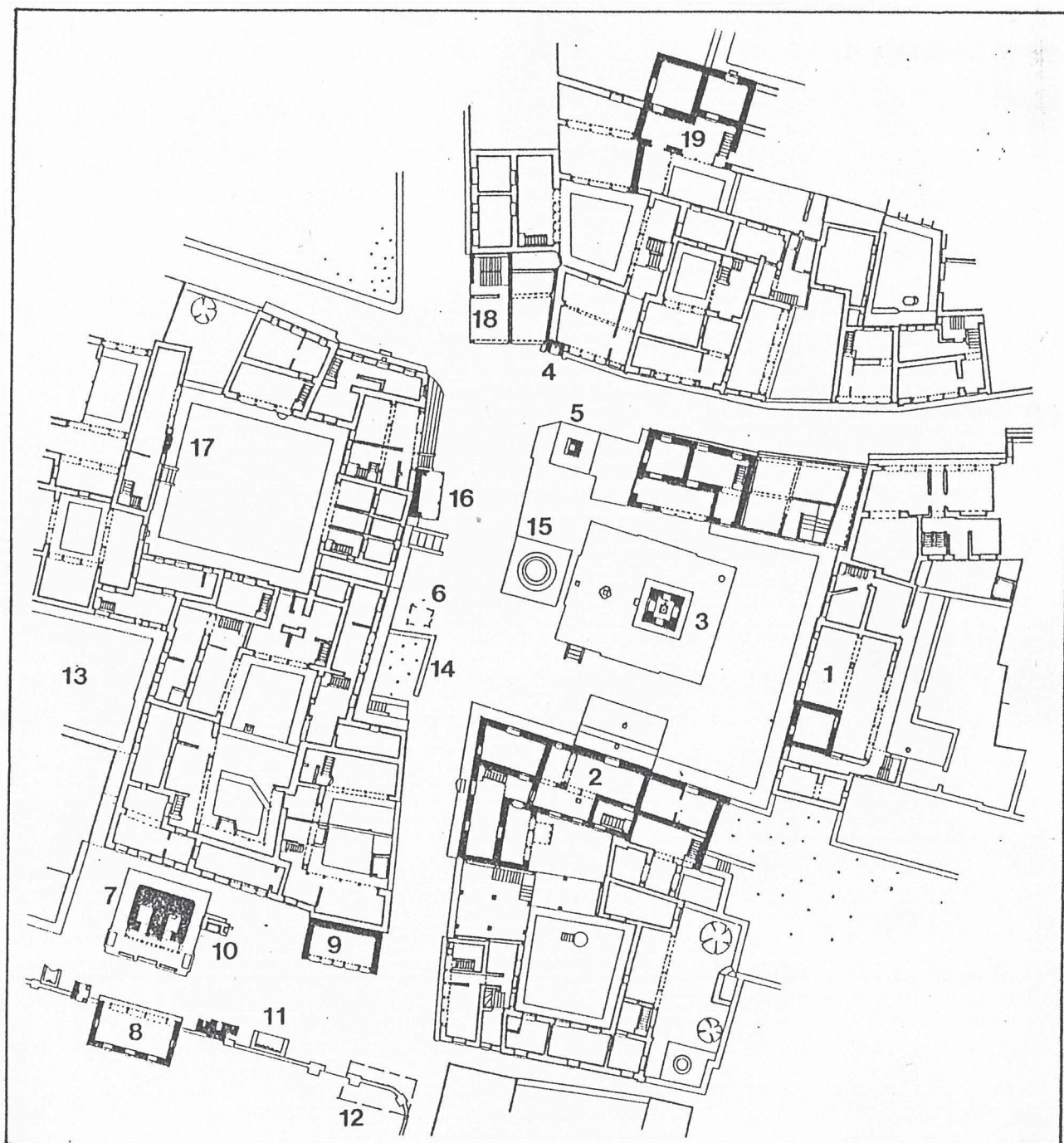
The temple dedicated to Shiva serves as the centerpiece of a small piazza defined by other historical buildings of great significance (see inventory). These include the 16th century Sulima Agam, an esoteric shrine house, and portions of the house of the great Tantric, Gayahbajya, a 16th century priest of legendary stature. Both shrine house and residence are the oldest surviving examples of their respective buildings types in the country. Restoration of these additional structures as well as re-pavement of the square are included in a masterplan for the area under development by the Trust.

Scaffolding on the temple by Sulima Guthi. Photo: 1994.





Buildings around the Ratnesvara Mandir. Five years ago the historical buildings of Sulima Square were intact. Since then, many have been replaced by modern concrete structures. Lost houses are shown in red. Photo: 1993.



Sulima Ratnesvar Mandir

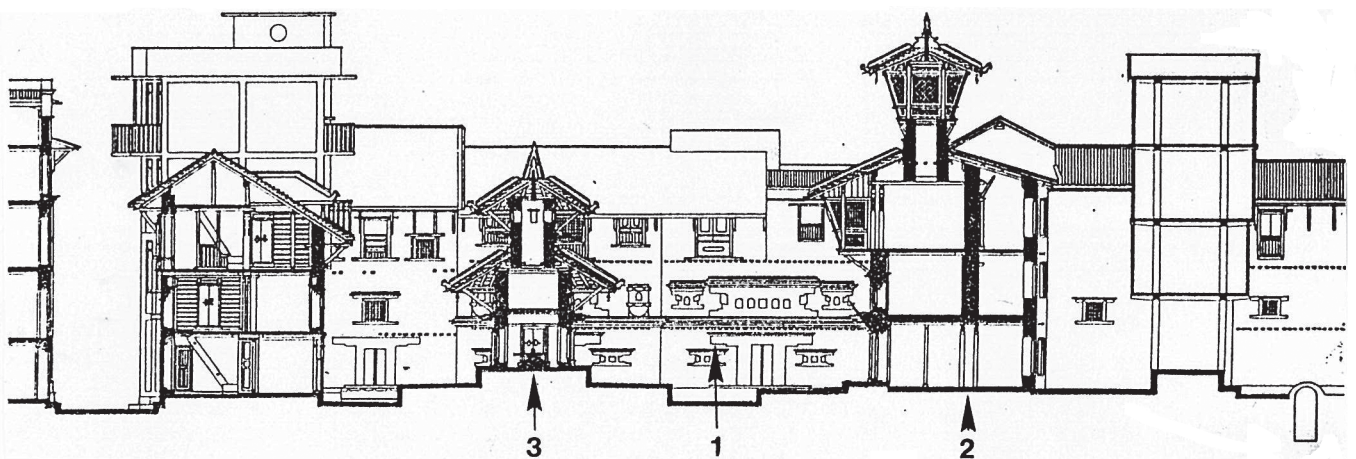
SULIMA TOL, PATAN

SULIMA SQUARE

KATHMANDU VALLEY PRESERVATION TRUST - MARCH 1998

Key to site map and section
N. Gutschow

- | | | | |
|----|--|----|---|
| 1 | Gayahbājyā's house, today the house of his descendant, Surjenāth Rājupadhya | 6 | Site of former Nārāyaṇa temple, whose remains from the 1934 earthquake were cleared in 1970. |
| 2 | Āgā housing the esoteric shrine of the Sulimha Rājupadhyas, one of six branches (kavaḥ) of Brahmans in Patan | 7 | Caṇḍeśvarī temple, a three storeyed pagoda, erected in 1663. One of the ground floor chambers is dedicated to Gaṇeśa, the other remain empty ("dyaḥ maru" literally "no god"), as Gayahbājyā did not become a Siddha. Between the two chambers are three holes, the triangular one representing Caṇḍeśvarī or Nāsadyaḥ the others representing Bhairava and Bhairavī. |
| 3 | Ratneśvara temple with liṅga, a two-storeyed pagoda of the 17th century | | |
| 4 | Shrine to Gaṇeśa, the guardian (dvārapāla) of the square | | |
| 5 | Remains of a 17th century Nārāyaṇa temple called Santāna Gopāl, not rebuilt after collapse in the 1934 earthquake | | |
| 8 | Phalcā used as bhajanghar for music performance. Renovated in 1975, the anniversary ritual of the phalcā is performed on the occasion of balacaturdaśī in December. | | |
| 9 | Phalcā, a three-storeyed sattal for public use which collapsed in 1952. A neighbor has renovated the ground floor arcade (now occupied by Kusle-tailors) to secure the use of the roof as his outdoor terrace (kauśi). | 13 | Akhaḍānani, the courtyard where Gayahbājyā is said to have brought the Aṣṭamātrikā from Harasiddhi. |
| 10 | Jahdhū, a fountain for drinking water | 14 | Site of former phalcā, which collapsed in 1934 earthquake. During Indrajātrā, Yamadyaḥ was displayed here. |
| 11 | Digyadyaḥ (ancestral shrine) of farmer castes from Taḥnani and Konti. An annual ritual is performed three days before the fullmoon in November (Yaḥmaripunhi). | 15 | Well (tū), which is still in use |
| 12 | Site of the former phalcā where samay (ritual food of five varieties) used to be | 16 | Phalcā of Āmaliguṭhi, established by the Jyāpus of neighboring Mikhābāhā. Once a year during the month of Mangsīr āmalī fruits and beer used to be offered here to the untouchable Poḍe. |
| | | 17 | Hanumān or Hāmva Shrine at Hāmvacok |
| | | 18 | Site of former sattal established by the Maskey clan and demolished in 1990 |
| | | 19 | Āgā housing the esoteric god of the Maskey clan |



Sulima Ratnesvar Mandir

SULIMA TOL, PATAN

SULIMA SQUARE: NORTH SOUTH SECTION



2.0 CONSTRUCTION HISTORY

Due to the lack of inscriptional evidence, a close study of the building's fabric has been made to attempt a description of the building's construction history. An annotated elevation drawing records estimated dates of various members and materials.

Most importantly, inspection and study of the carvings suggests that they all belong to the earliest centuries of the temple, i.e 12th-14th centuries, with the exception of several corner struts, replacements of the 19th century. The roof structure and middle wall masonry veneer were renewed in the early 20th century, while the ground and upper levels of masonry appear to be at least several hundred years old and may be original. From interviews with the local elders we know that the temple did not suffer any major damage in the great earthquake which ravaged the Kathmandu Valley in 1934. There are no other indications of a later interventions except for superficial wall patches on the ground floor, sloppy work using cement mortar.

The mysterious mud plaster

In the beginning, we supposed that the upper walls were plastered in mud mortar during a rebuilding after an earthquake in the 19th century, when such plastering was the fashion. This hypothesis was supported by the 19th century replacement struts. Closer study of the woodwork at the upper levels from the scaffolding, however, has not confirmed this hypothesis. On the earliest of the upper story windows, for example, the outermost surround extends and is detailed to accept plaster. In this case the frame extends beyond the visible edge of the window as a recessed surface scored to accept plaster. The detail does not appear on the lower ground floor elements where the veneer bricks meet the window frame in the typical but joint. It should be mentioned that this upper detail, the reveal to accept plaster, is integral to the window frame and not an added element. This suggests that the plaster may date from a much earlier century as the window has been stylistically dated by Mary Slusser to atleast the 13th century.



*Recent sloppy cement
patching by locals covering
timber elements.*

*Recessed and keyed surfaces
of the original window which
suggest an original plaster finish*



3.0 ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The temple stands on two levels of plinth. The upper plinth is perfectly square as the temple, projecting 26" from the temple wall on all sides. The upper plinth and temple do not sit symmetrically on the lower plinth, whose rectangular form offers a larger platform in front of the temple, an area used for religious rites and dances.

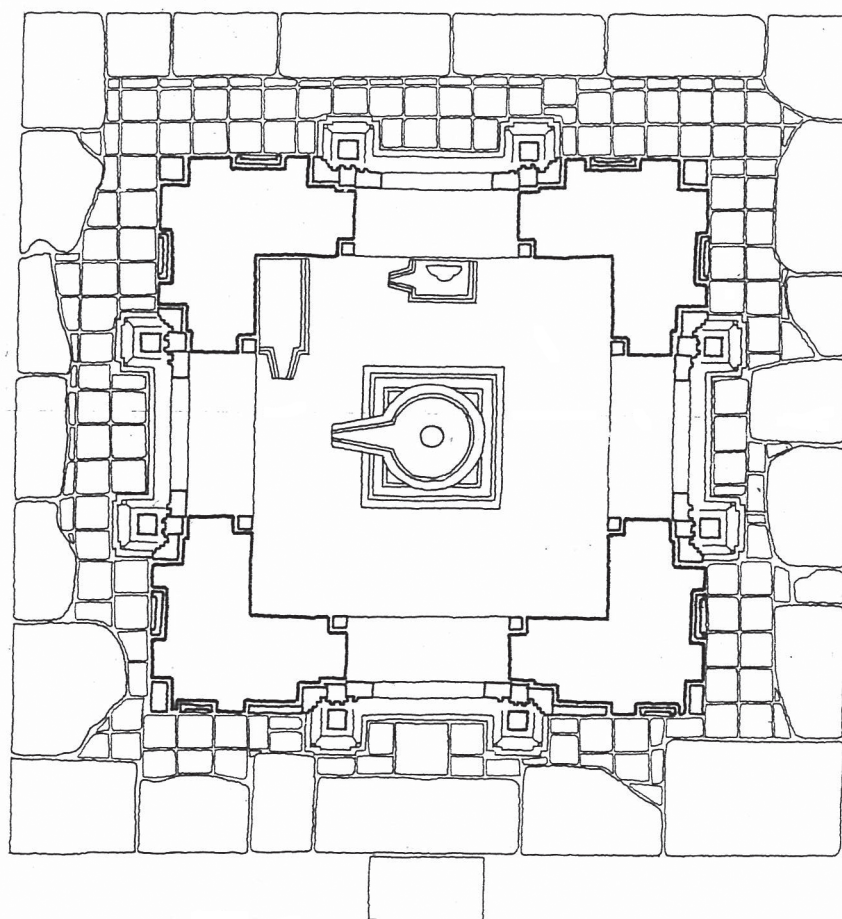
The ground floor plan of the temple, typical for a shrine to Shiva, consists of a perfectly symmetrical square brick masonry cella punctuated by a door opening on each elevation. Corners of the brick core are fitted with corner posts at the ground level. The ground floor sanctuary houses the icon, a Shiva linga atop a circular stone plinth.

Above the ground floor, which is demarcated by a continuous composite timber and brick cornice, is found a superstorey below the lower of two roofs. This superstorey is articulated with a single window opening centered on each side and two blind niches on each side of the centered window. Twelve massive roof struts (now lost) would have supported the deeply overhanging roof. An upper level corresponding to this superstorey, is accessible only by an opening in the timber joists above the sanctuary. There are no interior levels above this.

The cella forms a masonry structural core of walls 26" thick which is contained by the lower roof rafters. The upper temple level then continues upward, resting on timber beams within the base cella. The masonry walls of this smaller upper level form a 5'6" square (outside dimensions), whose outer surfaces lie 5" within the inside of the lower walls.

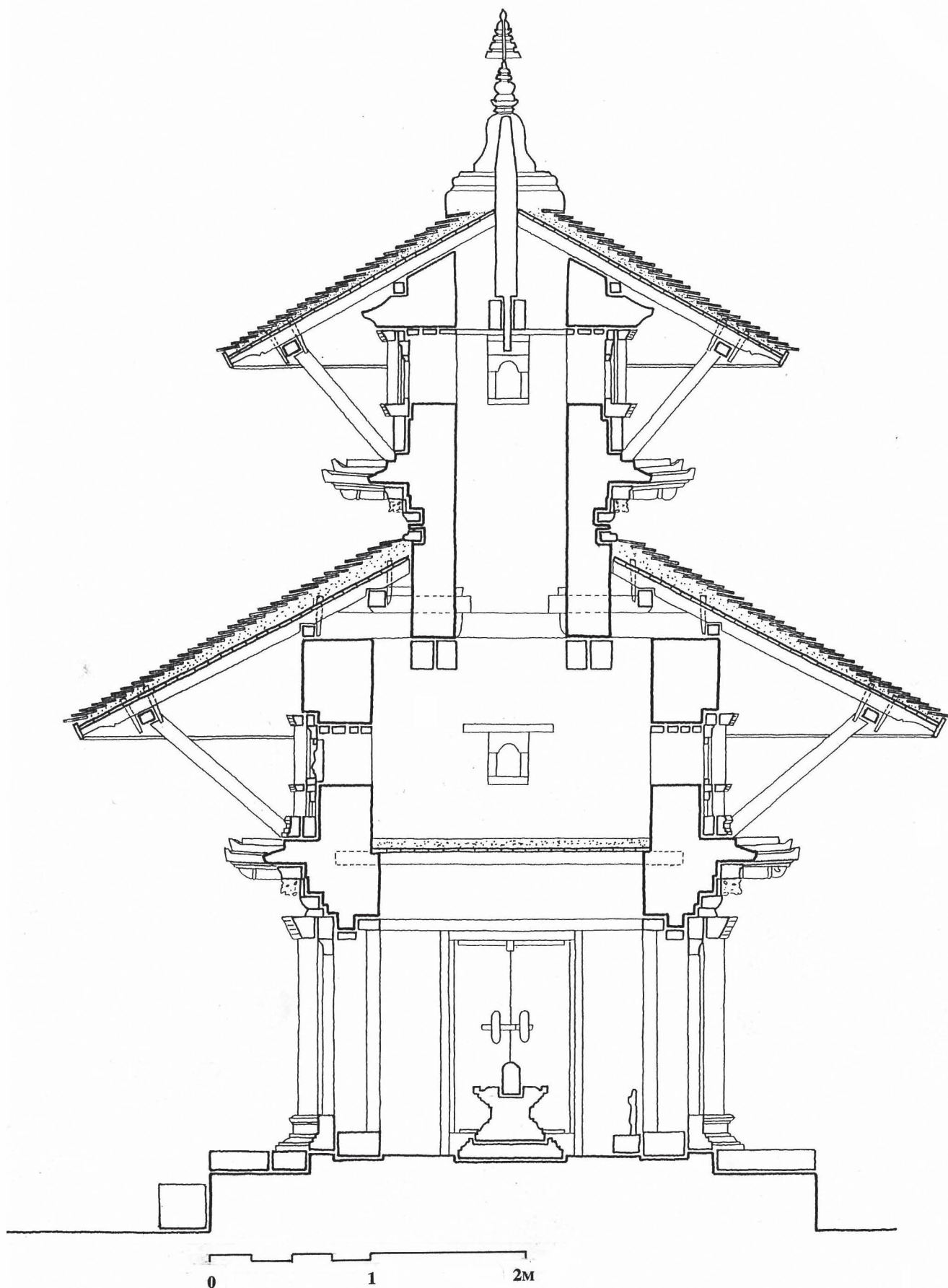
The visually dominant roof form consists of four-sided pent roofs at two levels with considerable overhangs (6' and 4'5" at lower and upper levels, respectively). These overhangs are supported by purlins, which are in turn supported by inclined timber struts. The massive lower roof (outer dimensions at eavesboard 21'9"X21'11") overhangs, but does not





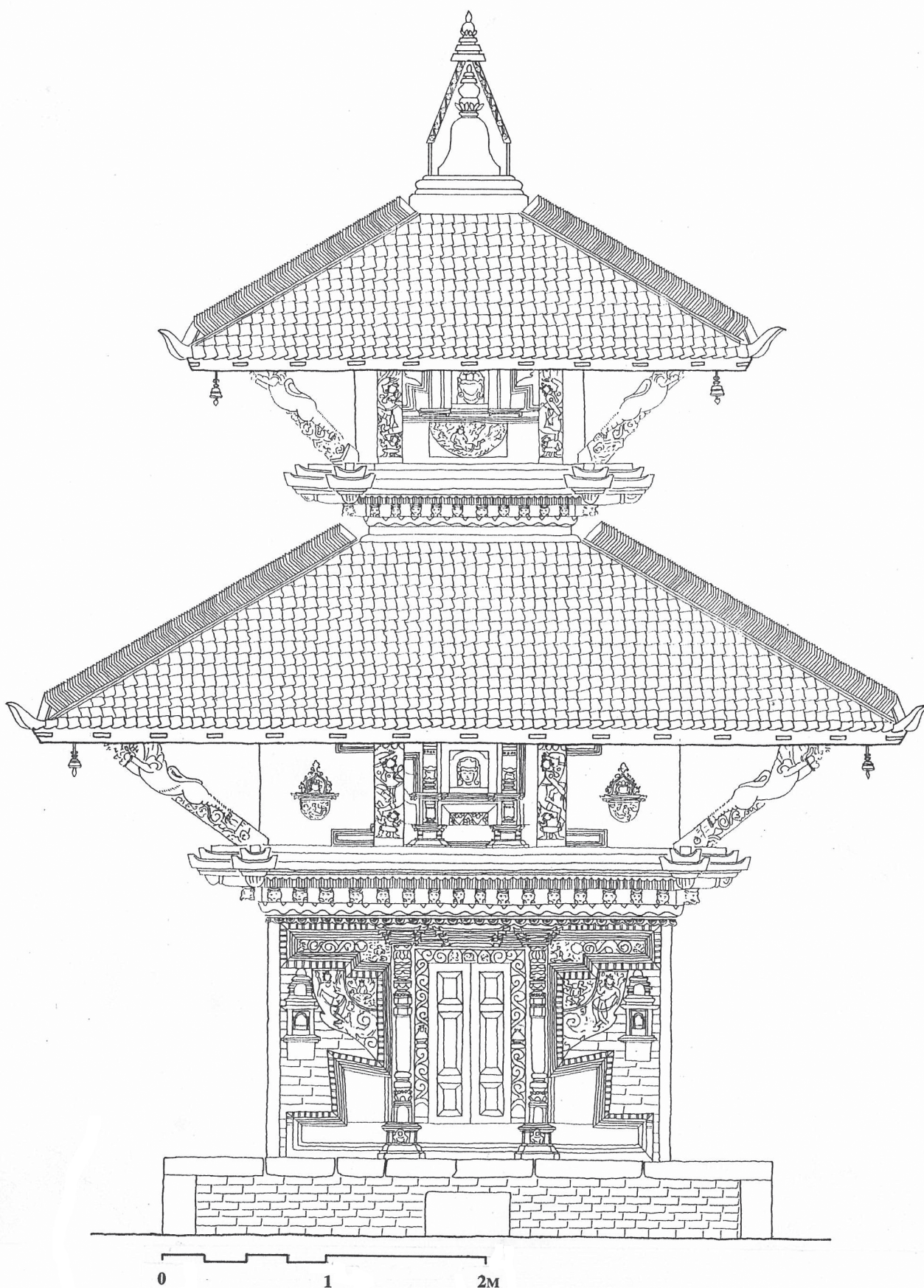
Sulima Ratnesvara Mandir
SULIMA TOLE, PATAN

GROUND FLOOR PLAN: PROPOSED
KATHMANDU VALLEY PRESERVATION TRUST - MARCH 1998



Sulima Ratnesvara Mandir
SULIMA TOLE, PATAN

SECTION WEST - EAST: PROPOSED
KATHMANDU VALLEY PRESERVATION TRUST - MARCH 1998



Sulima Ratnesvara Mandir

SULIMA TOLE, PATAN

PRINCIPAL WEST FACADE: PROPOSED
KATHMANDU VALLEY PRESERVATION TRUST - MARCH 1998

extend beyond the bottom level of the plinth. The timber struts rest on the continuous timber and carved brick cornices which project from the wall structure, creating strong horizontal registers. The entire roof structure is surmounted by a pinnacle, in this case only the decorative surround survives, the pinnacle itself roughly fashioned in masonry after theft.

