



Buddhist & Pali College of Singapore Alumni (BPCA) - Quarterly E-Bulletin

Jul - Sept 2021



*Ānanda Stupa, with an Asokan pillar at Vaiśālī
By Brother Bryan*

In this quarter, we completed another class of *Introduction to Buddhism Course* (in English) and held a course preview for *Diploma in Buddhism 2021/2022*.

For the coming quarter, we are excited to announce the much-awaited Certificate in Buddhist Counselling course planned from 19th Nov to 12th Dec 2021. The course aims to provide elementary knowledge of counselling principles of Buddhist psychology and show their applicability and practicality in resolving psychological problems in day-to-day life.

In this Jul – Sep 2021 issue of the BPCA quarterly e-bulletin, please join us in a virtual tour to discover the amazing Buddhist art and architecture which are testaments of the flourishing of Buddhism in the history of civilizations. This journey will take place over a few issues. Stay tuned!

Please reach out to the editorial team if you would also like to share your inspiring stories, insights on putting Dhamma into daily practice or give any feedback or suggestions via email to Brother Bryan Law at bryan_law2002@yahoo.com.

Just as the COVID-19 is planned to be managed as an endemic, the academic year 2020 / 2021 is coming to an end soon. Here's wishing all students of the Diploma class, General Arts Qualifying Class, Bachelor of Arts (Buddhism) Year 1 class and Bachelor of Arts (Buddhism) Year 2 class the very best in their examinations.

In the meantime, let's stay safe and healthy.

The Editorial Team

Articles on Buddhist Art

Foreword by Sister Bhagya Jean Lau

During the Buddha's lifetime, his teachings spread to a large part of central and northern India. The third century BCE Asokan missions brought Buddhism out of India to South East Asia and Sri Lanka. By the first century of the common era, the teachings of the Buddha had reached China via the Silk Road and to Korea, Japan and Tibet in the subsequent centuries.

The key factors which led to the rapid spread of Buddhism during the Buddha's lifetime were undeniably his excellent qualities as a teacher, the appeal of the Dhamma and the efforts of the early Sangha. In the two and a half millennia since the Buddha's passing, Buddhism manages to maintain and even grow its presence in the world owing to the astounding relevance of the Buddha's teachings, continued preservation and propagation by the generations of Sangha and patronage of both the royal and commoner lay communities.

Today, Buddhism is the religious heritage of billions of people across Asia and for many millions more in the western world, it is a system of ethics to protect them against the perils of modernization and materialism.

In this and next issues of the BPCA e-Bulletin, we endeavor to bring to light another interesting factor which helped in the subsistence of Buddhism in the last two thousand over years. Buddhist art and architecture not only bore witness to the arrival, flourishing and sustenance of Buddhism in the history of civilizations, they too play an important role in educating and inspiring generations of believers and would-be believers in the countries Buddhism has set foot in and also travelers from around the world.

Two articles highlighting some of the inventory of this amazing Buddhist heritage are featured in this issue. The authors are students from 3rd year degree class who had carried out desktop research on these topics covered in the subject of Buddhist Art. Enjoy the virtual tours to the monuments of Emperor Asoka of India and Mogao Caves in Dunhuang China!

The ART of KING ASOKA

By Sister Sherry Julina



The name "Asoka" (A-so-ka) in the Maski Minor Rock Edict

WHO has not heard of King Asoka?

It's such a remarkable name, easy to utter and to remember. Yes, he was the third king of the Mauryan Empire who reigned between 269-232 BCE, and also the grandson of the famous Chandragupta Maurya. King Asoka converted to Buddhism after the Kalinga War (265-263 BCE). He repented of the violence which he had done and expressed his remorse, by developing the dhamma concept (pious social conduct) and best of all – the promotion of Buddhism across ancient Asia with a series of missionaries and artefacts.

WHY do we owe a huge thanks to King Asoka?

Without him, we may not be able to **know** about Buddhism at all (*in fact, there is no reason not to kowtow to him after knowing all his legacy*). Also, because of him, we have the privilege for a pilgrimage trip as he was the one who **marked** all those historical places. Otherwise, those places would be hidden somewhere unknown. As we do deeper research on him, we will understand why he was such a legend and deserved the title of Asoka, the Great, from the marvellous arts that he left behind.

