Amaravati: The Art of an Early Buddhist Monument in Context

Edited by Akira Shimada and Michael Willis

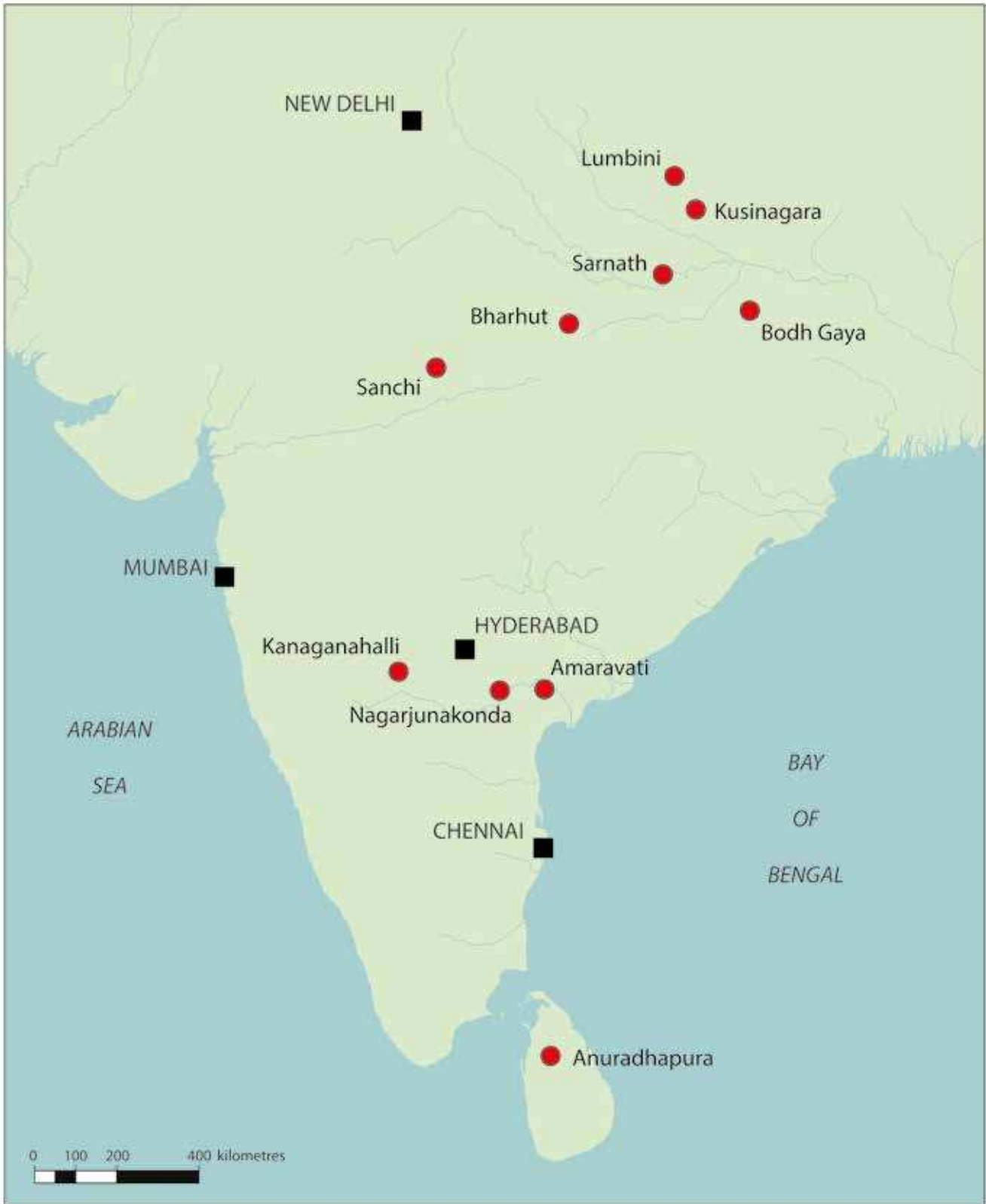**Figure 1 Map of early Buddhist sites in the Indian subcontinent (red circle: Buddhist site; black square: modern city)**

Introduction
Discovery of the Amaravati *Stūpa*: Early Excavations and Interpretations[1]

Akira Shimada

Between approximately the 2nd century BCE and the 3rd century CE, Buddhism burgeoned in the coastal area of south-east India, the part of the country that was traditionally known as Andhra (**Figs 1–2**). Among the more than one hundred Buddhist sites and remains in this region, particularly in the lower Krishna River valley, the great *stūpa* (a hemispherical monument enshrining relics) at Amaravati (ancient Dhāñyakaṭaka) is undoubtedly the most outstanding (**Fig. 3**). Since its discovery at the end of the 18th century the *stūpa* site has yielded numerous sculptures and votive inscriptions, which constitute the richest sculptural and epigraphic corpus of Andhran Buddhism. As indicated by Sri Lankan and Thai inscriptions that mention Dhāñyakaṭaka (Paranavitana 1935: 97; Chirapravati 2008: 20–1) as well as a Tibetan account of Dhāñyakaṭaka as an esoteric Buddhist centre (Lama Chimpa and Chattopadhyaya 1990: 107, 192, 209, 345, 440), Amaravati/ Dhāñyakaṭaka was known as an important Buddhist centre as late as the 14th century, even though many Andhran Buddhist monasteries had entered a period of decline after the 3rd–4th centuries CE. The excavated sculptures that decorated the *stūpa* are masterpieces of early Indian Buddhist art, and are exhibited in several museums in India, Europe and the USA.

Despite its great reputation as an early Buddhist centre and place of art production, however, Amaravati is an enigmatic site with many unanswered questions about its foundation, development and decline – a situation largely caused by the destruction of the *stūpa* by early excavations. Why and how was the *stūpa* dismembered despite the British effort to understand the monument? What kind of problems did Indian archaeological monuments encounter in the colonial

Figure 2 Map of early Buddhist sites in the Andhra region (red circle: Buddhist site; black square: modern city)

Figure 3 The Amaravati *stūpa* from the east, 2011

era? How has scholarship, both early and recent, addressed these problems? This introductory chapter will examine these questions by investigating the research history of the Amaravati *stūpa* and Andhran Buddhist material culture.