At the base level, the principal western facade is most complex including iconographic panels around the door (the curving salabhanjika, the quarter round, the base figures, torana, etc) which are not found on the other elevations. At the superstory and upper levels, the configuration of timber openings is identical on four sides, with axially symmetrical windows one per side. Openings diminish in size as one goes up the temple. The roof struts read as flanking elements around these focal windows.

The main steps to approach the temple from the ground level are not on axis with the principal entrance as expected. A small shrine (lost now) and deep well in front of the principal facade have displaced the approach steps to the southern side of the temple plinth.

Iconography

There has been documentation and analysis of architectural iconography in Nepal to date, Gali's study is the only one to attempt a comprehensive description and analysis of all iconographic components of one temple. Articles like Mary Slusser's on Indrasvar Mahadev and Rau's Woodcarving Workshops discusses sets of early carved temple struts.

The following documentation is a first contribution to this discussion by the project. Analysis of the iconography is beyond the scope of the project.

These carvings would be deserving of further study to investigate this early canon for the Nepalese pagoda to Shiva which curiously includes a number of images more Buddhist than Hindu.

The principal figurative carvings:

1. Ground Floor Level Ground

floor iconographic system on the front facade and other facades are different not symmetrical as used to be in all four sides.

I. Door frames

A. **Curved wall brackets (*gvagahkva*)** - female figures *salabhanjhika*, here rendered specifically as the river goddesses Ganga and Yamuna atop crocodiles or *makara*. Ganga is left and Yamuna right.

B. **Quarter round panels (*devika*)** - Chandra and Surya, the moon and sun, recognizable for their mounts, the geese and horses, respectively.

C. **Extended threshold panels**- Left: Prithivi God of the Universe (?) with attendant Right: lost

D. **Projecting lintels (*lapu*)** - *Ghandharvas* or dancing figures in different mudras mixed with floral motifs.

E. **Door surrounds** - i. lintel triad of gods:

West - Bramha, Surya and Mahesvara

East - Devi, Surya and Shiva

North - Devi, Surya and Shiva

South - Surya Shiva, and Devi

Additional figures on door frame

ii. Lower surround, inner frame, one standing figure on each side

West: left - Nagaraja, right - Nagin

East: left - Shiva Pratihara, right - Shiva Pratihara

North: left - three headed god, right - Shiva Pratihara

South: left - Three headed god, right - Shiva Pratihara

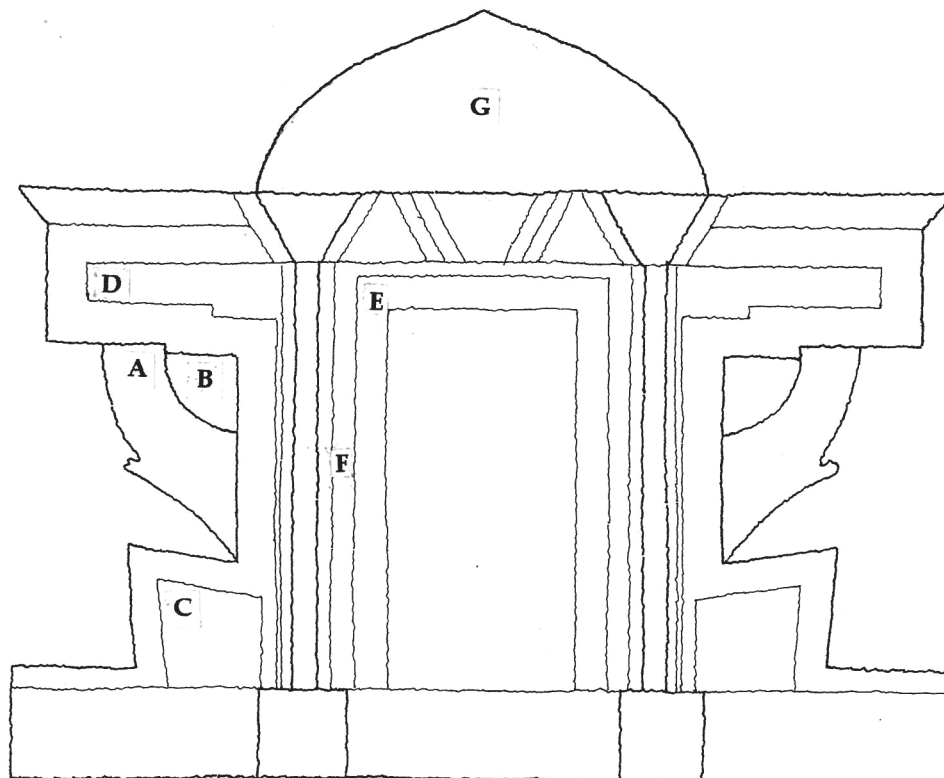
iii. This composition, found on the door surround at mid-height, repeats on four elevations, augmented by two additional figures on the principal elevation.

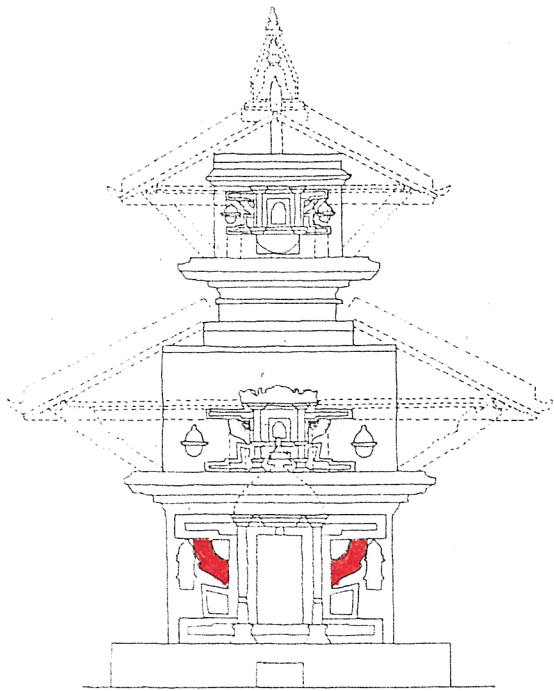
Left - three headed figure

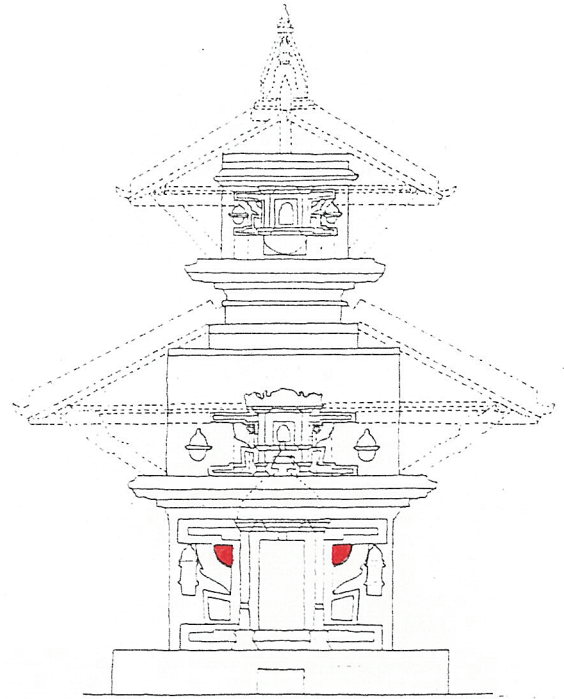
Right - One headed figure

F. **Forward-standing posts** - a pair of timber posts are standing on lion base on principal elevation. Head of *Ghandharva* (one top and bottom).

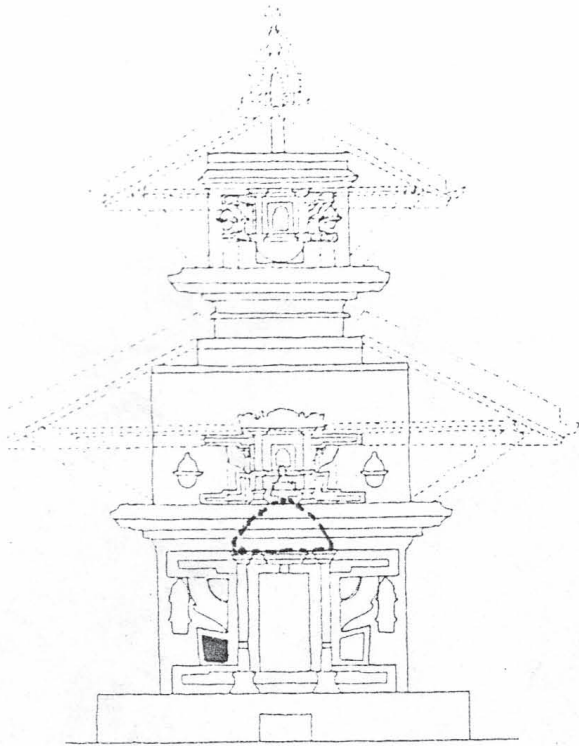
G. **Tympanum (*torana*)** - (From photographic documentation by M. Slusser and H. Rau). Main figure on the central base is dancing Shiva (Nriteswor) with eight arms; to his left Ganesh, to his right Karttikeya with two Mardnya players on both sides. On the top is Garuda, the bottom two ends defined by *makaras*.





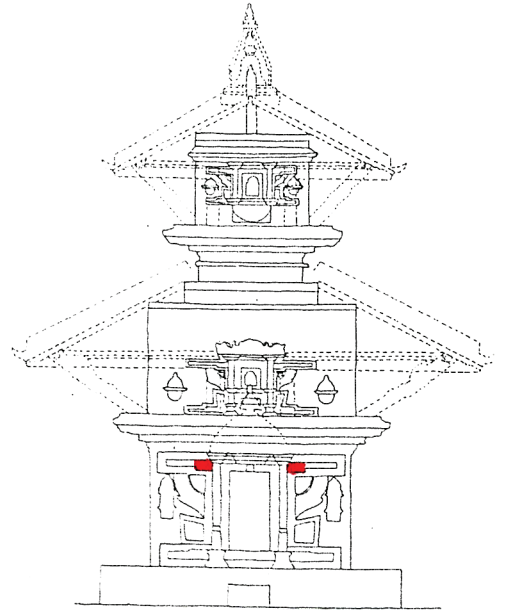






Facing page: Ground floor level with whole door frame showing lost torana (G), and lost panel above the stone (C) on the right, some fragments from the left were found later. Photo courtesy: M. Slusser. Bottom: Found fragments were assembled to identify the deity. Right: main deity of the panel, Prithavi (?) God of Universe.



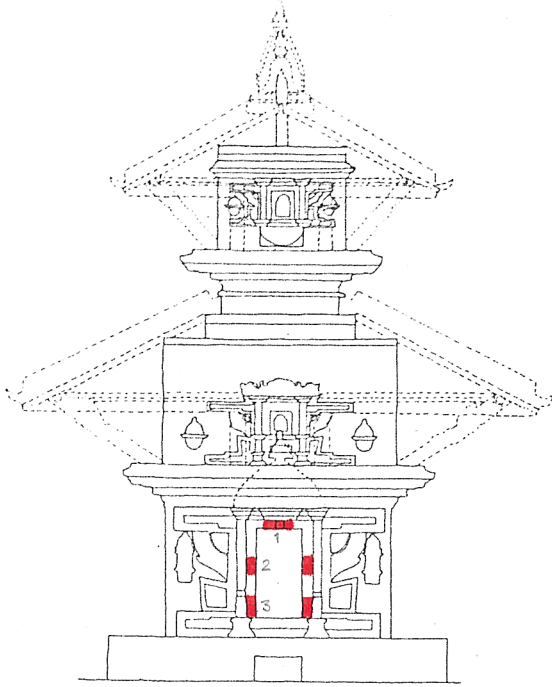


Detail of the upper level
extended door lintel showing
winged figure "Apsara". Top
photo from front west facade.
Bottom from east facade.

Facing page: Detail of the
upper level extended door
lintel showing winged figure
"Apsara". Top photo from
north facade. Bottom from
south facade.





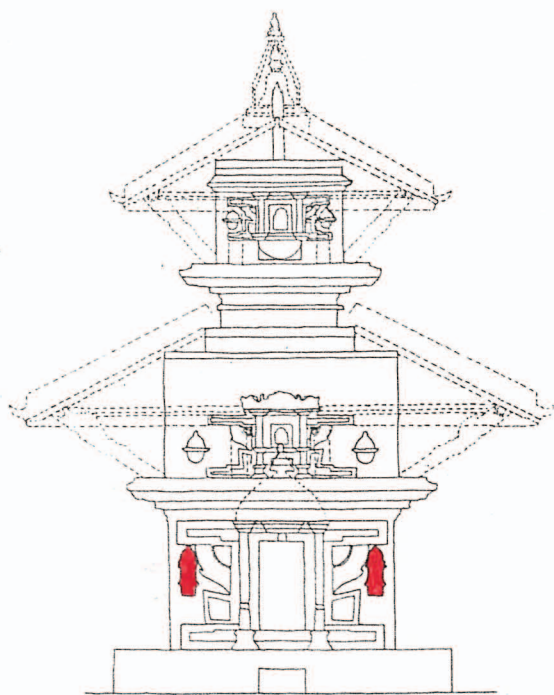




Lower parts of the door surrounds with small deities as a base of the vertical frame.



Lower parts of the door surrounds with small deities as a base of the vertical frame. Top: three headed icon (unidentified) and Shiva Pratihara on north door frame. Bottom: three headed figure (unidentified) and Shiva Pratihara on south door frame.



Left: Blind window from front west facade left side. Blind window is worn too much, so it is almost impossible to identify the main figures on it. Lower figure in blind window is "Ghandharva". Right: detail of main icon of the blind window.

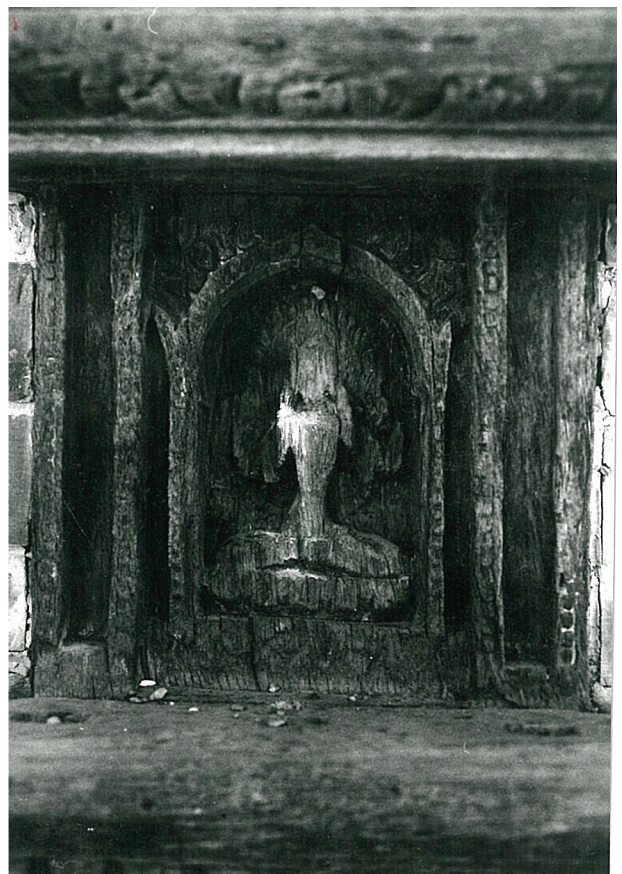




Left: Blind window from front west facade right side. Main figure of this blind window is also impossible to identify. Right: detail of main icon of the blind window.



Left: Gahjhya, blind window from ground level, north facade left side. Main figure is not identifiable and as on other blind windows, lower part is a "Ghandharva". Right: detail of the gahjhya.



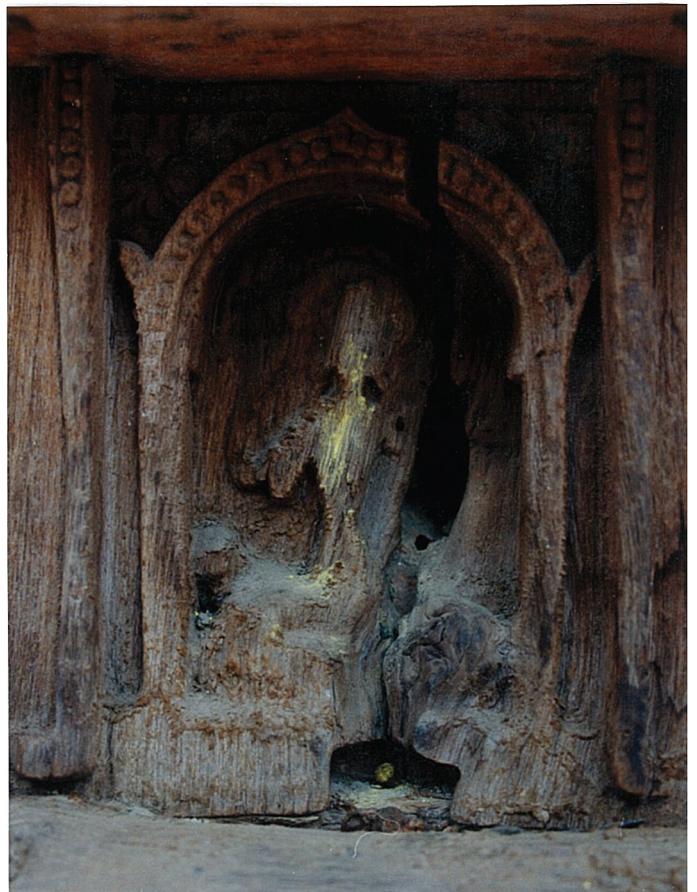
Left: Gahjhya, blind window from ground level, north facade right side. Main figure is "Garuda" carrying a human figure and, as on other blind windows, lower part is a "Ghandharva". Top part of the blind window about 1/3 and small timber posts are lost. Right: detail of the gahjhya. Garuda, vehicle of Narayan as a main figure inside the frame.



