

Report of the Research

World Corpus of Amarāvātī Sculpture (A Small Personal Research Grant, 2002-03)

World Corpus of Amarāvātī Sculpture aims at establishing a comprehensive web-database on the sculptures and other related documents of Amarāvātī, the oldest and one of the largest Buddhist monastic complexes in Andhra region, South India. As the project assistant, I traveled in India (New Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Guntur, and Chennai) between 14/January and 20/March supported by SSAS Small Personal Research Grant. In this trip, I succeeded to collect a variety of materials on Amarāvātī and other Andhran Buddhist sites, which have great importance for the development of this project.

My survey in India started from New Delhi. The main destination in this place was Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to obtain permissions for field survey and taking photographs in the archaeological sites and museums. Fortunately, my applications got approval from Dr. K. V. Menon, the Director General of ASI, who issued permissions promptly. I was also allowed to examine unpublished photographs of previous excavations at Amarāvātī and the related Andhran Buddhist sites at ASI photography section. This survey provided some important documents on early conditions of the sites.

From New Delhi I proceeded to Hyderabad, the state capital of Andhra Pradesh. Dr. K. V. Rao, the superintending archaeologist of ASI, Hyderabad branch, kindly approved my research and made necessary arrangements for my survey at Amarāvātī. Also Dr. B. Subrahmanyam, the superintending archaeologist of the State Archaeology and Museum, offered me unreserved help to issue the permissions for my survey in the archaeological sites protected by the A. P. government, and provided the latest archaeological information on Andhran Buddhist sites. I also visited the Birla Archaeological Museum and the State Museum to study the Amarāvātī collection and the sculptures from the related sites.

Obtained necessary permissions and information, I moved to Guntur, the nearest city from Amarāvātī. I stayed there more than five weeks and kept visiting Amarāvātī. At Amarāvātī, my work always got attentive support from the staffs of the archaeological museum at Amarāvātī. They fully opened the collection in the museum including the one in the storeroom, and painstakingly assisted my work. I could thus carry out an extensive survey on the collection of this museum, and confirmed a considerable number of unpublished and unnoticed sculptures and inscriptions, dated between 200 BCE-250 CE. I also made extensive field excursions at the *stūpa* site and the surrounding villages (Dharanikota, Maddur, Mottayyapalem, Vaddamanu, Vaikunthapuram, Velpur) with the help of local informants, especially Mr. Harsha Vardhan, the lecturer of Archaeology, the Nagarjuna University. At Dharanikota, the ancient fortified city adjacent to the *stūpa* site, a detailed plan of the fortifications was made. At Mottayyapalem, two kilometres east from Dharanikota, an ancient port site was newly confirmed at the bank of the Krishna. I also collected information on various archaeological objects found from the surrounding field such as Sātavāhana coins, potteries, early limestone sculptures and rock-cut inscriptions of the early medieval period through the communication with local villagers. This survey brought a deeper understanding on geography and archaeological landscape of Amarāvātī area.

In addition to the survey in the Amarāvātī area, I made several short trips during my stay at Guntur. I visited some important Buddhist sites such as Alluru, Bhattiprolu, Chebrolu, Ghantasāla, Goli,

Jaggayyapeta, Kesarapalli and Nāgārjunakonda in coastal Andhra. I also made a week trip to Kolkata in early February to study Amarāvātī materials in the Asiatic Society and the Indian Museum. At the Asiatic society, I had a chance to see Mackenzie documents preserved in the institution, and found two unknown Amarāvātī drawings in an album. At the Indian Museum, I examined the Amarāvātī collection in the museum and its acquisition record. In the end of February, I went to Sannathi, a recent-excavated *stūpa* site in Karnataka. Although the visit was very short and was not allowed to take any photograph, I could examine the well-preserved *stūpa* with more than one hundred limestone sculptures and inscriptions, which possesses clear stylistic and iconographic link to Andhran Buddhist tradition.

After finishing the survey in Andhra, I proceeded to Chennai to see the Amarāvātī collection in the Chennai Government Museum. During this visit, the half of the Amarāvātī gallery was closed due to the renovation work and many sculptures were kept at the storeroom. However Dr. Balasubramanyan, the curator of the Museum, kindly allowed me to spend a day in the closed part of the gallery and the storeroom. I could thus study the inscriptions and the sculptures in the museum, and took some photographs as well.

From Chennai, I went back to New Delhi. I again visited ASI and Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) for archival work and to discuss the Amarāvātī project with some historians and archaeologists like Himanshu Prabha Ray and Kunar Chakravarti. On 20th of March, I flew back to London.

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