WHAT are his **ARTS**?

Some of his major and well-known **Arts** include Rock Cut Edicts inscribed on monuments, Stupas, Pillars, and Caves.

1. Rock Cut Edicts

Based on the content on which they were engraved, Asokan Edicts are classified as Minor and Major rock and pillars edicts. Minor edicts focused more on religious aspects, while Major edicts were on politics and morality. Languages used in the inscription are Prakrit, Greek and Aramaic languages, with four types of scripts: Brahmi, Kharosthi, Greek and Aramaic scripts.

One of the most famous Rock Edicts is **Dhauli Rock Edict**.



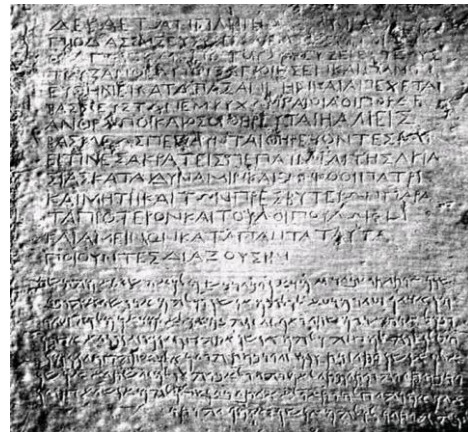
It was found in 1837 at Orissa. Dhauli Hill was presumed to be the area where the Kalinga War (261 BCE) was fought. It witnessed the horror and devastating war as well as King Asoka's inculcation of the doctrine to conquest through love (Dharma Vijaya) rather than conquest by sword (Dig Vijaya). It was where a king was "reborn" and a discovery that changed the history of mankind and cemented Buddhism as a religion in India then.

Girnar Rock Edict



Measuring 5.5 x 11ft, the Girnar Rock Edict was discovered in 1822 at Junagadh, with 14 Edicts inscribed on it.

Kandahar Bilingual Rock Edict



This is a plaque of size 45 x 69.5cm which was discovered in 1958. It was the very first known inscription of King Asoka, written in year 10 of his reign (260BCE), and categorized as Minor Rock Edict.

Can you guess which is the Greek inscription and Aramaic inscription?

2. Stupas

This is the most massive structure in Sarnath, the Dhamekh Stupa. According to an inscription dated to 1026, its old name was Dharma Chakra Stupa. It commemorated the spot where the Buddha preached His first sermon.



The total height is 43.6m including the foundation with a 28.0 diameter. The structure consists of a 11.2m circular stone drum and a 6.0m cylindrical mass of brick work containing images of Buddha. The basement structure survived from King Asoka's time. The stone facing was chiseled and displayed delicate floral carvings of Gupta origin. The wall was covered with exquisitely carved figures of humans and birds, as well as inscriptions in the Brāhmī script. King Asoka built stupas to enshrine relics of the Buddha and his disciples. An Asoka pillar with an edict engraved on it stands near the site.

The other well-known stupa from King Asoka is the Great Sanchi Stupa.

3. Pillars

Sthambas or Pillars are the oldest examples of monumental sculpture in India. They were religious emblems which were put up along major crossroads in honour of the Buddha to mark the sites related to events in the Buddha's life. The monolithic column pillars originally topped with carved capital in 3 parts: a lotus base, an abacus and an animal. The crowning animals were masterpieces of Mauryan art made in a single piece of stone. Only 7 capitals survived as shown in the map shown on the right.





This is a complete standing single lion pillar with no inscription, located in Vaishali. Based on stylistic and technical analysis, it could be the earliest pillar built, with its rigid lion and the undecorated square abacus.



The above is a Asokan pillar without capital found in December 1896, in Lumbini. The Lumbini inscription was in Brahmi script and was categorised as Minor Pillar Edict of King Asoka.



The *most perfect* capital found is the Lion Capital of Asoka, which was a sculpture of four Asiatic lions standing back-to-back, on an elaborate base that included other animals. There was also a crowning element, Dhammacakka, a large wheel which was a part of this pillar (on top). The capital is now placed in the Sarnath Museum).

