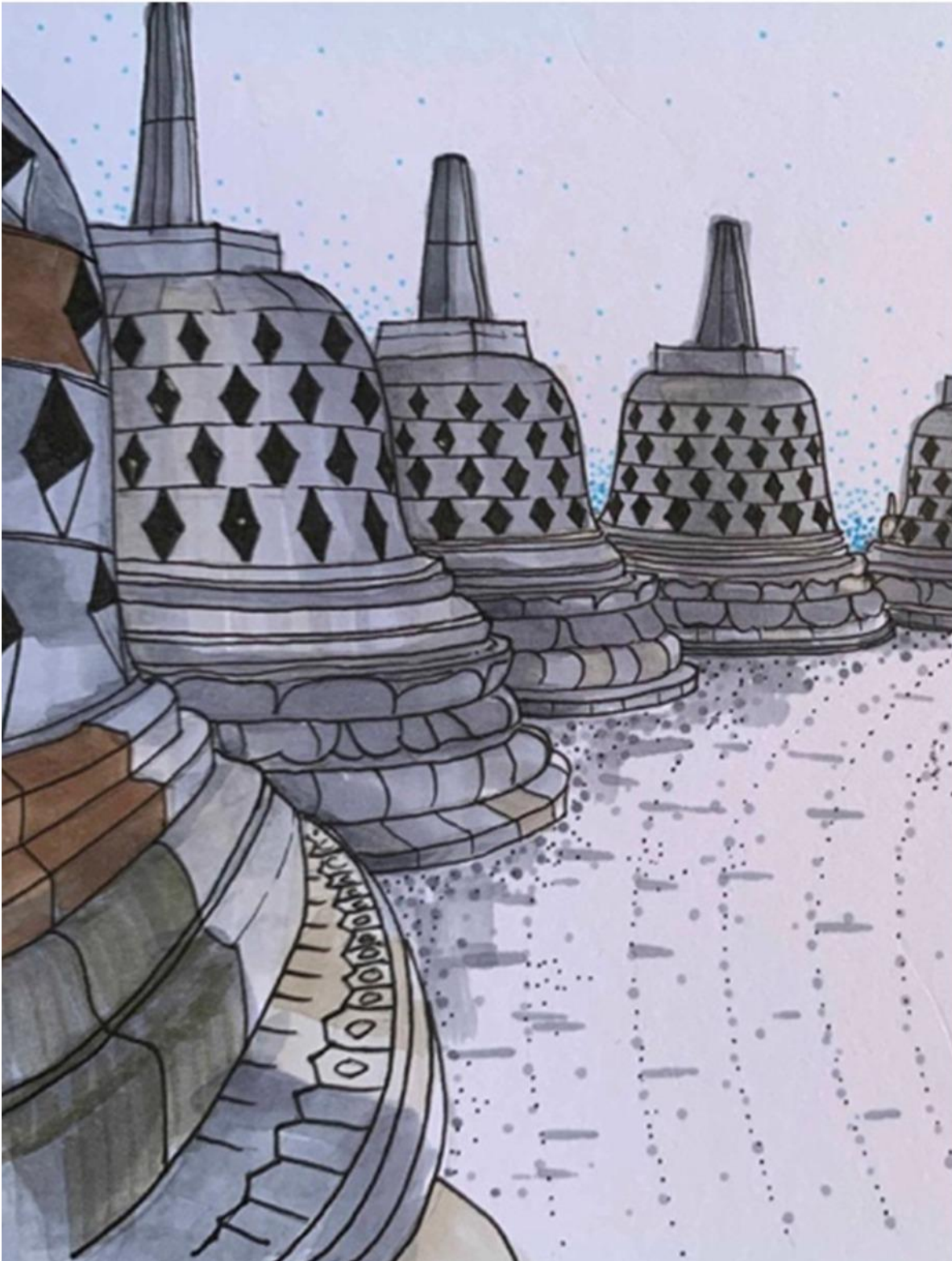




Buddhist & Pali College of Singapore Alumni (BPCA) - Quarterly E-Bulletin

Oct - Dec 2021



By Sis Kāñcanā Elaine Tan

In this Oct – Dec 2021 issue of the BPCA quarterly e-bulletin, we continue part 2 of 3 of the virtual tour to discover the amazing Buddhist art and architecture. They gave glimpses of how Buddhism flourished in different periods of time and how Dhamma was translated creatively and skillfully into art and architecture.

