
MetSpeaks

Symposium

Tree & Serpent: Early Buddhist Art in India and Its Global Reach

Day One

Friday, September 29, 2023, 10:30 am–6 pm

Day Two

Saturday, September 30, 2023, 10:30 am–6 pm

The Grace Rainey Rogers Auditorium
The Metropolitan Museum of Art



THE
MET

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Welcoming Remarks

10:30–10:45 AM

Andrea Bayer

Deputy Director for Collections and Administration,
The Met

Randhir Jaiswal

Consul General of India in New York

Symposium Introduction

John Guy

Florence and Herbert Irving Curator of the Arts
of South and Southeast Asian Art, The Met

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Session One Origins of Buddhist Art in India

10:45 AM–1 PM

Chair: Akira Shimada, Professor of History, State University of New York,
New Paltz

The Nāga Cult and a Reassessment of Imagery at the Nasik Caves

Robert DeCaroli, Professor of Art History, George Mason University, Fairfax

One of the oldest attested forms of South Asian religious practice centered on nāgas, serpentine deities often associated with water and abundance. Although the worship of nāgas was widespread, devotion was often local, focusing on the nāga of a nearby river, lake, or tank. The eagerness with which Buddhism, Jainism, and early forms of Hinduism incorporated nāgas into their artwork and literature attests to the importance of this cult, with nāgas serving as devotees, guardians, and attendants supplanted from their place of primacy. However, there is one case where the reverse seems to be true, which this talk explores. At Cave 10 in the rock-cut monastery of Nasik, a relief sculpture of a Buddhist stupa was overcut to create the image of a nāga. Extensive water damage at the site confirms this unusual situation and may represent an appeal to the ancient power of nāgas over the forces of water.

Sopara, Kanheri, and the Early Buddhist Landscape on the West Coast of India

Pia Brancaccio, Professor of Art History, Drexel University, Philadelphia

This presentation addresses the Buddhist centers of Sopara and Kanheri, situated in the coastal region of Konkan by the estuary of the river Ulhas in Maharashtra. The early growth of these two sites is examined in light of new data on the morphology of the ancient landscape, archaeological and epigraphic evidence, and textual sources—from which emerges a clearer picture of coastal Buddhism in Konkan, with its distinctive patronage base, long-distance reach, and key involvement in transregional Buddhist networks of the time.

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Imperial Representations: Spotting Aśoka at Buddhist Sanchi

Nayanjot Lahiri, Professor of History, Ashoka University, New Delhi

This presentation examines the gateway carvings at Sanchi invoking Aśoka in his historical life and afterlife to underline how the Buddhist emperor came to be remembered—and forgotten—in the site’s stories set in stone. It examines Aśoka’s own message engraved on a pillar and his presence there in the following centuries, anchored in a variety of representations. What emerges from these imprints of the emperor? Are they diverse remembrances, or can a purposive be imagined in these representations? In his own lifetime, Aśoka shaped Sanchi in the image he wanted, but Sanchi’s memories of him are much more than the historical emperor’s images of himself. The creators of this complex, as this paper demonstrates, did not simply remember the archetypal Buddhist emperor but cherry-picked from stories about him to offer an unusual interpretation of his imperial persona.

The Discovery at Piprahwa and Its Afterlife

Chris Peppé, independent scholar

In 1898, a British estate manager in Uttar Pradesh, William Caxton Peppé, excavated a stupa on his property, revealing the most important reliquary deposit of Buddhist India, now largely housed in the Indian Museum, Kolkata. A large stone coffer containing five reliquary urns revealed a deposit of around 1,600 miniaturized offerings in gold, pearls, gemstones, and rock crystal, along with bone fragments. An inscription on one of the urns stated that the bones were the remains of the Buddha of the Shakya clan. This paper examines evidence for this, along with the reinterment of these relics by the Emperor Aśoka around 250 BCE and the ongoing discoveries by western Indologists and Indian archaeologists more than two thousand years later.