Left: Gahjhya, blind window from ground level, south facade left side. Main figure not indentifiable, lower part is a "Ghandharva". Right: detail of the gahjhya.



Left: Gahjhya, blind window from ground level, south facade right side. Main figure not indentifiable, lower part is a "Gandharva". Right: detail of the gahjhya.



II. Pairs of niches (*gahjhyah*) - flanking each of the ground floor doors, each is divided into three registers. Central niche figure is a seated god upper field includes a miniature god, a lower panel depict *gandharva* with a floral pattern.

West left - ? West right - ?

North left - ? North right - Garuda

South left- ? South right - ?

III. Cornices - Miniatures between the carved lion heads in the cornice depict a variety of floral motifs and the eight auspicious symbols *Astamangal*.

2. First Floor Level

I. Roof struts (*tuna*)

A. Principal struts

The principal figures are all dancers in different positions. They are atop different musicians and *gandharvas*. The upper strut registers consist of floral patterns.

Since this temple is dedicated to the Shiva the struts are carved as a dancers dedicated to the Lord Shiva, in his form named "Nritesvor Mahadev" (dancing Shiva).

B. Corner struts (*kunsal*) are typically rendered as repeating mythical horse-like figures on both levels. Only the sex varies.

II. Central window (*gahjhyah*) - "blind windows" inhabited by the *gandharva mukha*, the face of the goddess.

Typical central window in this location with extended carved columns divided into two parts by middle *kulan* cornice. Upper part is filled with *gandharva mukha* and lower part with floral designs.

The extended upper panels consist of two parts, an inner field of floral design and an outer one with *salabhanjika* and *makara*, repeated on all sides. The lower extended panels include a goose swallowing pearls on two sides and at the back *makara*, but the principle facade where there is a *gandarva* figure.





Facing page and above: Historical original (?) struts from the lower roof, which were lost about two decades ago. Photo: M. Slusser, 1980.

III. Tympanum (*torana*) - fragmentary

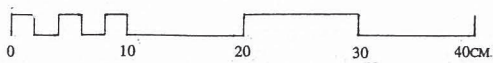
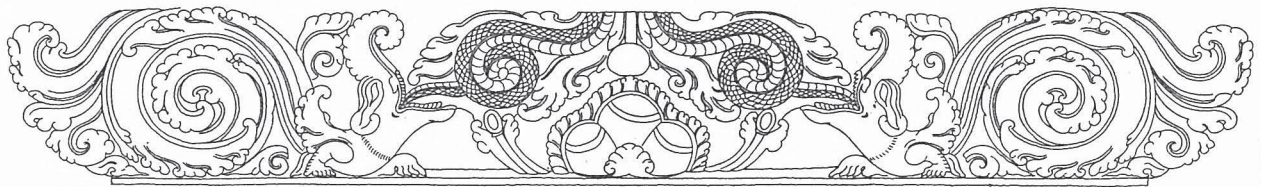
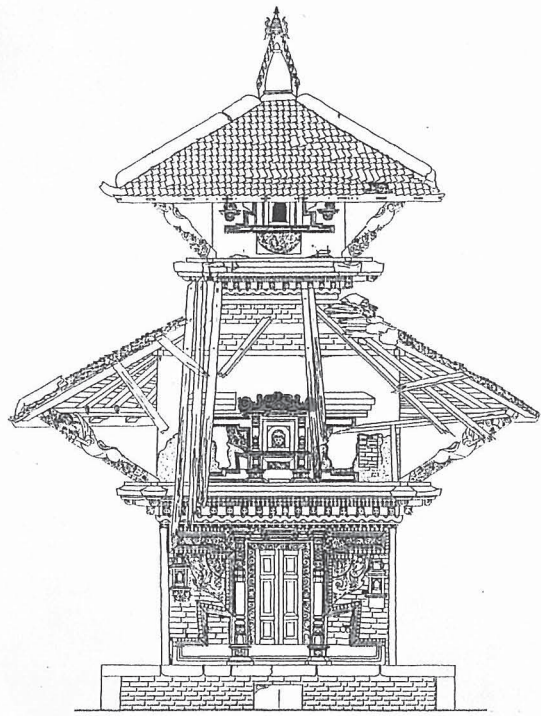
The surviving base panel depicts winding nagas in the central area, these emerge from *makaras* in the lower corners. The missing upper figure is indeterminate. Worthy of study as *toranas* of this age are rare.

IV. Pairs of blind niches (*gahjhyah*) - flanking central windows, The face of *gandharva* emerges from an oval frame composed of floral patterns above; below the upper body of a flying *ghandaroa* emerges from floral designs.



Windows of front and back facades.

Typical locations of decorative and iconographic carvings: extended carved lintel, free-standing posts in front of the door frame, inset decorative panels below the window lintel, decorative bracket figures defining quarter round panels, and decorative panels above the door sill.



Top: detail of the extended window sill showing gandharava. Middle: torana fragment above central window, principal facade. Bottom: documentation of fragment for study purposes. Drawing, Bijay Basuala.

3. Second Floor Level

I. Roof struts (*tuna*) -

A. Two historical struts have been found during the project study period. Similar to the lower roof struts the principal figures are dancers, lovely *yakshis* in the *salabhanjika* pose of one hand up grasping leaf stems and one hand down. These ladies are lithe and courtly, sporting garlands and elegantly detailed drapery.

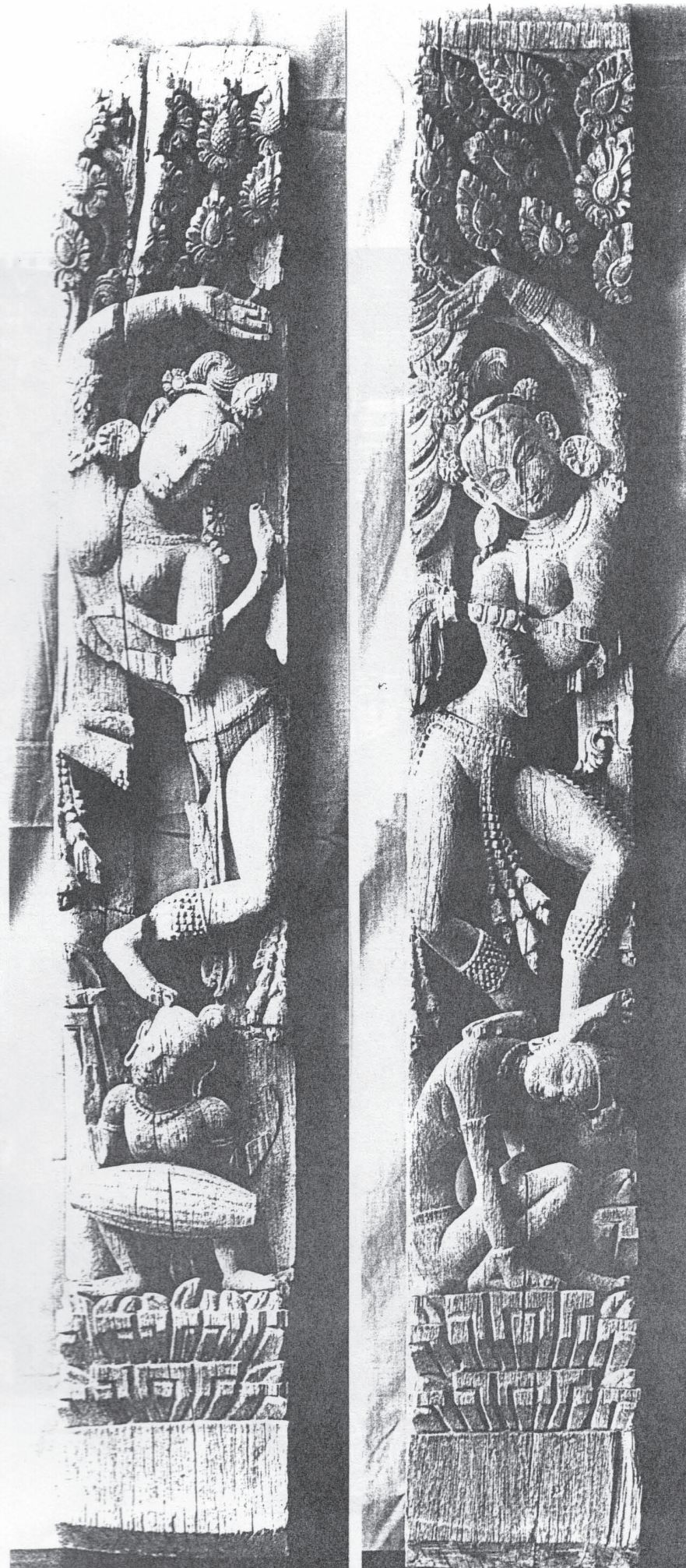
Subsidiary figures: one is a squatting drummer, a female figure (unusual according to Mary Slusser). The other is a *gana*, or dwarf. These subsidiary figures stand on the typical rock cut motifs.

B. Corner horses (*kunsal*) - are typical on both levels at four corners. They are identical in iconographic format except for sex. There are four males and four female. (mention locations)

II. Central window (*gahjhyah*) - Horses form the curved brackets; geese inhabit the extended sills; the semi-circular under-sill panel houses a single *ghandarva* figure on the three auxiliary elevations supported by additional miniature figures on the principal elevation.

III. Pairs of blind niches (*gahjhyah*) - floral designs in upper and lower panels.

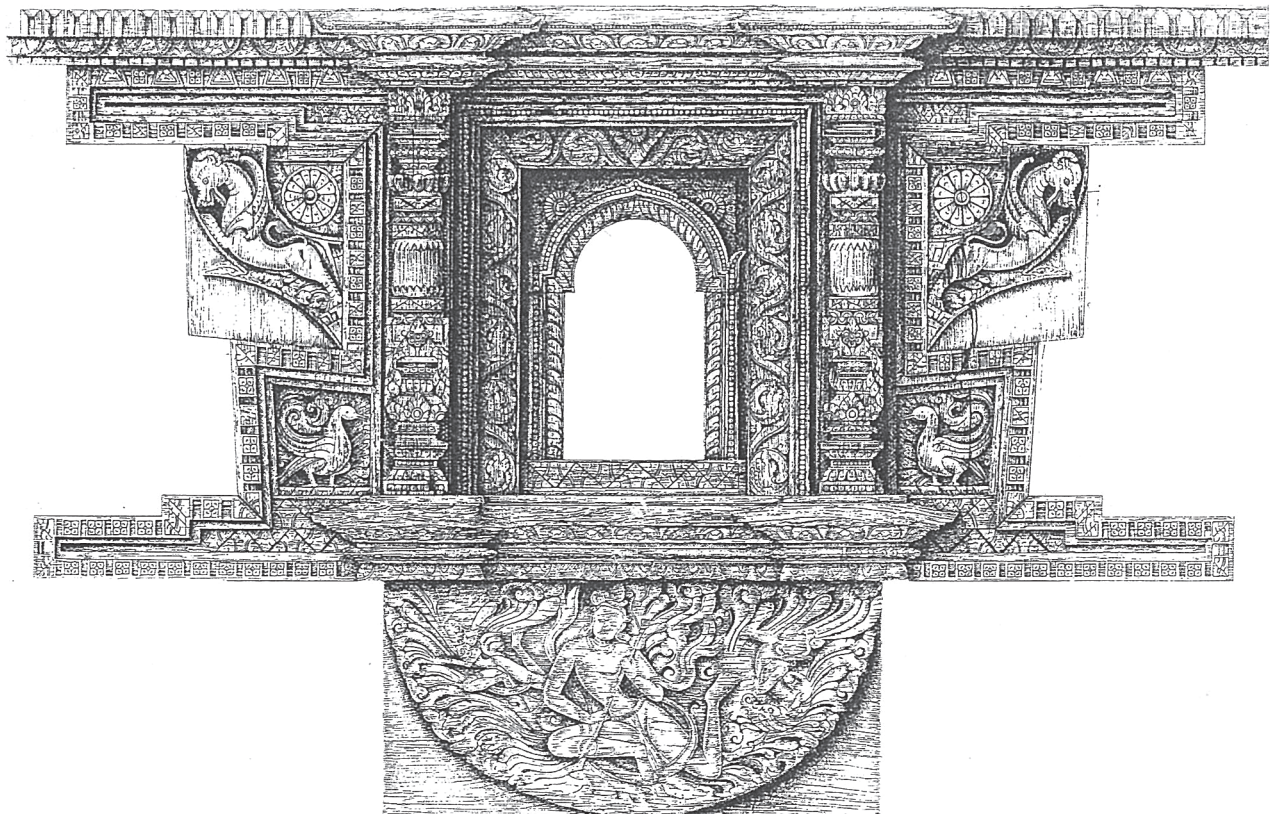
VI. Cornices - At the corners the upper layer of cornice cantilevers in the shape of hand (*lah kah*). Miniatures between the carved lion heads in the cornice depict floral motifs and the eight auspicious symbols, *astamangal*.

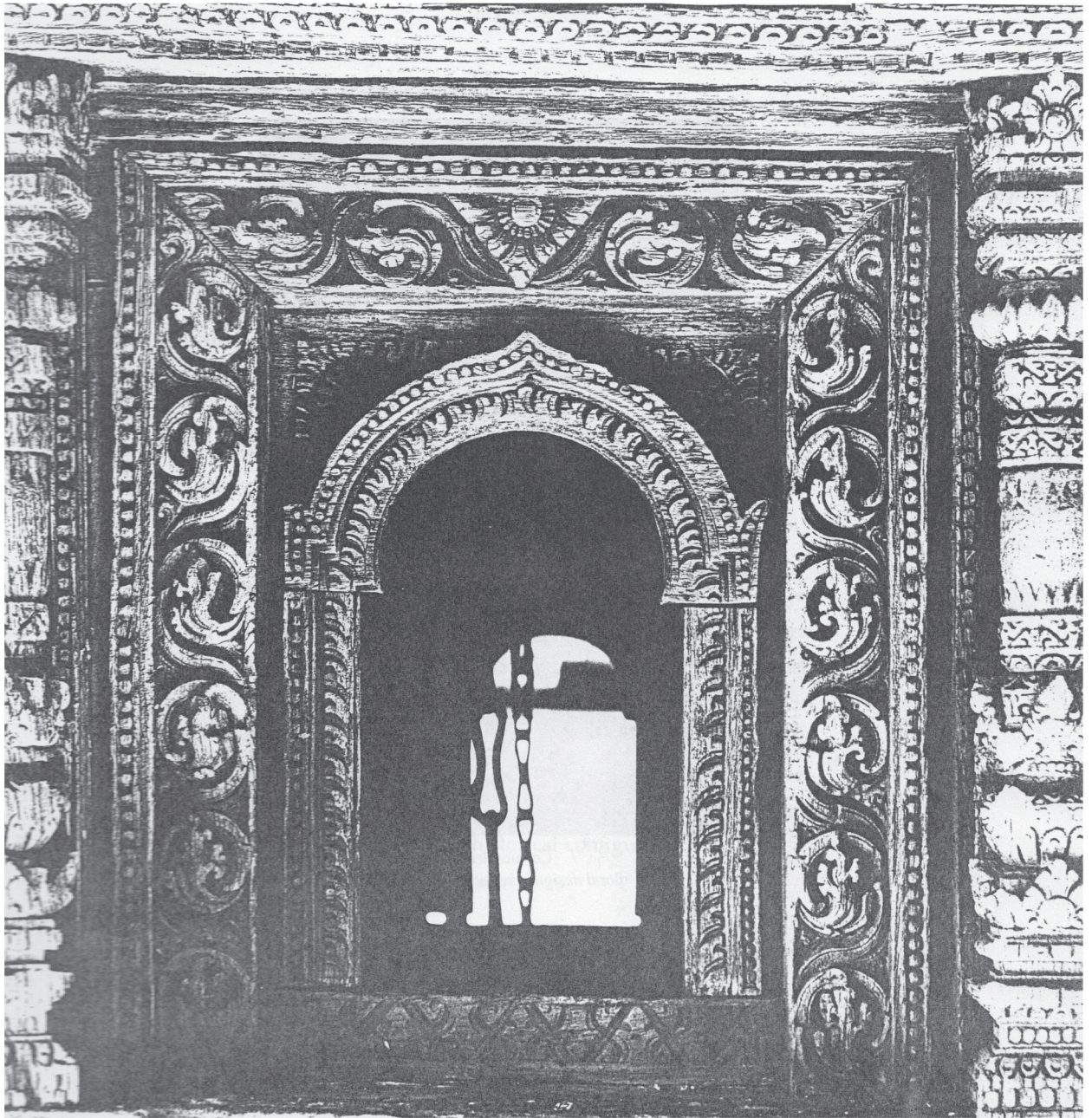


*The two surviving struts of
eight original upper roof
members.*



Right: detail of central window and ghajhyah. Bottom: drawing of front facade central window. Drawing, Bijay Basuala. Facing page: detail of central opening, a typical repeating detail.







*Cornice detail,
floral design inbetween lion heads.*

4.0 EXISTING CONDITIONS

- 4.01 Foundation wall and structure
- 4.02 Wall openings and decorative elements
- 4.03 Roof structure and struts
- 4.04 Roof cover and decorative elements
- 4.05 Interior

4.01 Foundation wall and structure

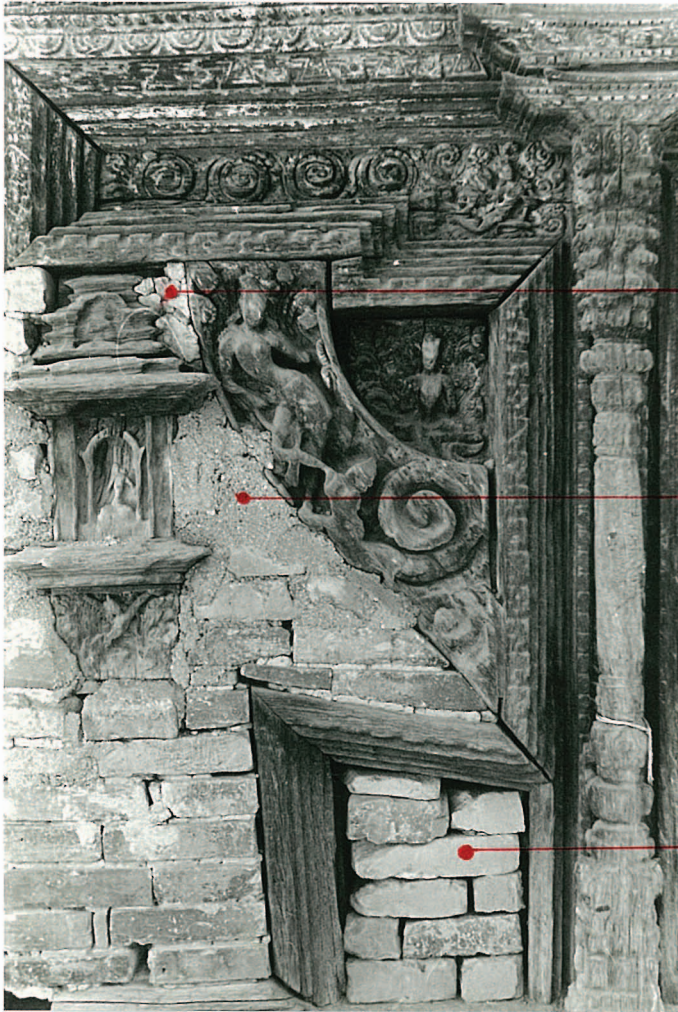
There is no visible settling or cracking of the wall structure. Excavations were not undertaken to examine the foundations of the temple. Also, there are no signs of rising ground dampness. This dryness probably is related to the location of a deepwell some 25 ft. in front of the temple, the well acting as a magnet for moisture.

There are two levels of plinth—one a base to the temple, another larger one below forming a mini-plaza (Newari: *dabu*) used for religious ritual presentations. Both levels of plinth were sloppily repaired about fifteen years ago. Common brick was substituted for lost veneer brick and in many places cement mortar was smeared over the brick surfaces. This describes 75% of the plinth faces except at the eastern or back side Lower level which was completely rebuilt not patched, using common brick and eliminating the stepping profile of the historical configuration.

Ground floor level

No structural problems are evident. The corner posts (plain replacements of this century) have moved slightly out (particularly at the SW corner) due to load from upper levels and undersized tenons connecting to the beams above.

Cosmetic problems over nearly all masonry surfaces: many patches have been made recently replacing damaged veneer brick with cement plaster, the plaster smeared indiscriminately over brick and timber carving alike.



