

Vihāra Project

JSPS KAKENHI, Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (A), Grant No. 22H00002

“Monasteries and Secularity in Indian Buddhism from the Gupta Period Onward”

[Vihāra Project]

March
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Vol. 8

Newsletter Vol. 8

Aim and Structure of This Project

The content of this research project is connected to that of the preceding Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (A) (Grant Number: 18H03569, Research Period: Fiscal Years 2018 to 2021, Research Title: Comprehensive Studies of Indian Buddhist Monasteries from the Gupta Period Onward). The aim of this research is to comprehensively study the relationship between monasteries and secularity in Indian Buddhism through collaboration between multiple research teams employing different methodologies in varied research fields. The investigation will be carried out especially on monasteries in India's regions from the Gupta period onward, the secularity of which became prominent along with the rise of tantric Buddhism. The main point of the previous research was rethinking the historical viewpoint of the decline of Indian Buddhism from the viewpoint of monasteries. In contrast, the current research will shift the viewpoint to the relationship between monasteries and secularity. Although the research themes are different, both pieces of research have the viewpoint of monasteries (*vihāras*) in common, so it was decided to continue referring to it as the Vihāra Project. Moreover, for the same reason, this newsletter will be Vol. 8 (the previous ones were published up to Vol. 7).

The relationship between religion and secularity is a universal question. Buddhist studies have also long addressed this relationship. Three main points of discussion regarding this relationship can be presented: (a) laity (or layperson devotees); (b) (its relationship with) secular power; (c) tantric Buddhism, which is said to have arisen around the start of the Gupta dynasty (around the years 320–550 CE). Among these, (a) and (b) already existed in Mahāyāna Buddhism and Hīnayāna Buddhism, which existed before tantric Buddhism. However, it can be said that with the addition of (c) tantric Buddhism (its doctrines/practical systems include sexual rituals and the

acceptance of killing), secularity in Buddhist ideas became more prominent from that point on.

Among the issues sharply highlighted because of this, there is the argument regarding Vinaya. As mentioned above, there are parts of tantric Buddhist ideas that deviate from the precepts of a monk. Despite this, these tantric Buddhist ideas would go on to occupy an important position in monasteries as well, from the Gupta period onward. Concepts that are analogous to Vinaya, such as pledges (*samaya*), also exist in tantric Buddhism but can be distinguished by their acceptance of taboos, such as killing. There are likely many points still unknown regarding how these tantric Buddhist precepts were practiced in monasteries and what kind of relationship the said precepts had with the Vinaya of Hīnayāna Buddhism (traditional sectarian Buddhism) or Bodhisattva vows. At the same time, in Indian Buddhism from the Gupta period onward, both (a) layperson devotees and (b) secular authorities became involved with (c) tantric Buddhism. For example, when (a) and (b) worship and hold services for tantric Buddhist deities, putting tantric Buddhist rituals/beliefs into practice, in what form and to what degree would the monasteries have been involved? Regarding these issues, in recent years, there have been discussions about the relationship between monasteries and tantric Buddhist saints (*siddha*) who converted while still being like laypeople as well as the relationship between large or small monasteries and secular power since the Gupta dynasty. This also includes more small-scale regional forms of government in addition to the major dynasties like the Pāla dynasty (from the middle of the 8th century to the end of the 12th century).

The three points of (a) to (c) mentioned above that are related to Indian Buddhism's secular nature are each commonly known points of discussion. However, this research includes an awareness of issues relating to a focus on and a systematic understanding of the secular nature of

Indian Buddhism that became prominent since the Gupta dynasty—particularly in terms of its relationship with monasteries—and the questioning of the necessity of creating a new blueprint in terms of the history of Indian Buddhism.

In the previous research, there arose new individual issues that each research team had to further work on. Upon summarizing these issues, it turned out that all of them could be comprehensively discussed under the framework of the relationship between Indian Buddhist monasteries and secularity since the Gupta dynasty. When handling this framework, one cannot think of laity (layperson devotees) and secular power while excluding tantric Buddhist ideas. The ideas presented in the current research have been derived from considering the necessity of interdisciplinarily and multilaterally studying the relationship between monasteries and secularity while focusing on the three abovementioned points of (a) to (c) (see Figure 1).

