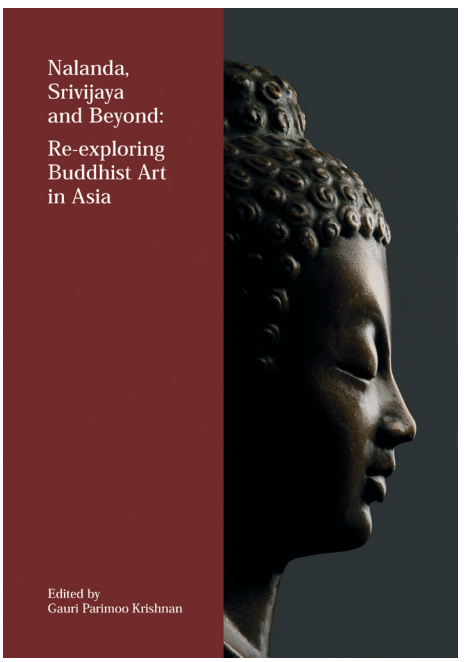
Review Article

Nalanda, Srivijaya and Beyond: Re-exploring Buddhist Art in Asia, edited by Gauri Parimoo Krishnan. (Singapore: Asian Civilisations Museum, 2016). ISBN: 978-981-09-9912-4. S$35.00.



The volume under review is a collection of selected papers delivered at a conference held in Singapore at the Asian Civilisations Museum (2008) in conjunction with the special exhibition, *On the Nalanda Trail: Buddhism in India, China and Southeast Asia*. This compilation of ten essays claims to offer new perspectives on Indian, Chinese, and Southeast Asian Buddhist art in general and of the premodern interaction that took place between "Nalanda" and "Srivijaya" in particular. Indeed, by the 8th–9th centuries, an artistic dialogue between maritime Southeast Asia (Java and Sumatra, the Malay Peninsula) and the Pāla homeland in Bihar was taking place. This dialogue has often been recognized by scholars, not least because Bālaputradeva, the Śailendra king of Suvarṇadvīpa, which most probably refers to the Śrīvijaya kingdom in Southeast Sumatra, erected a Buddhist monastery at Nālandā in the 9th century; this we learn from the famous Devapāla's copper-plate.

The volume's editor, Gauri Parimoo Krishnan, must be commended for her determination in bringing this compendium to fruition even though, as she concedes, "the book took much longer than anyone would have imagined" (p. 4). This state of affairs is somewhat regrettable for two reasons. First, a number of authors in this volume who put their papers on hold for so long understandably found a way to publish their work in one form or another elsewhere. Second, and perhaps most importantly, a good deal of other recent studies and new research on intra- and inter-Asian linkages and Buddhist networks has since come to light. In general, both the essays and the volume's bibliography (pp. 268–291) have not been sufficiently updated to reflect these recent works (as my own bibliography shows below).

After a short introduction (pp. 9–13), the initial essay by editor Gauri Parimoo Krishnan sets the volume's tone. It focuses on the "Transmission of Buddhist Ideology, Monastic Organization, and Artistic Expression in Asia" (pp. 15–25). The author discusses various scholarly theories about how Indian and Buddhist cultures appeared in Southeast Asia. Krishnan opens her essay by referring to the authoritative works by Herman Kulke and Sheldon Pollock and advocates the notion of "cultural convergence" that has become the theory of choice for many scholars today, even though it may be in need of serious reconsideration.[1] Recent scholarship stresses that cultural development in Southeast Asia did not exactly or even necessarily parallel that in India but had its own unique trajectory and identity.[2] In addition, her essay suffers from certain misconceptions and clichés that are too often repeated in secondary literature. One misconception is that, according to the Chinese pilgrim monk Yijing (635–713 CE) who travelled in India, both "Mahayana and Theravada existed side by side" (p. 19). This assumes that these two terms, Theravāda as a "monastic school" (*nikāya*) and Mahāyāna as a "vehicle" (*yāna*), were distinct categories that could be put on a par with each other. Here and later, the author clearly fails to distinguish the terms Theravāda, Sthavira, Hīnayāna, or Śrāvakayāna, and wrongly assumes they are analogous; they are not. In all likelihood, monks and nuns who presumably adhered to Mahāyāna texts and motives in India both lived in the same monastic communities as Śrāvakayānists (i.e. "those who follow the path/vehicle of the hearers/disciples") and followed the Vinaya of an old *nikāya*, for example that of the Dharmaguptakas or the (Mūla-)Sarvāstivādins composed in Sanskrit and predominant in today's China and Tibet, but unlikely that of the Theravādins written in Pali and used essentially today in Sri Lanka and mainland Southeast Asia.[3]

