

# 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]

September  
2023

Vol.9

## Newsletter Vol. 9

### JSPS Invitational Fellowship: Report on Prof. Abhishek Amar's Lectures

Through the FY2022 JSPS Invitational Fellowships for Research in Japan (short-term, research topic: “An interdisciplinary study of Bodhgaya”), the Head of the Project Taiken Kyuma invited Prof. Abhishek Singh Amar (Hamilton College), who is a member of the Team of Indian Archaeology/History of Art and the Team of Evaluation. During his stay from November 5 to December 24, 2022, Prof. Amar gave the following lectures.

Lecture 1 : Interactions with Built Environments of Bodhgaya

Lecture format : Online in principle (in person with staff only)

Date and time : November 19 (Sat.), 2022, 15:10–16:10

Venue : Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia, the University of Tokyo (3F main conference room)

This lecture was held at the kickoff symposium in 2022, and, as such, its summary has already been listed in Newsletter Vol. 8 (with authoring led by the chairperson of the day, Prof. Ryosuke Furui).

Lecture 2 : International Buddhist Monasteries and Modern Worship at Bodhgaya

Lecture format : Online in principle (in person with staff only)

Date and time : November 23 (Wed., public holiday), 2022, 16:00–17:30

Venue : Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia, the University of Tokyo (3F main conference room, changed to the 2nd meeting room on the date of the event)

The center of the Buddhist world, Bodhgaya, has expanded on a grand scale over the past several decades. Bodhgaya's development following economic liberalization in India has been extremely rapid that research cannot keep up. In particular, since it was certified on the UNESCO World Heritage list in 2002, it has attracted a great number of pilgrims and tourists as a pilgrimage site for Indian Buddhism. This is clear from the many new Buddhist

monasteries, religious facilities, meditation centers, and tourist infrastructure such as hotels and cafes. International Buddhist monasteries have especially proliferated in Bodhgaya, and these are being incorporated into the local landscape and acting as bases for religious practices and rituals. Furthermore, monasteries retain potential as spaces for dialogue in Asia and beyond and as spaces that preserve records of those dialogues. Further research is needed in the future on the complex modalities of Bodhgaya as it develops socially, politically, and religiously. Prof. Amar sorted the development of Bodhgaya into four stages from 1950 to 2022 (1950–60: Nehru's Asia policies; 1960–1980: construction of international Buddhist monasteries; 1980–2001: promotion of tourism; 2002–present: UNESCO World Heritage certification and onward). Prof. Amar emphasized that Buddhist communities beyond national or racial identities have played a pivotal role in this development. This is visible in the presence of over 200 international Buddhist monasteries. Prof. Amar also discussed how Bodhgaya's transformation into an international pilgrimage site is related to Nehru's policies, Buddhist communities that transcend national and ethnic boundaries, and Bodhgaya's status as a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Lecture 3 : Reimagining Hindu History: Rematerialization of Settlement Mounds and Buddhist Sculptures in the Magadha Region


Lecture format : In person

Date and time : December 3 (Sat.), 2022, 15:30–17:00

Venue : Kyoto University Yoshida Main Campus, General Research Building 2, Lecture Room 8

In over 100 villages in the Bodhgaya area, in the district of Gaya, state of Bihar, there are remains of Buddhist mounds, sculptures, and temples from ancient and medieval times. Although most of these Buddhist remains have lost their early historical context, they are used for

Lecture  
**International Buddhist Monasteries and Modern Worship at Bodhgaya**  
 Prof. Abhishek Singh Amar (Hamilton College)  
 Nov. 23 (Wed.), 2022, 16:00-17:30 (JST/GMT+9)  
 Host: Taiken Kyuma (Mie University), Q&A session included (17:00-17:30)  
 Venue: Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia, The University of Tokyo, Main Conference Room (3rd floor)



Abstract: Bodhgaya, being the paradigmatic center of Buddhist world, has grown tremendously in last six decades. As a UNESCO world heritage site since 2002, the site is part of the Buddhist circuit which links and attracts significant pilgrims and visitors on a yearly basis. In the post-liberalization India, the pace of growth of Bodhgaya has been high but the contemporary has been lost pace with the new developments. This is apparent in the number of new Buddhist monasteries, new religious shrines, meditation centers, and tourist infrastructure such as hotels, cafes, etc. A good example here is the growing number of international Buddhist monasteries at Bodhgaya that are embedded in the local landscape and continue to shape religious practices at this site. Not only have they emerged as new ritual centers but also are potential sites to locate and document intra- and inter-Asian dialogues. In fact, over a century's journey of the four Viharas at the complexity of socio-political, religious and developmental practices of Bodhgaya that needs to be investigated. Therefore, this lecture will examine contemporary religious practices of Bodhgaya and its growth in last few decades and how these practices have been influenced by international Buddhist monasteries of Bodhgaya.