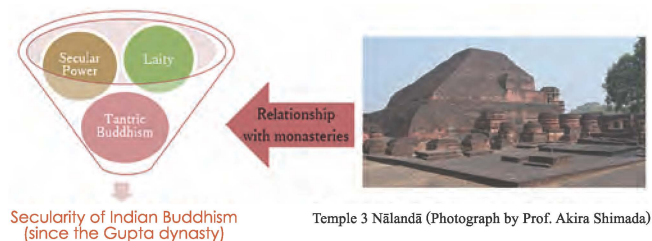


Figure 1: Aim of this project

The main problems in existing research that has examined the relationship between monasteries and secularity include the following.

(1) Despite large amounts of fragmentary information related to monasteries straddling different research fields (manuscripts, epigraphy, art, archaeology, etc.), there have been hardly any efforts to try to understand them comprehensively.

(2) There is not enough awareness of the need to carefully examine and collect the aspect of secular society shown in these materials related to monasteries or of the need to understand the said aspect through systematically linking it with multiple research fields.

Although fragmentary in nature, materials related to monasteries are spread over a wide range of fields, such as manuscripts, epigraphy, art, and architecture, and there is an abundance of previous research. It can be argued that thus far there have not been sufficient efforts to gather the aspects of secular society shown in these materials related to monasteries and to try to understand this through systematic linkage with multiple research fields. The

present research plans examine as much as possible the behavior of the general populace (layperson devotees) of secular society, which has been considered a difficult topic in Indian history (or Indian religious history). To give a concrete example, in places such as Sirpur (Chhattisgarh), Kanheri (western suburbs of Mumbai), and Bodhgaya (Bihar), which also provide information on the area surrounding monasteries, there is room to study the relationship between monasteries and secularity while including things such as traces of worship/services by layperson devotees in the area surrounding the monasteries. In addition, this research is also not unrelated to the issue of the role fulfilled by monkhood and laity in the rise of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism, the subject of debate in recent years in Buddhist studies. Efforts to shed light on this issue from the viewpoint of monasteries are still scarce, and this may suggest that Indian Mahāyāna Buddhist research has not reached the stage at which a cohesive understanding of monasteries is attained through cooperation by multiple research fields. This research, which handles monasteries (monks) and secularity including laity (layperson devotees), will hopefully offer a model methodology with regard to this issue.

This research considers the academic background mentioned above and endeavors to advance research from a comprehensive viewpoint while using an interdisciplinary methodology. In the same way as the previous research, this research will be an international multidisciplinary project consisting of six research teams: ① The Team of Management/Supervision, ② The Team of Manuscripts, ③ The Team of Epigraphy, ④ The Team of Indian Archaeology/History of Art, ⑤ The Team of Indo-Tibetan Lexical Resource (ITLR) Database, and ⑥ The Team of Evaluation (see Vol. 1 of the Newsletter). Each research team's role is as shown in Figure 2.

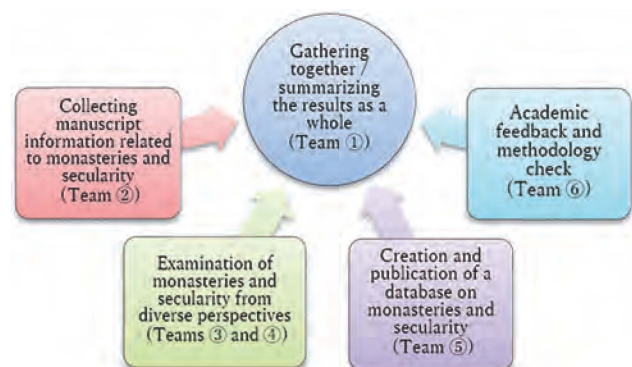


Figure 2: Division of roles for each research team

The specific goal of this project in its research period (fiscal years 2022–2025) is as described in the following three points:

(I) Each team will summarize the most up-to-date research results on the topic of monasteries, while, at the same time, endeavoring to obtain new knowledge. Research will be conducted with an interdisciplinary approach, working alongside researchers from other teams.