The volume's second essay is by Frederick M. Asher, titled "Xuanzang at Nalanda" (pp. 27–36).[4] The importance of Xuanzang's account in the study of ancient India cannot be underestimated. For much of the 19th century, British "gentlemen" archaeologists and scholars followed the routes of the Chinese pilgrim (602–604 CE) to reconstruct the history of the places he visited, just as modern tourists in India follow the *Lonely*

[1] For critiques of Pollock, see Bronkhorst 2011, and Ali 2011. Problems with the concept of cultural convergence are also highlighted in Brown 2017.

[2] Two recent collections of papers that reassess the idea of "Indianization" vs "Localization" in mainland Southeast Asia are Revire & Murphy 2014, and Murphy & Stark & 2016. For the case of maritime Southeast Asia, see Acri 2017.

[3] The Sanskrit compound **mahāyānasthavira* (Ch. *dasheng-shangzuo*) reported by the Chinese pilgrims in India literally means "Mahāyāna elders" or "elders/senior monks [not necessarily Theravādins] who follow the Mahāyāna." Put simply, the dichotomy made by Krishnan and others between Mahāyāna and Sthavira/Thera[vāda] Buddhist monks is wrong. Max Deeg has recently put forward a hypothesis that the same compound was an invention or even an attempt by Xuanzang "to upgrade the otherwise, at least in a Chinese context, low-ranked Hīnayāna-*sthavira*s to the respected status of Mahāyāna-monks" (2012: 153). In addition, Peter Skilling discusses a donative inscription in the present volume under review which relates the "pious gift of a senior monk" (*deyadharmoyaṁ sthavira*) on the pedestal of the female Mahāyāna deity Cundā (pp. 68–69, figs. 18–19).

[4] By the same author, see Asher 2015. For a new English translation of Xuanzang's *Xiyu Ji*, see Li 1996.

Planet guidebook. Asher rightly calls into doubt the overused English translation by Samuel Beal and also questions the extent to which we can use this resource to obtain a reliable picture of the Nālandā monastery during the pilgrim's stay there. Obviously, the bits of information provided by these foreign and intermittent pilgrims' accounts are necessarily of limited value when describing the continuous history of Nālandā. Xuanzang's clear attempt is to link the site with the miraculous life of the Buddha "even though there is no material evidence that the place has a history prior to the Gupta period" (p. 31). Asher also contests the notion that Nālandā was an institution of higher learning in the modern sense (p. 35). In seals and copper-plate inscriptions excavated at the site, Nālandā is invariably called a *mahāvihāra*, that is, a "great monastery"—even if it could never have accommodated the often large reported numbers of thousands of monastic residents. But Nālandā was never termed a *mahāvidyālaya*, i.e. a "university" or "great seat of learning."

The third essay, by Suchandra Ghosh, concerns "Mainamati: An Enigmatic Centre of Buddhism in Southeastern Bangladesh" (pp. 37–50).[5] Maināmatī is not a single site but a region dotted with more than fifty ancient Buddhist settlements dating between the 7th and the 12th century CE. The most important of these sites is the Salban Vihāra where many archaeological elements and Buddhist antiquities were discovered, such as miniature *stūpa*s in bronze (e.g. p. 46, fig. 8, which the author erroneously labels, "votive stupa"). These miniature bronze images certainly hold a major position in the introduction of metal casting in maritime Southeast Asia (compare the bronze *stūpa* found in Peninsular Thailand, p. 165, fig. 10a). Bronze sculptures certainly reached a high level of craftsmanship during this period, with production also including large-size images of various Mahāyāna and tantric deities, as illustrated by the magnificent Vajrasattva sculpture (p. 45, fig. 7). It appears that during this period, most kings patronized Buddhism in the form of land-grants although, as Ghosh aptly emphasizes, "royal patronage cut across [the] personal religion of the rulers" (p. 39). This is an important statement which is generally valid for all other Buddhist sites found in Bihar-Bengal during the Pāla-Sena period (8th–12th c.). For example, if the second and third known Pāla kings, Dharmapāla and Devapāla, clearly made significant contributions to such great Buddhist monasteries as Nālandā, they, at the same time, patronized Hindu establishments. Likewise, almost every other Pāla ruler did not actually profess Buddhism, but adhered to Hinduism, even though they used the *dharmacakra* royal seal and the title *paramasaugata* or "supreme follower of Sugata" (i.e. the Buddha) in an "ecumenical" manner.[6] But what made the region of Maināmatī so special, stresses Ghosh, is the landscape, the region's strong economic base and agrarian resources to support the monasteries, and its geographically favorable position along the trade routes and networks of communication with other Buddhist centers in East Bengal and maritime Southeast Asia.

