

***Monks, Texts, and Relics:
Towards a Connected History of 2nd-millennium Buddhisms in Southern Asia***

In the first half of the 2nd millennium, the southern Asian region we now know as Sri Lanka, peninsular India, Burma, Thailand, and the Malay Peninsula came to be bound together more tightly through changing regimes of seaborne trade that affected linked maritime and riverine networks. This tighter integration within the Bay of Bengal-Gulf of Siam arena had substantial implications for the Buddhist worlds of what we now call South and Southeast Asia. *Monks, Texts, and Relics: Towards a Connected History of 2nd-millennium Buddhisms in Southern Asia* is a project that develops several linked areas of research in order to deepen our understanding of the relationships that obtained between Buddhist monks, monastic centers, and royal patrons across this region.

One aspect of the project is an investigation of changing trade practices and political formations that reshaped areas of Buddhist activity within the maritime/riverine sphere of the Indian Ocean. The rise of new states, and competition between mainland Southeast Asian Buddhist polities supportive of Buddhist institutions, affected Buddhist mobility in the region. In addition, the project attends to the increasing overlap between Buddhist and Islamic circuits during this time. At least in Lañkā, Buddhists and Muslims shared ritual space. Moreover, it appears that in the second half of this period Buddhists traveled along a maritime network largely controlled by Muslim merchants.

Another dimension of the project is a combination of solo and collaborative work undertaken to identify Buddhist lineage texts and *sāsana* (“Buddhist world”) histories that make reference to the movement of Buddhist monks within this region, to date such texts as securely as possible, and to explore the role played by references to non-local Buddhist locations in these works. What role did places like Anuradhapura, Pollonaruva, Cola country, Kotte, Pagan, Sukhothai, Chiang Mai, Mottama, and Pegu play in the textualized Buddhist memory of their counterparts? How were references to trans-regional Buddhist movement and influence drawn into locally produced, historically voiced, arguments for and against specific Buddhist lineages and institutions?

In addition, the project aims to spur collaborative work on published and unpublished inscriptions related to Buddhist institutions in the region. Since lineage texts and *sāsana* histories may post-date the events they describe, and are written with polemical intent, or at least from distinctive social and authorial vantage points, they cannot be our sole resource for the historical reconstruction of Buddhist monastic travels and networks. Inscriptions, while sometimes also rhetorical and performative, can often be dated more securely than these other textual materials. Moreover, they sometimes contain brief and casual references to monastic mobility that provide a valuable counterpoint to the more stylized content of Buddhist lineage texts and *sāsana* histories.

Monks, Texts, and Relics: Towards a Connected History of 2nd-millennium Buddhisms in Southern Asia is expected to reach publication in several forms, through my own single-author publications and in collaborative research and writing.