(II) In conjunction with (I), a database with an emphasis on information related to monasteries and secularity in Indian Buddhism will be created and published through collaboration with the University of Hamburg, Germany, and feedback will be encouraged with heightened

international impact.

(III) Based on the results of (I) and (II), the relationship between monasteries and secularity in Indian Buddhism will be studied from a comprehensive viewpoint.

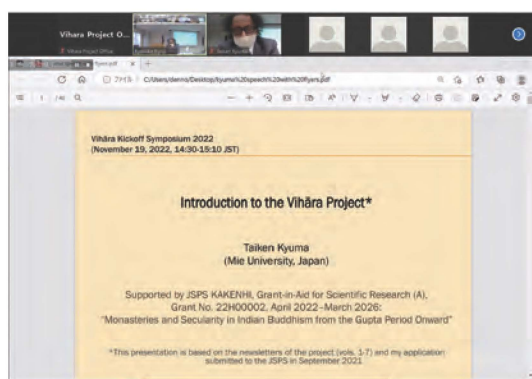
Despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and worries about the future international situation, this research project will strive to obtain significant results with the guidance and encouragement of many people.

(Author: Taiken Kyuma, Head of the Project/Head of the Team of Management/Supervision, Mie University)

*The above details are based on the JSPS application form.

Holding the Kickoff Symposium and the Research Meeting

On November 19, 2022, the project’s symposium (Vihāra Kickoff Symposium 2022) was held at the Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia, the University of Tokyo (3F main conference room, 14:30–18:30). The symposium was open to the general public, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a limit on the number of people using the venue. Therefore, on the day in question, only the speakers and project members were gathered at the venue, and general participants took part online through a Zoom meeting. At the same venue the following day, the 20th, a research meeting was held, including presentations from each research team and intensive debate (in principle, not open to the public, 09:45–18:00). The details of this research meeting will be shown in the reports from each research team in this issue.



Head of the Project Taiken Kyuma’s explanation of the project aims

At the introduction of the symposium on November 19, Head of the Project Taiken Kyuma carried out a presentation titled “Introduction to the Vihāra Project.” At this point, he referred to the activity reports of the research project (fiscal

years 2018–2021) preceding this research, the conclusions obtained through the project, as well as future prospects. Then he also explained the aim of the current project. As a matter that needed particular consideration in terms of methodology, there was emphasis on the importance of considering how to analyze and put together this research’s main points of discussion: (a) laity (laypeople), (b) secular power, and (c) tantric Buddhism. For example, analysis of (a) will be comprehensively connected to (b) and (c) alongside a constant awareness of multiple focal points, including foreign pilgrims/natives, upper class/lower class (gap between class and the rich and poor), literacy/illiteracy and Buddhists/non-Buddhists. Meanwhile, with regard to (b), instead of trying to explain everything with just the major dynasties, there will likely be a need to look at the regional governments/communities. Moreover, while there are many points of discussion in relation to (c), it is nonetheless obvious that a multilateral viewpoint is needed that includes not just the doctrinal history aspect but also the secular power aspect. Finally, the presentation drew to a close with a reference to Prof. Alexis Sanderson’s (University of Oxford) lecture (please refer to Newsletter Vol. 7 for details), which stated that an important task for the future is to further deepen research on lay Buddhism. The main points of the lectures carried out after this are as shown below (written by, in order, the chairs Ryosuke Furui and Erika Forte).