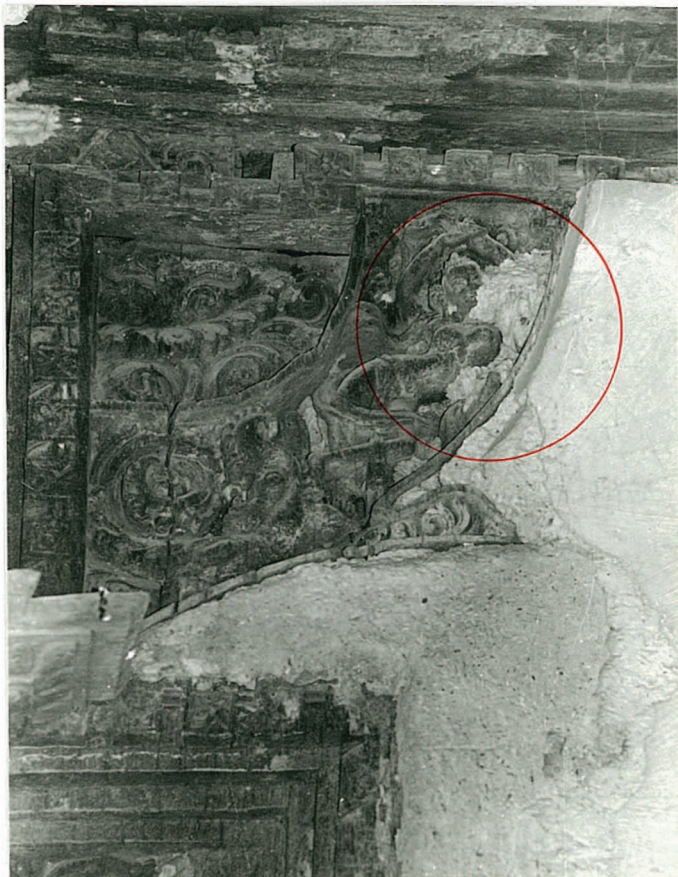
Fill with rubble and mud

Cement patching over dachi apa

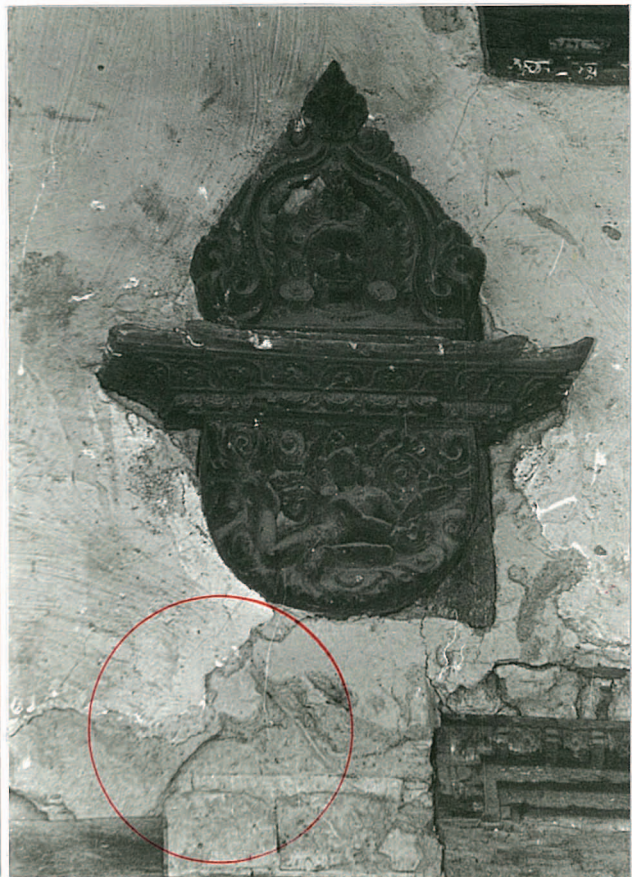
Brick fill without mortar

Left: recent repair work carried out by locals

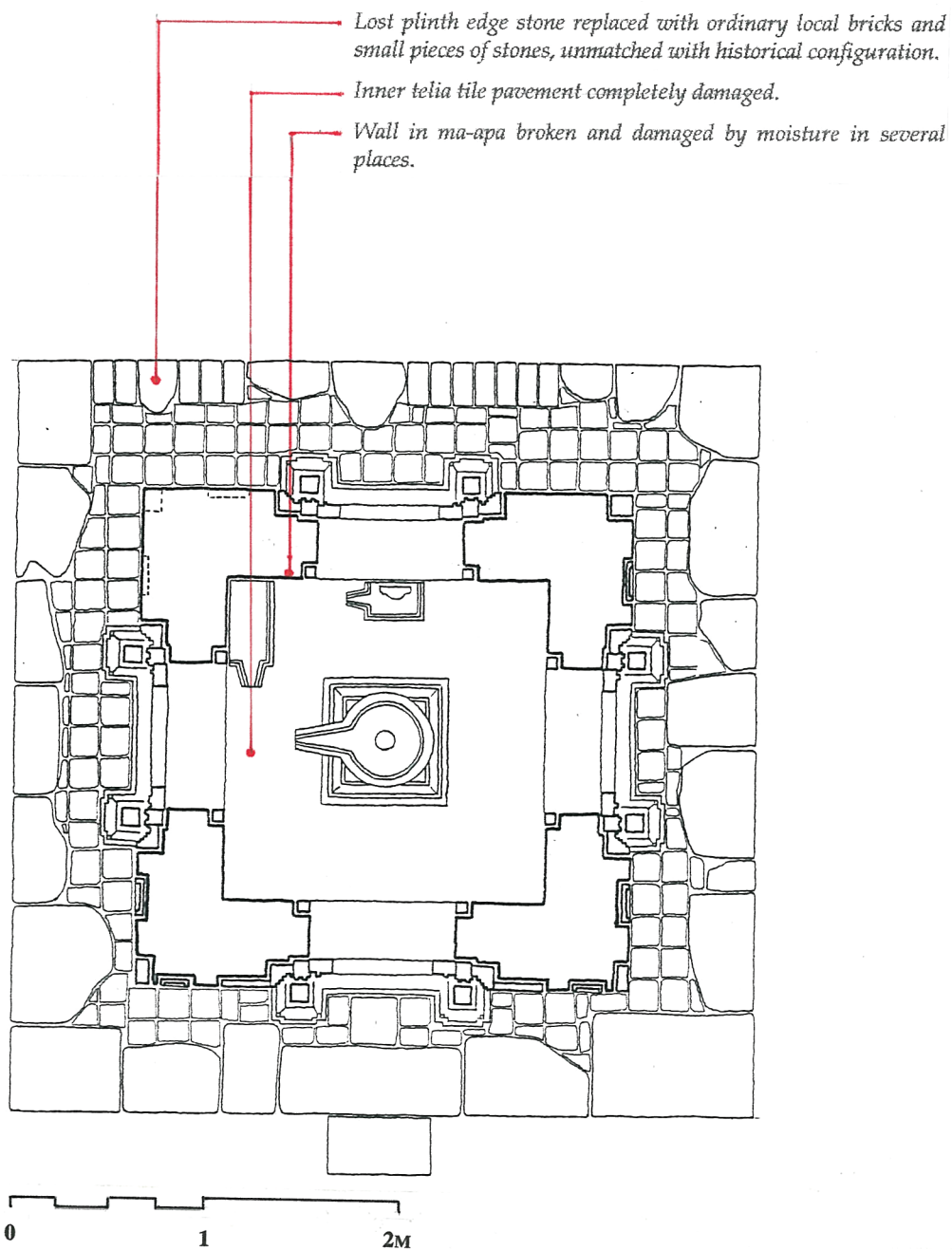
Below: damaged plaster surfaces on the 1st and 2nd levels



Sloppy mud plaster, which covers small portions of the historical windows



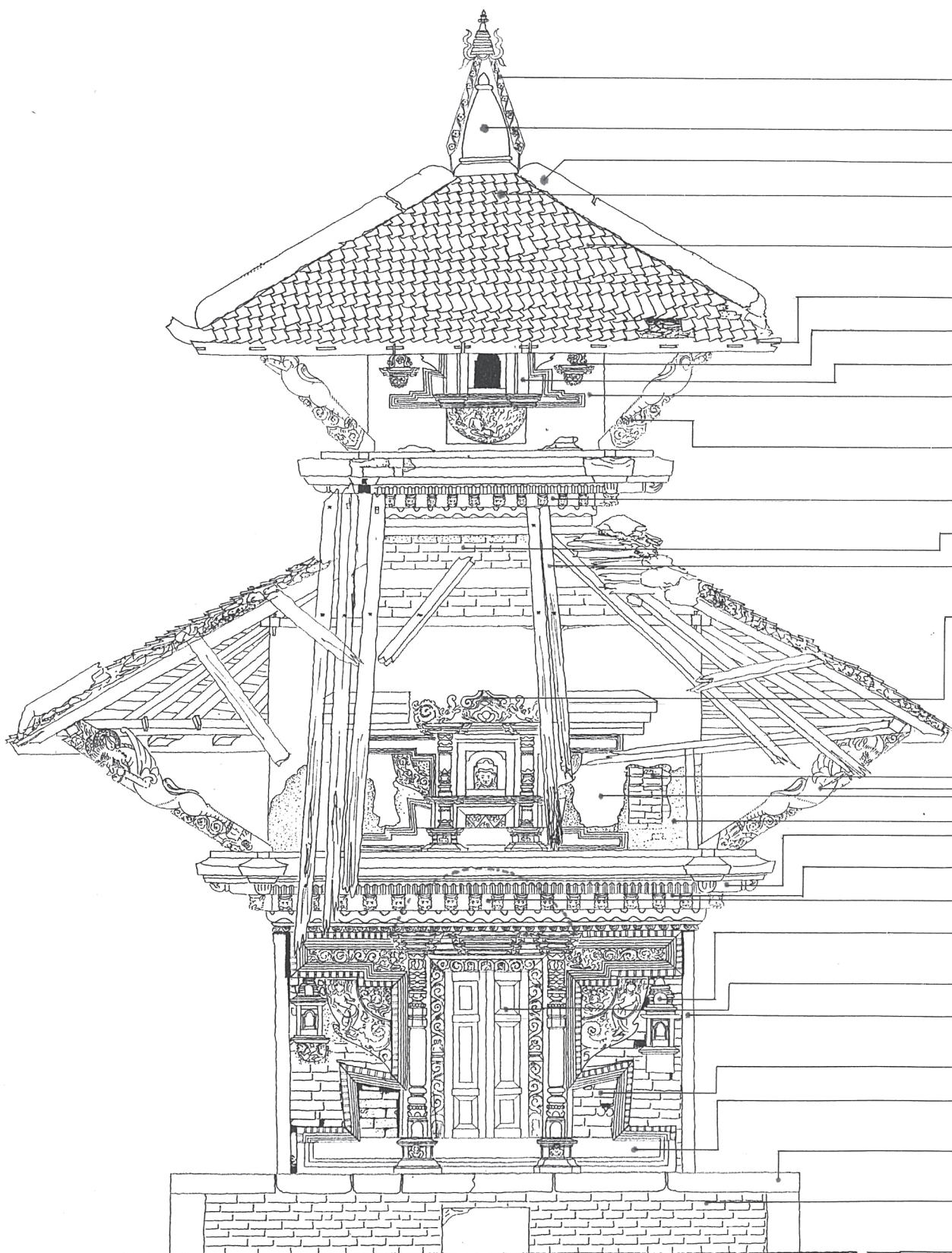
Broken lime punning and mud plaster.



Sulima Ratnesvara Mandir

SULIMA TOLE, PATAN

GROUND FLOOR PLAN: EXISTING
KATHMANDU VALLEY PRESERVATION TRUST - MARCH 1999



Sulima Ratnesvara Mandir
SULIMA TOLE, PATAN

PRINCIPAL WEST FACADE: EXISTING
KATHMANDU VALLEY PRESERVATION TRUST - MARCH 1999

Existing Condition

WEST (PRINCIPAL) FACADE

Gajura (gilt pinnacle) lost, triangular decorative frame with umbrella survives.

Main *gajura* replaced with brick work.

Lime-*surkhi* plaster incorrectly applied over ridge tile.

Roof tiles and mud cover damaged extensively (lost 30%, displaced 50%).

All roofing timber members; including rafters, wall plates, purlins damaged completely by wetrot.

Eavesboard completely damaged by wetrot.

Small blind niches: good condition.

Middle window: good condition.

Masonry wall in good condition, lime plaster broken in several places (30% of wall area).

Roof struts lost (8/level). Corner struts: in good condition.

Timber cornice fair condition: small area of wetrot.

Masonry wall in good condition.

Roofing timber members - rafters, wall plates, purlin, eaves board were completely damaged.

Upper *Torana* fragment survives in good condition. Small portion on the top lost.

Both blind niches lost.

Roof struts lost (8/level). Left corner strut broken and partially rotten. Right corner strut in good condition.

Wall in good condition.

Plaster damaged in several places (50% of wall area).

Timber bracket *Lah-kha* damaged at joints.

Timber cornice: good condition.

Torana (tympanum) lost.

Gahjhyah worn extremely from weathering, but sound. Top (pinnacle) of left *gahjhyah* lost

Contemporary door panel: good condition.

Left corner timber post damaged by moisture, right post good condition.

Door niches lost both side.

Stone threshold: good condition/ no visible settlement.

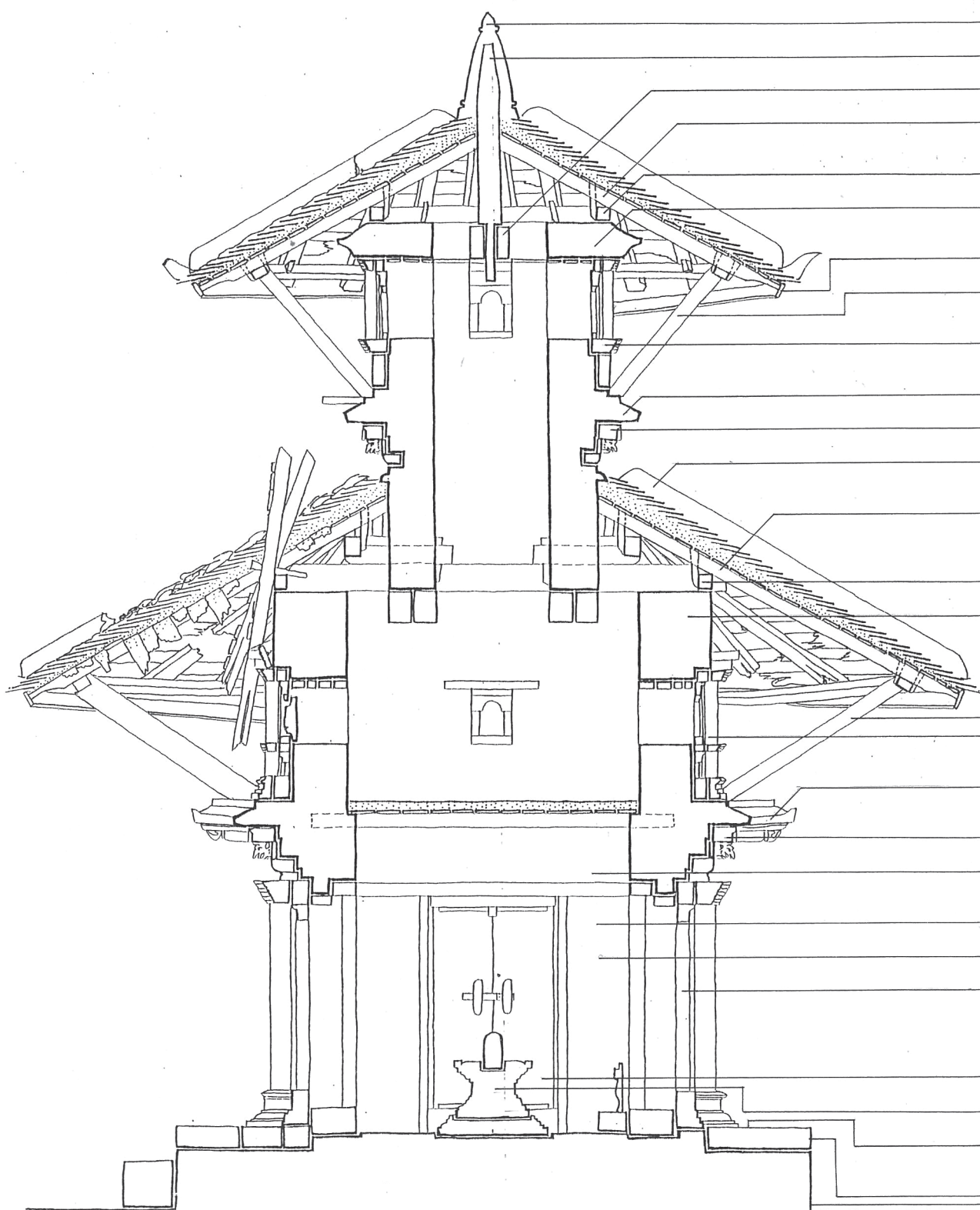
40% of plinth edge stones replaced with unmatched yellow stone and brick on edge.

Plinth wall damaged in several places with patching in cement mortar.

Telia tile pavement completely damaged (cracked 50%, lost 50%).

50% of plinth edges stones lost replaced with unmatched yellow stone and broken edge.

East plinth wall completely rebuilt with common brick, *ma-apa* and brick on edge as a edge stone.



Sulima Ratnesvara Mandir

SULIMA TOLE, PATAN

SECTION WEST - EAST: EXISTING

KATHMANDU VALLEY PRESERVATION TRUST - MARCH 1999

Existing Condition

WEST EAST SECTION

Gajura (gilt pinnacle) lost

Pinnacle king post: in satisfactory condition.

Pinnacle beam is poor condition from wetrot.

Roof structural timbers: all pine rafters, purlins and planking severely damaged by wet rot.

Wall plates damaged at corner location.

Masonry wall in good condition, only upper three layers displaced.

Eavesboard damaged in several places from wetrot.

Corner struts are in good condition, middle struts lost (8 strut/level).

Middle window is in good condition, 2 of 8 auxiliary blind niches lost

Lha-kha damaged completely.

Timber cornices is in good condition

Lime *surkhi* plaster inappropriately applied on ridge tile.

Roof cover damaged. Rafters, purlins, planking, eavesboard completely damaged and not able to be reused

Wall plates good condition

Wall masonry structurally sound

Corner struts are in good condition, middle struts are lost (8 strut/ level).

Middle window in good condition, miniature elements including (forward standing columns, figur in the middle), at east, north and south windows missing. 4 of 8 auxiliary blind niches lost.

Lha-kha were damaged several places (decorative timber bracket).

Timber cornices: good condition.

Timber planking beneath the mud floor completely damaged.

Joists: good condition

Inner wall surface damaged several places (4 Sq.ft).

Lattice Door @ (west). Principal entrance lost, replaced by modern door panels. East lattice door damage lower third from wetrot. North and south doors: small areas of lattice work damaged.

Inner paneled door in satisfactory condition.

Ratnesvar Mahadev in good condition.