November and December 2021 were busy months for students of diploma and degree classes, as they prepared and sat for the examinations. We also successfully conducted the much-awaited Certificate in Buddhist Counselling course. The course covered elementary knowledge of counselling principles of Buddhist psychology and their applicability and practicality in resolving psychological problems in day-to-day life. Check out the course feedback from course attendees in this e-bulletin.

Please reach out to the editorial team if you would like to share your inspiring stories, insights on putting Dhamma into daily practice or give any feedback or suggestions via email to Sister Tyy Yn at tyyynquek@gmail.com.

With 2021 coming to an end, let's welcome 2022 and may all be well, happy and peaceful!

The Editorial Team

The Arts of Borobudur

By Brother Dhammaruci Low



BOROBUDUR, YOGYAKARTA, INDONESIA
WORLD'S LARGEST BUDDHIST MONUMENT
UNESCO World Heritage Site

Borobudur was built as a Mahayana Buddhist temple in the 8th to 9th century CE during the Sailendra Dynasty.

There are numerous meanings for Borobudur. Most candi (stupa) are named after a nearby village. If it followed the Javanese language conventions, Borobudur was named after the nearby village of Bore. The second component of the name, Budur, came from the Javanese term “bhudhara” which means a hill. Therefore, Borobudur could mean a hill near Bore. Some scholars however, interpreted Borobudur from its romanized Javanese pronunciation as “Barabudur”, which in Sanskrit is Vihara Buddha-Uhr. In this interpretation, Borobudur is known as a "Vihara of Buddha located on a Hill".



Source: <https://image.shutterstock.com/image-photo/borobudur-temple-aerial-view-central-260nw-1802295418.jpg>

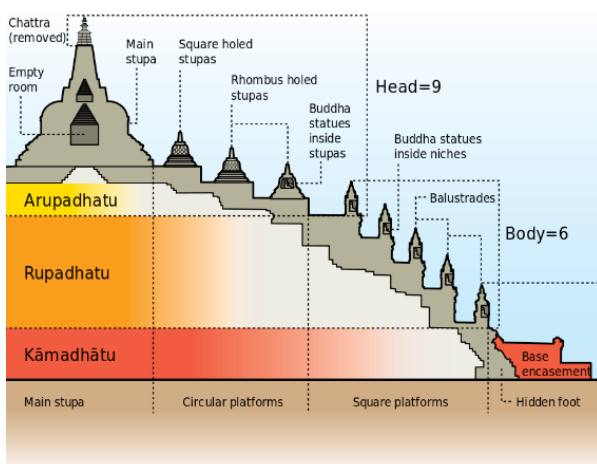


■ Kāmadhātu ■ Rūpadhātu ■ Arūpadhātu

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Borobudur_Mandala.svg

- It was built as a single large stupa. When viewed from the above, it took the form of a giant tantric Buddhist mandala. It also represented the Buddhist cosmology and the nature of mind which is divided into Sphere of Desire (Kamadhatu), Sphere of Form (Rupadhatu) and Sphere of Formless (Arupadhatu).
- The centre stupa represents the final goal of achieving liberation and out of samsara. There are 9 stacked platforms; 6 squares and 3 circulars, decorated with 2,672 relief panels and 504 Buddha statues.

