The Collective Sponsorship of the Renovations of the Svayambhū caitya of Kathmandu in the later Malla Era

Between the thirteenth and nineteenth century the Svayambhū caitya was renovated roughly every fifty years. These renovations were major affairs that involved the dismantling and rebuilding of much of the structure. This talk is dedicated to documenting the pattern of collective sponsorship that evolved at the end of the 16th century and turned the renovations of Svayambhū into great communal events, involving significant segments of the Buddhist community. Beyond its interest for the history of Svayambhū, the data presented here contributes more generally to the social history of the later Malla era. This is particularly valuable as there is no other material that would show in comparable detail how the Buddhist segments of Kathmandu's populace were bound together by a collective task. The data presented here gives a sense of the functioning of traditional Newar society, and of the place of Buddhism within it, and they show how Buddhism was woven into the fabric of Newar society and tied different segments of this caste-based society together.