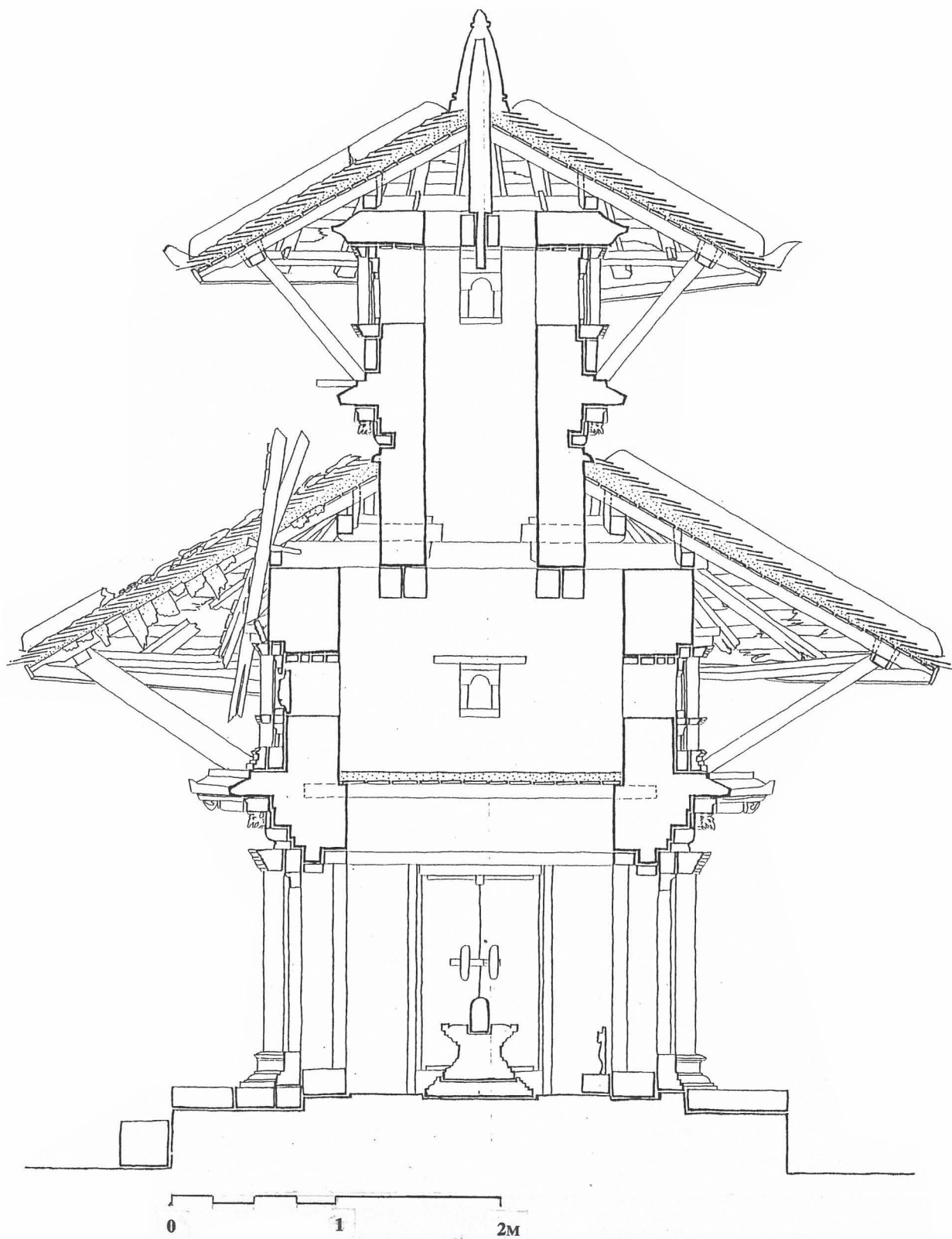
Telia tile floor badly cracked, missing tiles 30%, sloppily patched with cement and common brick.

40% of plinth edge stones lost

Most of the plinth wall repaired, rebuilt in and carelessly pointed with cement mortar.

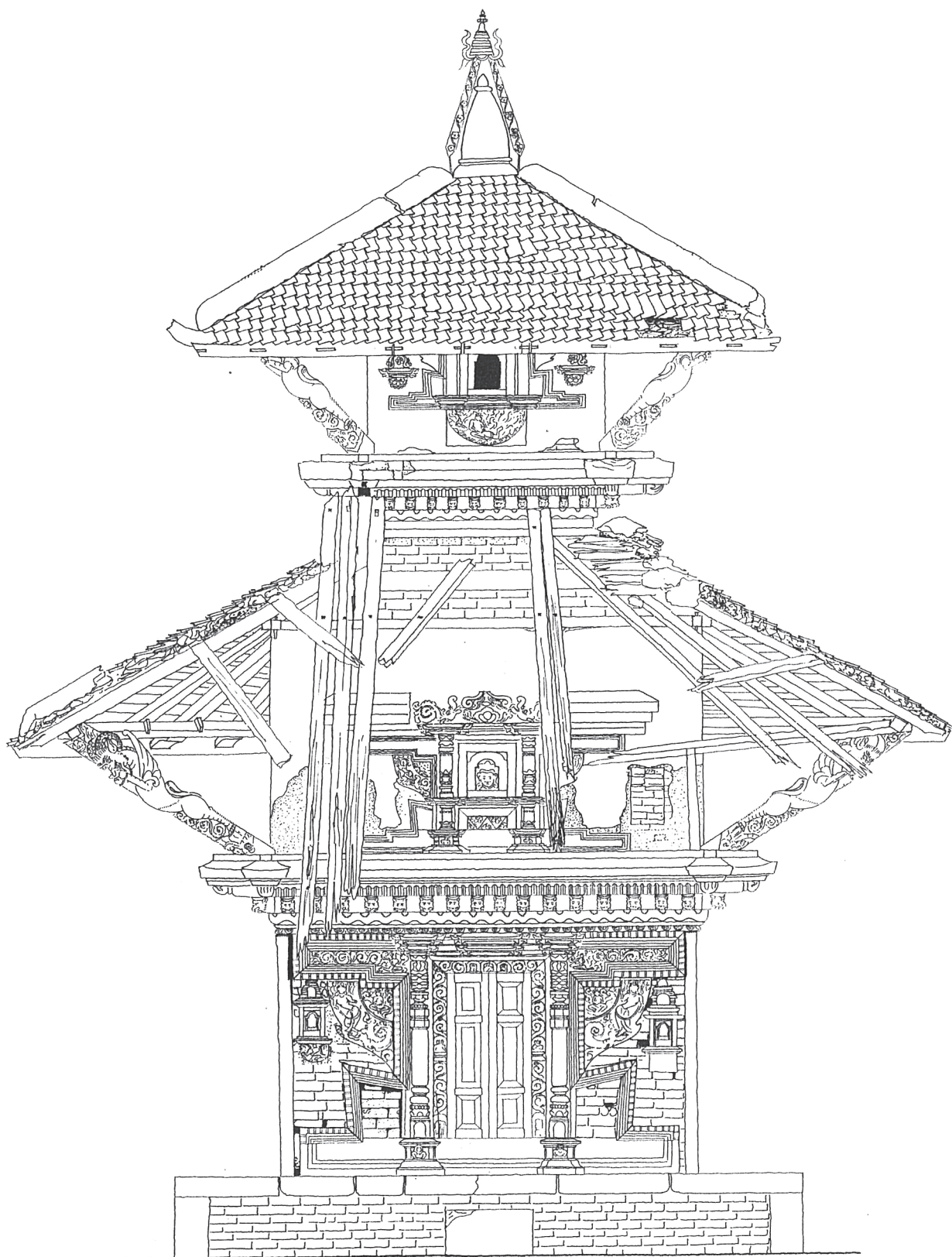
Telia tile pavement cracked and lost (70%).

This description is representative of other three elevations with the following additional comments:
Lattice door @ ground level. Auxiliary niches @ ground level. Auxiliary niches @ upper level.



Sulima Ratnesvara Mandir
SULIMA TOLE, PATAN

SECTION WEST - EAST: EXISTING
KATHMANDU VALLEY PRESERVATION TRUST - MARCH 1999



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Sulima Ratnesvara Mandir

SULIMA TOLE, PATAN

PRINCIPAL WEST FACADE: EXISTING

KATHMANDU VALLEY PRESERVATION TRUST - MARCH 1999

First floor level

In good condition, the wall seems to have been rebuilt in the last fifty years using common brick and plastered with mud plaster in a sloppy manner. The plaster was applied with the hand and not with tools giving a rough finish.

Upper level

Due to the roof damage, water has penetrated into the upper wall for the last five years causing the uppermost three courses of brick to be dislocated. This level preserves old common brick difficult to date. The mud mortar has been washed out in the upper half of this wall area. The eastern wall is bulging out from this damage 2.5"; the norther wall 2"; the southern wall 1.5" and western 1". The mud plaster has broken off in virtually all places; there are small areas of lime plaster patches that may be 20 years old.

4.02 Wall openings and decorative elements

Typical of historical openings here, there are numerous spaces in the joints as these elements were made with unseasoned timbers which later "moved". These do not pose structural problems and are generally less than one inch in size.

The timber carved elements and openings are in excellent condition showing no signs of wetrot or insect attack. On ground floor the surviving elements are extremely weather-worn and worn down by touching. The upper level carvings contrast in their crispness, protected by the deep overhangs. Many carved elements have been stolen as shown in the diagrammatic elevations.

4.03 Roof structure

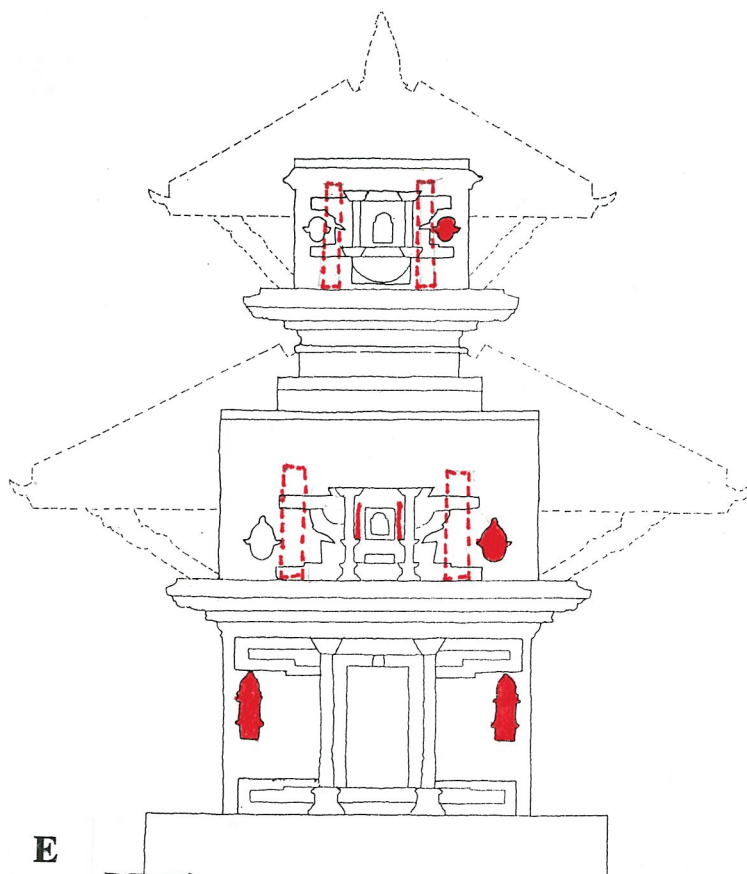
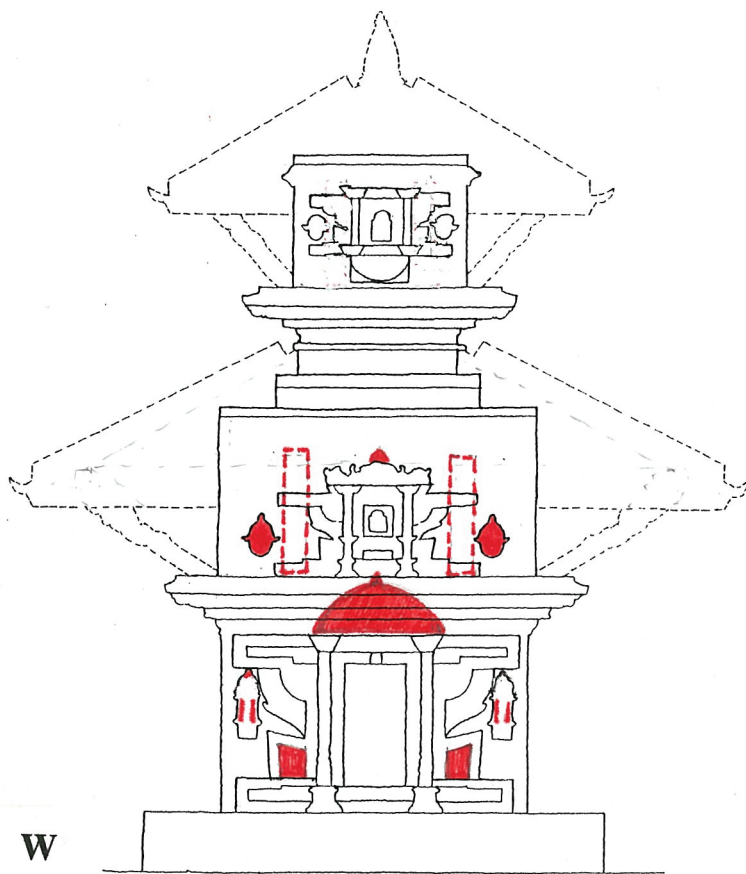
The roof structure in mixed pine and sal seems to date from a rebuilding in this century based on its more widely spaced (16" o.c.) rafters, adze finished and covered with lathe. More recent repairs would have used planking above the rafters. The roof was opened up (removing tile, mud,



Ground floor doorways.

Top: front west side door. Original door was replaced with this modern door for security. Lower inset decorative panels of the door are lost, filled with sloppy brickwork. Bottom left: north side door, only door with carvings on the door shutter frames too, which seems oldest door among the others. Condition of the door is also better than other side doors, only a small piece of lattice at the left panel is broken. Bottom right: west side door is the worst compared to other sides.

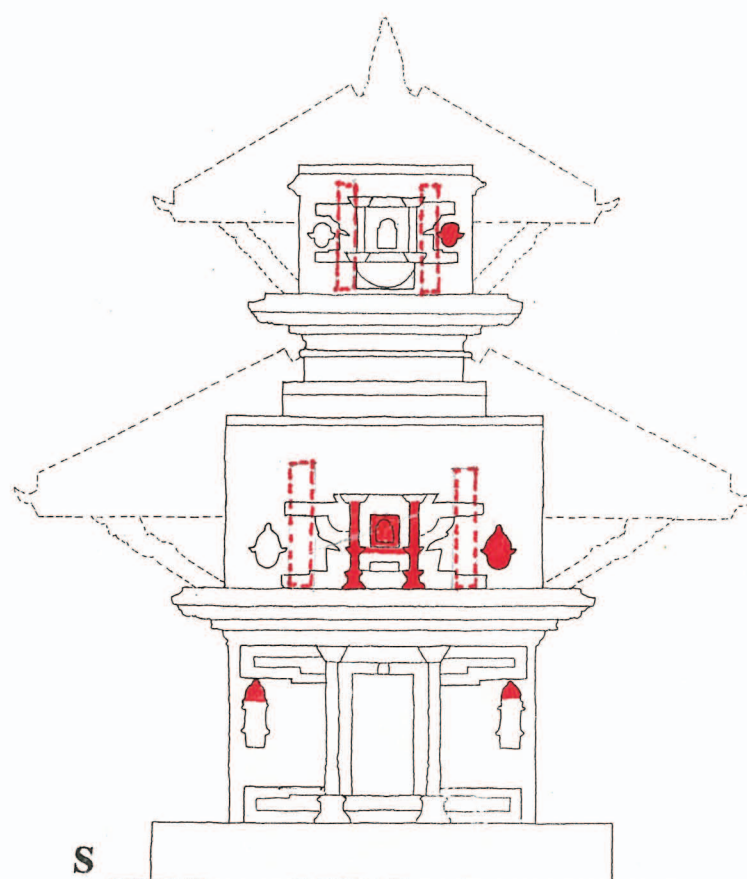
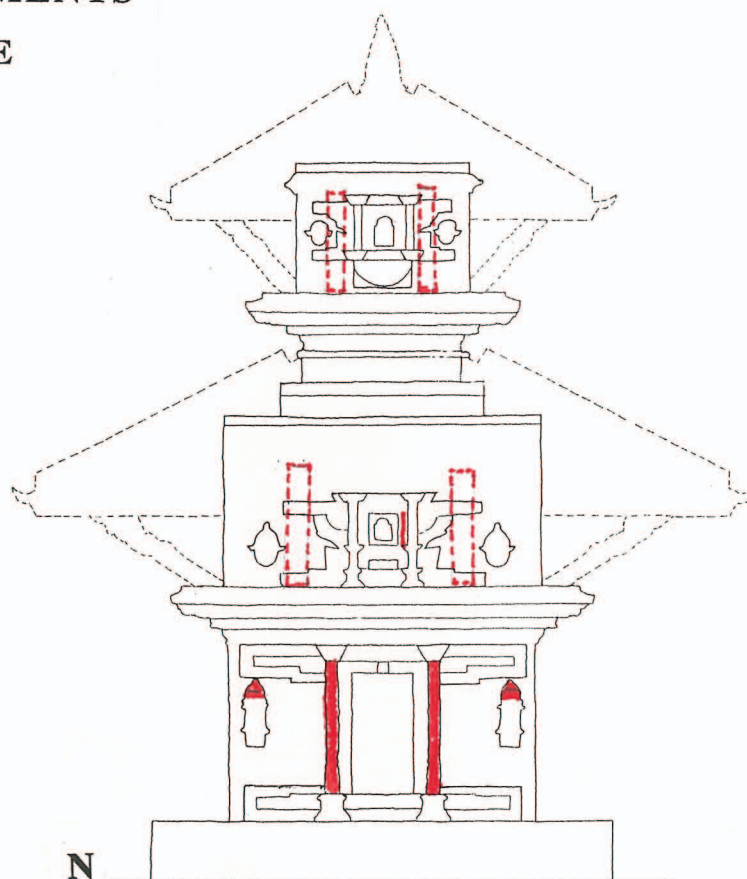




LOST TIMBER CARVED ELEMENTS

SULIMA RATNESVARA TEMPLE

Spring 1996

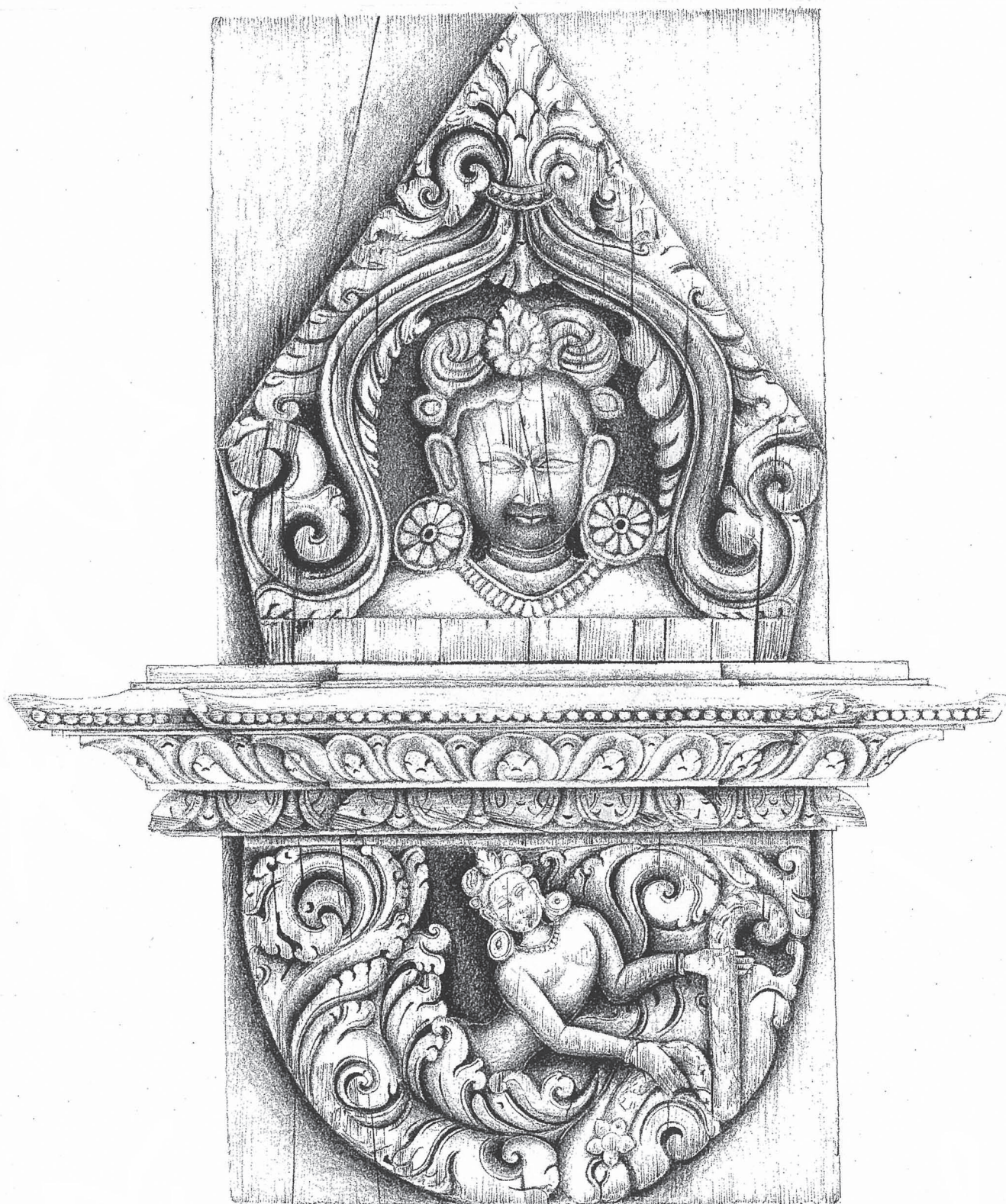




Blind niche from the principal facade,
upper level, below the lower roof, left side

Photo: Mani Lama, spring 1998

Drawing (opposite): Bijay Basukala, spring 1998



Sulima Ratnesvara Mandir

SULIMA TOLE, PATAN

GAHJHA (BLIND WINDOW)

KATHMANDU VALLEY PRESERVATION TRUST - MARCH 1999

and lathe cover) in 1993 to begin repairs which were then never carried out. The opened roof accelerated deterioration of the roof structure causing complete rotting of all rafter, wall plate, purlin, and eavesboard members. The only good thing about this misguided effort was that it allowed us to see from the beginning that all the structural timber was structurally unsound.