Discussion

BREAK AND EXHIBITION VIEWING + 1–2:30 PM

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Session Two

Southern Buddhism of Āndhradeśa

2:30–4:30 PM

Chair: **Stefan Baums**, Institute of Indology and Tibetology, Ludwig Maximilian University, Munich

Arhats in the Religious Landscape of Āndhradeśa: A Devalued Ideal?

Vincent Tournier, Chair of Classical Indology, Institute of Indology and Tibetology, Ludwig Maximilian University, Munich

Soteriological ideals and conceptions of “sainthood” among Buddhist communities of Āndhradeśa deserve to be properly evaluated to reach a finer understanding of the regional history of Buddhism. A partial reading of the epigraphic evidence has led scholars to question to which degree Buddhist scripture’s definitions of religious achievements ever penetrated actual early monastic communities. On the other hand, scholarship primarily informed by doxographic works describes Buddhist lineages prominent in Āndhra as “devaluating” the ideal of the Arhat to promote the new and more ambitious Bodhisattva ideal. Departing from both positions, this presentation argues that a close reading of epigraphic evidence newly documented and edited by the Early Inscriptions of Āndhradeśa project—alongside other written sources and visual evidence—reveals the persisting relevance of a clearly defined Arhat ideal in the early centuries of the Common Era. Indeed, wonder-working and liberated individuals identified as Arhats assume a major role in the religious landscape and imaginary of Āndhran Buddhism at the time, while the Bodhisattva ideal becomes visible in the archaeological record from the fifth century CE onwards.

Towards a Corpus of Inscriptions of Early Historic Āndhradeśa

Arlo Griffiths, Professor of Southeast Asian History, Head of the Jakarta Center, École française d’Extrême-Orient

Inscriptions are a major source for the historical study of Buddhism and Buddhist art in the early Deccan, including the Āndhra region. Discovered by the hundreds from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, notably at Amaravati and

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Nāgārjunikoṇḍa, such inscriptions give insight into the dating and function of the monuments or sculptures on which they were engraved. The circumstances of their discovery and study have, however, stood in the way of their full potential as source material being realized. All major sites have been excavated under suboptimal conditions. Inscriptions have been regarded mainly in their textual aspects, their artifactual being neglected. And there is no publication that allows a faceted study of the epigraphic material of the entire Āndhra region over the whole period during which Buddhism flourished there. This talk presentation the history of scholarship in this field and presents ongoing work toward building such a database, the online corpus Early Inscriptions of Āndhradeśa.

Buddhist Art and Coins: Numismatic Underpinnings and the Deccan, ca. 200 BCE–400 CE

Shailendra Bhandare, Senior Assistant Keeper, Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford

Coins constitute the most numerous material evidence for building and understanding the chronology of ancient India, and that of early Indian art in particular. The Early Historic period, particularly in peninsular India, was characterized by extensive monetization and use of coins. However, the true potential of this foundational evidence is somewhat underappreciated by scholars working in the field, primarily due to a lack of interdisciplinarity. This paper highlights the role coins play in understanding the chronological backdrop of early Buddhist art, with specific focus on how coins and numismatic techniques help to inform and offer valuable markers that are often incontrovertible, so shaping the historical context.

Discussion

BREAK ↗ 4:30–5 PM

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Keynote Lecture

5–5:45 PM

Not Very Far from the Madding Crowd: Ordinary Life in an Indian Buddhist Monastery
Gregory Schopen, Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Asian Languages and Cultures, University of California, Los Angeles

Archaeology and architectural sources tell us important things about what we call *monasteries*, but to get at what life in one might have been like, Buddhist literature—and especially Buddhist Vinayas, or monastic codes—are sometimes even more suggestive. Vinayas are made up of monastic rules and narratives about how those rules came to be and how they were often broken. Since these texts were meant to be “in-house” documents, they can be remarkably candid and straightforward, often unintentionally providing a backstage view of the monastery. (At the very least, they tell us what some monks wanted monks to do and not to do.) This keynote lecture will explore one extant Vinaya to see how it viewed ordinary life in the monastery.