The next essay by Peter Skilling, "Writing and Representation: Inscribed Objects

[5] Another version of this paper was published as Ghosh 2015.

[6] For a more recent review on the patronage of the Pālas and other dynasties such as the early Candras of Southeast Bengal, see Bautze-Picron 2016: 167–170.

in the *Nalanda Trail* Exhibition" is thorough and instructive (pp. 51–99). Skilling starts by stating "inscriptions were not written for the benefit of future historians," but rather were composed "to formalize grants or acts of merit" (p. 52). He then goes over a series of early examples of donative and label inscriptions found on sculptures from Bhārhut, Pauni, and Sāñci (pp. 53–58, figs. 1–7). To this corpus we can now add the recently published material from Kanaganahalli in Karnataka (Hinüber 2014). Importantly, certain early Buddha or Bodhisattva images produced in the vicinity of Mathurā are inscribed with donative records dated to the Kaniṣka era (pp. 60–63, figs. 10–13), which Skilling assumes started in 78 CE. Following Harry Falk's lead (2001), however, has led to significant reconsiderations in the chronology of the Kushan era in the last decade and 127 CE seems to have now reached a certain agreement amongst scholars as the beginning year (Bracey 2017). Skilling then goes on to enumerate the variant list of donative formulae, such as "*deyadharma*…," "*yad atra puṇyaṁ*…," and so on. These inscriptions were often accompanied by other ritual formulae, spells, and incantations (*mantra*s and *dhāraṇī*s), such as the popular *ye dharma* stanza, "fundamental to the early transmission of the Dharma" (p. 73), or the formula of dependent origination, which spread throughout Northern India as well as Southeast Asia either in Pali or Sanskrit.[7]

In one special case, the back of a bronze frame from Kurkihār bears a long *dhāraṇī* inscription opening with the consecrated *ye dharmā* formula in Sanskrit using the Siddhamāṭṛkā script (pp. 82–83, figs. 30–32, Appendix on pp. 90–91). This *dhāraṇī* is popularly known as the "casket seal" (*Karaṇḍamudrādhāraṇī*), variants of which have also been discovered on stones inscribed at the Abhayagiri Vihāra in Anurādhapura, Sri Lanka, and, more recently, at Udayagiri 2 in Orissa (Tanaka 2014; Mishra 2016: 77–79, figs. 7–9). These discoveries point to possible direct cultural contacts between these regions. After all, we know from dedicatory inscriptions that Kurkihār was often visited and sustained by monks and lay donors from various parts of "Southern India," especially hailing from Kāñcī (Prasad 2014). However, we do not know to what extent this Buddhist network may have also included the region of Orissa and the Sri Lankan sphere. To date, it has not been discovered in Southeast Asia but a copy of this *dhāraṇī* is known to have been brought to Japan from China by the scholar-monk Kūkai, also known as Kōbō Daishi (776–835), the founder of the Shingon school, in the early 9th century (Giebel 2012: 218, no. 26). Many clay sealings or molded tablets bearing various *mantra*s and *dhāraṇī*s have also been found in the Malay Peninsula, often deposited in remote caves (pp. 86–87, figs. 34–35). For example, a number of clay tablets have recently been found at Khao Nui cave in Trang province. Some of these tablets bear, on the back, an abbreviated inscription of the Four Truths of Buddhism in Sanskrit (Revire 2015: 301–303, figs. 26.4–26.6) which may or may not have functioned similarly as a *mantra*.