Discovery and dismemberment of the *stūpa*

As discussed in previous publications (Singh 2001; Howes 2002; 2009; Shimada 2013), early surveys of the Amaravati *stūpa* between the end of the 18th century and the end of the 19th century were beset by much confusion and many problems. The discovery of the *stūpa* was made around 1797 by Raja Vesireddy Nayudu, a local landlord who had decided to move his residence to Amaravati because of the East India Company's annexation of Guntur District (Mackenzie 1807: 273). In the process of searching for building materials to renovate Amaravati town as his new capital, Nayudu and his subjects came across the *stūpa* mound, which had been covered with soil. Numerous bricks and stone pillars were found inside the mound, and Nayudu used them for his building projects. The Madras government, having heard about the discovery of a mysterious mound, sent Colonel Colin Mackenzie, a military engineer and surveyor, to Amaravati in 1798.[2] He made a brief observation of the site and the excavated sculptures, but did not (or could not) stop the project of the powerful *zamindar*. When Mackenzie came back to Amaravati in 1816 as the Surveyor General, the dome of the *stūpa* had been destroyed and the centre of the mound turned into a reservoir, as yet unfinished (**Fig. 4**) (Mackenzie 1823: 465). On this second visit, however, Mackenzie and his team conducted an intensive survey of the *stūpa*, working until the end of 1817, and made detailed drawings of the excavated sculptures.[3] They also removed a considerable number of

sculptures from the site and sent them to Masulipatan, Calcutta, Madras and London (Taylor 1856: 36; Sewell 1880: 13). Although there are no good records of the final destinations of these pieces, some of those sent to Calcutta formed part of the collection of the Asiatic Society of Bengal and the Indian Museum (Anderson 1883: I, 195–7). Pieces sent to Masulipatan in coastal Andhra were used to embellish a monument built by Francis W. Robertson, the Head Assistant to the Collector at Masulipatan. As one of Mackenzie's drawings records a plan of Robertson's monument, one of the purposes of the 1816–17 survey may have been to find sculptures for the monument (Howes 2002: 59–61). Pieces shipped to London via Calcutta and Madras seem to have gone either to East India House in Leadenhall Street (Wilson 1841: 33) or to private individuals. A drum frieze purchased by the British Museum in 1860, for example, was probably sent to private individuals, as the sculpture was found lying in the backyard for a barber's in Great Marlborough Street near the museum (**Fig. 5**) (Fergusson 1868: 205, n. 1).

This kind of archaeological survey, tinged by the antiquarian interests of various surveyors and officials, continued at Amaravati after Mackenzie. In 1845 Walter Elliot, a civil servant who had a wide interest in South Indian languages, flora and fauna, coins and antiquities, excavated the *stūpa* and collected a large number of sculptures during a mission that lasted for a few months (Elliot 1872: 346). Since the excavation took place in the year when he was appointed Commissioner of Guntur and that he expressed a wish to present the pieces to the Court of Directors of the East India Company (Taylor 1856: 30), we may assume that one reason for his excavation may have been to find a gift for the top executives of the Company Raj.

PLATE I

(Description of this Plan, given above it, by Colonel Mackenzie,)

"Sketch of Deepauldinna
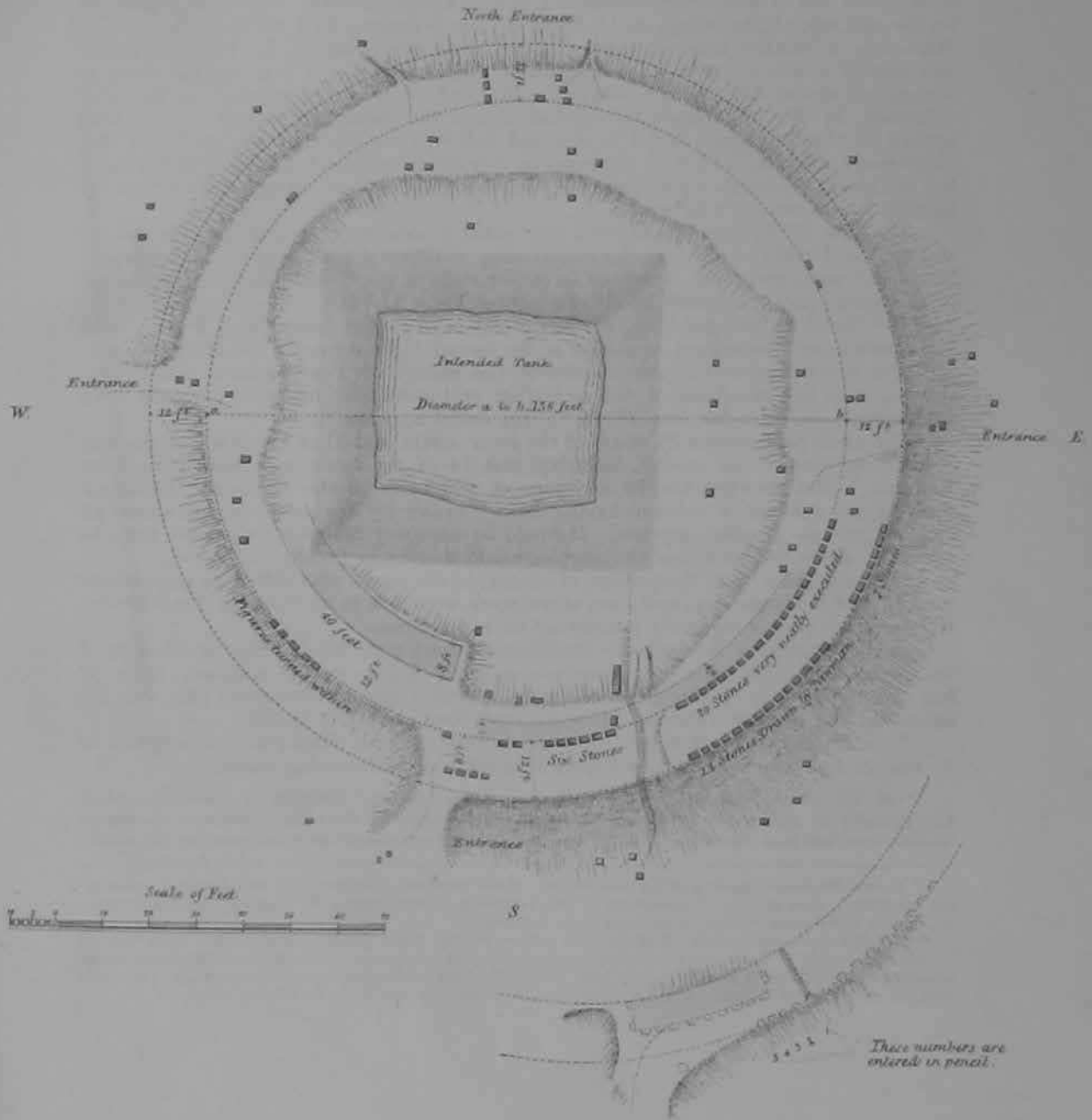at AMRAWUTTY
in its present state,
March 1816."