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Abhishek Amar (Hamilton College)

“Interactions with Built Environments of Bodhgaya”

In this lecture, Dr. Abhishek Amar discussed—through an analysis of archaeological sites and objects mainly of the early medieval period—how the built environments of Bodhgaya had changed due to the interactions between political authorities and monastic and lay communities. He first pointed out the problem of the reconstruction of the site centered on Mahābodhi Temple by Alexander Cunningham relying on the account of Xuanzang. He also explained the history of constructions of Bodhgaya from the early historical period to the early medieval period—starting with Aśoka’s commemoration of the site as the place of the Buddha’s enlightenment—as a process in which the center of activity shifted from the shrines encasing the Bodhi Seat and the Bodhi Tree to the Mahābodhi Temple and monasteries accompanying it. In the following discussion on the excavated objects, he first explained sculptures. While the image of the seated Buddha in *bhūmisparśamudrā* was prevalent and developed due to the position of Bodhgaya in the Buddha’s life, the activities of various sects including Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna were recognizable in the dedications of Mahāyānistic Bodhisattva images. He also noted the dedication of a large number of miniature *stūpas*—including those carried away overseas—, which indicates the aspiration of devotees to be buried at this sacred place.



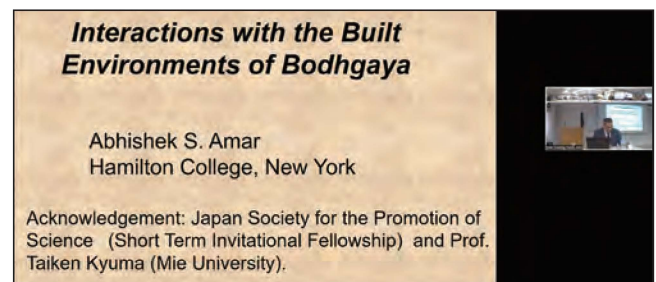
Prof. Amar’s lecture (1)

As for ritual and devotional activities in Bodhgaya, Dr. Amar indicated that depictions of the worship of the Bodhi Seat and the Bodhi Tree on reliefs of pillars and railings conformed to the account of Xuanzang. He also pointed out that the worship with lamps, incense burners, the seven jewels, food, garlands, manuscripts and folded hands, along with the worship of manuscripts, were depicted in portraits of devotees and their family on image pedestals, in reliefs on pedestals of miniature *stūpas* and in votive tablets, and that activities of Mahāyānist devotees were detectable in image inscriptions.

In terms of secularity, he first highlighted—with regard to the origins of devotees—that while the existence of pilgrims was confirmed from image inscriptions, interactions between local devotees and monastic community could be found from materials discovered in the sites in vicinity such as Nālandā. With regard to *bhikṣus*, he presented the cases clearly mentioning places

of their origin, especially Tibet. As for connections with political authority, he explained that a local relationship with the kingship called *pīṭhipati*, and international relationships with kingships of Sri Lanka and Burma, especially repairs of the temple by the latter, could be confirmed in the inscriptions.

Thus explaining the changes in built environments of Bodhgaya, Dr. Amar raised questions on the impact of new sectarian movements like Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna, and the possible decline of Bodhgaya in its importance caused by that. Regarding the former, he indicated that the inflow of ideas and practices of various sects added a new layer to the built environments of Bodhgaya. Regarding the latter, he suggested that the importance of Bodhgaya grew and even reached to sects beyond Buddhism, as shown by the prevalence of ritual and devotional activities transcending sectarian boundaries and a large number of inscriptions left by visitors from abroad.



Prof. Amar’s lecture (2)



Valerie Hansen (Yale University)

“The Lives of Buddhists in Niya, ca. 250-350 CE”

Next, Prof. Valerie Hansen gave a lecture. The main materials she used were writings found in Niya 尼雅 (also known as Caḍota), one of the ruins of the ancient kingdom of Kroraina (Loulan 楼兰, Shanshan 鄯善) that prospered during the 3rd–5th centuries at the south-eastern edge of the Taklamakan desert. With a basis in these writings, she introduced early Buddhist society in East Asia (the Tarim Basin). Currently, around 1,000 texts have been found in that area, with Aurel Stein having collected over 700 of them in four different research projects conducted from 1901 to 1930. These writings mainly describe administrative matters, but among the handling of disputes and problems related to property, marriage, and slave ownership, there are some related to Buddhist monks (*śramaṇa/bhikṣu/sthavira*). Most of the writings are carved into wood in Prakrit languages in the *kharoṣṭhī* script and are dated around 250

CE to 350 CE.