Language: English    Admission: Free    This lecture is open to the public via Zoom. Pre-registration is required. Please apply via the following QR code or URL: <https://forms.gle/FcY9ABkdyGq7>

Application deadline: Nov. 17 (Thu.) 12:00 GMT+9 JST  
 Sponsored by FY2022 JSPS International Fellowship for Research in Japan (Short Term)  
 Organized jointly by the Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia and the Vihāra Project (JSPS KAKENHI Grant No. 22000002, "Monasteries and Secularity in Indian Buddhism from the Gupta Period Onward")

Poster for the lecture (November 23)

In doing so, he particularly examined the interpretive strategies used by local communities and the ways in which these strategies shaped broader regional histories, narratives, and spaces. Prof. Amar used a wealth of photographic materials to show how ancient and medieval historic sites, icons, inscriptions, and Buddhist temples have been reused in the villages of the Gaya district, and how they have brought about the formation of new histories and narratives. These histories and narratives comprise aspects of timelessness, authenticity, and a continuous past and are important to the identities of local people. Ruins, histories, and narratives have facilitated the formation of places, which then functioned as important local religious centers.

Lecture 4 : Reimagining the Buddhist Landscape of Ancient Rājagṛha/Rajgir

Lecture format : In person

Date and time : December 13 (Tue.), 2022, 15:30–17:00

Venue : Integrated Research Bldg. for Humanities and Social Sciences, Nagoya University, 7th Floor Conference Room

Rajgir is an important place in the history of Buddhism, as a place where the historical Buddha stayed and as a place in which many *sūtras* were preached (i.e., at Gṛdhrakūṭa/Vulture Peak). However, this place was explored in practice in the 19th century, with excavations beginning in the 20th century. Following these studies and excavations, multiple Buddhist groups began the task of restoring this area. In 1969, Nipponzan Myōhōji



Lecture at Kyoto University (December 3)

religious purposes under social and religious contexts that have replaced earlier ones. In this lecture, Prof. Amar presented Bodhgaya, Kespa, Makhdumpur, and Kurkihar and covered specific methods in which local communities reused materials from the Buddhist past to produce their own histories and narratives.

constructed the Vishwa Shanti Stupa or World Peace Stupa.

This was followed by the construction of temples in Rajgir by many Buddhist religious organizations

from places such as Thailand and Burma. With the start of the 21st century, the new construction of Nalanda University garnered attention. Subsequently, the state government promoted tourism by setting up walking trails, ropeways, and gardens for touring historical heritage sites and constructing a large Buddha statue in the outskirts of Rajgir. These state government strategies highlight specific elements of cultural and socioeconomic history that complement the preservation of heritage sites and promotion of tourism. Thus, archaeology becomes a means of crafting a special narrative of contemporary India and is linked to central and local policies. Several achievements of archaeology since the 19th century have reconsidered the history of Buddhism, which had been constructed primarily from written sources. However, these archaeological studies have also ignored the “living” history of a multireligious Rajgir. Prof. Amar explained the importance of “living” Jain and Hindu communities and the tense relationship between Rajgir’s “dead” history and its “living” history. The content of this lecture was useful for thinking about the sacred site of Bodhgaya.

The aforementioned lectures were planned and hosted with the cooperation of the following people (titles omitted). We would like to extend our profound gratitude to them.

•Supporting researchers: Akira Shimada (Head of the Team of Indian Archaeology/History of Art), Ryosuke Furui (Head of the Team of Epigraphy), Masahiko Mita (Nagoya University Graduate School of Humanities, Asian History), and Izumi Miyazaki (Head of the Team of Manuscripts)

•FY2022 Research fellows of the Vihāra project: Ryogyo Ozaki (Taisho University) and Keiki Nakayama (Kyoto University)

Through holding the lecture series, Prof. Amar had lively academic exchanges with historians, philologists, and cultural anthropologists in Japan and, simultaneously, brought a wealth of knowledge to the Vihāra Project. Our overall impression of this invitational fellowship was that it enabled us to study the sacred site of Bodhgaya in an interdisciplinary way and shed light on it from different angles, with Prof. Amar’s expertise as the linchpin. We hope that the networking between researchers will develop even further in the future.