4.04 Roof cover and decorative elements

Roof cover lost as discussed in 4.03. A damaged traditional, gilt, bell-shaped pinnacle (Newari: *gaju*) was replaced by rough masonry some twenty years ago, although the gilt decorative surround of the pinnacle, in triangular shape, survives. This surround is missing a length of 15" where brass strips have been inserted. A photo of twenty years ago documents lost traditional small bells at the corner eaves.

4.05 Interior

The common brick interior, unplastered, has been damaged up to a height of four feet level by water splashing off the icon during worship, a blocked interior drain, and lack of ventilation. Floor pavement is a hodgepodge of tile and brick fragments in mud with insufficient slope for drainage. There are no traces of an historical floor beneath. The icon, a stone linga of approximately one foot height on a pedestal, is in good condition. It may be the original.

5.0 RECOMMENDED WORK

- 5.01 Foundation and wall structure
- 5.02 Wall fabric
- 5.03 Wall openings and decorative elements
- 5.04 Roof structure and struts
- 5.05 Roof cover and decorative elements
- 5.06 Interior

5.01 Foundation and wall structure

General seismic reinforcement issues.

Given the structural activity of Nepal, any restoration project must consider both the reinforcement of existing structure and the introduction of new structural members to withstand earthquakes. This is balanced against the desire to maximize historical fabric and configuration. Based on our experience with other pagoda structures and given the very small scale of this structure, it was decided that major interventions were not necessary.

We thus used as a model the KVPT reinforcements of Uma Maheswar Temple which was designed together with engineers Manohar Rajbhandari and Prayag Joshi in 1992. Interventions were limited to numerous small scale reinforcement measures in the timber roof structure to help the historical timber frame to act as a brace for the overall structure. In addition, the maintenance of mud mortar was a key feature, both as historical feature and for its damping effect during an earthquake. (The mud is able to absorb the shock waves of the earthquake without fracturing adjacent bricks and other wall areas.)

Strengthening of timber structural connections

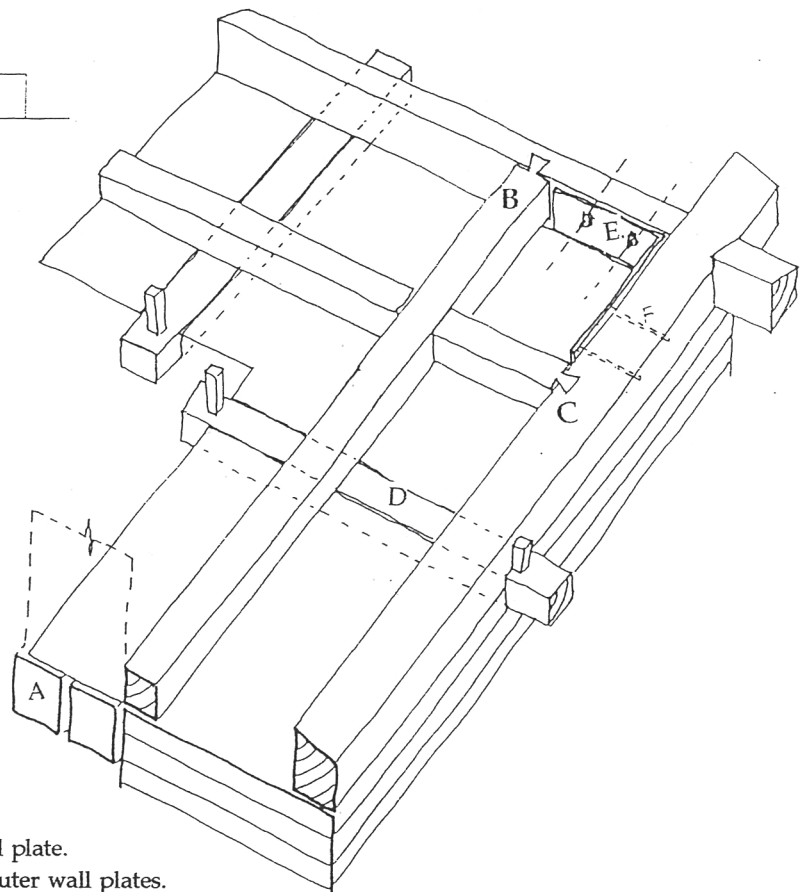
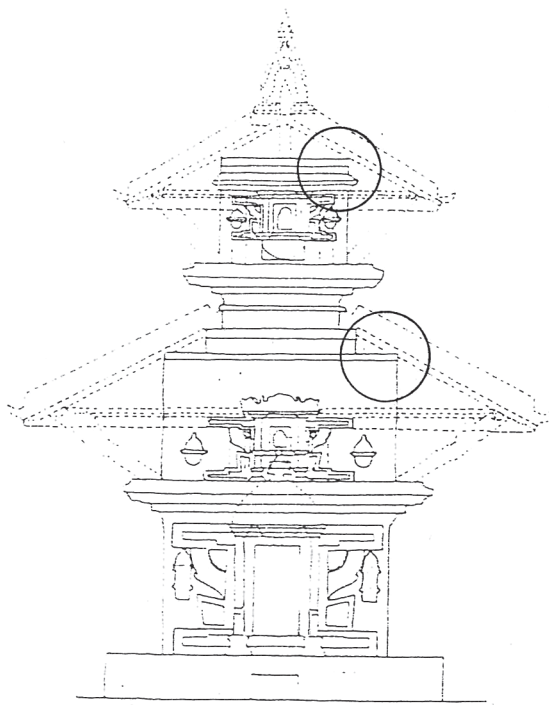
Connection between rafters and wall plates. In traditional structures the rafters are not notched to the wall plates and are simply held by timber pegs. Concealed bolting on every third rafter is proposed to improve the structural stability of the roof frame and wall plate connections. This can be considered a general strategy for seismic reinforcement.

Connection between innerwall plate and outerwall plate. The traditional configuration of double wall plates makes it easy to develop a timber horizontal ring beam of sorts by careful sizing and joinery at the corners. In this temple there was no connection between the inner and outer wall plates, because these members were already damaged. During rebuilding, the corner joints will be made with the traditional lap joinery but will also incorporate 3/8" thick steel "L" plates to reinforce this corner. These plates will be made of iron painted with three coats of anti-corrosive paint. The additional joints between inner and outer wall plates use dovetailed joinery.

(Stainless steel components are not available in Nepal. Past experience with imported stainless steel from India has caused delays of up to six months, while the risk of corrosion seems minor if the roof cover is properly maintained.)

Connection between the rafter and purlin. The joint between rafter and purlin is a loose joint only linked by timber pegs to prevent diagonal sliding. It is proposed to incorporate steel bolts in every second rafter to overcome vertical movement and improve overall rigidity.

Connection between purlin lap joints in the corners. This joint is much weaker than the wall plate joints and they have to bear extra load from the struts as well. It is proposed to add a steel plate 2" wide and 3/16" thick in the same angle as the purlins to strengthen this connection.



- A. Existing principal timber beam.
- B. Existing inner wall plate.
- C. Existing outer wall plate.
- D. Timber joining inner and outer wall plate.
- E. Steel collars tying together timber outer wall plates.
- F. Concealed bolting with outer wall plate and steel collar.

Reinforcement of wall plates: Axonometric view at wall plate level below the roof rafters. Metal collar connection in between the outer wall plates to improve the weak corner of a half-lap joint, which must carry the thrust of the rafters.

5.02 Wall fabric

The question of the upper wall finish is complex--maintain mud plaster or restore to typical veneer brick?. The grooving on the very old timber openings (to accept plaster) suggests that the plastered finish may be very ancient, an unusual case for the Kathmandu Valley. The age of the common brick at the upper level suggests that the plastered finish is at least 19th century. It would thus fit into the trend of plastered architecture which the Gorkha kings promoted 1810-1860. The decision was made to maintain the plaster based on the following considerations:

- it reduced the necessary intervention, allowing maintenance of the 19th c. (or older) wall fabric
- it improved the viewing of the very early wall and strut carvings. The whitewashed plaster contrasts and brightens the wood color, unlike the more traditional brick walls. Given the importance of the early carvings, this seemed desirable.

Thus, at upper levels the mud plaster over common brick will be maintained requiring patching at first floor level and complete replastering at upper level.

The inappropriate *ma apa* brick and cement patches at ground level shall be replaced with traditional *dachi apa* using yellow mud mortar.

At upper levels the three upper brick courses will be repaired using *ma apa*. Several bricks within the sanctuary have suffered damage, these shall be replaced individually by "piecing in" without dismantling the wall. This work must be carefully supervised as masons tend to rebuild large areas whenever left to their own.

5.03 Wall opening and decorative elements

Strut repairs

All surviving struts, the corner struts, shall be cleaned with plain water and soft toothbrushes *in situ* except for the two damaged members discussed below.

The NW lower corner roof strut and NE upper roof corner strut require structural bracing due to cracks from overloading. This bracing will be accomplished using concealed steel members custom-fabricated and screwed to the back surfaces. These steel components are painted with several coats of red oxide paint before they are applied to reduce corrosion. (and will be repainted every four years to reduce risk of corrosion and damage of the struts).

Strut replacement

Given the extreme rarity of the two historical roof struts recovered during the study period, their fragile condition, and the great risk of theft, the local community has requested to install copies on the temple. They propose that the originals be stored by the *guthi* until a plan for permanent storage and exhibition can be developed in concert with the Department of Archaeology

Lost struts

The strut question?

The question of whether and how to carve the replacement roof struts constitutes the principal design/restoration challenge of the project. Unlike other decorative elements, the structural necessity of the struts (to carry the roof overhangs) means that something must be put there. Existing are simple members, props inserted to carry the loads.

The decision to carve new iconographic members is a philosophical question deserving of ongoing debate. There is a contemporary woodcarving tradition in Nepal whose masters are able to develop new and appropriate solutions. At the same time, one must decide what interventions either complete, complement, or detract from the surviving historical fabric.

To carve new or insert plain members represent the main choice. We have done both in past projects, but the importance of this case, where the other struts and carvings were so rare and early and where there was significant documentary evidence, encouraged us to review our philosophy, achievements, and local practices. The following list summarizes some of the considerations which will contribute to the decision-making process.

Documentary evidence.

Corner struts

All 8 corner roof struts were intact at both levels and appear to be from two different generations, one very old (original ?) and the other 19th century.

Lower roof struts

We had excellent photographic documentation of four of eight lower roof struts and thumbnail-sized, hazy photos of the remaining four lower roof struts. There was written evidence by an art historian H. Rau describing the 8 lost upper struts. He reported that they were in fact miniatures of the lower roof struts.

During the preparatory work for the project, two historical upper roof struts were found. They did not match Rau's description being different poses and formats from the lower roof members of similar age.

We thus had relatively detailed information for four lower struts, an idea of the form of the remaining four, and two upper examples. What to do? Should we carve all of the struts? or only the ones for which we have photographic evidence? Or carve only those on the most visible principal elevation? On the nearby Kulima Narayana Temple, for example, we had enough historical struts to complete the most visible facades, installing plain members in the less visible places.

Trust opinions

Nepal's leading art historian, Mary Slusser, and KVPT Chairman John Ford found these plain members intrusive to the effect of the restored monument. On the other hand, Chairman Emeritus Eduard Sekler has always encouraged a policy of no new figurative carvings for which there is not clear documentation, a straightforward application of the Charter of Venice's mandate to stop restoration design at the point where conjecture begins.

Living tradition

One should mention that there is a living tradition of carvers and priests who would never hesitate to propose an appropriate solution for a lost

iconographic carving. We also have enough budget to reproduce carvings.

Religious meaning

As the temple is still actively worshipped, we looked to local practice in strut replacement for ideas.¹ There seem to be few rules. The neighbors at Sulima naturally preferred new members to be carved but we think (based on experience) only because of fears that the carving budget would be misappropriated. Local initiatives in temple restoration have wherever financially possible consistently inserted carved elements, although the quality and content of the carving has been generally poor, and thoughtless. It appears a problem of patronage as skilled carvers exist as well as priests or religious historians, who as above mentioned, would not hesitate to propose a religiously appropriate configuration, etc. In one case at the Radha Krishna temple restoration a priest advised us to replace *all* of the struts (including some 18 members we believed original to the 1668 structure) because they were "wrong for the deity, depictions of Siva for a Visnu temple."

Support of craftsmen as preservation.

We try to support two carvers of Bhaktapur who are more than skilled but actually great artists. They follow their family line--and represent a living tradition where skills are passed on from father to son. In our evaluation of the larger preservation cause in Nepal, it seemed important to give these carvers challenging and high-quality work. In fact, struts of this early period have never been attempted in contemporary conservation projects.

Juxtaposition with other carvings.

We knew that inserting new plain elements beside carved struts or carved windows is visually distracting, the plain surface very intrusive visually and drawing the eye away from the historical carvings.

¹ Some examples include the Radha Krishna Temple repaired in 1967 by Guthi Sansthan and incorporating three new struts of inconsistent proportion, format and wrong deity. A restoration at Maru Hiti copied a strut from a different (and unrelated) temple on instructions from the repair committee chairman. Rarely do priest or master carver have free reign in restoration committees here bureaucracy dominates. A recent restoration in Indrachowk, Kathmandu recarved medieval struts to make them sharper".

Reduced design, spirit of the times

We will also consider the design of new "reduced" struts and have a 19th century prototype in mind. A new, design ca. 1999 would be a great design challenge.

With these considerations in mind, we propose to continue the design and discussion of the problem.

5.04 Timber roof structure and struts

The entire roof structure shall be restored matching the historical configuration. The rafter size will measure a minimum of 4" x 3" in keeping with historical precedents and will be adze finished.

The roof will be made in sal timber because the guthi has donated it to the project. Although the use of pine was consistent in historical roofs, this substitution of sal will increase the life of the roof members. It is critical to the community's longterm commitment to the temple to respect their insistence to use sal and their contribution.

The traditional joinery techniques for the fixing of rafters are limited to the use of pegs. To improve the structural integrity of the roof frame, which must carry loads of up to 300 kg/sq.m, every third rafter shall be fixed to the wall plate using a concealed bolt and every corner wall plate shall be joined with a steel plate to increase the strength of the lap joint. The bolts will be stainless steel imported from India or steel pre-painted with anti-corrosive paint.

5.05 Roof cover and decorative elements

Gajura

A copper *gajura* or pinnacle will be designed to fit the surviving decorative surround, the gilding (cost approximately \$1,000) will be left as a future possible donation. The decorative surround will be carefully patched with gilt copper to match.

Roof cover

The formula for roof cover has been developed over the years by various international projects. The general principle is well understood--introduction of a waterproof membrane under the mud bed to extend the life of the roof . Our experience shows that the careful supervision of the various work components (mud treatment, batten installation, etc.) is the most critical determinant of the roof's life.

Roof tiles/ *jhingati*

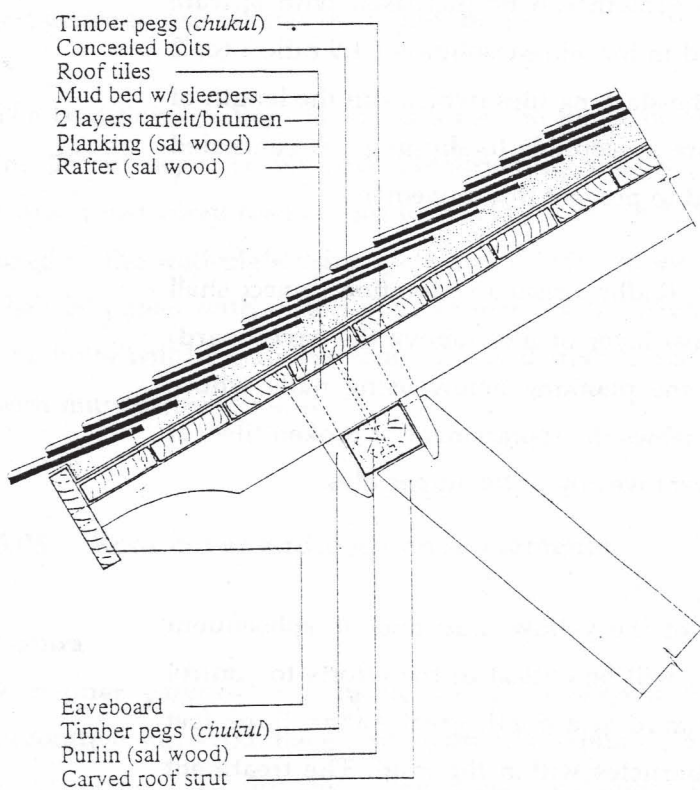
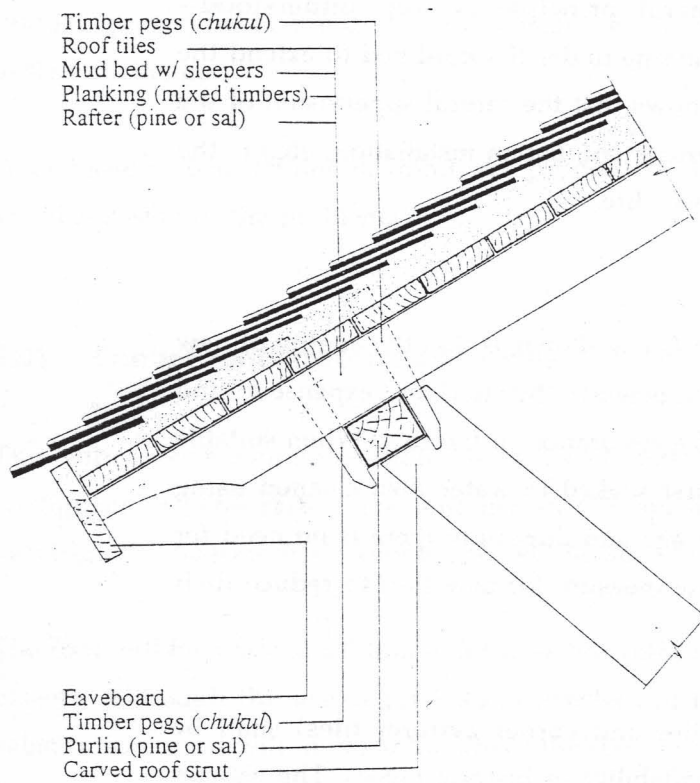
Experience gained from past projects has shown as that the quality of new tiles is inferior to that of old. It is thus worth the effort and expense to find and clean old *jhingati* for use in the restoration of the roof. When suitable tiles have been found they are first soaked in water then cleaned using wire brushes. Given their present age and durability there is no need for chemical treatment, an appropriate measure for new tiles to reduce their absorption.

Specialty tiles (stacking ridge tiles and corner aviform tiles) shall be custom ordered due to the unavailability of historic pieces. The shorter life span and tolerance to moss growth can be increased with siltrate treatment. Each tile is to be soaked in the siltrate solution (1:9 ratio) for 2 hours and then allowed to dry. The stacking tiles (which run the length of the ridge, down to the corner) are susceptible to slipping . A concealed copper wire and nail shall be used to prevent this movement.

One detail developed in the 1992 Radha Krishna restoration project shall be repeated here. The bottom-most layer of tiles (above the eavesboard) are pre-drilled and attached to the planking below using nails whose heads have been removed, this enables the replacement of broken tiles, at a later date, without the need to remove any of the upper tiles.