Respondent: **Vincent Tournier**, Chair of Classical Indology, Institute of Indology and Tibetology, Ludwig Maximilian University, Munich

END OF DAY ONE

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Welcoming Remarks

10:30–10:45 AM

Mike Hearn

Douglas Dillon Chairman, Department of Asian Art,
The Met

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Session Three Revisiting Āndhradeśa Art History

10:45 AM–1 PM

Chair: **Jinah Kim**, George P. Bickford Professor of Indian and South Asian Art
and Professor of South Asian Studies, Harvard University

*A Place Like No Other: Kanaganahalli and Its Position Among Other Sites
of Ancient South Asia*

Monika Zin, Professor, Saxon Academy of Sciences and Humanities;
Honorary Professor, Institute for Indology and Central Asian Studies, Leipzig University

The sensational discovery of Kanaganahalli has highlighted how sketchy our picture of the artistic landscape of ancient South Asia and Buddhism is. Inscribed *jātakas* that do not belong to any of the known collections, likenesses of historical kings, images of geographical locations that were never depicted elsewhere or even are entirely unrecorded in Buddhist scriptures, representations of monk missionaries as deities in flying palanquins—all of this was hitherto unknown. The discoveries at Kanaganahalli prompt us to look at previously familiar artworks from a radically new perspective whilst at the same time raising questions about all that has been lost to us from the ancient period. This paper explores the peculiarities of the representations from Kanaganahalli and examines them in relation to possible parallels in art and literature.

Towards a Chronology and Corpus of the Earliest Buddhist Sculpture of Āndhradeśa
John Guy, Florence and Herbert Irving Curator of the Arts of South
and Southeast Asian Art, The Met

The lower Krishna river system of Andhra Pradesh in southeastern India is the heartland of the ancient region referred to in contemporary sources as Āndhradeśa. The density of monastic sites in this region attracted antiquarian and archaeological interest in the later nineteenth century but has until recently been largely relegated to the margins of twentieth-century Indian art history. Whilst many of the monastic remains are attributable to renovations undertaken in the early centuries of the

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Common Era, there is a small corpus of stupa-associated sculptures that point to the region being engaged in a vigorously pursued regional style in the second and first centuries BCE that warrant recognition alongside the widely celebrated early phase Buddhist art of Bharhut Sarnath, Bodhgaya, and Sanchi. Recent advances in Indian dynastic dating along with stylistic analysis allows a discrete corpus to be identified, displaying a remarkable stylistic unity. This is, in all probability, the product of shared workshop practices, aided by the mobility of skilled masons and sculptors along the roads and waterways of the lower Krishna river system. This paper argues for Andhradeśa's recognition as a key participant in the earliest phase of Buddhist art production in India.

The Archaeological and Sculptural Landscape of Buddhist Phanigiri
Shrikant Ganvir, Assistant Professor of Ancient Indian History, Culture, and Archaeology, Deccan College Post-Graduate Research Institute, Pune

Phanigiri is one of the significant Buddhist monastic sites of the eastern Deccan, located in the Suryapet District of the state of Telangana. The archaeological excavations at the site have unearthed the remains of *mahāstūpa*, memorial stupas, apsidal and circular *caityagrhas*, *maṇḍapas*, and *vihāras*, and a spectacular *torana*. This paper examines the nature of Buddhist monasticism on the site in a wider context—including discussions of patterns in royal and community patronage, the nature of the relationship between laity and monastic establishment, the network of satellite sites supporting this monastery, the interpretation of visual narratives and motifs and art-historical idioms, and chronological frameworks. It will examine the functional role of landscape in the development of the Buddhist monastic site at Phanigiri and how the monastic architecture is associated with the sacred landscape in a spatiotemporal context.