Lion Capital, Sarnath



A graphic representation of Lion Capital of Asoka was adopted as the official Emblem of India in 1950.



The most visible legacy of King Asoka was the wheel of law (Dhammacakka), which was on many of King Asoka's pillars and had been the focal point of India's flag since 1947.

4. Caves at Barabar Hills, Bihar

The Barabar Hill Caves are the oldest surviving rock-cut caves in India, located at Bihar.



Most caves at Barabar consist of two chambers, carved entirely out of granite with a highly polished internal surface. The “Mauryan polish” was also found on sculptures, and exciting echo effects.



The Lomas Rishi cave is probably the most famous caves of Barabar, because of its beautifully carved door “Chaitya arch”.



Interior of the Barabar Rock Cut Cave.

Do you agree that this is the megalithic wonder – ancient laser cut?



Mirror-like polishing of the granite walls, the interior of Sudama cave with reflection of a monk. These quasi-perfect walls were dug into the hard rock and polished before 261 BCE.

And **HOW** do we know that all these arts are **linked to King Asoka?**

Most of the edicts found in Brahmi script only mentioned “King Devanampiya Piyadasi” which archaeologists initially assumed was a Sri Lankan king. They simply associated this title on the basis of the Pali script from Sri Lanka.



ॐ ऽ नम पि या सा अ सो का
DE VA NAM PI YA SA A SO KA

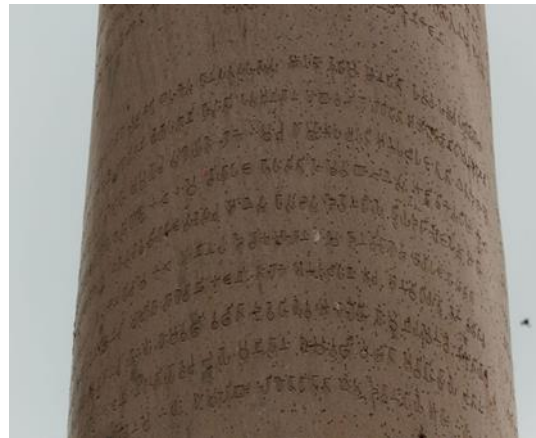
However, it was later found out that Devanampiya Piyadasi was *indeed* King Asoka when the Maski Edict was discovered in 1915. In this Maski Edict it was indicated clearly the name of Asoka in person, whereas other edicts only referred to him as Devanampiya Piyadasi (Beloved of the God).

Puzzle solved!

LET'S READ BRAHMI SCRIPT!



Above is a Prakrit word, "Dha-m-ma" in the Brahmi script, as inscribed by King Asoka in his Edicts, on the Topra Kalan pillar, now in New Delhi.



Now, how many “Dhamma” words can you find here?

The Arts of Dunhuang

By Sister Tung Swee Cher

Dunhuang is a city in western Gansu province in China, at the crossroads of the ancient Southern Silk Route. The city is the site of the renowned Mogao Caves which were designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1987. It is a treasure chest of Buddhist artefacts and an important source of history for the expansion of Buddhism to the region.



Dunhuang Mogao Caves

They contain the largest Buddhist art collection in the world. It is known as the caves of thousand Buddhas as there are more than 1,000 Buddha images in statues, paintings, etc. They were developed over 1,000 years, through 4th century to 14th century and spanned across 10 dynasties: Southern & Northern Dynasty, Sixteen Kingdom, Northern Wei, Western Wei, Northern Zhou, Sui, Tang, Liao, Western Xia and Yuan.