Following Skilling's discussion is an essay on "Buddhism in the Bujang Valley, Kedah (5th to 10th Century)" by Nik Hassan Shuhaimi Nik Abdul Rahman (pp. 101–128). Before the 1970s, research on the Bujang Valley in the northwest of the upper Malaysian

[7] For a recent survey of *mantra*s and *dhāraṇī*s in ancient maritime Southeast Asia, see Griffiths 2014.

coast was done mainly by Western archaeologists (Murphy 2018). Nik Hassan is one of the most esteemed local archaeologists trained in the 1980s to continue research there. He has published countless books and articles on this topic in recent decades which have introduced a periodization of the early history of the Bujang Valley. He has also published a theory explaining the process of indigenization of the Indic culture which formed the socio-economic makeup of the region in the pre-Islamic era. Located near three rivers, the Sungai Bujang, Sungai Muda, and Sungai Merbok, the valley has yielded ancient ruins and artifacts from a "lost" Hindu-Buddhist civilization. These remains include inscriptions, sculptures,[8] and monuments showing Buddhist influence dating approximately from the 5th century onwards. The most important Buddhist inscriptions Nik Hassan lists here (pp. 103–104) are the so-called great mariner Buddhagupta and the Bukit Miriam inscriptions; unfortunately, the content seems to partially elude him. In fact, these inscriptions have been shown to refer in part to a peculiar Buddhist formula found elsewhere in ancient inscriptions from maritime Southeast Asia. Importantly, this formula is unknown in Indian sources and has yet to be traced to any Buddhist texts. This inscription is the *ajñānāc cīyate karma* stanza, which can be interpreted as a summary of the dependent origination, often found in conjunction with the ubiquitous *ye dharmā* verse and associated with *stūpa* reliefs (Skilling 2015).

Regarding Buddhist monuments, Nik Hassan and his team's latest excavation conducted in the Bujang Valley was in 2006–07 at Site 32, located in the vicinity of the Sungai Mas (pp. 122–124). The excavated structure, possibly a *stūpa*, yielded beads, ceramics, and vessels from the Middle East and China datable to the 8th to the 9th century. The diversity of these discoveries in the region of South Kedah (known in Chinese sources as Jiecha) seems to confirm that it was an important entrepôt actively engaged in international trade during this period. It was also probably linked by transpeninsular routes with the Yarang site (Langkasuka) on the opposite coast, in today's Pattani province in Southern Thailand. This connection has been demonstrated by the late Michel Jacq-Hergoualc'h (1992 and 2002) in his exhaustive published research on the Malay Peninsula which was not cited by Nik Hassan.

The next essay, by John Miksic, reviews the evidence for "Buddhism in the Straits of Melaka and the Archaeology of Srivijaya," (pp. 129–151).[9] Miksic rightly recalls that "the earliest evidence of Indic religion in this realm consists of Buddhist texts" found in the region of South Kedah (see discussion above). However, the paleographic dating traditionally given for these inscriptions to the 5th century CE is not totally certain (they may be relatively dated anywhere later up to the 7th century). At any rate, I do not think we can assume that these inscriptions were the earliest composed in Southeast Asia and preceded the famous Vo-canh Sanskrit inscription found in Campā (i.e. Central Vietnam, now approximately dated to the late 4th or the early 5th century; cf. Zakharov 2010), or even perhaps the earliest Pali inscriptions found at Śrīkṣetra in Upper Myanmar, probably also composed in the 5th–6th century (Falk 1997).

[8] The Buddha image depicted seated in the earth-touching gesture with the left hand (p. 109, fig. 9) is a printed mistake showing a reversed mirror-image (cf. Jacq-Hergoualc'h 1992: 239, doc. 256).
[9] A variant of this paper has been published elsewhere as Miksic 2010.