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Formation of the Mature Nāgārjunakoṇḍa Style: Buddhist Art and Architecture of Sites 2 and 3
Akira Shimada, Professor of History, State University of New York, New Paltz

Of the forty-one Buddhist monastic remains excavated at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, Sites 2 and 3 occupy a special position in yielding a large corpus of sculptures belonging to the Ikṣvāku period (ca. 225–325 CE). Because of the limited documentation of the sites and their subsequent submergence under the Nagarjuna Sagar reservoir, studies of these monasteries have been confined to formal analysis of the sculptures and identification of the narrative reliefs. As such, a detailed chronology of these sculptures and their relationship with other groups of sculptures from Āndhra have yet to be fully delineated. For an integrated understanding of this important group of monasteries, this paper examines the sculptures and other artifacts from the sites, the layout of the monasteries, and their embellishment program. By comparing their principal features with those of other Buddhist sites, this paper intends to suggest a proper location for the monasteries at Sites 2 and 3 in the chronology of early Buddhist art and architecture of Āndhra.

Discussion

BREAK AND EXHIBITION VIEWING ✦ 1–2 PM

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Session Four

India and the World—Looking West

2–3:45 PM

Chair: **Nayanjot Lahiri**, Professor of History, Ashoka University, New Delhi

Following the Scythian Trail in the Indian Subcontinent

Upinder Singh, Professor of History, Ashoka University, New Delhi

Histories of the Scythians in the Eurasian steppes usually stop short once they cross the Hindu Kush. The histories of the Scythians in the Indian subcontinent, largely reconstructed on the basis of coins and inscriptions, tend to ignore their steppe background. Given the distinctive Scythian cultural practices, it seems strange that the kurgan burials, gold objects, and animal art that are distinctive to their presence over the centuries in the Eurasian steppes are not found in India. Could it be that we have not looked carefully enough? This presentation discusses a few of the archaeological markers of the Scythians in the subcontinent against the background of their Central Asian roots. The larger argument proposes a need to reassess the Scythian/Śaka presence and its impact on the Indian subcontinent.

Indo-Roman Exchange as Witnessed by the Pompeii Ivory Figurine

Paolo Giulierini, Director, National Archaeological Museum of Naples

The famous Indian statuette in ivory is representative of the luxury goods that journeyed by the maritime routes from India via Alexandria to Pozzuoli and Pompeii in the first century CE. It traveled alongside an array of spices, gemstones, textiles, and other commodities, some of which can be attested archaeologically. During the imperial age, which began with the reign of Augustus in 31 BCE and lasted until the fall of Rome in 476 CE, India played an important role in the Roman economy. Roman merchant ships—as noted in Pompeian graffiti—used the ports of the Red Sea and navigated the challenges of the monsoon winds. This Indian statuette excavated at Pompeii in 1938 is a unique discovery. It is an exotic object, perhaps intended to be shown at banquets, as described in Petronius's *Satyricon*, and presupposes the existence of educated classes who knew of this exotic world.

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Early Historic Āndhra: Coast-Interior Convergence and the Buddhist Patronage Network

Suchandra Ghosh, Professor of History, University of Hyderabad

This presentation explores the Bay of Bengal as a coherent space of land-sea trade, artistic exchange, and Buddhist patronage in the context of early Āndhra. Scholars have studied numerous Buddhist sites—both major and minor—in coastal Āndhra and suggest the presence of a Buddhist patronage network. This paper focuses on the coast-interior convergence and mobility across the Bay of Bengal. Links between the prosperity of the coastal region and its rich agricultural hinterland are well known, with epigraphic evidence indicating donations by the *gahapati*, who were agricultural landowners and patrons of Buddhism. They were also invested in long-distance trade, and while the *gahapati* represented the interior, the *nāvika* (mariner) symbolized the coast, and the *sārthavāhas*, their carts loaded with goods, plied between the interior and the coast. As for artistic exchange, Buddhist networks played a stellar role that also receives attention in this presentation.