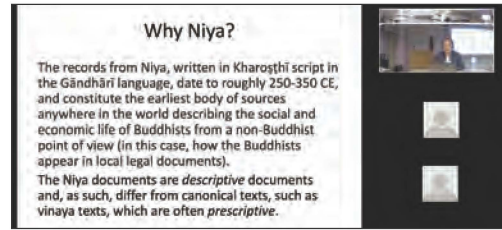
Prof. Hansen emphasized that as these writings were not religious ones created within monasteries, the general social lives of Buddhists could be seen in a new and direct way through the secular viewpoint. In other



Prof. Hansen's lecture (1)

words, these writings are the earliest materials that clarify how monks and ordinary people—or in broader terms, monasteries and secular society—were involved with each other. The Buddhists belonging to the monastery of Niya seem to have possessed property and residences with spouses, children and servants. Moreover, there are writings that show that these monks did not live in Buddhist monasteries but in their own homes, sometimes visiting the monastery and carrying out ceremonies and participating in Buddhist gatherings. This was greatly different from the ideas of traditional Indian Buddhism.

Another notable aspect of the abovementioned materials is that monasteries, in a certain sense, seem to have obeyed secular authority while possessing an independent will of their own. The organization of monks not only had a parallel relationship with secular organizations within the kingdom but also was supported by the king, who issued regulations in the realm of Buddhism at least in one case.



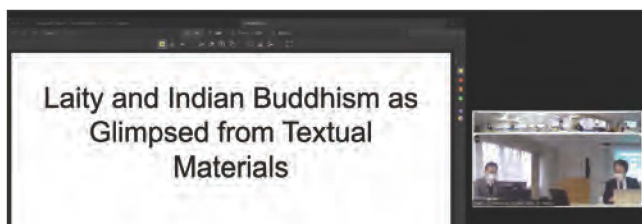
Prof. Hansen's lecture (2)

After the lecture, there was a lively question and answer session between the participants. One of the main points of discussion was the possibility that the behavior of the Buddhist monks of Niya depicted in the aforementioned writings could be interpreted more broadly. Some argued that the monks did not have an Indian Buddhist background and thus had a low understanding of the precepts, while others argued for the possibility that this was not the case. In relation to this point, there was also consideration of the regional adaptability of Buddhism, the regulations between devotees and monks, differences in interpretations/understandings of monkhood, the degree of separation between monks and secularity, and the possibility that the word *śramaṇa* in the Niya community implied a layperson Buddhist, who was probably excellent.

(Report: Ryosuke Furui, Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia, The University of Tokyo; Erika Forte, Institute for Research in Humanities, Kyoto University; Taiken Kyuma)

Summary of Presentation by the Team of Manuscripts

The written materials centered on the Sanskrit manuscripts handled by the Team of Manuscripts can yield various viewpoints, including region and time period, in terms of studying the relationship between Indian Buddhist monasteries and secularity. It has been the subject of debate as to which of these viewpoints should be focused on first. In this symposium, Izumi Miyazaki, Head of the Team, and four other main members took part, with each discussing their viewpoint through a joint presentation on future prospects.



Prof. Miyazaki's presentation

Miyazaki presented the research team's fundamental goals for the future. He then provided a summary of the basic nature of lay Buddhists, discussing a Mahāyāna sūtra called

Rājāvavādaka—which is also quoted in the first *Bhāvanākrama*—and introduced a story of a king explained there. This shows one of the many possibilities of written materials. Prof. Ryugen Tanemura (Taisho University) stated some secular aspects of the *Kriyāsaṃgrahapañjikā* written by Kuladatta: (1) some rituals mentioned in it were performed in the public domain, (2) it mainly assumed royal patronage, (3) the plans of Prasādas were very similar to those of secular architecture. In this way, it is possible to gather circumstantial evidence connected to the relationship between monasteries and secular society. Prof. Kaie Mochizuki (Minobusan University) discussed a work called the *Sarvasamayasaṃgraha*, in which Dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna explains the Tantric Samaya vows in terms of twenty points. In this work, there are comparisons made between the Prātimokṣa vows of Hīnayāna Buddhism, the Bodhisattva vows of Mahāyāna Buddhism, and the Samaya vows of Mantrayāna Buddhism, and the predominance of Mantrayāna Buddhism is discussed. Prof. Ryuta Kikuya (Koyasan University) focused on a text known as