My cautionary remark is equally valid for the early archaeological evidence briefly discussed from Yarang and hastily dated by the author to the 5th century. This again seems a bit too early, for even if two Sasanian coins allegedly found there and kept in private hands are correctly attributed to the reign of King Peroz I (ca 457–483 CE), these coins "do not permit us to assign a date to the places where they were found, as they were evidently in use over a very long period" (Jacq-Hergoualc'h 2002: 191). We are on better grounds, however, for dating the presence of Buddhism in Śrīvijaya (pp. 131ff), that is, originally the region of Palembang in Southern Sumatra. Here we have securely dated inscriptions from the late 7th century (p. 134, fig. 3) as well as Yijing's account in which the pilgrim wrote that he visited [Shili-]Foshi in 671 CE for six months. Śrīvijaya (Shilifoshi) then became an important center for the expansion of Buddhism in maritime Southeast Asia, lasting to the 12th century or so. The nature of Buddhism in Sumatra, Java, and Southern Thailand is then discussed by the author. It was apparently deeply influenced by Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna beliefs, as evidenced from the sheer number of statues of Bodhisattvas and other Buddhist tantric deities and utensils discovered in the region. Importantly, Miksic adds that "the repertoire of images found in Indonesia overlaps but does not duplicate that found in Nalanda" (p. 141).

The task of the next essay by G.P. Krishnan is to precisely describe "The Roots and Legacy of the Art of Nalanda as seen at Srivijaya" (pp. 153–199). Here the author-editor acknowledges the many "roots" and "legacies" in the art of Śrīvijaya beyond Nālandā.[10] Śrīvijaya should no longer be viewed as a "sub-style of Central Java," since it has its own "distinct identity" (p. 154). This is a welcome change since Śrīvijaya has too often been characterized as a cultural potpourri of ancient Southeast Asia. Krishnan then emphasizes (p. 157) the presumably important role played by travelling images carried by monks and lay worshippers, such as miniature bronzes into Southeast Asia, which may have served as models or prototypes for the transfer of knowledge. This is a sound hypothesis and I think we can push it even further. Robert Brown (2014) recently proposed elsewhere that the sudden burst of metal icons in India circa the 6th century and their subsequent spread into Southeast Asia created the opportunity for a popular Buddhism by placing images into the hands of non-monastic practitioners who could carry them outside of the monastery context.

In the same vein, Krishnan also suggests that *sādhanā*s and other ritual manuals ought to have played a decisive role in transmitting a certain iconography to artists-craftsmen. However, a *sādhanā* literally describes a particular mode of worship or spiritual practice in Indian esoteric Buddhism; it is primarily a visualization practice for the practitioner or a conjuring ritual that prescribes for each deity a repertory of iconic representations, accoutrements, and regalia, *dhāraṇī*s or *mantra*s, hand gestures (*mudrā*s), and body postures (*āsana*s). A *sādhanā* does not directly include the instructions for sculpting an icon per se, as opposed to *śilpaśāstra*s which reflect older Indian conventions for painting and image-making. It is clear that, following the arrival of such tantric masters

[10] She writes that "more detailed study on sites such as Kurkihar, for example, needs to be undertaken to explore the regions beyond Nalanda in Eastern India and Bangladesh which exerted stylistic as well as iconographic influence on Myanmar and Sumatra" (p. 193). Her wish has since been fulfilled with the following publications by Prasad 2014 and Bautze-Picron 2015.

as Vajrabodhi (671–741) and Amoghavajra (704–774) who traveled from India to China by the sea route and spent some time in what is now Indonesia, we see a proliferation of esoteric texts, images, and practices in maritime Southeast Asia.[11] We do not know however if these texts were also followed by sculptors, or if *śilpaśāstra*s likewise circulated in early Southeast Asia. But surely this religious and cultural intercourse helps explain the emergence of such images as the twelve-armed Avalokiteśvara, one of the rarer forms of this Bodhisattva, in both Nālandā (p. 184, fig. 24) and Southeast Asia.[12]