Discussion

BREAK + 3:45–4 PM

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Session Five

India and the World—Looking East

4–6 PM

Chair: **Tansen Sen**, Director, Center for Global Asia, and Professor of History, New York University Shanghai; Associated Professor of History, New York University

Gods and Serpents of Wealth from Āndhra to Sri Lanka: Kubera and Nāgas
Osmund Bopearachchi, Numata Professor, University of California, Berkeley; Emeritus Director of Research, French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS-ENS), Paris

The spread of Buddhism from India to Sri Lanka is closely connected with the growth of the maritime and fluvial networks. As a result, portable reliefs executed in the Āndhra and Telangana regions of southern India were brought to Sri Lanka by traders and monks as offerings. In addition, the first sculptures found on the island were probably executed by artists from Āndhra following Āndhra prototypes. It is believed that *nāgas* bestow wealth and assure fertility. In the same way, Buddhist traders worshipped Kubera, said to be in possession of the riches of the underground world such as pearls, precious metals, stones, and his two *nidhis* (treasures), Shankha and Padma, commonly known as Shankhanidhi and Padmanidhi. This presentation expounds how, from the earliest days of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, the semidivine gods, spirits, and *nāgas* that bring wealth and good fortune were popular and became an integral part of Buddhist beliefs and rituals.

Kuṣāṇa-Derived Anthropomorphs in China: Chronology, Geography, and Typology
Minku Kim, Assistant Professor of Fine Arts, The Chinese University of Hong Kong

The offshoot of the standard anthropomorphic figures of the Buddha that had been de novo established in the Kuṣāṇa north by the early reign of Kāṇiṣka (enthroned around 127 CE) quickly arose in China along the Yangtze. Its exact date of arrival has yet to be determined, but in the river's upper basin it should have been around the early third century CE. Regarding such imagery as new to some contemporary Buddhist communities within India itself, the exotic

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design's quick rise in China, especially removed of any otherwise context of Buddhism, becomes striking. This presentation emphasizes the onset of these anthropomorphs in China as an essentially post-Han (or Three Kingdoms) development. It identifies two distinctively regionalized subtypes of the design and revisits the difficult issues relevant to their local distribution and long-distance transmission.

The archaeology of Buddhafields: Early Landscapes of Indian Buddhism
Peter Skilling, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok; Adjunct Professor of Pali and Buddhist Studies, Savitribai Phule Pune University

The seminal *Tree & Serpent* exhibition has turned the Met into a Buddhafield—to bring an ancient notion to life. This paper focusses on the networks of reliquary monuments that spread across South Asia in the last centuries BCE and the early centuries CE, developing into landscapes dominated by stupa complexes. Relics were the heart of Buddhist devotion, and these complexes acted as centers of devotional and artistic activity, as hubs of education and erudition. Here, inspired by the prevailing culture of merit, Buddhist art began and flowered. All good things, however, come to an end. The impressive Buddhist landscapes were complex organisms, and social and economic change determined that they could not be sustained indefinitely. Their vitality declined, and they were abandoned and fell into ruin. By the end of the eighteenth century, archaeology and manuscript studies began reshaping their history, leading to the rediscovery of India's long-forgotten Buddhist past. History is however complicated by language—by the tangle of terminologies we choose to use or not to use, to challenge or to change. This presentation aims to step outside the box in hope of offering fresh perspectives.

Discussion

Roundtable Discussion

Chair: **David Ludden**, Professor of History, New York University, together with the panel chairs.

END OF DAY TWO

Presenters

Shailendra Bhandare

Senior Assistant Keeper, Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford

Shailendra Bhandare is curator of the South Asian and Far-Eastern Numismatics and Paper Money Collections at the Ashmolean Museum, a Fellow of St Cross College, and a member of the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Oxford. He started his career as a numismatist with a visiting fellowship at the Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge. He was then appointed as a postdoctoral fellow of the Society for South Asian Studies and worked as a curator at the British Museum on the coins of the Later Mughals and the Indian Princely States. He has several research publications to his credit, covering a wide range of subjects in Indian history and art, where he deploys his numismatic expertise to contextualize the themes and subjects further.