Figure 4 The Amaravati *stūpa* observed by Colin Mackenzie in March 1817 (after Sewell 1880: pl. 1)
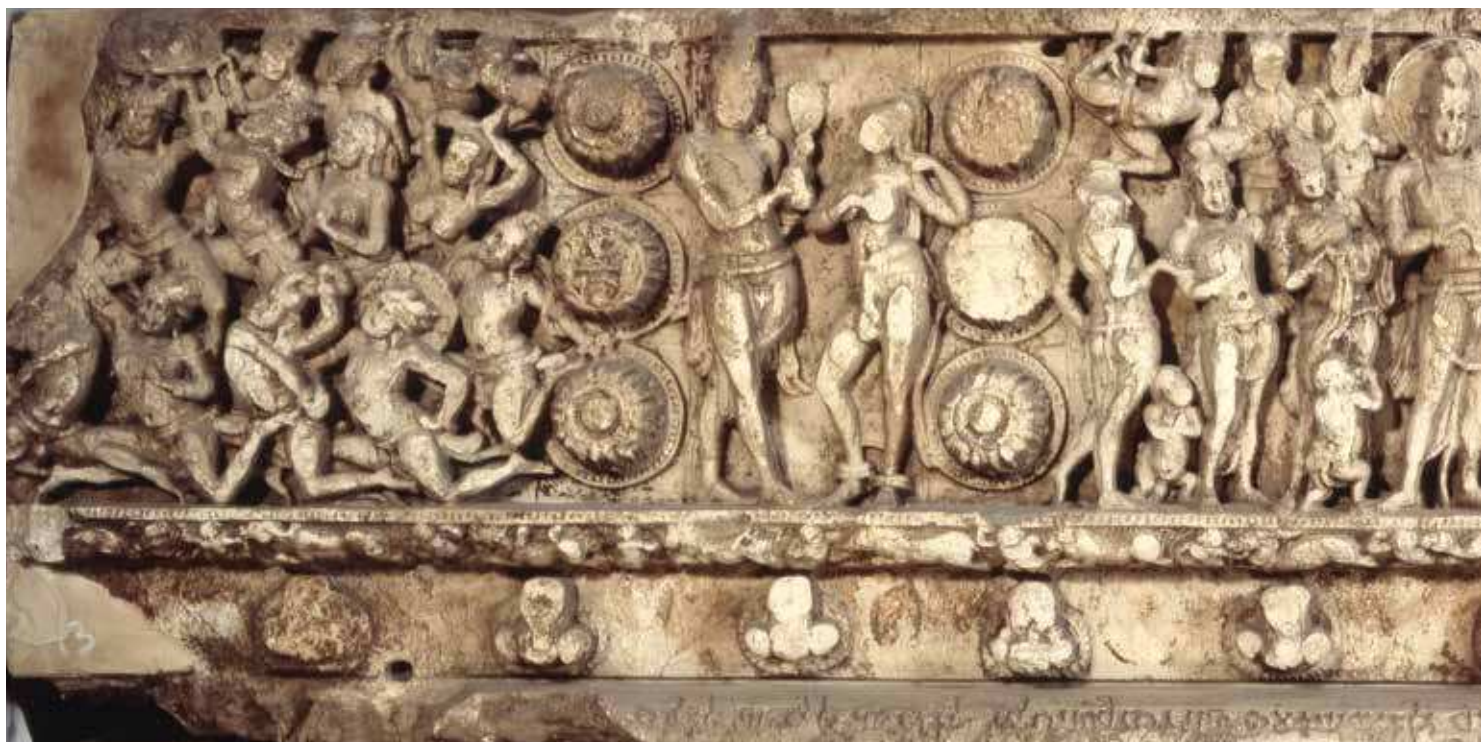
Figure 5 Drum frieze, Amaravati, *c.* 3rd century CE, British Museum, 1880,0709.77

Despite this, the pieces were abandoned for a long time in the Old College at Fort St George in Madras. When drawings of the sculptures were made in 1854 'to enable the Honorable Court to decide whether the marbles are worthy of transmission to England or not', two of the 79 sculptures collected by Elliot (ibid.: nos 63 and 85) had been lost.[4] This incident seems to have alarmed the Madras government, as it was around this time that they decided to assemble the Amaravati sculptures in the newly opened Madras Central Museum. When the Revd William Taylor compiled a list of the Amaravati sculptures in the museum in 1856, the pieces at the Old College had been moved to the museum (ibid.: 6). The government had also successfully acquired 37 sculptures that had embellished Robertson's monument and sent them to the museum (Sewell 1880: 21; Howes 2002: 61). When Linnaeus Tripe, official photographer to the Madras government, took the first photographs of the Amaravati sculptures in Madras in 1858, six more pieces (Tripe 1859: nos 130/135, 131/134, 132/133, 136/137, 138/139, 140/141) had been added to the museum either from Masulipatan or Amaravati (Howes 2009: 25). These sculptures, 120 pieces in total, were shipped to London in 1859.

Unfortunately, the sculptures arrived in London at an inopportune time. After the abolition of the East India Company as a result of the Indian Rebellion in 1857, the India Museum, attached to East India House, which kept Mackenzie's Amaravati collection, was closed.[5] Until it reopened temporarily in 1861 at Fife House, Whitehall, under the administration of the Secretary of State for India, there was no space to accommodate the sculptures. For a year after their arrival in 1860, therefore, the Amaravati sculptures stayed at Beale's Wharf in Southwark before they were transported to Fife House. Even then, as the museum could not exhibit such a large number of sculptures, they were stored in the attached coach house, and a few pieces

were exhibited outside. By the time James Fergusson rediscovered the pieces in January 1867 (Fergusson 1867: 135), the dust in the coach house and the polluted air of 19th-century London had seriously damaged them, especially the ones exhibited outside (BM nos 1880,0709.1, 1880,0709.93; Knox 1992: nos 8, 88). When the museum had to move again to smaller premises at the India Office in 1869, the Amaravati sculptures were sent to a storehouse in Lambeth (ibid.: 18) until the museum acquired new galleries at South Kensington in 1875. As this new India Museum lasted for only four years, the sculptures were transferred again in 1880 to the British Museum, where they at last found permanent residence. Again, however, their large numbers, monumental size and damaged condition meant that finding an appropriate space to exhibit the collection became a challenge, one which was not effectively solved until the opening in 1992 of the Asahi Shimbun gallery.