“*Siddhāmnāya” and showed the possibility of thinking about the nature of boundaries—referring to what is inside and outside the monastery—with a focus on tantric Buddhist saints (*siddha*) in India during the Middle Ages, while also comparing the text with hagiographies/historical documents left in Tibetan and original Sanskrit. Finally, Prof. Kazuo Kano (Komazawa University) reported on the Sanskrit manuscript of the *Śatasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, which comprises four bundles and has been passed down in the Sa skya monastery in Tibet. The work itself is not rare and is a common text written by a copyist in Kathmandu from 1283 to 1284, but the name of the person who requested it draws interest. The name written in the colophon, “resides in *uttarāpatha*, the Sa skya monastery,” “*śākyabhikṣu* of *himavantapārśva* Kīrtidhvaja” is a Sanskrit translation of the real name Grags pa rgyal mtshan. The possibility that this person can be identified as Yar lung/klungs lo tsā ba (1242–1346) can be assumed from traces of activities written in the colophon of various *bsTan* 'gyur works he

was involved in. It may be that a Tibetan chief mourner commissioned the copying of a *sūtra* to a copyist in Kathmandu like this because it was for the mourning of 'Phags pa, who passed away in 1280.

Secularity in the Kriyāsamgrahapañjikā (Ryugen Tanemura)

The Kriyāsamgrahapañjikā is a collection of Tantric Buddhist manuals.
A kind of temple construction manual.

Prof. Tanemura's presentation materials

This way, written materials have the potential to enable one to study the relationship between Buddhism and secularity from various viewpoints. This research team intends to examine as many diverse texts as it can and search for further possibilities while relying on cooperation from overseas researchers. The team plans to hold up to two research meetings a year as it continues with its research.

(Report: Izumi Miyazaki, Head of the Team, Kyoto University)

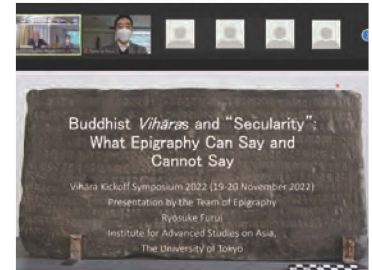
Summary of Presentation by the Team of Epigraphy

The Team of Epigraphy made a presentation titled “Buddhist *Vihāras* and ‘Secularity’: What Epigraphy Can Say and Cannot Say.” The team reviewed the previous research and explored goals of the future research. In the previous project, the research team carried out studies on epigraphic sources with the aim of describing the Buddhist monasteries of the early medieval South Asia as a material/social entity embedded in the power relation and the socio-economic context of the period. The results of the research culminated in the special issue (Vol. 7) of *Buddhism, Law & Society*, (forthcoming). Based on the cases in South and Southeast Asia, the team was able to clarify various issues, including the commonality and difference in patrons and objects of donation, and the diversity of terms denoting Buddhist monasteries. However, with regard to ‘secularity,’ the theme of the current project, Buddhist inscriptions—including both copper plate grants and stone inscriptions—reveal their limitation. As is clear from the comparison with non-Buddhist inscriptions, those inscriptions hardly mention ritual services for kings or interactions with social groups outside the monastery, while they refer to the

patronage by political authority, monks and lay devotees including land donations and image installations, and to the usage of endowed objects within the monasteries including worship of

deities, copying of scriptures, provision of clothes, food and so on to *bhikṣus* and repairs of monastic buildings. For overcoming this limitation, it is necessary to elucidate the characteristics of Buddhist inscriptions and to deepen their comprehension by collecting more non-Buddhist inscriptions through the collaboration with the DHARMA project and comparing both sets of inscriptions, and complementarily using liturgical texts, accounts of Chinese Buddhist monks and archaeological sources especially image inscriptions. Further collaboration with other research teams is also required to achieve this goal.