Osmund Boppearachchi

Numata Professor, University of California, Berkeley; Emeritus Director of Research, French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS-ENS), Paris

Osmund Boppearachchi is a numismatist, art historian and archaeologist. He is Emeritus Director of Research of the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS-ENS), Numata Visiting Professor of Central and South Asian Art and Archaeology, University of California, Berkeley, and former Visiting Professor and Member of the Doctoral School of the Paris-Sorbonne University. He holds his BA from the University of Kelaniya (Sri Lanka), and B.A. honours, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D. from the Paris 1 Sorbonne University, and a Higher Doctorate (Habilitation) from the Paris 4 Sorbonne University. He has sixteen books, six exhibition catalogues and six edited volumes to his credit, and has authored 152 research articles, along with other contributions. He is the recipient of several international awards, including the French Academy of Inscriptions and the Belles-Lettres. Five of his books have received awards, the George Perrot Medal being the most distinguished.

Pia Brancaccio

Professor of Art History, Drexel University

Pia Brancaccio is a professor in the Department of Art and Art History at Drexel University. Her research focuses on early Buddhist art and long-distance exchange in South Asia with a regional emphasis on the visual cultures of ancient Gandhara (Pakistan) and the Deccan Plateau (India). She has published extensively on the Buddhist caves in the western Deccan, including a monograph, *The Buddhist Caves at Aurangabad* (2010), and the edited volume *Living Rock: Buddhist, Hindu and Jain Cave Temples in the Western Deccan* (2013). She is a longstanding collaborator of the ISMEO-Italian Archaeological Mission in Pakistan and has written on architecture, visual narratives, artistic workshops, and the multicultural fabric of Buddhism in Gandhara.

Robert DeCaroli

Professor of Art History, George Mason University, Fairfax

Robert DeCaroli, professor of South and Southeast Asian art history at George Mason University, is the author of *Haunting the Buddha: Indian Popular Religions and the Formation of Buddhism* (2004). His second book, *Image Problems: The Origin and Development of the Buddha's Image in Early South Asia* (2015), explores the origin of the Buddha image and the factors that led to its codification and spread. Most of his research addresses early aspects of South Asian material culture and Buddhist interactions with devotion to terrestrial deities. Recently, he co-curated *Encountering the Buddha: Art and Practice Across Asia* at the National Museum of Asian Art.

Shrikant Ganvir

Assistant Professor of Ancient Indian History, Culture, and Archaeology, Deccan College Post-Graduate Research Institute, Pune

Shrikant Ganvir is an archaeologist and faculty member of Deccan College. He has served as co-director of the excavations at Nagardhan (2015–18) and Phanigiri (2018–19). He also participated in the Rajagala Archaeological Research Project, Sri Lanka (2018). His recent publications include the co-edited books *Cultural Heritage of South Asia and Beyond: Recent Perspectives* (2020) and *Telangana through the Ages: Perspectives from Early and Medieval Periods* (2019). His research areas include the archaeology of Buddhism, rock-cut architecture, Buddhist art and iconography, and religious paradigms of the Deccan.

Suchandra Ghosh

Professor, Department of History, University of Hyderabad

Suchandra Ghosh completed her doctorate at the University of Calcutta's Department of Ancient History and was a faculty member for twenty years. She is an historian of early India with a focus on epigraphy and numismatics. Recent publications include *From the Oxus to the Indus: A Political and Cultural Study* (2017) and the co-edited volumes *Early Indian History and Beyond: Essays in Honour of B. D. Chattopadhyaya* (2019), *Cross-Cultural Networking in the Eastern Indian Ocean Realm, c. 100–1800 CE* (2019), *Exploring South Asian Urbanity* (2021), and *The Economic History of India: Historiographical Issues and Perspectives—Essays in Honour of Professor Ranabir Chakravarti* (2023).

Paolo Giulierini

Director, National Archaeological Museum of Naples

Paolo Giulierini graduated in Etruscology and Italian Antiquities and specialized in classical archaeology at the University of Florence. After holding various management positions in Tuscan cultural institutions, he was appointed Director of the National Archaeological Museum of Naples (MANN) in 2015, where he has overseen the opening of the Egyptian, Epigraphic, Magna Graecia, Prehistoric and Roman Campania sections. He has also instigated cultural agreements with the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, and the Colosseum Archaeological Park. In 2017, *Art Tribune* recognized MANN as the best museum in Italy for innovation and in 2018 honoured Paolo Giulierini with the best museum director in Italy award.