After Elliot's survey the *stūpa* went through another period of neglect until 1870, when J.A.C. Boswell, the Officiating Collector of the Krishna District, undertook an exploration of the ancient remains in the Krishna District and recommended a further survey of the Amaravati *stūpa* to the Madras government (Boswell 1871; Singh 2001: 25). To investigate the possibility of finding more sculptures and architectural remains, Robert Sewell, the Acting Head Assistant Collector of the Krishna District, undertook a test excavation at Amaravati in April 1877. In a one-week mission, his team excavated the north-west quadrant of the processional path and found a good number of sculptures, including a portion of *in situ* railing (Sewell 1880: nos 26–8; Knox 1992: fig. 16). To preserve the original context of the site, his team recorded the find-spot, shape and size of each sculpture without moving it. They also conducted a survey of loose sculptures surrounding the *stūpa* and found 89 pieces through excavation and exploration. Sewell's effort to study

the *stūpa* with no further destruction, however, was in vain. In February 1880, Richard Temple-Grenville, the Governor of Madras, visited Amaravati and ordered the immediate completion of the Amaravati excavation without waiting for the sanction of the Secretary of the State (Burgess 1882b: 3). Following the order, J.G. Horsfall, the Collector of the Krishna District, uncovered the entire passageway around the *stūpa* in about two weeks and numbered, photographed and drew the excavated sculptures (**Fig. 6**). The results of the excavation, according to Horsfall, were 'somewhat disappointing' (Horsfall 1880). Because of the lack of financial and professional support from the central government, the excavation focused exclusively on finding sculptures by hiring local labour. Owing to his lack of archaeological knowledge, Horsfall was not able to take any detailed notes on the excavated sculptures, inscriptions and other excavated objects. When the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) sent James Burgess to inspect the condition of Amaravati in December 1881, the *stūpa* had been turned into a circular area of ground with a scattering of sculptures. Seeing the highly disturbed condition of the site, Burgess decided to ship 175 fine pieces to Madras. This plan was suspended by H.H. Cole, who was appointed as the first Curator of Ancient Monuments in 1881. In an attempt to restore the monument Cole insisted that the sculptures should stay at the site and criticized Burgess, saying that he had 'ransacked the place' and 'monopolized the ground particularly important to my department' (Cole 1882a; 1882b). Burgess accused Cole of ignorance about the condition of the site, and even suggested that his real aim

Figure 6 The south gate of the Amaravati *stūpa* excavated by J.G. Horsfall, 1880
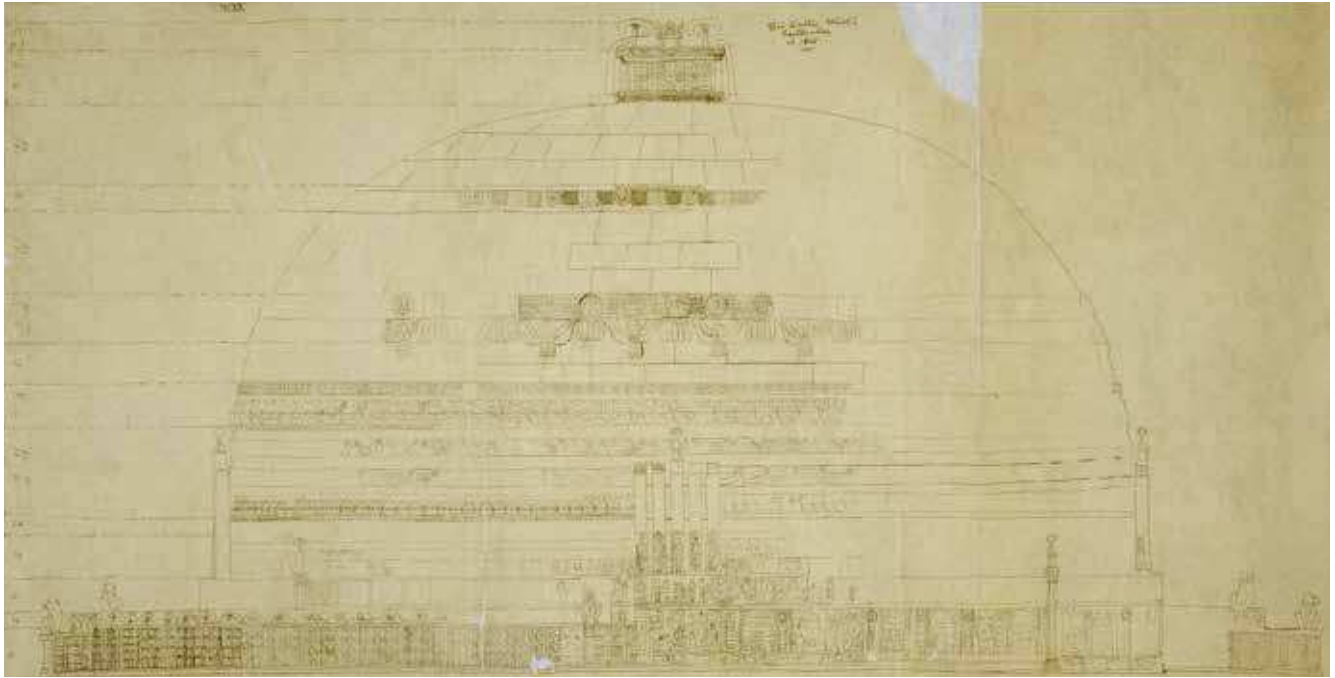
Figure 7 Reconstruction of the Amaravati *stūpa* by Walter Elliot, 1845 or after, British Museum, 1996,1007,0.3

was to deprive the ASI of the right to survey South Indian architecture (Burgess 1882a). Although this conflict was settled by the government's decision to move the sculptures from the site in 1883, it delayed the shipment of the sculpture for two years (Singh 2001: 32–7). After their arrival at Madras, the sculptures were stored at the museum for another two years. When the reliefs were finally installed in the museum gallery in 1886, they suffered again. Surgeon George Bidie, the Superintendent of the Museum, arranged the sculptures according to his own idea and embedded them in the concrete walls of the gallery (ibid.: 37). This infamous installation caused serious damage to the sculptures, although the Government Museum, Chennai has recently removed all the sculptures from the wall and placed them in the new Amaravati gallery.