Quick Facts

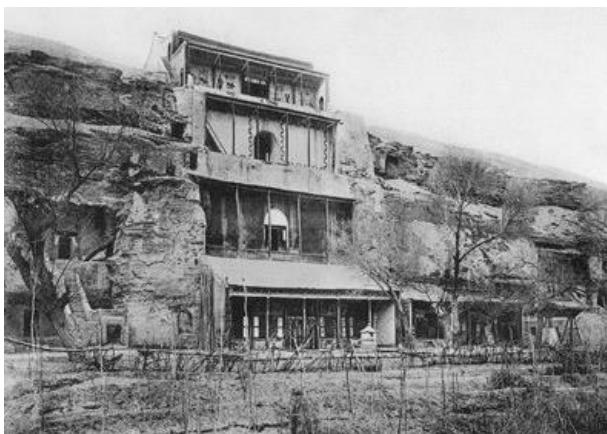
- Situated along a cliff face, 1,680m long
- 735 caves are labeled, of which 492 have paintings and/or statues
- 45,000m² of murals and 2,415 stucco statues
- > 50,000 manuscripts, written or painted between 4th and 12th centuries, were found in the Library Cave in 1900 CE
- The caves initially served as a place of meditation for hermit monks and developed to serve the monasteries nearby. It fell into steep decline after 14th CE when the southern sea routes were used for trade and the Silk Roads were abandoned by the Ming Dynasty.

Mogao Caves – Discovery & Revival

- Chinese Taoist monk, Wang Yuanlu, appointed himself guardian of some of the cave temples around 1900 CE and raised funds to repair the statues.
- Some caves had been blocked by sand. Wang set about clearing away the sand and tried to initiate restoration of the site. On 25 June 1900, in one such cave, Wang followed the drift of smoke from a cigarette and discovered a walled-up area behind one side of a corridor leading to a main cave. Behind the wall was a small cave stuffed with an enormous hoard of manuscripts.



- This drew the attention of expeditors such as British Aurel Stein, French Paul Pelliot and Japanese Otani Kozui. As a result the artefacts are now scattered around the world.



The Mogao Caves site is a melting pot of culture - Although a Buddhist site, the art and objects found at Mogao reflect the meeting of cultures along the Silk Road, the collection of trade routes that for centuries linked China, Central Asia, and Europe. Discovered at the site were Buddhist, Confucian, Daoist, and Christian texts, and

documents in multiple languages including Chinese, Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Old Turkish. Even Hebrew manuscripts were found there.

The Arts of Dunhuang – Highlights

Grottoes/Caves Architecture

Meditative Caves

Cave 285 Western
Wei 538-539



Central Pillar Caves

Cave 428 Northern
Zhou 558-581



Assembly Hall Caves

Cave 45 High Tang
705 – 781



Polychromed Statues

The indigenized art style in the Sui,
Cave 427



The Northern Wei
statue, Cave 259



The Tang Buddha,
Cave 328



Murals



The Western Pure Land and related stories on vertical margins (High Tang, Cave 217)



Apsara (High Tang, Cave 39)



Printed Image



Diamond Sutra, British Library

Painting



— Painting of the Guiding Bodhisattva. Found at the Library Cave (Cave 17), Mogao Caves, Dunhuang, Gansu province, China, about 851-900.

Textiles



MAS.925 | Tang dynasty | 唐代 | 7thC(late)-8thC(early) | Excavated/Findspot: Cave 17 | Excavated/Findspot: 第17窟

Upcoming Courses



BUDDHIST AND PALI COLLEGE OF SINGAPORE

(Affiliated to Buddhist & Pali University of Sri Lanka)

Diploma in Buddhism 2021/22

(29th Intake)

Curriculum

- Early Buddhism - Basic Doctrines
- Buddhist Social Dimensions
- Geographical Expansion of Theravada Buddhism
- Early History of Buddhism up to 3rd Century BCE
- Pali Qualifying Paper

NEW Term Start Dates

2nd Jan 2022 (Mangala Vihara)
4th Jan 2022 (Poh Ming Tse)
(To be held on Zoom or physical class)

Exams: Mid Oct 2022 (Tentative)

Venues

Mangala Vihara (Buddhist Temple)
30 Jln Eunos, Singapore, 419495
Tuesdays (7.30pm - 9.30pm)
Sundays (2.00pm - 5.15pm)

Poh Ming Tse Temple
438 Dunearn Road, Singapore, 289613
Tuesdays (7.30pm - 9.30pm)
Fridays (7.00pm - 10.00pm)