\*The basic information writeups for the lecture series are based on the author’s report submitted to JSPS. The sections of this article that summarize the lectures are based on Prof. Amar’s own summaries.

(Report: Taiken Kyuma, Head of the Project, Mie University)



## Report of a Survey in India by the Team of Indian Archaeology/History of Art

From January to February 2023, we conducted a survey of Buddhist monastic remains in the western Deccan and Bengal areas. Participants of the survey were the team members of Indian Archaeology/History of Art, i.e., Shimada; Nicolas Morrissey (University of Georgia); Abhishek Amar (who only participated in the Malda survey from the 19th to 20th due to visa issues). In addition, Pia Brancaccio (Drexel University), whose research focuses on later Buddhist cave temples in the Deccan, and Louis Copplestone (Harvard University), who is preparing a doctoral dissertation on Buddhist monastery architecture in Bengal, joined the trip. Our survey started at Kanheri caves in Mumbai on which we plan multiple-year surveys in the current term of the Vihāra Project. Under the guidance of Rajendra Yadav, the Superintending Archaeologist of the Mumbai Circle, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), we conducted a preliminary survey of the remains in the area of restricted public access, such as cemeteries (Caves 85–87) and structures on the north hill (Figure 1). It resulted in the discovery of several important remains, including a *stūpa*



(Figure 1) Monastic cemetery at Cave 87, Kanheri

and a temple on the top of the northern hill, dateable roughly to the early medieval period. Thanks to the efforts of Mr. Yadav, the survey (Mapping of Kanheri Project) will continue for the next three years with an official support from ASI.

After Kanheri, we flew to Dhaka to visit principal archaeological remains and museums in eastern Bengal. At the Bangladesh National Museum in Dhaka, under the guidance of Mr. Nabi, a curator of the Museum, we completed the documentation of the Buddhist sculptures and artifacts in the galleries. Subsequently, from Dhaka, we moved to Mainamati to visit Shalban vihāra, Rupban Mura, Itakhola Mura, Latikot vihāra, and Queen Mainamati Mound. We also accomplished the documentation of exhibited artifacts at the Mainamati Archaeological Museum. Unfortunately, we could not visit Ananda vihāra, the largest monastic ruin in the Mainamati area, and Kutila Mura, known for its unique temple structure with three *stūpas*, because they are located in a military base. We then headed to Bogra to investigate the archaeological remains in the northern area, i.e., Somapura mahāvihāra in Paharpur (Figure 2), Vasu vihāra, Bihar Dhap, Gokul Medh, Halud vihāra, and Jagaddala mahāvihāra. We also visited archaeological museums in Paharpur, Mahasthangarh, Dinajpur, Kantanagar, and the Varendra Research Museum in

Rajshahi to study their collections. On our way back to Dhaka from Bogra, we stopped by the house of Professor Swadhin Sen (Jahangirnagar University) to thank him for his unlimited support for the trip. He also gave us valuable suggestions for the further development of the project. After leaving Dhaka, we headed north from Kolkata to Malda to visit Nandadīrghi vihāra in Jagjivanpur, which yielded a copperplate inscription in the 7th regnal year of King Mahendrapāladēva of the Pāla dynasty. Unfortunately, due to recent restoration work, the vihāra already lost the detailed architectural features that could have been retained at the time of the excavation. We thus could not achieve a principal objective to visit the site, i.e., estimating the original locations of the terracotta sculptures found there. After a thorough exploration of the area, on the other hand, we gained a better understanding on the archaeological landscape of the site, including many unexcavated mounds and reservoirs surrounding the monastic site.



(Figure 2) Somapura mahāvihāra, Paharpur

Despite a tight schedule and unforgiving conditions to travel, we managed to accomplish the documentation of principal monastic remains and artifacts of Bengal region, with the generous support from Prof. Sen and the staff members of the Archaeology Department. The remains of Buddhist monasteries in this region have certain similarities with the monastic architecture of Odisha, such as the provision of drainage ditches with a lowered floor in the central courtyard. However, they have interesting architectural features appropriate to the crossroads of India and Southeast Asia. Tower-like *stūpas* with a cruciform plan and terracotta plaques that decorated the bases of monasteries and *stūpas*, for example, remind us of their connections with Burmese monastic architecture.