After the destruction of the mound, the excavations at Amaravati continued in the hope of finding more sculpture and other monastic remains in the surroundings of the *stūpa*. In April 1888 and February 1889, Alexander Rea of the ASI excavated around the west, east and south gateways and found more than 200 pieces of sculpture and brick structures, particularly at the west side of the *stūpa*.[6] Between 1905–6 and 1908–9, Rea extended the scope of excavation to the surrounding area of the *stūpa* between the gates and the area to the north, and found further objects and structures, such as bronze Buddhas, a gold relic casket, granite rail pillars and votive *stūpa*s (Rea 1909; 1912). After India's independence, R. Subrahmanyam of the ASI excavated the surroundings of the *stūpa* in 1958–9, and uncovered the damaged portion of the original *stūpa* drum, four projections of the drum, and circumambulatory way of the despoiled *stūpa*. The excavation also found several objects that show extended activity at the *stūpa* between the 3rd–2nd century BCE and the 9th century CE (*IAR* 1958–9). In the latest surveys, in 1973–5, I.K. Sarma excavated underneath the former sculpture shed at the north-east of the *stūpa* and obtained stratigraphical data of the site (*IAR* 1973–4; 1974–5;

Sarma 1975; 1980a; 1985). As the largest part of the site had been heavily disturbed by early excavations, these recent excavations could not provide any conclusive answers about the detailed plan of the monastic complex as it would have existed at Amaravati or its chronological development.

The above history of the Amaravati excavations exemplifies the problems typically faced by Indian archaeological monuments in the 19th century. Early surveyors of archaeological monuments, such as Mackenzie, Elliot, Sewell and Horsfall, were military officers or civil servants with varying levels of skill and personal interest in Indian antiquaries. Even early professional archaeologists from the ASI, such as Cunningham and Burgess, developed their research discipline largely through their experience at the sites. Since there was no standard method for surveying and recording the sites, the quality of the surveys varied significantly with each surveyor. As the study of early Indian Buddhism and Buddhist art developed so little in the early 19th century, the early surveyors excavated the site with scant knowledge of the monuments and objects (Almond 1988: 7–32). Preserving the architectural remains was not their main interest, as the primary aim of the excavations was often to find treasures. This certainly seems to have been the basic attitude of the British India government in the early and mid 19th century because, despite the removal of a large number of sculptures by Nayudu, Mackenzie and Elliot, the government did not take any effective action to preserve the monument. In 1871, the Public Works Department of the government even destroyed an early *stūpa* at Gudivada to use the materials for road-making (Rea 1894: 18). The British India government started addressing this issue around the 1870s, as is manifested by the institutional foundation of the ASI (1871), its administrative expansion to the Madras Presidency (1881) and the appointment of the Curator of Ancient Monuments (1881). As described above, these institutions did not function well in their early stages and were not able to save Amaravati from destruction. The

Figure 8 Reconstruction of the Amaravati *stūpa* by James Fergusson, drawn before 1869, British Museum, 1996,1007,0.2

devastation of the Andhran Buddhist sites continued to be a major problem even in the 20th century, when Andhran Buddhist sculpture became the subject of interest among antiquarians and art dealers. While the ASI kept exploring and registering early Buddhist remains in Andhra for protection, their work could not catch up with the spread of treasure-hunting at many unprotected sites. Jouveau-Dubreuil's collecting of sculptures at Nagarjunakonda and other sites in the lower Krishna valley in the 1920s under the direction of an art dealer, C.T. Loo, is a famous example of these kinds of 'excavations' (Delatour 1996: 37; Kaimal 2012: 133–47). Sculptures obtained through such methods were sent to the European and US markets with no excavation data, labelled as Amaravati or 'Amaravati school' sculptures.

Studies of Amaravati

In spite of the disappearance of the monument itself, the Amaravati *stūpa* has been a major subject of academic research since the 19th century. As the late 19th and early 20th centuries were the foundation period of modern academic disciplines concerning the investigation of history and material culture, scholars of each discipline applied their methods to analyse excavated objects, particularly sculptures and inscriptions, in order to address a set of questions about the *stūpa*. Broadly speaking, these questions sought information on three topics: (1) the architectural features of the destroyed monument; (2) the contents of the narrative sculptures and inscriptions; (3) the chronology of the *stūpa* and the excavated artefacts.

Architectural reconstruction

Since the main structure of the *stūpa* had been destroyed before Mackenzie's survey in 1816–17, the original shape of the demolished monument was the immediate concern of early surveyors. The presence of Buddhism in ancient India was hardly recognized in the early 19th century, so they struggled to understand the religious affiliation of the monument. Colin Mackenzie, the first British surveyor of the *stūpa*, did not make any conclusive comments about the nature of the monument, while briefly noting its possible affiliation with a religion other than Hinduism and Jainism (Mackenzie 1807: 278; 1823: 469). Walter Elliot, according to his letters, started the excavation in 1845 with little idea about the character of the mound. During the course of the excavation, however, he noticed that the sculpture carved on drum slabs resembled that of Ceylonese *dagoba* (= *stūpa*) (Elliot 1871; Sewell 1880: 68). Based on this observation and the measurements of the slabs and mound, he made the first elevation plan of the monument (**Fig. 7**). He was, however, discouraged from publishing his elevation plan, since it did not get support from James Fergusson, an authority on the history of Indian architecture at that time (Elliot 1871). Indeed, Fergusson's first catalogue of the Amaravati sculpture in 1868 and his reconstruction plan, which is preserved in the British Museum, proposed a very different shape for the monument from that of Elliot (Fergusson 1868: 164) (**Fig. 8**). He assumed that the *stūpa* was relatively small and occupied the centre of the mound, being then surrounded by a monastic complex with *vihāra*s, a nine-

storeyed pagoda, a *caitya* hall and so forth. Although Sewell's 1880 report persuasively argued that the monument was a large single *stūpa* (Sewell 1880: 23–5), the debate about the detailed shape of the *stūpa* and the precise location of the excavated sculpture on the *stūpa* continued (Jouveau-Dubreuil 1932: 5–16; Brown 1942: 45–7; Barrett 1954a: 27–39; Knox 1992: 23–30; Kuwayama 1997: 148–9) and still remains one of the unsolved questions concerning Amaravati.