Having said the above, Krishnan again stresses that these artistic "influences" to Southeast Asia "are not one off or from one region alone, but continue across several centuries from various coastal regions, and need to be examined in waves or phases" (p. 174). Along this line of thought, some interesting parallels between the Buddhist caves of the Maharashtra region in Western India and (Pen)insular Southeast Asia have been recently observed, including images of the ascetic form of Avalokiteśvara, possibly dating back to approximately the mid-to-late 7th century (Sundstrom 2015). I also believe that some iconographic and stylistic features observed in the rock-cut art of the western Deccan caves contributed to the development of early Javanese Buddhist sculpture and imagery dateable to approximately the late 8th through the 9th century. One important case is the enthroned Buddha type in *bhadrāsana*—performing the *dharmacakra* hand gesture—and attended by two Bodhisattvas. The most famous example of this enthroned Buddha is the central triad carved in stone enshrined at Candi Mendut, near Borobudur, Central Java. In my opinion, the latter sculptures draw their artistic inspiration almost directly from the post-Vākāṭaka model of Ellorā, especially Cave 12 (Revire 2017). While Krishnan also acknowledges the later impact of Cōḻa styles on Śrīvijaya sculptures at the beginning of the second millennium (pp. 190–191), a case can be made that, at times, Southeast Asian iconography also had an impact on later Indian sculptures, particularly at Nāgapaṭṭiṇam, one of the last Buddhist strongholds in Southern India.[13] However, this hypothesis requires further studies.

The next two essays deal with representations of Avalokiteśvara in China. Teoh Eng Soon writes about "The Chinese Assimilation of Avalokiteśvara" (pp. 201–221), while Ho Puay-Peng's concern is "Housing the Colossal Images of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva in 10th Century China" (pp. 223–242). We learn from both that an independent cult of this most popular Bodhisattva in East Asia was first introduced to China by at least the 3rd century where the Great Savior is extensively discussed in one specific chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra* (Dharmarakṣa's earliest Chinese translation is dated 286 CE). There, we find a list of misfortunes from which Avalokiteśvara—who came to be widely known in China as Guan[shi]yin ("One who observes sounds")[14]—can save a human being

[11] For more on these "esoteric networks", see Acri 2016.

[12] Several examples have been found in Thailand, see Woodward 2003: 86–91, pl. 18.

[13] For a recent overview of the history of Nāgapaṭṭiṇam, see Ray 2015.

[14] It appears that the original Indic form of the name (probably in Gāndhārī) was actually Avalokitasvara, "One who observes sounds" (i.e. the cries of sentient beings who need help) or "One who observes thinking." This earlier name was later supplanted by the Sanskritized form containing the ending *–īśvara*, "lord," i.e. Avalokiteśvara. For two fascinating and recent excursuses on the etymology of the Bodhisattva's names used in early Chinese sources, see Nattier 2007 and

and another list of ways in which he can appear before these beings to guide them. The Great Savior was indeed known as "Lord of travelers" as we hear from the testimonies of Faxian (ca 337–422 CE) and Xuanzang in their respective travel accounts. Besides, a recent study has shown that the roots of Faxian's devotion towards Avalokiteśvara during maritime distress on his return journey to China can be traced back to the early influence of Dharmarakṣa's translation of the *Lotus Sūtra* (Hu-von Hinüber 2015). Visual depictions of the *aṣṭamāhābhaya* Avalokiteśvara, i.e. "protecting from the eight (sometimes ten) great perils," found at various Buddhist sites in India, starting at Ajaṇṭā, are also likely based on this specific literary description from the *Lotus Sūtra* or that found in the *Kāraṇḍavyūhasūtra* (Bautze-Picron 2004: 236ff, figs. 34, 37, Appendix 2).

Moreover, Guanyin, the compassionate Bodhisattva, can transform into many different forms in order to cross over to the sentient beings. Originally represented as a male in India, the images are more generally those of a female figure in China since approximately the Tang period (618–907 CE). Perhaps confusion arose with his female aspect in the guise of Tārā. Generally, he/she appears with one face and two arms, but at other times with many more arms and heads in tantric forms. Two peculiar esoteric manifestations that began to flourish in China and Japan during this period were the Eleven-Headed (*ekādaśamukha*) and the Thousand-Armed (*sāhasrabhuja*) Avalokiteśvara; this is when some images of colossal proportions of the Bodhisattva started to appear. Only one possible Indian sculptural antecedent of the Eleven-Headed form is known**,** from Cave 41 at Kanheri, which is an important testimony of India's sustained cultural and religious contacts with Central Asia and China. As it happens, rare examples of the Eleven-Headed Avalokiteśvara are also attested in Khmer art between the 10th and 13th centuries (Green 2014).