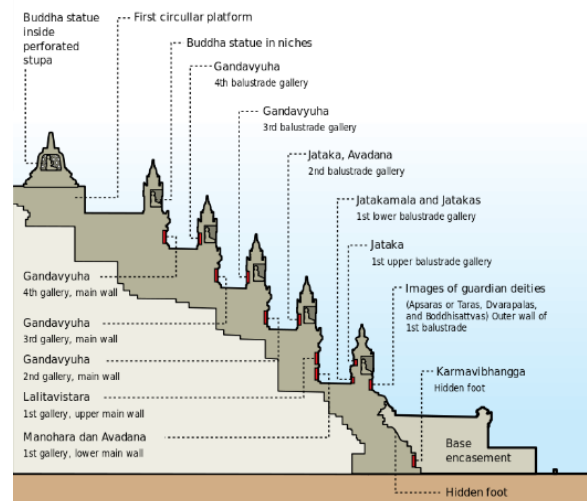
Borobudur Cross Section and Building Ratio
Borobudur, Central Java, Indonesia



Half cross-section with 4:6:9 height ratio for foot, body and head, respectively

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Borobudur#/media/File:Borobudur_Cross_Section_en.svg
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Borobudur#/media/File:Borobudur_Reliefs_Position_en.svg

Position of Narrative Reliefs Stories in Borobudur
Borobudur, Central Java, Indonesia



The position of narrative bas-reliefs stories on Borobudur wall

- It is topped by a central dome, surrounded by 72 Buddha statues, each seated inside a perforated stupa.



Editor's Notes:

- *The sculptures in the temple relate to the philosophical and spiritual foundations of Buddhism. The relief sculptures narrate the Buddha's teachings (the Dhamma), his past lives (Jataka stories) and stories taken from the important Buddhist suttas.*
- *The temple does not have actual spaces for worship. However, it has an extensive system of corridors and stairways for Buddhist ceremonies. The climb to the top of the temple represents the path an individual must take to reach enlightenment.*
- *Borobudur was abandoned from the 11th Century CE for about 800 years, till Sir Thomas Raffles, a British Lieutenant governor of Java rediscovered it in 1814. He realised that the temple was a remarkable grandeur of design. The ruins were then cleared and restoration works was carried out but on a small scale. Further restoration works were carried out by the Dutch between 1907 and 1911 and between 1973 and 1982.*

Buddhists' Attitude Towards Stupas

Mahāparinibbāṇa Sutta

27. "There are four persons, Ananda, who are worthy of a stupa. Who are those four? A Tathagata, an Arahant, a Fully Enlightened One, is worthy of a stupa; so also is a Paccekabuddha, and a disciple of a Tathagata, and a universal monarch.

28-31. "And why, Ananda, is a Tathagata, an Arahant, a Fully Enlightened One worthy of a stupa? Because, at the thought: 'This is the stupa of that Blessed One, Arahant, Fully Enlightened One!' the hearts of many people will be calmed and made happy; and so calmed and with their minds established in faith therein, at the breaking up of the body, after death, they will be reborn in a realm of heavenly happiness."



All stupas must be treated with respect as they are symbols of the Buddha. Many stupas contain the remains of prominent monks or people and some auspicious stupas have the relics of the Buddha in them.

When a person sees a stupa, his heart would be calmed and he is happy. He has faith in the Buddha and his teachings, and when he passes away, he would be reborn in a realm of heavenly happiness. A stupa in fact, is an object of veneration of the Buddhists.

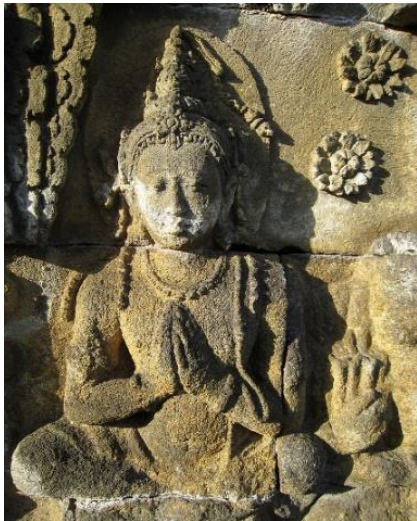
Arts found in Borobudur

- **Sculptures on the Wall**

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Borobudur#Reliefs>



Jatakas are stories about the Buddha before he was born as Prince Siddhartha e.g., as a king, an outcast, a god or an elephant. In whatever form, he exhibited some virtues that the tale thereby inculcates. For e.g., Jataka story of a giant turtle that saved drowned sailors.