Content analysis of sculptures and inscriptions

Apart from the continuing discussions about the shape of the demolished *stūpa*, many academic researchers have developed minute analysis relating to the contents of the sculptures and the accompanying inscriptions. Initial efforts to read Amaravati inscriptions based on Mackenzie's drawings started immediately after the decipherment of Brahmi script by James Prinsep in 1837 (Prinsep 1837: 218–23; Sewell 1880: 63–6).[7] Fergusson's Amaravati catalogue includes Cunningham's tentative transliterations and translations of 20 inscriptions, although his readings suffered from the poor facsimiles of inscriptions that he used (Fergusson 1868: 238–40). More accurate readings appeared in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when professional epigraphists began publishing rigorous studies (Hultzsch 1883; 1886; Burgess 1887; Lüders 1912; Chanda 1925; Sivaramamurti 1942). With the continual discovery of new inscriptions after Independence, the total number of published Amaravati inscriptions has now reached more than 300 and is still growing (Ghosh and Sarkar 1967; Sarkar 1971; Sarma 1975; Ghosh 1979; Sarma 1980a). Since these epigraphic studies have been published in several different epigraphic journals and archaeological reports, however, it has become difficult to capture the entire picture. Even the latest comprehensive catalogue of Indian Buddhist inscriptions by Tsukamoto does not include a full list of the published Amaravati inscriptions (Tsukamoto 1996).

In terms of the identification of the narrative sculptures, the first attempt was made by Fergusson, although his interpretation of the sculpture is heavily tinged by his controversial theory of tree and serpent worship, the ancient Turanian cult he postulated as being widely spread among non-Semitic and non-Aryan races (Fergusson 1868). With the significant increase of knowledge of early Buddhist narrative texts, sculptures and paintings in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, his interpretation was fully revised by more objective and comprehensive analyses of the sculptures (Burgess 1887; Vogel 1926; Foucher 1928; Coomaraswamy 1928b; 1929; Linossier 1930; Kempers 1932; Ramachandran 1932). Sivaramamurti's catalogue, which tried to identify all the narrative sculptures in the Madras Museum collection, was the culmination of such scholarly efforts (Sivaramamurti 1942). Since the Amaravati narrative sculptures often include iconography that does not correspond with any surviving texts and artistic examples, their identification has had to be tentative in many cases. As rightly noted by Monika Zin (Chapter 4), the most reliable clues for identifying the reliefs are often the reliefs themselves.

Date and historical background of the *stūpa*

More warmly debated, compared to the consistent but relatively low-key discussions on the contents of inscriptions and narrative sculptures, and involving different fields of scholarship, has been the issue of the dating and nature of the cultural and political circumstances under which the *stūpa* was constructed with the attendant flowering of artistic production. To address this question, scholars have noted in particular two historical events of the early Deccan: first, the cultural interactions between Andhra and outside regions, particularly the western classical world; and, second, the rule of the Sātavāhana dynasty. As exemplified by Mackenzie's report praising the sculptures' 'correct' representation of the human figure, the use of perspective and their qualitative superiority to any ancient or modern Hindu art (Mackenzie 1823: 469), British officials and scholars were highly impressed with the Amaravati sculptures' naturalistic style and their affinity with western classical art. When subsequent archaeological and historical studies amply proved the flowering of Greco-Bactrian art in north-west India and Indo-Roman trade in the early centuries CE (Sewell 1904; Warmington 1928), such observations developed into a conviction that there was a connection between the Amaravati style and Greco-Roman art. The most explicit example of this line of interpretation is William Taylor's list of the Amaravati sculptures (Taylor 1856). He called the sculptures 'the Elliot Marbles', most likely to compare them with the Elgin Marbles in the British Museum. With the strong conviction that the Amaravati sculptures were made on the basis of a Greek model, he misinterpreted the accompanying Brahmi inscriptions as localized Greek letters and even published his translation! Unsurprisingly, the aesthetic value of Amaravati sculpture in Indian art was elevated by this theory. Fergusson, for instance, regarded the history of Indian architecture and sculpture as the process of artistic and moral decay from the purest prototype brought by Aryans (Mitter 1977: 263–8). However, he evaluated the Amaravati sculptures more highly than the earlier Buddhist sculpture at Bhārhut and Sānchī since they were produced under the influence of Greco-Bactrian art, which, in his opinion, temporarily arrested the process of decay of Indian art (Fergusson 1891: 34–5, 99). While such a eurocentric understanding of Indian sculpture became unpopular during the 20th century, serious scholarly efforts to seek a source for Amaravati style in western classical art, particularly in Roman art and architecture, have continued (Rowland 1953: 128, nn 6, 10; Stone 1985; Kuwayama 1997; Stone 2008). Stone's article in this volume (Chapter 5), for example, is the latest result of this aspect of research. When scholars started discussing the 'Indianization' of south-east Asia in the early 20th century, the far-flung presence of Amaravati-style sculpture in Sri Lanka and south-east Asia was noted as important evidence of the early expansion of Indian religious culture into the Indian Ocean world (Coomaraswamy 1927: 161, 197). The precise stylistic and iconographical relationship between the Amaravati sculpture and Sri Lankan and south-east Asian Buddhist art has thus been a major concern among scholars (see Chapter 6).

In terms of the political circumstances that supported the flowering of the *stūpa*, what has been particularly noted by

former studies is the rule of the Sātavāhanas, the imperial dynasty that emerged in the post-Mauryan Deccan. The first scholar who highlighted the link between the *stūpa* and the dynasty was probably Fergusson. Because of the similarity between the design of the Amaravati railing and that of railing motifs carved at Buddhist caves at Kanheri and Nasik, and on account of the palaeographic resemblances among the inscriptions at all three sites, he assigned these sites to the same period. He dated the Nasik caves to the early 4th century CE because of their association with the Sātavāhana king, Gotamīputa, and so the Amaravati railing was also dated to the 4th century CE (Fergusson 1868: 84, 156–7). Subsequently, Burgess's Amaravati excavation in 1882 found a Sātavāhana inscription mentioning King Puḷumāyi, the son of Gotamīputa. While Burgess revised the date of the two Sātavāhana kings to the early–mid 2nd century CE based on Gotamīputa's contemporaneity with Nahanāpa, a famous ruler of the Kṣaharātas, the chronological link between the *stūpa* and the dynasty was confirmed (Burgess 1887: 4–5, 100). After Rea's excavations at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, R. Chanda (1925) studied newly discovered inscriptions and classified them on the basis of the palaeography into four periods between the 2nd century BCE and the 3rd century CE. Since this dating corresponded well with the traditional chronology of the Sātavāhanas based on a group of the Purāṇas, it was fully accepted by Sivaramamurti, who labelled the *stūpa* 'a glorious monument of the Sātavāhana period' (1942: 8).