The final essay of this volume by Rajeshwari Ghose is entitled "Kizil, The Hospitable Halt on The Silk Road" (pp. 243–267). This area, associated with the ancient oasis kingdom of Kucha, was a commercial hub of the Silk Road visited by Xuanzang in 630 CE. The caves are said to be the earliest major Buddhist cave complex in China, with development occurring between approximately the 3rd and the 8th century. The caves display Indian, Gandhāran, and Sasanian, rather than Chinese, styles in their artwork. Significant mural paintings remain in situ today, although the German explorer Albert von le Coq chose to remove several fragments in the early 20th century, most of which are now kept in the Museum of Asian Art in Berlin.

Ghose notes that there has been a growing scholarly interest in Kuchean mural paintings in recent years.[15] The early murals mostly depict *jātaka* and *avadāna* stories, as well as legends of the Buddha, and are, according to the author, an artistic representation in the tradition of the school of the (Mūla-)Sarvāstivādins. I would dispute, however, some of these attributions as necessarily belonging to this school. For example, I do not agree with her when she writes about the episode dealing with the temptation of the Buddha by Māra's daughters who "are transformed into decrepit and ugly old women," or when she insinuates that depictions of the "Buddha's Taming of the Six Heretics Masters"

Karashima 2017. See also Bautze-Picron 2004: 232.

[15] See for example a series of articles by Zin 2005–13.

at Kizil, i.e. "The Great Miracle of Śrāvastī," are unique to the Mūlasarvāstivādins (p. 249). Many depictions of these two episodes are known in mainland Southeast Asia as well, predominantly in a Theravāda milieu (e.g. Brown 1984; Stadtner 2015). The rear chamber of the Kizil caves often features the *mahāparinivārṇa* scene in the form of a mural or a large sculpture (pp. 249–250, figs. 4–5) but a great many caves were probably just *vihāra*s, that is, monks' living quarters and storehouses, or even perhaps meditation caves, and do not contain mural paintings. Importantly, Buddhist manuscripts written in Tocharian languages were also found at Kizil, several of which describe meditation manuals that later probably played a vital role in the transmission of such practices in East Asia.

At this juncture, I would like to make a critical note on some of the terminology that occurs throughout the volume. I have already challenged artificial boundaries or categories created by scholars, especially art historians, such as "Theravada" and "Mahayana" (Revire 2013: 236; see also my remarks above). The history of Theravāda is long and convoluted. We learn from another recently published collection that Theravāda is a term with multiple meanings and varying significance (Skilling et al. 2012). The modern notion of "Theravāda Buddhism" as an ancient and homogeneous school of Buddhism is out of date. Likewise, "Mahāyāna Buddhism" (not to mention Vajrayāna) should no longer be perceived as an entirely uniform and monolithic movement since, in India alone, distinct Mahāyāna communities were based on different scriptures, developing in various places and at different times.

I am also not sure why such phrases as "Dhyānī Buddhas" or "Jina Buddhas," appear here; all Buddhas ("awakened ones") are Jinas ("conquerors" or "victors") after all. These "ghost" terms were invented by modern scholars in the 19th–20th century. They do not exist in any Buddhist original text and should no longer be used. Skilling informs us in his authoritative essay (p. 92, n. 28) that texts simply call them the "five Buddhas," "five Tathāgatas," or "five Jinas." Similarly, the term "votive," which is extensively used here, as in "votive tablets," or "votive stupa," seems equally inappropriate. These Buddhist artifacts bear no comparisons to other objects for which the term is commonly used, such as medieval Christian tablets (*ex voto*) expressing gratitude to a saint, which now crowd the walls of European churches. There are also a certain number of inconsistencies and infelicities using diacritics throughout the volume, for example the Sanskrit name Viṣṇu and the word *uṣṇīṣa* are constantly misspelt as Viśnu and *uśniśa* (e.g. pp. 24, 192). Some of the important sites mentioned in this volume shown on the overview map (p. 8) are also clearly incorrectly located, such as Kizil in Central Asia.

To conclude, while I may not agree wholly with some of the observations and conclusions presented by various authors in this volume, there is no denying the value of such a collective effort in attempting to assemble our current knowledge of Buddhist art in the region and proposing new interpretations based on archaeological, epigraphic, and artistic evidence. The present volume offers a particular challenge to scholars to re-examine the art of Nālandā, Śrīvijaya, and beyond in light of some of the stimulating ideas raised in this work.

Nicolas Revire

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