

Buddhist Studies Lecture Series

The School of Languages and Cultures, University of Sydney, is honoured to host

Dr PETER SKILLING (Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient, Bangkok & Paris) the first University Buddhist Education Foundation (UBEF) Visiting Professor.

Peter Skilling is a Canadian citizen (born 1949). He has been a resident of Thailand for 30 years. He received a PhD with honours and a Habilitation in Paris (Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes). His main field of research is the archaeology, history, and literature of Buddhism in South and Southeast Asia. Other interests include the early history of Mahāyāna Buddhism, the Pali literature of Southeast Asia, and the history of the Buddhist order of nuns. He has travelled extensively in South and Southeast Asia, and been a visiting professor at Harvard University (2000), Oxford University (2002), and the University of California at Berkeley (2005). At present he is Maître de Conférences with the École française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO) and Head of the Buddhist Studies Group of the EFEO. He is also a special lecturer at Chulalongkorn University (Bangkok).

Skilling's publications include numerous articles and several books, the most recent being *Mahāsūtras: Great Discourses of the Buddha* (2 vols., Oxford, The Pali Text Society, 1994 and 1997) and the edited volume *Wat Si Chum, Sukhothai: Art, Architecture and Inscriptions* (River Books, Bangkok, 2008).

SYDNEY IDEAS

Tuesday 7 April, 6.30pm

Seymour Theatre Centre, University of Sydney

Did the Buddha invent Asia?

Buddhism, Buddhists, and the 'very idea' of Asia

The Buddha was born in a small kingdom in the foothills of the Himalayas over two thousand years ago. Within five hundred years of his death, his teaching has spread far beyond the confines of India, and were beginning to find a foothold in China and the Far East. At its height Buddhism flourished across much of Asia. Buddhist monks and nuns established networks of intellectual exchange that for centuries linked Asian societies, inspiring literature and philosophy, art and architecture, and social and ritual practice and affecting conceptions of time, cosmology, and governance.

How did the teaching of one man influence Asia so profoundly? What was the role of Buddhism in the geography of ideas in the pre-modern period? What were the unifying principles or ideologies that brought distant cultures into close relation? The fascinating diversity of Buddhism and its dynamic cultural transformations lead us to examine the role played by Buddhism in the construction and imagination of an interactive trans-regionalism. Was Buddhism in Asia the vanguard of globalisation?

FREE to staff and students of the University of Sydney (ID required)

www.usyd.edu.au/sydney_ideas/lectures/2009/did_buddha_invent_asia.shtml

AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR ASIAN ART & ARCHAEOLOGY (ACAAA) SEMINAR AND PUBLIC LECTURE

(In association with the University of Sydney Buddhist Studies program)

Tuesday 21 April, 5.00–6.30pm

The Refectory, Main Quadrangle, University of Sydney

(Access down stairway near Faculty of Arts Office, south-western corner of the Quad, below MacLaurin Hall)

Map: <http://db.auth.usyd.edu.au/directories/map/building.stm?ref=D15H22>

The Enigma of Si Thep

One of the extraordinary ancient sites of Thailand is Si Thep, a large moated and fortified city in a commanding position in the Pasak River valley. A major polity in which Buddhism and Brahmanism flourished, it developed its own style and produced outstanding images which today count among some of Thailand's – and Southeast Asia's – masterpieces. Recent excavations (2008) uncovered an immense laterite stupa, one of the largest in Thailand. Despite the early discovery of several inscriptions, we know little if anything about Si Thep's political development, its dynasties, or its relations with other states in the region and beyond. We do not even know its ancient name. This is the enigma of Si Thep – a civilization with a face (and a remarkable face at that) but without a name.

Background Reading:

Peter Skilling, 'L'énigme de Si Thep' In Pierre Baptiste et Thierry Zéphir (ed.), *Dvaravati – aux sources du bouddhisme en Thaïlande*, Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux/Établissement public du musée des Arts asiatiques Guimet, 2009, pp. 117–125.

Peter Skilling, 'A Recently Discovered Sūrya Image from Thailand' In Gerd J.R. Mevissen and Arundhati Banerji (ed.), *Prajñādhara: Essays on Asian Art, History, Epigraphy and Culture in Honour of Gouriswar Bhattacharya*, New Delhi: Kaveri Books, 2009, pp. 455–465 and pls. 46.1–10.

AUSTRALASIAN ASSOCIATION OF BUDDHIST STUDIES

Friday 29th May, 6.00–7.30pm

Rodgers Room, Woolley Building, University of Sydney

Title TBA

<http://www.buddhiststudies.org.au/seminars.htm>

FRIDAY LECTURE SERIES

Fridays 10.00–11.30am (lecture 7: Tuesday 26th May)
Lecture Room 209, RC Mills Building, University of Sydney

In this series of eight lectures, Dr Peter Skilling will deal with aspects of Indian Buddhism: scriptures, writing, councils, schools, Mahāyāna, and narrative literature. For further details and a reading list, please go to:

www.arts.usyd.edu.au/departs/indian/news/index.shtml

Friday 3rd April	A transformed field: What's new in Buddhist studies.
Friday 24th April	Recitation, writing, transmission: Scriptures and text.
Friday 1st May	Problems with numbers: Eighteen schools, three vehicles, one vehicle.
Friday 8th May	The power of narrative (1): Jātakas and Avadānas in ideology, literature, and art. Jātakas 12 (Nigrodhamiga), 22 (Kukkura), and 545 Vidhura (Cowell ed. Vol. VI, 126–156).
Friday 15th May	The power of narrative (2): Jātakas and Avadānas in ideology, literature, and art. Divyāvadāna 7 (Nagarāvalambikā-avadāna).
Friday 22nd May	The power of narrative (3): Jātakas and Avadānas, Bodhisattvas and Buddhas.
Tuesday 26th May	Bhāviveka's defence of Mahāyāna. (NB Changed Venue: Education Seminar Room 419)
Friday 29th May	Concluding Session

READING PALI INSCRIPTIONS OF THAILAND

Tuesdays 10.00–11.30am

(1) 28th April; (2) 5th May; (3) 12th May; (4) 19th May
Seminar Room 452, Education Building, University of Sydney

A series of four workshops on the inscriptions of Thailand. A basic knowledge of Pali and Sanskrit is assumed. Students will need to prepare themselves by learning basic 'Pallava' script as well as (ideally, but not absolutely) the modern Thai script as used for Pali. For these materials, contact:

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