In 1954, however, this so-called long chronology of the Amaravati *stūpa* and sculpture was strongly contested by Douglas Barrett. In his catalogue of the Amaravati sculpture of the British Museum, Barrett agreed with Sivaramamurti in admitting the Sātavāhanas' crucial role in providing the Andhra region with the political and economic stability that enabled the erection of Buddhist monuments (Barrett 1954a: 40). However, he dated the beginning of the dynasty's rule in Andhra to the second quarter of the 2nd century CE, since he identified the homeland of the Sātavāhanas with the north-west Deccan, not with Andhra (ibid.: 13). He also supported the much shorter chronology of the dynasty that was proposed by D.C. Sircar, who relied on another group of Purāṇas (Sircar 1951: 195–211). Barrett thus concluded that the construction of the Amaravati *stūpa* and sculptures was achieved in a relatively short period between *c*. 125 and 240 CE (Barrett 1954a: 45).

This co-existence of two significantly different chronologies of the *stūpa*, relying on different chronologies of the Sātavāhanas, generated much controversy among scholars. While Barrett's short chronology was, with minor modifications, well accepted among art historians outside India (Spink 1958: 100; Huntington 1985: 174–9; Miyaji 1992: 101; Koezuka 1994: 18, 22), Indian archaeologists contested it by providing new archaeological and epigraphic data that indicated that the *stūpa* was founded much earlier (Ghosh and Sarkar 1967; Sarma 1975; Ghosh 1979; Sarma 1985). As scholars in different fields discussed the validity of their supporting chronologies of the Amaravati *stūpa* and the Sātavāhanas by analysing their own materials, such as Purāṇic accounts, inscriptions, sculptures, coins and

architecture, the chronological argument became complicated and hard to comprehend for non-specialists. On the other hand, all studies accepted the validity of the historical assumption on which the chronological debates were based, i.e. the causal link between the rule of the Sātavāhanas and the development of the *stūpa*, because 'the historical model presented here by the Sātavāhana/ Amaravati combination, i.e. the juxtaposition of economic prosperity, royal patronage and religion, remains unaffected by the dating controversy' (Knox 1992: 14).

In short, since the unfortunate destruction of the site in the 19th century, scholars have studied the architectural and historical developments of the Amaravati *stūpa* mainly by analysing excavated objects such as sculpture, inscriptions, coins and pottery, in isolation from their site contexts, and by connecting their material analysis with textual sources, particularly the Purāṇas. Their studies thus approached the Amaravati *stūpa* not as an integrated monument, but as a depository containing much sculptural and epigraphic data awaiting scholarly classification and analysis. This approach was successful in revealing the stylistic and iconographical features of each of the sculptures, deciphering the contents of inscriptions and identifying kings mentioned in the Purāṇas. Their efforts to understand a variety of objects also enhanced the specialization of disciplines, such as epigraphy, archaeology, art history and numismatic studies, and developed different scholarly narratives to understand their objects. Since the site had already been destroyed and early excavations were poorly recorded, serious efforts to examine the original integration of the objects with the *stūpa* and the monastic complex at Amaravati tended to be dismissed among scholars. For instance, even now, there is no full *catalogue raisonné* listing all Amaravati sculptures and inscriptions and providing detailed acquisition records. As a result, in the discussion of Amaravati sculpture many 'Amaravati-school' sculptures whose association with the Amaravati *stūpa* is unconfirmed are often included without distinguishing them from genuine Amaravati pieces. This situation undermines our precise understanding of the Amaravati sculpture and creates considerable confusions in the discussion of 'Amaravati-style' art in Andhra, Sri Lanka and south-east Asia (Brown 2014: 14–18). By assuming the causal relationship between the rule of the Sātavāhana dynasty and the development of the *stūpa*, early studies have tended to avoid in-depth discussions about the immediate social surroundings in which the *stūpa* flourished. Amaravati thus tended to be studied as if it had an autonomous existence, lacking any relationship with the local habitations or with the other Buddhist sites in Andhra (Sarkar 1987: 631–2). In the main it has been compared to famous early Buddhist sites outside Andhra, such as Bharhut, Sanchi, Ajanta and Gandhara. This has been a major methodological problem for the study not only of the Amaravati *stūpa*, but for Indian archaeological monuments in general.

Recent approaches
Fortunately, recent developments in archaeological and historical research on early India have helped somewhat in enabling us to address such methodological problems. Of

particular note is the substantial growth of our knowledge about Indian Buddhist sites, particularly those of Andhra. Throughout the 20th century, apart from a few sites like Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda, Andhran Buddhist sites received very little serious scholarly attention in comparison to their counterparts in the western Deccan, owing to the poor documentation and protection of the sites. In the last few decades, the situation has changed significantly. As a result of extensive surveys by AP State Archaeology and the Archaeological Survey of India, more than 100 Buddhist remains are now documented in the lower Krishna and Godavari valleys (Shimada 2013: Appendix B). While many of these sites await further intensive research, some of the newly discovered sites, such as Chandavaran, Dhulikatta, Vaddamanu, Nellakondapalli, Kottanandayapalem, Phanigiri and Kanaganahalli, have become well known, since they yielded a significant number of new sculptures and inscriptions. Perhaps the two most impressive sites are Phanigiri and Kanaganahalli, located on the tributary of the upper Krishna valley. Recent re-excavations at Phanigiri in Nalgonda District, to the south of the new state of Telangana, revealed an extensive monastic complex of the Ikṣvāku and the Viṣṇukuṇḍin periods on a monolithic hillock (Reddy *et al.* 2008; Skilling 2008; Skilling and von Hinüber 2011). As is highlighted by Becker in this volume (Chapter 6), the excavated objects include unique pieces, such as the narrative sculpture on the gateway (*toraṇa*) and a large statue of a princely figure. Excavations at Kanaganahalli, which had been known as Sannati, yielded a well-preserved *stūpa* with numerous relief sculptures in good condition, dated roughly to between the 1st century BCE and the 3rd century CE (Poonacha 2011; Nakanishi and von Hinüber 2014). Since the excavated sculptures include many reliefs of narratives and portraits of Aśoka and several Sātavāhana kings with label inscriptions, they provide a new set of evidence to identify Andhran Buddhist narrative sculptures and also to establish their chronology. Recent archaeological research in the Deccan has provided more data not only on the Buddhist period, but also on the pre-Buddhist or 'megalithic period', as discussed by Johansen in this volume (Chapter 1).