(Report: Ryosuke Furui, Head of the Team)



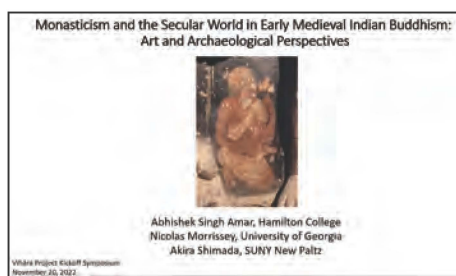
Prof. Furui's presentation

Summary of Presentation by the Team of Indian Archaeology/History of Art

Three members of the Art and Archaeology team (Shimada, Amar, and Morrissey, see the title page below) made a group presentation entitled “Monasticism and Secular

World in Early Medieval Indian Buddhism: Art and Archaeological Perspectives.” After summarizing the activity of the team in the previous term of the *Vihāra*

project (fiscal years 2018–22), Shimada explained the team’s two goals for this term: (1) intensive surveys of the selected Buddhist monasteries that prospered over a long period, such as Kanheri caves in the Western Deccan; (2) enriching the entries of our online database (<https://indian-buddhist-monasteries.hamiltonlits.org/omeka/s/main/page/home>). Next, Morrissey and Amar introduced the key monastic sites and artifacts the team will investigate in this term. Morrissey’s presentation focused on the Buddha and Bodhisattva sculptures with the



The title page of the presentation by the Team of Indian Archaeology/History of Art

images of devotees in the later rock-cut monasteries caves in the Western Deccan (ca. 6th–8th centuries CE). By referring to epigraphic evidence such as the copper plate inscription from Kashmir Smast, the presentation suggested that the laypersons’ acts of donating and venerating these sculptures could have financially supported the activities of Buddhist monasteries of this period. Amar’s presentation explained the prospect of his research on several unexcavated monastic sites surrounding Nālandā (Juaffardih Mound, Begumpur, Rukministhan, Garhpar). Through investigations of these small-scale monasteries, he intends to reveal how they continued their religious activity by maintaining relationships with prominent monasteries such as Nālandā, local rulers, and laypersons.



The meeting’s venue

(Report: Akira Shimada, Head of the Team, State University of New York at New Paltz)

Summary of Presentation by the Team of the ITLR Database

Just as with the Vihāra Project Phase 1 (fiscal years 2018–2021) and its predecessor, the Vikramaśīla Project, the current research project will use the ITLR Database as a platform for accumulating research knowledge (with regard to the ITLR Database and the activities of the Database Team up until this point, see Newsletter Vols. 1, 4, and 7 of the Vihāra Project Phase 1 available on Mie University’s repository). In the process of transition from the Vikramaśīla Project to the current Vihāra Project, the focus of research has shifted from persons/texts to monasteries and their activities and then on to the relationship between monasteries and secular society. In accordance with this shift, the selection of database entries to focus on, and the specifications required of the database also began to change. During this time, the Team of the ITLR Database held research meetings in the form of data inputting sessions, up to two or three times in each academic year, and discussed on various topics such as technical issues related to data input and database entry selection policies. Three

research meetings (September, December, and February) are planned for the academic year 2022—the first year of the current project—with the November Kickoff Symposium in between. Activities are planned on a similar schedule for the next academic year onward. The ITLR editorial meeting, which has been suspended due to the pandemic since 2020, will resume in March 2023, with the Head of the Database Team scheduled to attend.



Dr. Tomabechi’s presentation

(Report: Toru Tomabechi, Head of the Team, International Institute for Digital Humanities)

Summary of Presentation by the Team of Evaluation

In the presentation’s introduction, the Co-head of the Evaluation Team, Taiken Kyuma provided an outline of the Team. With the discussion (see Newsletter Vol. 4) by Prof.