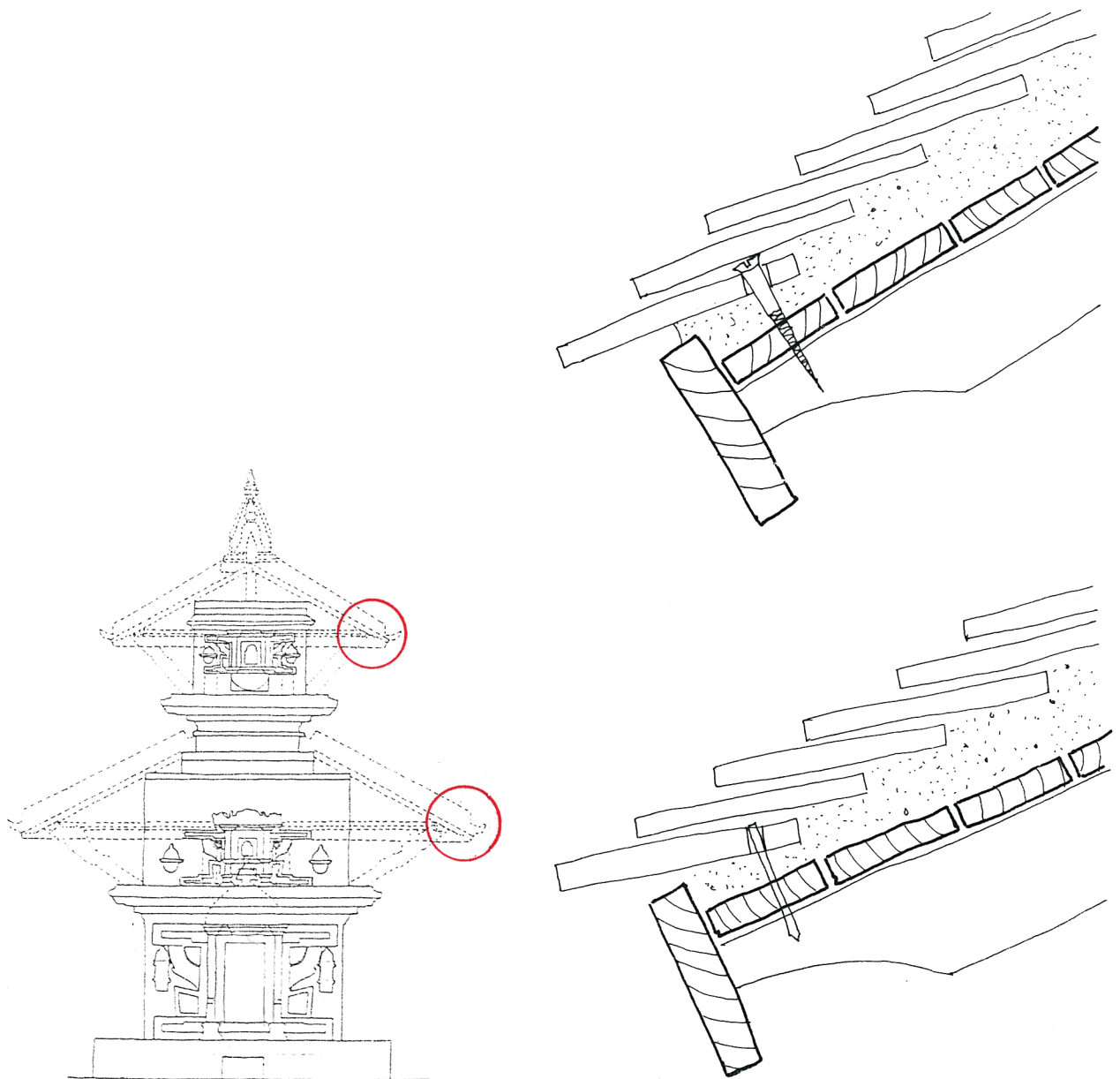
Mud bed

The supervision in the digging of the yellow mud and its subsequent treatment with Karmex herbicide will be critical in the efforts to control vegetal growth. The removal of mud at a depth greater than three feet ensures the absence of vegetal particles within the mud. The treatment with Karmex should follow the manufacturers instructions diligently. The Karmex available today, an Indian product, has been found inferior to the French Karmex used in the UNESCO Hanuman Dhoka project (1972-76).



The KEY Problem.

Section at roof overhang: tra ditional and improved detail.



Improved detail for fixing the first row of jhingati (roof tiles) on the roof

Top: Typical detail with half of the jhingati in the first row overhang the eaves board. Once the first row falls away further loss continues above. In the Hanuman Dhoka Restoration Project the first row of jhingati were screwed into place to prevent loss. After some years many jhingati were lost. Replacement, however, was difficult, due to the screw heads which must be removed before jhingati replacement can be undertaken. Bottom: Improved detail with the first row of jhingati fixed with headless nails. If it becomes necessary to replace jhingati one simply lifts the second row of jhingati to insert replacement onto headless nail

In previous restoration projects the use of Indian Karmex has resulted in vegetation growing especially on the less sunny north side.

Moisture barrier

Since the Hanuman Dhoka restoration project (1976), the employment of Indian tarfelt as a waterproof membrane has been standard. The heated bitumen is coated on the planking, between the two layers of tarfelt, and sealed with bitumen on top. This use of tarfelt as a waterproof membrane is, however, a potential weak link in the rebuilt roof cover. The study of previous projects has shown the maximum life span for Indian tarfelt to be only fifteen years.

Proposed for the Sulima project as a more longlasting membrane is the imported "Plasfal" new to the Kathmandu Valley. A synthetic elephant skin, it has the advantage of being easier to install on the planking (it is more flexible and not temperature sensitive). It is supplied with its own waterproof glue. Its life is projected at a minimum of 20 years and may reach 30 years or twice that of the tar felt.

Above the membrane, battens will be provided (a traditional key to grab the mud bed above). They shall be painted with the multiplast glue to protect them from water damage and minimize seepage through nail holes. The battens must be laid in a diagonal sloping pattern to allow water to flow off.

Planking

The typical solution of restoration projects in the last two decades substitutes planking for traditional lath of scraps and bamboo ends. Although ahistorical, the planking is more moisture resistant and contributes to the rigidity of the roof structure, a critical issue in light of seismic activity. All planks will be 1" thick sal wood in random widths and lengths, fixed to the rafters with galvanized nails.

5.06 Interior

Traditional telia tiles (6"x 6") shall be installed as a new appropriate flooring, installed with proper slope and a repaired drain.

6.0 RECOMMENDED MAINTENANCE

Maintenance in Nepal is a challenging question with no easy answers. Theoretically any future work on this temple will have to be approved by the Department of Archeology, although in practice government authorities are not even able to control demolition of historic structures in the World Heritage Site, let alone specify maintenance practices. Thus, the first job of the conservation architect in Nepal is to build not only the Department's technical resources, but also the public awareness that old buildings need care and professional expertise.

The following is an outline of what recommendations the Department could issue to persons wishing to maintain an historical building:

- i. Roof maintenance. Roof damage must be corrected as soon as possible to prevent related timber and structural damage. During repairs of the traditional tile roofs, great care must be taken not to damage other tiles. We recommend that only tile layers (*Newari-awah*) be used for any work on the roof - even the removal of vegetation - as they only have the sensitivity to realize when a tile has been broken when stepped on. And they have the skills to be able to repair it on the spot.
- ii. Timber carved elements. No paint, varnish, or treatments other than the traditional linseed oil. Current fashion is to paint everything black.
- iii. Wall repairs. No cement mortar anywhere. The problem with cement or *surkhi* mortars is that they are largely irreversible, i.e. while removing them bricks or stones are generally broken. The salt content of cement mortar reduces the life of these traditional building materials. Despite these facts, cement mortar is the norm.
- iv. Brick walls. No paint, mud wash or lime wash. Clean with soft bristled brushes.

Appendix

1. Conservation notes

submitted to Department of Archaeology, August, 1997

2. Proposal for Secondary Monument Zone at Sulima Square

Niels Gutschow, Patan Programme, spring, 1993

3. Iconographic identification

notes by Nutan Sharma

4. Excerpt from "Workshops of Traditional Newar Carving"

by Heimo Rau

from "Journal of the Nepal Research Centre" vol. vii, 1985,
ed. A. Wezler. pp 141-182.

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Ratnesvara Temple Sulima , Patan

preserving the oldest pagoda carvings in the Kathmandu Valley

1.0 Introduction

The Sulima Ratnesvara is a monument of outstanding importance due to the age of the timber carvings. Based on stylistic comparisons with such early carvings at Sasu Nani Temple and Uku baha in Patan, and with the Panauti Indresvara Mahadev, the carvings can be dated to the Transitional Era, i.e. predating the fifteenth century. To our knowledge there are no pagoda temples in the Kathmandu Valley which retain earlier carvings.

The temple has been in ruins since ten years, the two tiered roof partially collapsed at two levels. Due to the importance of the monument, the Nagar Palika has requested the Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust to act as liason to the Department of Archaeology for all conservation and technical matters. The Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust has secured private donations to fund the restoration costs of the building. In addition, Patan Programme in cooperation with the Nagar Palika will repave the surrounding square. Adjacent monuments of great importance include the Sulima Agam, an outstanding example of agam architecture from at least the fifteenth century, and the partially-dismantled house of the historical tantric priest, Gayahbajya, the oldest surviving residence in the Kathmandu Valley.

The scope of work planned for the temple includes the rebuilding of the timber roof structure in its historical shape while introducing a moisture barrier of tar felt under the *jhingati* roof, introducing additional reinforcements in the timber structure to improve earthquake performance, and careful cleaning of the exquisite timber carvings. In several locations, cement mortar and pointing will be removed and replaced with historical *daci apa* in mud mortar.

A complete program of photographic and drawn documentation will be carried out as at other Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust projects such as Patukva Agam and Radha Krishna.

Inauguration of the restored temple is anticipated for fall 1997. All project accounts will be submitted to the Municipality and Department of Archaeology after auditing by a Chartered Accountant and within four months of project completion.

2.0 Proposed work description/conservation specifications

Timber roof structure

The roof structure will be repaired *in situ*, i.e. with minimal dismantling in order to maintain the existing historical roof dimensions and pitch. Individual rafters and elements will be repaired or replaced piece by piece to achieve this.

Timber carvings

The carvings will be carefully cleaned in situ with mild soap water using soft brushes. Damaged areas will be carefully replaced to match the originals.

Documentation of one missing historical roof strut will allow the reproduction of one typical roof strut in the restoration. The other missing struts will be replaced with plain elements as no documentation exists.

Earthquake strengthening

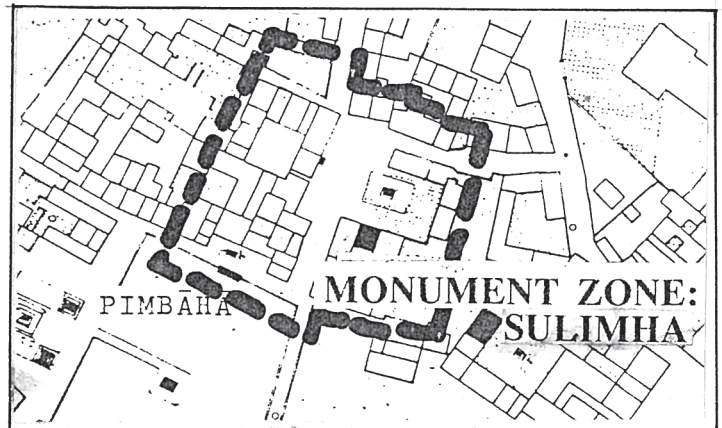
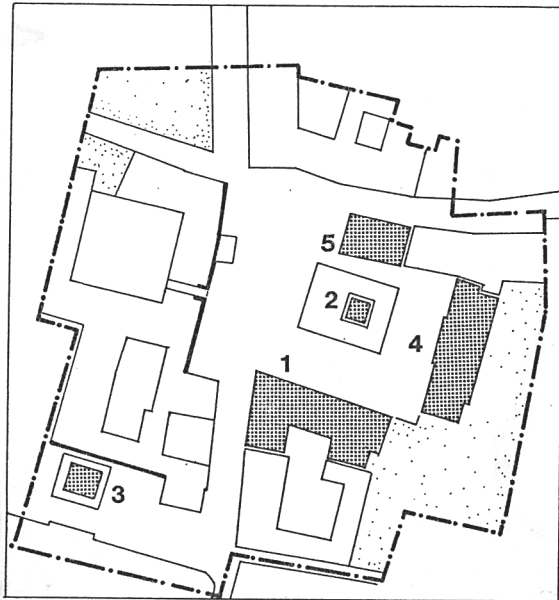
As in the Uma Maheswar project, the timber structure will be strengthened in order to improve performance in an earthquake including: (a) concealed bolting of every third rafter to the wall plate (b) improved jointing, corner reinforcements, and doubling up of the timber wall plates to act as a kind of ring beam. This is a historical configuration in many pagoda temples.

Roof cover

As in past KVPT projects, a concealed layer of the highest quality tar felt and bitumen will be inserted under the *jhingati* roof to improve the roof performance.

PROPOSED SECONDARY MONUMENT ZONES

1. SULIMHA SQUARE



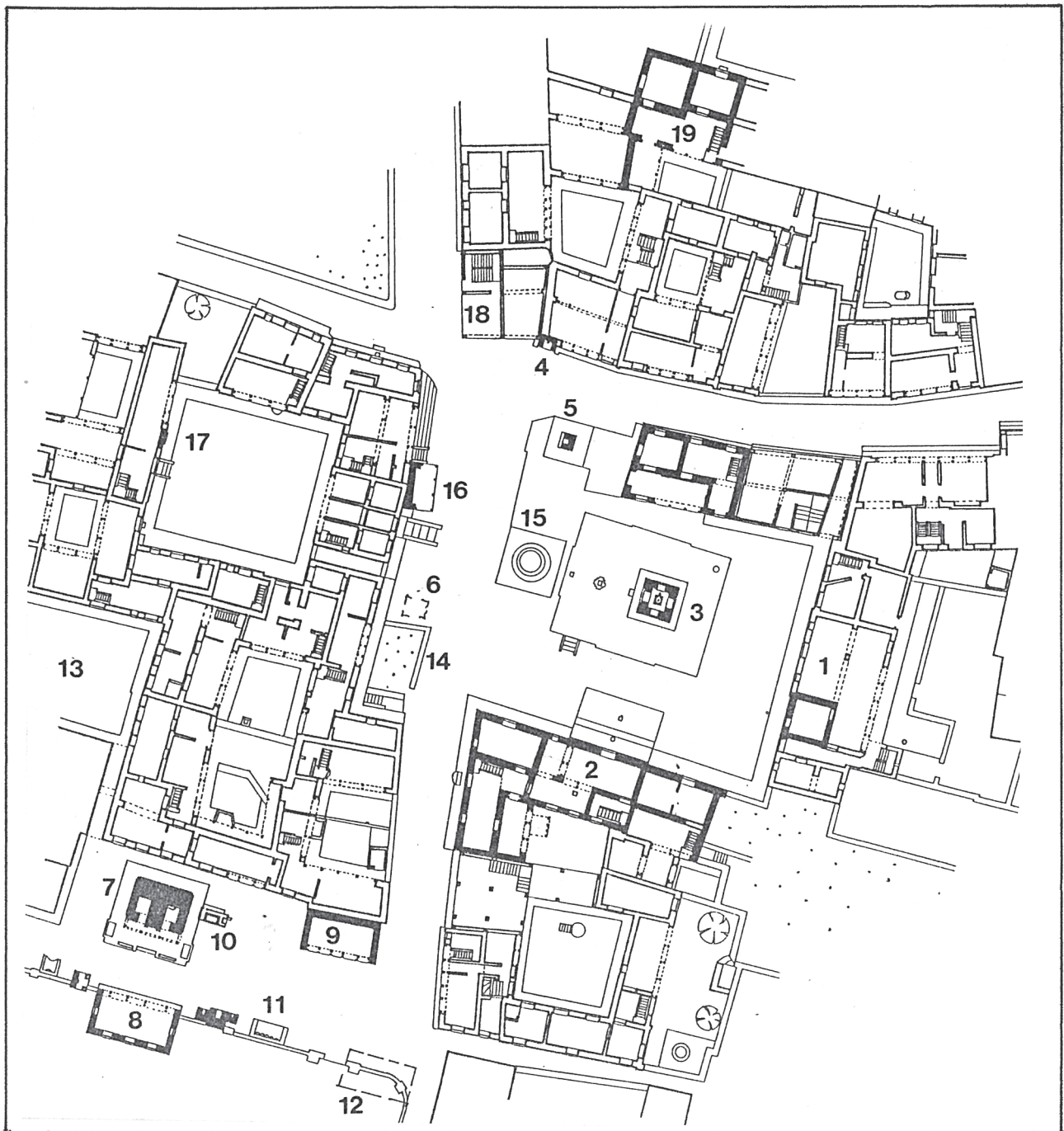
Detail of the Guideline Plan
Scale: 1: 2000

National Monuments

1. Rajupādhyā Āgā
2. Ratneśvara temple
3. Caṇḍeśvari temple
4. The house of Gayāḥbājyā*
5. House with dalān*

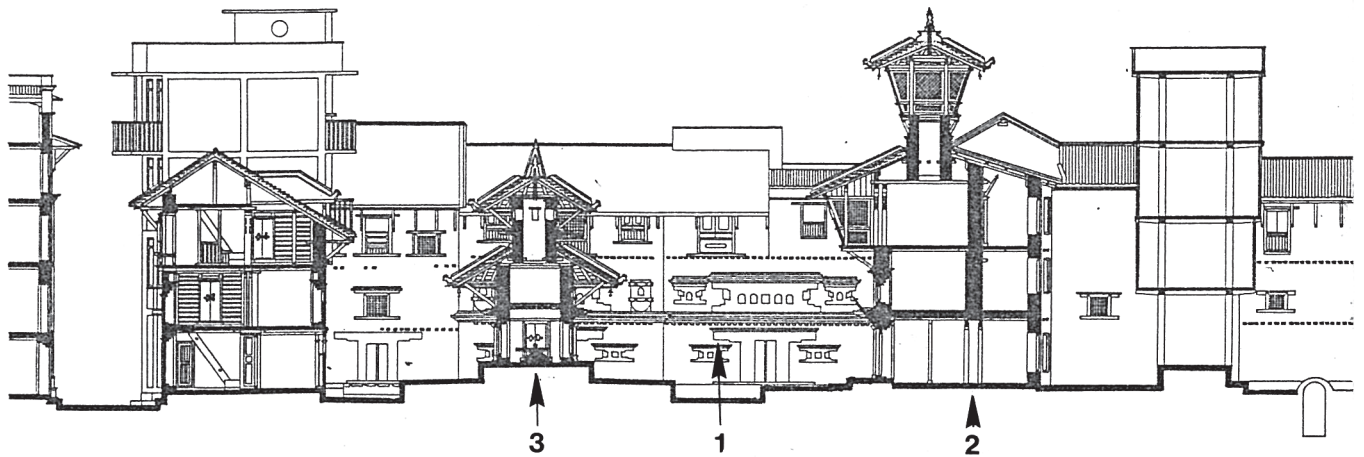
* under private ownership

Sulimha Square combines in a unique way qualities of architectural and historical significance. The square, at whose center stands the Ratneśvara temple, is defined by buildings which retain to a large extent their historical character. The Guideline Plan proposes to include the surrounding buildings and six adjoining courtyards to comprise a **Secondary Monument Zone**. Five **National Monuments** are designated within this zone. Two of these buildings are privately owned houses of great artistic and historical significance. Their designation as National Monuments will make their demolition subject to the approval of the Department of Archaeology, while also making them eligible for state, municipal, and private subsidies.