Gandavyuha is the story told in the final chapter of the Avatamsaka Sutra about a young pilgrim, Sudhana's tireless wandering in search of the Highest Perfect Wisdom. He was finally instructed by Bodhisattva Manjusri to meet the monk Megasri, where he was given the first doctrine. As his journey continued, Sudhana met many teachers, including Bodhisattva Maitreya and then back to Bodhisattva Manjusri. Each teacher gave Sudhana a specific doctrine, knowledge and wisdom.



Lalitavistara (The story of Prince Siddhartha): Queen Maya riding a horse carriage where she gave birth to Prince Siddhartha Gautama at Lumbini.

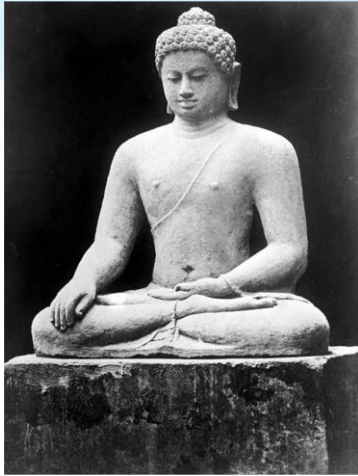


Lalitavistara: Great departure of Prince Siddhartha from the palace.

Arts found in Borobudur

• Buddha's Statues - Symbolic Meaning of Mudras

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/borobudur#buddha_statues



Mudra: Bhumisparsa mudra

Symbolic meaning:

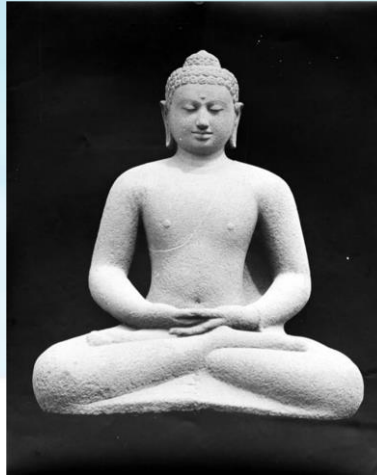
Calling the Earth to witness

Dhyani Buddha: Aksobhya

Cardinal Point: East

Location of the Statue:

Rupadhatu niches on the first four eastern balustrades



Mudra: Dhyana mudra

Symbolic meaning:

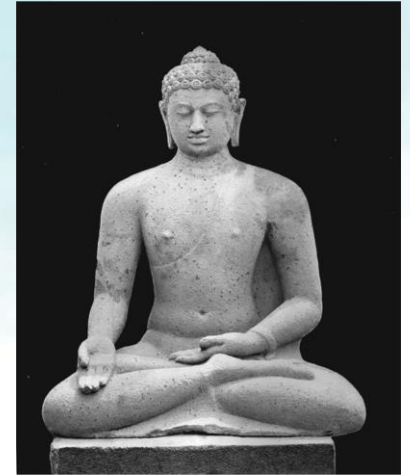
Concentration and meditation

Dhyani Buddha: Amitabha

Cardinal Point: West

Location of the Statue:

Rupadhatu niches on the first four western balustrades



Mudra: Vara mudra

Symbolic meaning:

Compassion, alms giving

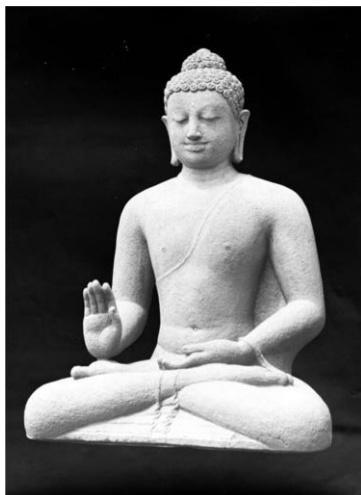
Dhyani Buddha:

Ratnasambhava

Cardinal Point: South

Location of the Statue:

Rupadhatu niches on the first four southern balustrades



Mudra: Abhaya mudra

Symbolic meaning:

Courage, fearlessness

Dhyani Buddha:

Amoghasiddhi

Cardinal Point: North

Location of the Statue:

Rupadhatu niches on the first four northern balustrades



Mudra: Dharmachakra mudra

Symbolic meaning:

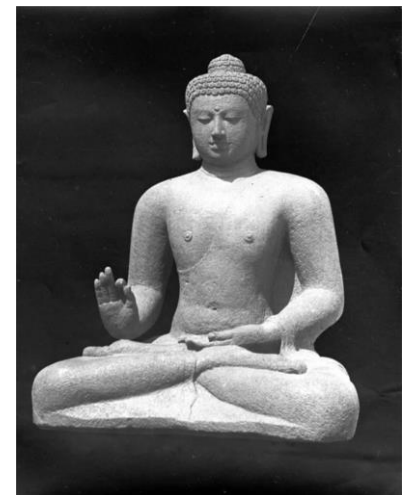
Turning the Wheel of dharma

Dhyani Buddha: Vairocana

Cardinal Point: Zenith

Location of the Statue:

Arupadhatu in 72 perforated stupas on three rounded platforms



Mudra: Vitarka mudra

Symbolic meaning:

Reasoning and virtue

Dhyani Buddha: Vairocana

Cardinal Point: Zenith

Location of the Statue:

Rupadhatu niches in all directions on the fifth (uppermost) balustrade



Painting of Cave 19, Ajanta, a 5th-century chaitya hall

By Brother Bryan Law

Ajanta Caves

By Sister Rosalind Lim

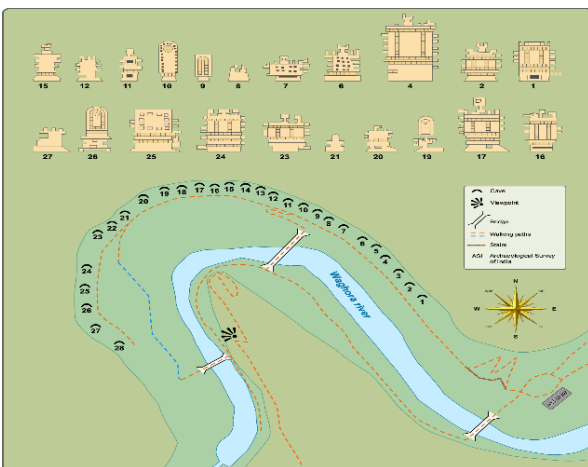
The Ajanta Caves complex is a horseshoe-shaped collection of rock-cut cave temples. The complex is situated in the Aurangabad district of Maharashtra state in India dating from the 2nd century BCE to about 6th century CE.



The Chinese pilgrim Xuan Zang who visited India in the 7th century CE, mentioned the caves in his travelog. The complex was discovered in 1819 by a British colonial officer, Captain John Smit, on a hunting trip. He first discovered Cave 10.

In 1983, the Ajanta Caves Complex became a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The Ajanta caves are in the rocky northern wall of the U-shaped gorge of the river Waghur, in the Deccan plateau of India. The caves were built in two phases: The first phase started from the 2nd century BCE to the 1st century CE while the second phase of the cave excavation took place in the 4th to 6th centuries CE.



There are about 29 caves on site. The caves are numbered as a form of identification and not by order of their construction. When certain caves were discovered later, such as cave 15A, a suffix would be assigned to the number.

Caves at Ajanta were either designed as Vihara (monasteries with residence halls), or Chaitya-grihas (prayer halls). Each cave has its own unique characteristics.

First Period Caves – Nos 8, 9, 10, 12, 13 & 15A

The features of this phase of the caves emphasised on the stupa structure rather than sculptures. Caves 9 and 10 functioned as prayer halls and caves 12, 13 and 15A were viharas where monks resided. During this phase, the Buddha was not shown in the human form but through symbols such as the Wheel, the Bodhi Tree and the Footprint of the Buddha.