Arlo Griffiths

Professor of Southeast Asian History, Head of the Jakarta Center, École française d'Extrême-Orient

Arlo Griffiths studied Sanskrit at Leiden University. After holding positions in the Netherlands, he joined the École française d'Extrême-Orient in 2008. He was posted at its Jakarta Center (2009–14), then based in Lyon (2015–22), and since September 2022 has been posted again in Jakarta. He is a principal investigator of the Domestication of “Hindu” Asceticism project and the Religious Making of South and Southeast Asia project (DHARMA), funded by the European Research Council (2019–26). His research focuses on inscriptions and manuscripts in early languages of South and Southeast Asia as source materials for exploring socio-religious history.

John Guy

Florence and Herbert Irving Curator of the Arts of South and Southeast Asian Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

John Guy, an art historian of Hindu-Buddhist South and Southeast Asia, joined The Met in 2008, having formerly served as Senior Curator of South Asian art at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, for 22 years. He is an elected Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, London (2003) and of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (2016). He has curated and co-curated numerous international art exhibitions and published widely, including *Indian Art and Connoisseurship* (1995), *Woven Cargoes: Indian Textiles in the East* (1997), *Indian Temple Sculpture* (2007), *Interwoven Globe: Textile Trade 1500–1800* (2013), *Lost Kingdoms: Hindu-Buddhist Sculpture of Early Southeast Asia* (2014), *Art & Independence: Y.G. Srimati and the Indian Style* (2019) and *Tree & Serpent: Early Buddhist Art in India* (2023).

Minku Kim

Assistant Professor Department of Fine Arts, The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Minku Kim is an art historian focusing on Buddhism in China and Korea. He is currently Assistant Professor of Fine Arts at The Chinese University of Hong Kong. Previously he taught at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities and was an Andrew W. Mellon Scholar in the Humanities at Stanford University. A graduate of Seoul National University, he earned his PhD at the University of California, Los Angeles. Publications include articles in *Archives of Asian Art* and *Ars Orientalis*, and he is completing his first book, *Dolls and Idols: The Buddhist Shift of Images in Medieval China*.

Nayanjot Lahiri

Professor of History, Ashoka University, New Delhi

Nayanjot Lahiri is an historian of early India and author of *Pre-Ahom Assam* (1991), *The Archaeology of Indian Trade Routes (up to c. 200 BC)* (1992), *Finding Forgotten Cities: How the Indus Civilization Was Discovered* (2005), *Marshalling the Past: Ancient India and Its Modern Histories* (2012), *Monuments Matter: India's Archaeological Heritage since Independence* (2017), *Time Pieces: A Whistle-Stop Tour of Ancient India* (2018), and *Searching for Ashoka: Questing a Buddhist King from India to Thailand* (2022). She won the 2013 Infosys Prize for the Humanities–Archaeology and was the 2016 awardee of the John F. Richards Prize of the American Historical Association for her book, *Ashoka in Ancient India* (2015).

Chris Peppé

Independent scholar

Chris Peppé is the great grandson of William Claxton Peppé, the British estate manager who excavated the Piprahwa stupa in northern India in 1898. After graduating from Exeter University in the U.K., he moved to Los Angeles to work in the film industry where he edited both film and television projects before directing for television. He began researching the Piprahwa discovery in earnest in 2013 and has since worked with his two cousins to make the duplicate jewel offerings that W.C. Peppé was permitted to retain by the government available for study and exhibition.

Gregory Schopen

Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Asian Languages and Cultures,
University of California, Los Angeles

After receiving his PhD from the Australian National University, Gregory Schopen has taught at several American universities and in Kyoto, Paris, Oxford, Christchurch, and Oslo. His work has been acknowledged with a MacArthur Foundation Genius Grant and election to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Four volumes of his collected papers have been published to date.