1. SULIMHA SQUARE: INVENTORY

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| <p>1 Gayahbājyā's house, today the house of his descendant, Surjenāth Rājupadhya</p> <p>2 Āgā housing the esoteric shrine of the Sulimha Rājupadhyas, one of six branches (kavaḥ) of Brahmans in Patan</p> <p>3 Ratneśvara temple with liṅga, a two-storeyed pagoda of the 17th century</p> <p>4 Shrine to Gaṇeśa, the guardian (dvārapāla) of the square</p> <p>5 Remains of a 17th century Nārāyaṇa temple called Santāna Gopāl, not rebuilt after collapse in the 1934 earthquake</p> | <p>6 Site of former Nārāyaṇa temple, whose remains from the 1934 earthquake were cleared in 1970.</p> <p>7 Caṇḍeśvarī temple, a three storeyed pagoda, erected in 1663. One of the ground floor chambers is dedicated to Gaṇeśa, the other remain empty ("dyaḥ maru" literally "no god"), as Gayahbājyā did not become a Siddha. Between the two chambers are three holes, the triangular one representing Caṇḍeśvarī or Nāsadyaḥ the others representing Bhairava and Bhairavī.</p> |
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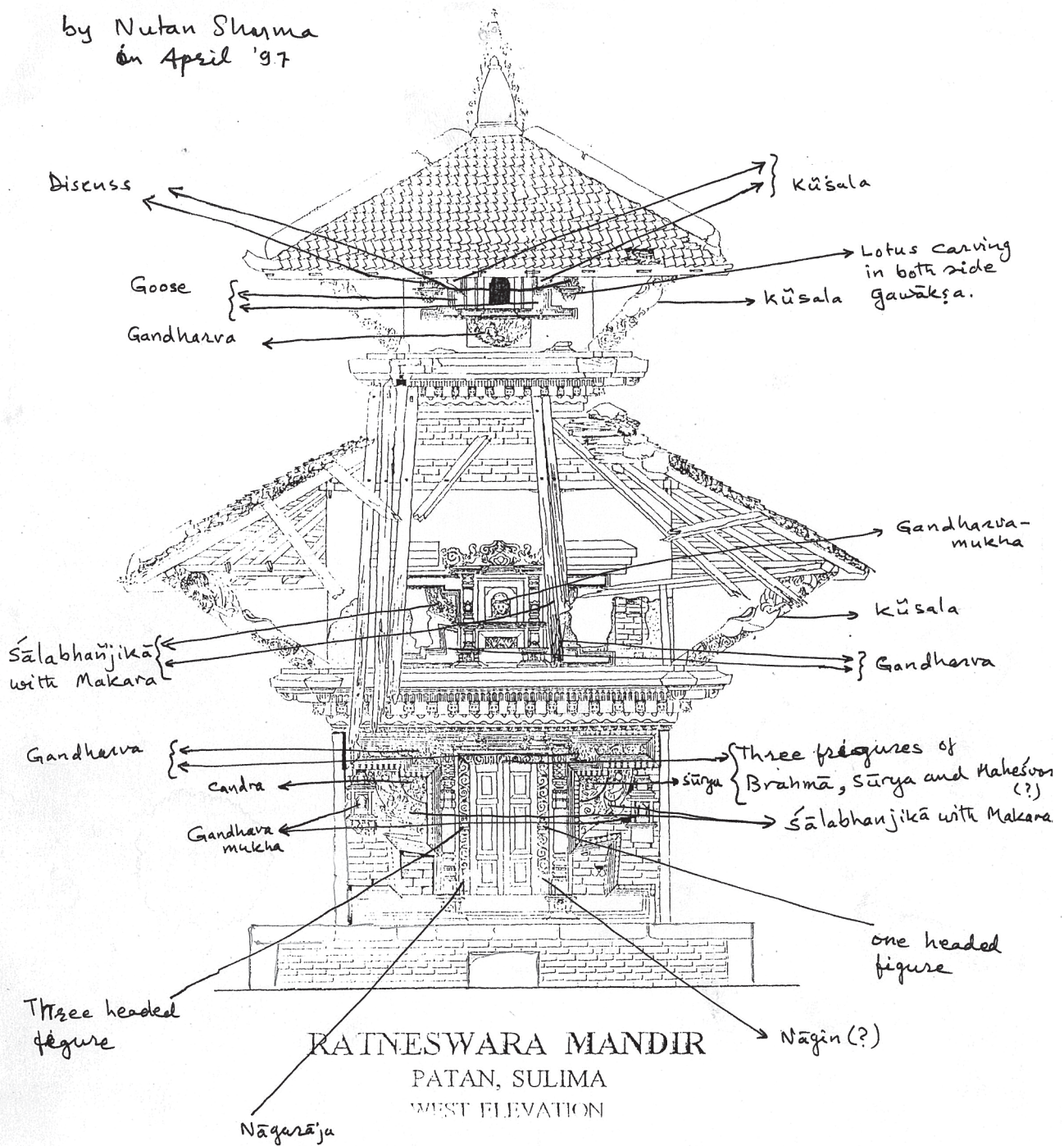


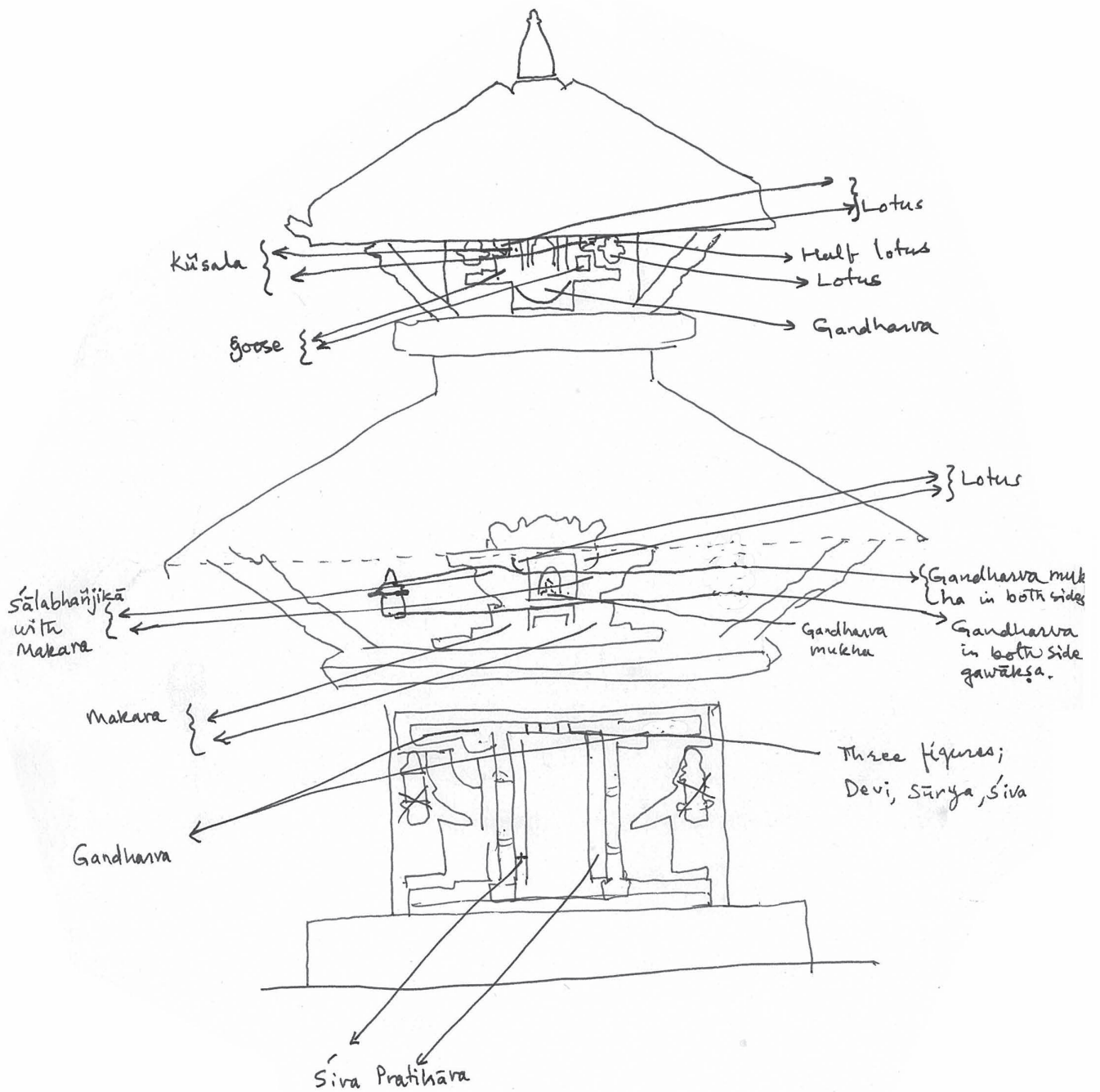
North-South Section of Sulimha Square

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|--|--|
| <p>8 Phalcā used as bhajanghar for music performance. Renovated in 1975, the anniversary ritual of the phalcā is performed on the occasion of balacaturdaśī in December.</p> <p>9 Phalcā, a three-storeyed sattal for public use which collapsed in 1952. A neighbor has renovated the ground floor arcade (now occupied by Kusle-tailors) to secure the use of the roof as his outdoor terrace (kauśi).</p> <p>10 Jaḥdhū, a fountain for drinking water</p> <p>11 Digyudyah (ancestral shrine) of farmer castes from Taḥnani and Konti. An annual ritual is performed three days before the fullmoon in November (Yaḥmaripunhi).</p> <p>12 Site of the former phalcā where samay (ritual food of five varieties) used to be</p> | <p>offered by the Rājupadhya to Lakhe Śreṣṭha from Patukva.</p> <p>13 Akhaḍānani, the courtyard where Gayaḥbājyā is said to have brought the Aṣṭamātrikā from Harasiddhi.</p> <p>14 Site of former phalcā, which collapsed in 1934 earthquake. During Indrajātrā, Yamadyah was displayed here.</p> <p>15 Well (tū), which is still in use</p> <p>16 Phalcā of Amaliguṭhi, established by the Jyāpus of neighboring Mikhābāhā. Once a year during the month of Mangsīr āmali fruits and beer used to be offered here to the untouchable Poḍe.</p> <p>17 Hanumān or Hāmva Shrine at Hāmvacok</p> <p>18 Site of former sattal established by the Maskey clan and demolished in 1990</p> <p>19 Āgā housing the esoteric god of the Maskey clan</p> |
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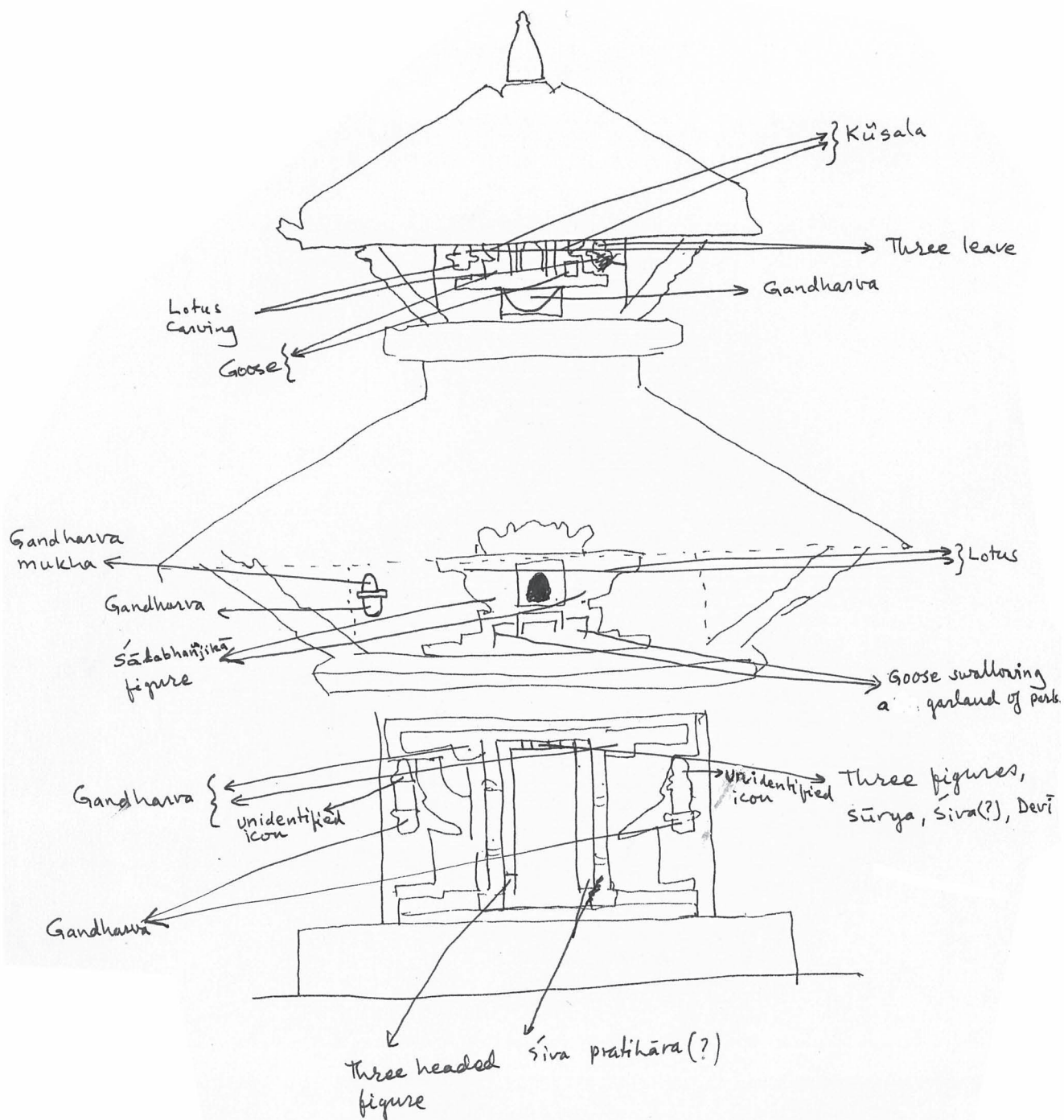
By Niels Gutchow.

by Nutan Sharma
in April '97

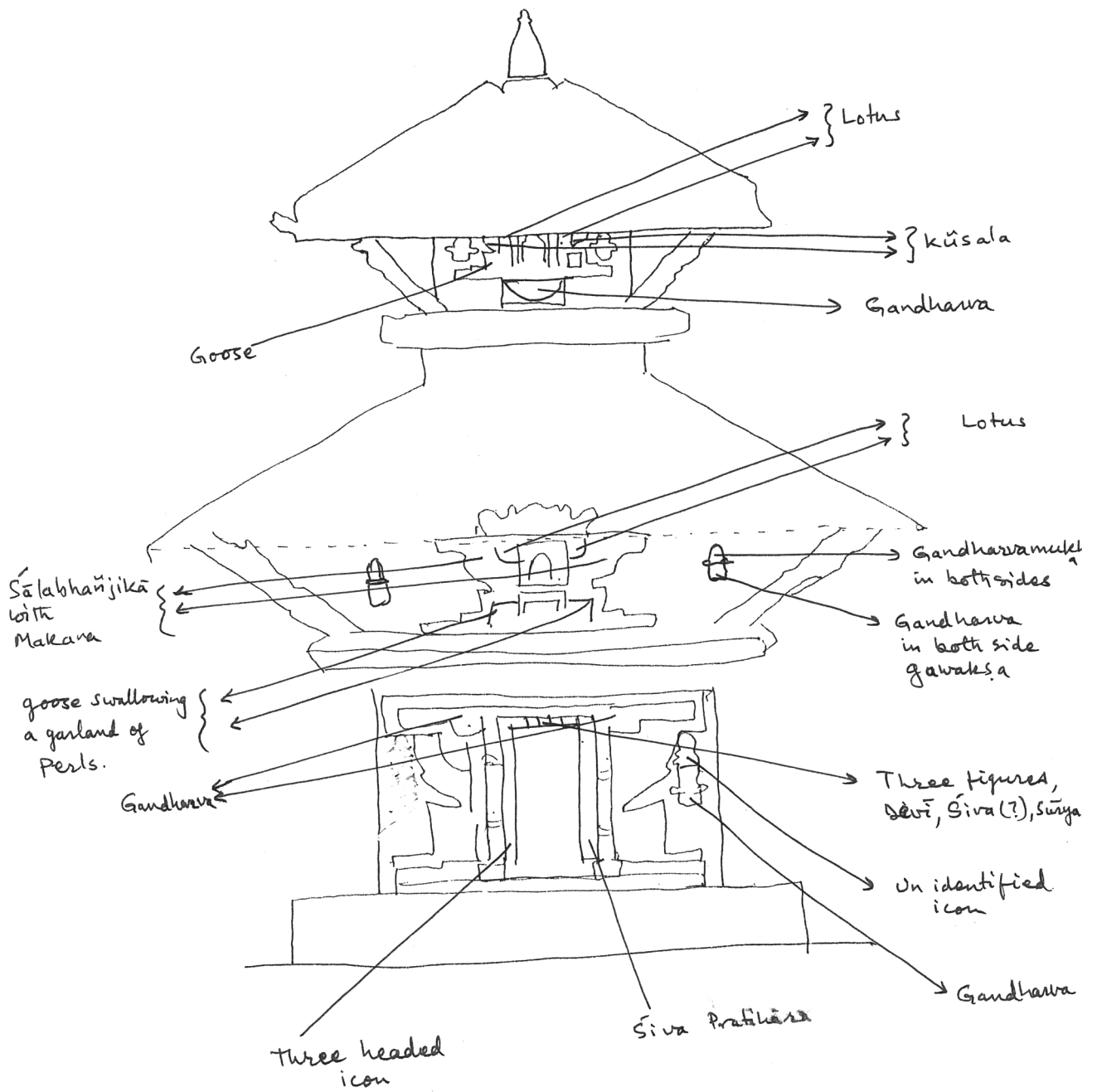




RATNESWAR MANDIR (Patan)
 EAST ELEVATION



RATNESVARA MANDIR (Patan)
 South Elevation



RATNESVARA MANDIR (PATAN)
NORTH ELEVATION

The artistically exceptionally fine woodcarvings of the Nṛteśvara Mahādeva Mandir in Pāṭan¹², which likewise have their origin in the "monastery workshop", constitute a special case.

In a section of the town known as Sūlimtole, the small temple with two roofs stands in the centre of a square, whose uniformity and integrity are still intact. Only on the west side, where a road passes by, have some houses in a meadow been renovated – this tends to detract from the total visual impression. The sanctuary Joṣi Agā on the south side belongs to the temple complex in the centre of the square. Both are consecrated to Siva Mahādeva as Nṛteśvara; the platform in front of the pagoda is reserved for music and dance performances.

The cella is open on all four sides (caturmukha). The main entrance lies on the west. It is framed in by the usual carved ornamentation representing both the river goddesses Gangā and Yamunā on Makaras. The tympanon is also carved of wood. It offers the traditional frame with Garuḍa above in the centre, Makaras to the right and left below and Nāgas winding inbetween. In the centre of the lunette, Nṛteśvara is dancing with eight arms, to his left Gaṇeśa, to his right Kārttikeya, both likewise dancing and beating cymbals. Two dancing Mṛdanga players to the right and left complete the group of five. There is a linga in the centre of the caturmukha cella as a cult object. Cult images of Bhāgvatī, Gaṇeśa, Sūrya and Viṣṇu occupy the walls.

The lower roof is supported by wooden struts, representing Sālabhañjikās two on each side. The same motifs from the "monastery workshop" reappear here. Only on the west side above the main entrance to the cella have the Sālabhañjikās been transformed into dancing girls, and the Yakṣas beneath them into musicians. In this way, they are integrated into the theme sounded by Nṛteśvara on the tympanon inbetween. The contrast between Sālabhañjikā and Yakṣa is heightened by its interpretation as dancing girl and musician, a secularizing variant, indeed. It should be mentioned that in order to protect the fragile carvings they have been framed on both sides mostly by plain wooden beams supporting the roof. Moving from west to north, then east and south, the Sālabhañjikās can be described from right to left as follows:

1. West right side: Sālabhañjikā as a dancing girl with likely, contrastive movement of limbs. Reaching above her head with her left hand into the branches, her right hand swinging free and almost touching the foot of her left leg, the left knee raised. Right leg standing on the left shoulder of the Mṛdanga player. The sash of her richly decorative belt is also swinging in rhythm with the dance. Lower half of both legs with broad belled anklets. The only clothing worn

2. West left side: Sālabhañjikā as dancing girl above a Mr̥danga player. Her movements are a mirror-image of those of the dancing girl on the right. Both struts are thus linked together as a unitary composition.
3. North right side: Sālabhañjikā embracing the runner of a tree; she is standing beneath it, touching it with her lap. With her legs crossed she stands on a Yakṣī with pendulous breasts, with her left foot on her elbow, her right foot on the Yakṣī's head.
4. North left side: Sālabhañjikā reaches with both hands into the branches above her head. She is standing with legs crossed on the head and right shoulder of a crouching Yakṣa.
5. East right side: Sālabhañjikā reaches with her left hand into the branches, holding a hanging branch in her right hand. Standing cross-legged on the head and right shoulder of a crouching Yakṣa.
6. East left side: Sālabhañjikā reaches with her right hand above her head into the branches. The left hand is broken off, its function thus unclear. She is standing crosslegged on the head and shoulder of a crouching Yakṣī.
7. South right side: Sālabhañjikā reaching with her right hand above her head into the branches. With her left hand she undoes her belt and opens her garment. Standing crosslegged on the head and right elbow of a Yakṣa.
8. South left side: Sālabhañjikā reaches with her right hand up into the branches above her head. Her left hand is raised in Abhayamudrā. To her left, a bird is sitting on a tree trunk. She is standing with legs crossed on the head and left upper arm of a crouching Yakṣa.

The struts below the upper roof are likewise all carved as Sālabhañjikās, two on each side. Like those below, they are standing on the head and shoulders of crouching Yakṣas and Yakṣīs, and repeat the various movements and positions described for the figures of the lower roof. In formal terms, they also stem from the same workshop as the lower row and are of equal artistic quality.

The workshop, which we have designated above as the "monastery workshop", was thus open also to accepting commissions which went beyond the more narrow Buddhist framework. The small Nṛteśvara Mahādeva Mandir has been built as a pagoda of dancers and musicians for dancers and musicians. Its woodcarvings present in their entirety all possibilities of flowing movements and tribhanga postures developed within the soft style of this workshop. They are not at all replicas, but original masterpieces equal in quality to those of Uku Bahāl. Therefore they have been added to this group of woodcarvings which includes the monastery workshop proper and its direct filiations. If a date for this post-classical phase of style in Nepal should be suggested one has to think of the 14th and 15th centuries A.D.

From right to left
1, 2, 3, 4

1.6 Pāṭan, Nṛteśvara
Mahādeva Mandir

From right to left
5, 6, 7, 8





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