Furthermore, the monasteries' magnificent scale, complex architectural plans, and abundant sculptures using a variety of materials and techniques testify eloquently the flowering of Buddhist construction and artistic production in Bengal during the early medieval period. Traditionally, research on Buddhist art in this region has focused exclusively on identifying specific deities by comparing their iconography with written texts. Our survey highlighted the urgent need to advance more comprehensive studies of art and architecture of this region, which should go beyond iconographic interpretation.

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

## Future Plans

From January to February 2024, the Team of Indian Archaeology/History of Art will conduct fieldwork in India. At the end of this academic year, the Team of Evaluation is planning to conduct a reading session focusing on the \**Āryavasiṣṭhasūtra*.

## Activity Report

On March 26, 2023, Head of the Project Taiken Kyuma participated (online) in the 5th edition of Bodhgaya Global Dialogues 2023 and gave a presentation on the present research. This was a good opportunity to disseminate information regarding this research, especially to people in India. Furthermore, from May to September 2023, the Team of Manuscripts held three online meetings. With team members Profs. Kaie Mochizuki and Izumi Miyazaki leading, they conducted readings of the *Sarvasamayasaṃgraha* attributed to Atiśa.

From September 8 to 14, 2023, the Team of Manuscripts held an international workshop. It was held in a hybrid format with Taisho University and Kyoto University acting as venues. They invited Prof. Péter-Dániel Szántó (Eötvös Loránd University) and read the original Sanskrit text of the *Suḥṛllekha*. They also had Dr. Bhikṣu Hejung (University of Hamburg/Joong-Ang Sangha University) read and give a comparative study of treatises by Jñānaśrīmitra and Ratnakīrti.

Details of the above activities will be reported in Newsletter Vol. 10.

## Reading Sessions by the Team of Manuscripts

The Team of Manuscripts has been focusing on the *Sarvasamayasaṃgraha*, which is a compendium on Samaya vows in tantric Buddhism (*samaya/damtshig*) attributed to Dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna (Atiśa), in a project led by Prof. Kaie Mochizuki (Minobusan University) to analyze the secularity of monasteries. As part of the preparatory work for critically editing this compendium, we are deciphering the Tibetan text. There is no extant Sanskrit manuscript; however, from the Tibetan text, we can learn how the superiority of Mantrayāna was explained through Samaya vows. There have been many prior studies on this document. In Japan, for example, there are studies by Hakuyū Hadano, and, in recent years, by Kōkan Fujita and Yūjun Endo; outside Japan, this text is frequently referred to in studies on Indian and Tibetan Buddhism. Based on these studies, this research team specifically plans to edit the text, including identifying unconfirmed citations, and analyze its content from the perspective of the secularity of monasteries. What follows is a summary of the research completed thus far and its outlook as summarized by Prof. Mochizuki.

The text can be broadly classified into an introduction and a main text. The introduction cites many treatises to demonstrate the superiority of Mantrayāna. Some of the sources can be cited as in the *Nayatrāyapradīpa* of Trivikrama and the *Triyānavyavasthāna*, which is cited under the name of Ratnākaraśānti, whereas other citations attributed to Nāgārjuna, Indrabhūti, Jñānapāda and others do not have confirmed sources. Nevertheless, some of the unconfirmed citations are confirmed as citations in later Tibetan documents, and these may have been cited from the *Sarvasamayasaṃgraha*.

The main text discusses 19 of the 20 items listed on the topic of “What is Samaya?” The 19/20 items are (1) Basis, (2) Cause, (3) Root, (4) Substance, (5) Etymology, (6) Classification, (7) Synonyms, (8) Number, (9) Metaphoric Expressions, (10) Interferers, (11) Enemies, (12) Extent of damage, (13) Indicators of integrity, (14) Recovery, (15) Check, (16) Recovery and indicators of integrity, (17) Harm caused by damage, (18) Benefit of integrity, and (19/20) Summary of Samaya/fruitions. Each explanation ranges from simple to detailed. Here, we will summarize some of the most noteworthy points.

“Number of Samaya” lists the number of articles of Samaya in so-called Hīnayāna, Pāramitāyāna, Kriyā Tantra, Caryā Tantra, Yoga Tantra, Mahāyoga Tantra, and others, although no details are mentioned. In Tibet, Tsong kha pa and mKhas grub rje consider that the total number does not add up to the sum of each article; however, we need to consider how this number should be read. The final item of “Summary of Samaya/fruitions” concludes the text with a detailed discussion of the superiority of Mantrayāna from a variety of perspectives, classifying it into Prātimokṣa, Bodhisattva and Mantrayāna Samaya vows.

Based on the progress made thus far, we plan to continue to advance our research under the leading of Prof. Mochizuki.

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