NEW Registration Closing Date

- By 23rd Dec 2021

How to Apply

- Application Form:
Download at <https://bpc.edu.sg> or <https://mv.org.sg/>, or
Collect from Mangala Vihara, or
From QR code below
- Registration Fee: US\$55 (pay in Sgd\$ equivalent) to be paid to the university
- Maintenance Fee: S\$260
- Other documents:
2 Passport Size Photos and a copy of IC

Enquiry

Maureen Hui
maw69xyz@gmail.com, 96282069
Sandra Koh
chaturikoh@yahoo.com.sg, 91297763

Upcoming Courses



Certificate Course in Buddhist Counselling

Organised by

Buddhist and Pali College Alumni of Singapore

Course contents

1. Nature of Buddhist Counselling Psychology
2. Theories of Buddhist Counselling
3. Buddhist Analysis of Psychopathology, Mental Disorders and Abnormal Behaviours
4. Counselling Skill and Code of Ethics
5. Buddhist Counselling, Approaches and Techniques
6. Relevance of Buddhist Counselling for Resolving Psychological Problems of the Modern Individual (2 days)

*70% attendance is required in order to get the Certificate in Buddhist Counselling.

This certificate course aims to provide elementary knowledge of counselling principles of Buddhist psychology and to show their applicability and practicability in resolving psychological problems in day to day life. Special attention is paid here to discuss the therapeutic values of Insight and Tranquilised meditation. Role play and actual case studies are entertained in this course as the means of providing the knowledge.

Venue

To be held online via Zoom

Registration fee: \$20 non-refundable

Course Fee: Free

Participants can donate any amount to defray costs.
Limited to 100pax, priority given to BPC alumni members.

Date and Time

Total 4 weeks

(every Fri, Sat & Sun)

Start 19th Nov, end 12th Dec

every Fri (7.30pm to 9.30pm)

every Sat (3.00pm to 6.00pm)

every Sun (9.00am to 12.00pm)

About the Trainer

Professor Wasantha Priyadharsana of the Postgraduate Institute of Pali and Buddhist Studies, University of Kelaniya in Sri Lanka and visiting professor of the Buddhadharma Center of Hong Kong.

To reserve your seat, please whatsapp to Sis Jasline at 8333 4813
or email to bpca2017sg@gmail.com

Upcoming Courses



Master of Arts (MA) in Buddhist Studies

Buddhist and Pali University

Course contents

1. Philosophical Trends in Buddhism
2. Buddhism and Management
3. Buddhist Psychotherapy
4. Buddhist Social Philosophy and Modern World
5. Buddhist Art and Architecture
6. Independent Dissertation (5000 to 7000 words)

Tentative Venue

To be held in Mangala Vihara
and via Zoom

Tentative Term and Exams Dates

Class Term:
9 Jan 2022 to end Oct 2022
Exam Period:
First 2 weeks of Dec 2022

Total Fees

Total Fees:
SGD\$2000
this includes:
-Registration fee (BPU)
-Exam Fee (BPU)
-Maintenance Fee (MV)
-Course Fee (BPC to defray for
overseas lecturer and Misc cost)

Prerequisites

Either, a BA degree in Buddhist studies from Buddhist &
Pali University (BPU), or

a BA degree in Buddhist Studies from any recognised
university (need to be verified n approved by BPU & BPC)

To apply, please contact:

Maureen Hui, maw69xyz@gmail.com, 96282069
Sandra Koh, chaturikoh@yahoo.com.sg, 91297763

Current School Activities

- **Buddhist Pali College Courses**

All courses are ongoing

Upcoming Activities

- **Certificate in Buddhist Counselling Course**

Course Date: 19th Nov to 12th Dec 2021 (12 lessons)

Fridays: 7.30pm – 9.30pm

Saturdays: 3pm – 6pm

Sundays: 9am – 12pm

- **Diploma in Buddhism 2021/ 22 (29th Intake)**

	Mangala Vihara Buddhist Temple (MV)	Poh Ming Tse Temple (PMT)
Course Commencement	2 nd Jan 2022 (Sunday)	4 th Jan 2022 (Tuesday)

- **Master of Arts in Buddhist Studies**

Course Date: 9th Jan 2022 to 31st Oct 2022

For more information, please contact:

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<https://www.facebook.com/bpcsin>