Cave-9, a first-period prayer hall with stupa but no Buddha image. The cave is dominated by a chaitya window, originally ornamented with wooden lattice-works.



Cave-10, John Smith vandalized the vibrant painting of the Bodhisattva on the pillar with his name and date inscribed.

Second Period Caves - Nos 1-8, 11, 14-29

These caves were built during the 4th and 6th centuries, influenced by Mahayana Buddhism. They are homes to stunning sculptures and paintings.



Cave-1 is a magnificently painted Vihara (monastery), filled with wall murals, sculptures and ceiling paintings. The most famous of the nine surviving images is the image of Bodhisattva Padmapani ("one who holds the lotus").



Cave-26 has a big hall with ribbed ceiling and a stupa at one end. The surrounding walls have fine sculptures, including a Buddha sculpture.

Editor's Notes:

The Ajanta caves provided a sanctuary for the Buddhist monks. During the rainy season, the monks spent their time at these caves as they would not travel during this period of the year. While staying in the caves, the monks put their creative minds and time to use and painted the walls of the caves.

The caves have extensive sculptures and paintings although not all of them were done by the monks. These arts portrayed scenes of Buddha's past lives (the Jataka), his birth, life activities and Mahāparinibbāna. There were also many stories taken from the suttas which provide educational value on morality and practices that would lead to the attainment of Nibbāna.



<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/242/>

Themes of Buddhist Painting

By Brother Andy Foo

I am always amazed by Buddhist paintings. Sometimes, these paintings brought me back to the ancient world, peeking into the life of Buddha. Other times, these paintings brought a sense of calmness and peace to me.

When I was in my 3rd year of BA studies, during the subject of Buddhist Art, teacher Sister Jean encouraged us to do research on Buddhist Art topics. I chose the topic of Buddhist Paintings as I wanted to find out more about this Buddhist form of art such as the common themes of Buddhist paintings and the messages these paintings are trying to convey.

For my research, I went to the library and Internet to search for relevant materials and found that the following are the common themes in Buddhist paintings:

- Buddha, the teacher
- Life of Buddha such as his birth, renunciation, “turning of the Wheel”, his Mahāparinibbāna etc.
- Jataka stories (stories about his past lives)
- Symbols that represent Buddha’s teachings such as the Bodhi tree and lotus
- Bodhisattvas
- Monastic life such as monks with umbrellas on alms rounds
- Portrait of well-known monks
- Paintings also vary in different cultures in Thailand, Sri Lanka, Tibetan, China and Japan.



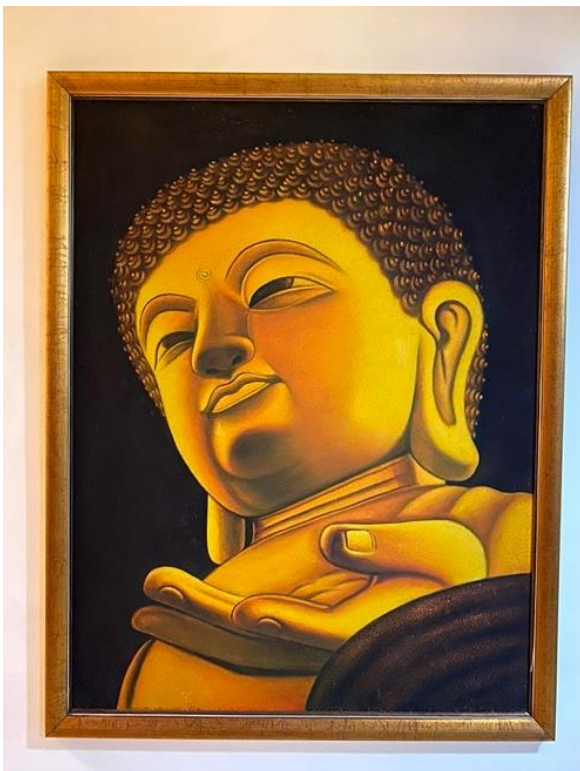
Indian painting of Vajrapani Bodhisattva from the Ajanta Caves

The earliest Buddhism paintings could be traced to those in Ajanta Caves in India and Dunhuang Caves in China. Some of these paintings served as an aspiration for practitioners while others served to inform the illiterate about Buddhist beliefs and stories of the early days.