Akira Shimada

Professor, Department of History, State University of New York at New Paltz

Akira Shimada's research focuses on the history of Buddhist art and architecture of the early Āndhra region of southeastern India. His dissertation in South Asian History at the University of London on the Amaravati stupa was published by Brill in 2013 as *Early Buddhist Architecture in Context: The Great Stūpa at Amarāvati (ca. 300 BCE–300 CE)*. He is currently working on a new book project, *From Amarāvati to Nāgārjunikoṇḍa and Beyond: History of South Indian Buddhism after the Sātavāhanas*.

Upinder Singh

Professor of History, Ashoka University, New Delhi

Upinder Singh's writing covers various aspects of ancient Indian history and archaeology. She is the author of *Kings, Brāhmaṇas, and Temples in Orissa: An Epigraphic Study AD 300–1147* (1993); *Ancient Delhi* (1999); *The Discovery of Ancient India: Early Archaeologists and the Beginnings of Archaeology* (2004); *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India* (2008); *The Idea of Ancient India: Essays on Religion, Politics, and Archaeology* (2016); *Political Violence in Ancient India* (2017); and *Ancient India: Culture of Contradictions* (2021). Her edited books include *The World of India's First Archaeologist: Letters from Alexander Cunningham to J. D. M. Beglar* (2021).

Peter Skilling (Bhadra Rujirathat)

Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok; Adjunct Professor of Pali and Buddhist Studies,
Savitribai Phule Pune University

Until his retirement in 2017, Peter Skilling was a professor at professor at the École française d'Extrême-Orient. Skilling specializes in the literary and material history of Buddhism in South and Southeast Asia. He publishes widely and has been a visiting professor at leading universities worldwide. His recent book, *Questioning the Buddha* (Wisdom Books, 2021), contains translations of twenty-five sutras from the Tibetan *Kanjur*. His forthcoming book, *Buddha's Words for Tough Times* (Wisdom Books, 2024), translates twenty sutras from Tibetan and Pali.

Vincent Tournier

Chair of Classical Indology, Institute of Indology and Tibetology,
Ludwig Maximilian University, Munich

Vincent Tournier is Professor of Classical Indology at the Ludwig Maximilian University. Previously he held positions at SOAS, University of London, and at the École française d'Extrême-Orient in Paris. Tournier's research primarily focuses on the history of Buddhism in South Asia. In particular, he has worked on Buddhist soteriology, the history and self-representation of Buddhist lineages, patronage at major Buddhist centers, scriptural formation and authentication, cosmology, and narrative representations of the past. Employing philological and historical methods, he scrutinizes a wide range of texts on multiple supports—manuscripts and inscriptions alike—and also includes visual evidence in his analysis.

Monika Zin


Professor, Saxon Academy of Sciences and Humanities; Honorary Professor,
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Monika Zin studied literature, art history, and Indology in Krakow and Munich and subsequently taught the art history of South, Southeast, and Central Asia in Munich, Leipzig, and Berlin. Zin currently leads a research group, Buddhist Murals of Kucha on the Northern Silk Road at Leipzig University. She has contributed numerous articles on Buddhist narrative art and books on Ajanta paintings, and *Kanaganahalli Stūpa: An Analysis of the 60 Massive Slabs Covering the Dome* (2018). Her 2023 publication, *Representations of the Parinirvāṇa Story Cycle and the Gods, Deities and Demons in the Paintings of Kucha* explores the Central Asian afterlife of Indian culture in the Buddhist sites in Kucha.

MetSpeaks

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The symposium is free with Museum admission, though advance registration is required. The symposium will be livestreamed.

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This symposium is made possible by the Fred Eychaner Fund.

It is organized by The Met in cooperation with NYU Center for Global Asia, NYU Shanghai Center for Global Asia, and the Lakshmi Mittal and Family South Asia Institute, Harvard University.

Presented in conjunction with the exhibition *Tree & Serpent: Early Buddhist Art in India, 200 BCE–400 CE*, on view at The Met Fifth Avenue in Gallery 999, to November 13, 2023.

The exhibition is made possible by Reliance Industries Limited, The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Global, and the Fred Eychaner Fund.

Major support is provided by the Estate of Brooke Astor, the Florence and Herbert Irving Fund for Asian Art Exhibitions, and the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation.



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