This increase in archaeological and epigraphic data on Andhran Buddhist sites has certainly raised scholarly and public interest in Andhran Buddhism and Buddhist material culture in recent years. In terms of scholarly research, a notable development is the interdisciplinary discussion about the excavated objects. As exemplified by a series of works by Gregory Schopen (1988; 1991), textual Buddhologists have started revising traditional theories on early Indian Buddhism, such as the monastic avoidance of *stūpa* worship, by making active use of archaeological and epigraphic data from Andhra. Peter Skilling's study of *mahācaitya* in this volume (Chapter 2) demonstrates the advantage of such scholarship, which combines the careful analysis of the texts with a comprehensive survey of the epigraphic and archaeological evidence. Moreover, a series of studies by J. Heitzman, H.P. Ray and A. Parasher-Sen show how a historical approach can reveal more refined pictures of the political and economic development of the eastern Deccan in the Early Historic period on the basis of

archaeological and epigraphic data (Heitzman 1984; Parasher-Sen 1991; Ray 1988; 1994; 1997; 2008). In the field of research into Andhran Buddhist monuments, Lars Fogelin's study of Thotlakonda and my own work on the Amaravati *stūpa* employed this method in order to reveal the immediate historical landscape in which the monastic complex flourished (Fogelin 2006; Shimada 2013).

The growth of data on Andhran Buddhist sites has also brought a better understanding of the old Andhran collections in museums. Scholars have started to re-examine so-called Amaravati-school sculptures in order to identify their original locations and recover their site context by combining the early acquisition records of the objects in the museums with new data on Andhran Buddhist sites, sculptures and other excavated objects. The studies of Barnard, Ślaczka and Willis in this volume (Chapters 7–9) are examples of this. One of the major discoveries resulting from this type of research is that of the Sadas, an important local dynasty that ruled the coastal Andhra region before the expansion of the Sātavāhanas. As noted by Bhandhare in this volume (Chapter 3), their coins in the British Museum were discovered more than a century ago but were given obscure identifications. Accumulation of epigraphic and numismatic data through recent excavations at Vaddamanu and other sites, however, has enabled scholars to find out about this unknown dynasty and even construct a chronology of the kings. According to my study on the construction process of the great limestone railing at Amaravati, the sculptural production of Amaravati seems to have reached a high point under the Sadas' rule (Shimada 2006: 127–8, 131–2; 2013: 40–2, 111–12). This suggests that the construction of the *stūpa* was not simply the accomplishment of the Sātavāhana dynasty.

It is also important to note that continual discoveries of new Buddhist sites in Andhra have greatly increased people's consciousness of the legacy of Buddhism in Andhra. Since the legacy is used to promote tourism and enhance local pride, Buddhist remains are given new layers of significance as symbols of the glory of Andhran history and culture. As discussed recently by Becker (2009; 2015) and in Vardhan's report of Sriparvata Arama in this volume (Chapter 10), the Amaravati *stūpa* is seen as the most important monument in this movement of promoting the legacy of Buddhism as a cultural identifier for Andhra. The recent selection of Amaravati as the new capital of Andhra Pradesh after the split of the Urdu-speaking Telangana region may not be completely unrelated to this movement.

In short, the Amaravati *stūpa* and its sculptures, which had been treated as outstanding but rather solitary and fragmented examples of early Buddhist monuments and art in Andhra, have attracted significant scholarly and non-scholarly interest in recent years through the acquisition of new kinds of knowledge and fresh perspectives that have led to a clearer understanding of the monument. This volume presents such new scholarship on Amaravati and the related Buddhist material culture of early Andhra, in the hope of enhancing further discussions on this remarkable Buddhist monument of early India.

Notes

1   This topic is taken up in my monograph (Shimada 2013: 1–30) and consequently the contents here overlap in part. For this article, I have incorporated new scholarship and discoveries as far as possible. Owing to the word limit in this volume I have not repeated the detailed references in my monograph to the early surveys of the Amaravati *stūpa*, particularly the India Office Records.

2   Mackenzie's report indicates that his visit to Amaravati took place around February 1797 (Mackenzie 1807: 272). Howes' recent study of Mackenzie's surveys in South India, however, shows that his visit to Amaravati took place in February 1798 (Howes 2002: 54; 2009; 21; 2010: 49).

3   A set of the drawings is preserved in the British Library (BL, WD 1061). They are available online at http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/features/amaravati/homepage.html (accessed 17 June 2016).

4   This set of drawings is now in the British Library (WD 2242–2283). About the drawings, see Howes 2009.

5   The British Museum Amaravati collection includes 12 sculptures that have no record of arrival in London (nos 1880,0709.8, 9, 34, 67, 70–72, 77, 79, 82, 92, 129; illustrated in Knox 1992: nos 22, 27, 30, 40, 55, 60/72, 69, 70, 81, 84, 105, 130). As six of them (nos 1880,0709.8, 34, 67, 79, 71, 72; illustrated in Knox 1992: nos 27, 40, 60/72, 70, 81, 130) are recorded in the Mackenzie Amaravati drawings, it is likely that they were sent by Mackenzie and were kept in the India Museum of East India House. Unfortunately, the archive of the India Museum kept in the Victoria & Albert Museum does not include records of Mackenzie's Amaravati pieces. I thank Nick Barnard for sharing this piece of information.

6   The report of these excavations was not published. Brief records are available in Madras Public Proceeding, 11 September 1888, no. 896 (BL, IOR, P/3284) and Madras Public Proceeding, 30 April 1889, no. 383 (BL, IOR, P/3511).

7   One of the two inscriptions discovered by Mackenzie is in the British Museum (no. 1880,0709.67; illustrated in Knox 1992: no. 130).

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