I also came across a number of Buddhist paintings that focused on the life of Buddha. Some portray his quest for enlightenment (such as his renunciation, life as an ascetic, his conquering of evils during meditation), his attainment of Buddhahood, his delivery of sermons and his Mahāparinibbāna. I also found other paintings focusing on various Bodhisattvas, such as Avalokiteshvara and Manjusri, and other well-known monks such as Bodhidharma and XuanZhang.

Another aspect of Buddhist paintings is the cultural influence. We can see the different traditions in such paintings. For example, in Thai paintings where their most frequent themes are illustrations of the Jataka tales. Such paintings reflect a blend of Thai folklore, culture and traditional Buddhist iconography. Tibetan paintings followed certain painting guidelines from the Vajrayana tradition.

With the above motivation, I examined further and appreciated the Buddhist paintings that I have collected. The following are some of them which I had shared during a presentation in class:



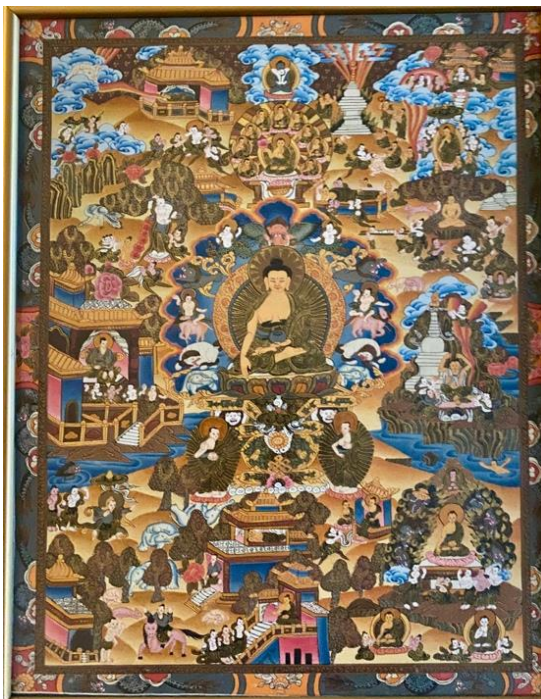
A painting which I bought from Hong Kong. It is a typical Chinese painting showing the Buddha with “curly hair”. Some people refer to these curly hairs as 108 snails on Buddha’s head. There is an Usha (Unna in Pali, Bai Hao in Chinese) on Buddha’s forehead and he has long ear lobes. His hand is extending out and he is looking at a distance. It is like Buddha is using his divine eyes to scan the worlds and extending his compassion to all suffering beings.



A Hand-painted Thangka of the 4-arms **Chenrezig Bodhisattva** which I bought from a Singapore shop. This painting was done on a paper attached to a cloth.

Chenrezig is also known as *Avalokitesvara*, “One who looks with unwavering eye,” and is the most revered of all Bodhisattvas, embodying the compassion of all Buddhas.

Artists usually draw the outline of the object (e.g. a Bodhisattva) in pencil and then slowly add the colour onto the drawing of the Thangka. The Tibetan Buddhist practitioners sometimes use the Thangka for prayer while they are on the move.



A Nepalese hand painting bought from Kathmandu, Nepal in 2008.