Satoshi Ogura (the previous Team Head, Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies) as a guideline, he divided the Team of

Future Plans

There are plans to hold an international workshop implemented by the Manuscript Team in September 2023. Participants will read texts and engage in debate alongside overseas researchers active on the forefront of research in the field. The workshop will be based in Japan and will be implemented in hybrid form.

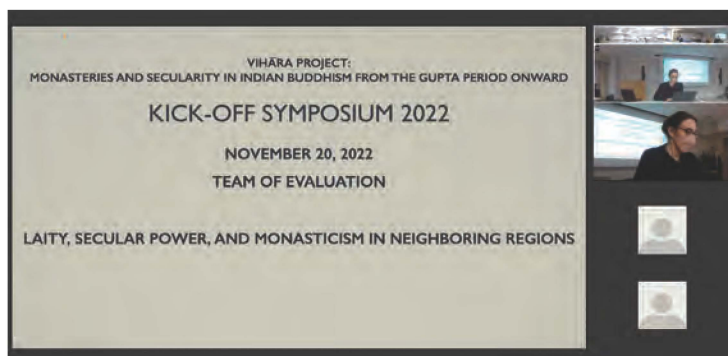
Activity Report

From November 5, 2022 to December 24, 2022, Prof. Abhishek Amar, a member of the Team of Indian Archaeology/History of Art and the Team of Evaluation, was invited through the Fiscal Year 2022 JSPS Invitational Fellowships for Research in Japan (Short-term, Research title: An interdisciplinary study of Bodhgaya). During his stay, in addition to the lecture at the Kickoff Symposium (online on November 19), he held lecture meetings at the Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia, the University of Tokyo (November 23, online), Kyoto University (December 3, face to face) and Nagoya University (December 13, face to face). Useful advice about this project's future activity goals were also obtained from him. From January to February, 2023, the Team of Indian Archaeology/History of Art implemented fieldwork in India. On this occasion, the subject of their investigations included Kanheri. From February 18 to 19, 2023, the Team of Manuscripts held a domestic research meeting at Taisho University. That day, led by Profs. Izumi Miyazaki and Kaie Mochizuki, members of the said team conducted a reading of the *Sarvasamayasaṃgraha*—attributed to Atiśa—followed by a debate.

For details of the activities above, see the forthcoming Newsletter Vol. 9.

Evaluation's target regions into Central Asia, West Asia, and Southeast Asia, and then confirmed the main research themes.

Next, Erika Forte, a Co-head of this research team, focused on the eastern part of Central Asia, the Tarim region, and described the themes of this project from the viewpoint of Buddhism's development in Central Asia in the first millennium CE. Forte noted a particular goal for the current fiscal year: studying Buddhist society in terms of its relationship with secular authority and secular society as evidenced by the physical culture of the ancient Kroraina kingdom. In the Kickoff Symposium held in November 2022, Prof. Valerie Hansen presented on her interpretation of the writings excavated in the ruins of Niya, one of the central areas of administration in the ancient Kroraina kingdom. The details of this are touched upon in the aforementioned summary of the lecture. Through these administrative writings, it is possible to see aspects of Niya's Buddhist society and their relationship with layperson society and secular authority. The research team plans further research moving forward, with the main subject being the ancient Kucha kingdom that has the oldest physical proof related to Buddhist activities that goes back to the 4th century. The investigations will include the theme of Buddhism and secularity.



Prof. Forte's presentation

Continuing after Forte's presentation, Prof. Andrea Acri (École Pratique des Hautes Études), an important contributor to this project, explained his new project, "Maritime Asian Networks of Buddhist Tantra (MANTRA)," via a Zoom meeting. His project attempts to shed light on the form of succession of tantric texts centered on Southeast Asia. After the presentation, participants debated how to collaborate with this research project. As a further activity of this research team, former Head of the Team Prof. Ogura is planning a reading of the Tibetan and Persian versions of the **Āryavaśiṣṭhasūtra*.

(Report: Erika Forte/Taiken Kyuma, Co-Heads of the Team)