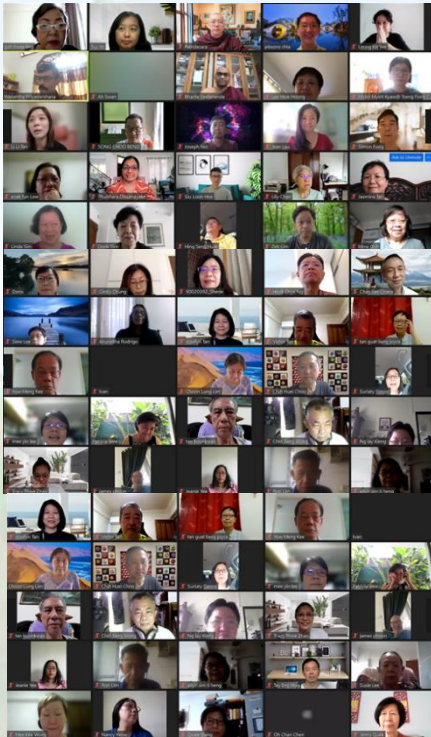
It displayed the artist's view of the Life of Buddha in Vajrayāna style. If we look closer, the painting seems to be alive, telling us the life of Buddha. The painting showed Siddhattha Gotama cutting his hair during renunciation, meditating under the Bodhi tree, attaining Enlightenment and giving sermons. Tibetan paintings are usually in very bright colours. The popular colours used are yellow, gold and green.

To me, Buddhist paintings serve as inspirations for Buddhists, have a purpose of spreading Buddha dhamma, provide a pictorial insight of monastic life and Buddhist cosmology.



Certificate Course in Buddhist Counselling

*By Prof. Wasantha Priyadarshana
University of Kelaniya*



19 November – 12 December 2021

Course Feedback



"The course introduces us to many interesting suttas in this field. The course draws from the fundamentals and core teachings of Buddha's dharma. It is joyful listening to Prof covering these contents and reading of sutta passages by Sister assisting Prof."

Anonymous

"It reaffirms my belief that the Buddha's teachings can be used to build psychological resilience and to treat mental issues achieving long term resolution!"

Sis Jean Lau

"Very comprehensive and insightful course!"

Sis Ailyn Sim

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

Tentative Venue

To be held in Mangala Vihara
and via Zoom

Total Fees

Total Fees:

SGD\$2000

this includes:

- Registration fee (BPU)
- Exam Fee (BPU)
- Maintenance Fee (MV)

Tentative Term and Exams Dates

Class Term:

9 Jan 2022 to end Oct 2022

Exam Period:

First 2 weeks of Dec 2022

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 and approved by BPU & BPC)

To apply, please contact:

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

Upcoming Courses

Introduction to Buddhism Course

March 2022 (23rd Intake)

- * How much do you know about Buddhism?
- * Are you a knowledgeable Buddhist?
- * What is the essence of Buddhism?
- * Do you know how to practise Buddhism?



Course Details :

Course Date : 2nd March to 4th May 2022 (10 weeks)

Frequency : Every Wednesday 7.30pm to 9.30pm

Venue : Mangala Vihara Buddhist Temple
30 Jalan Eunus, S'pore 419495 (Opposite Eunus MRT)

Course Fees : By donation

Email : Intro2buddhismbpca@gmail.com

Tel : Sis. Lynn @ 8288 9888

Instructors : By experienced Dhamma Teachers

*Topics are covered in plain
and simple language and include:*



The Freedom of Inquiry in Buddhism, the Life of the Buddha, the 3 Characteristics of Existence, the 4 Noble Truths and the Noble 8 Fold Path, Rebirth and Kamma, the Buddhist Texts, How to Practise Buddhism, the Different Buddhist Traditions, the Meaning of Common Buddhist Rituals and Chanting, Buddhist Meditation.

Organized by the Buddhist & Pali College of Singapore

Current School Activities

- **Buddhist and Pali College Courses**

- 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)

- Commencement date of degree classes:
9th Jan 2022 (Sunday)

Upcoming Activities

- **Master of Arts in Buddhist Studies**

Course Date: 9th Jan 2022 to 31st Oct 2022 (*tentative*)

- **Introduction to Buddhism (in English)**

Course Date: 2nd Mar 2022 to 4th May 2022

For more information, please contact:

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