

allows students to check their grades whenever they want, as well as giving me the security of having my grade records in another place. Finally, the course statistics allow me to see who has actually been using these resources.

I am also thinking about new ways to use this. I have already used the Discussion Board in my introductory Religion classes, to give students the chance for unstructured, out-of-class discussion. For several years I've had small groups of students lead discussion in class on the day's reading, and I don't see any reason (beyond the logistics of thinking about how to set it up) why I couldn't move these group discussions to the Discussion Board, and have the groups run them after class, so that the discussion could reinforce class learning. Finally, in Spring 2003 I am scheduled to teach a special section of Heritage, a cultural studies class, in which some of the in-class "seat time" will be replaced by electronic discussion. I've never done anything like this before, but I'm more than willing to try.

### **Methods for Research and Teaching Asian Ideologies and Material Cultures**

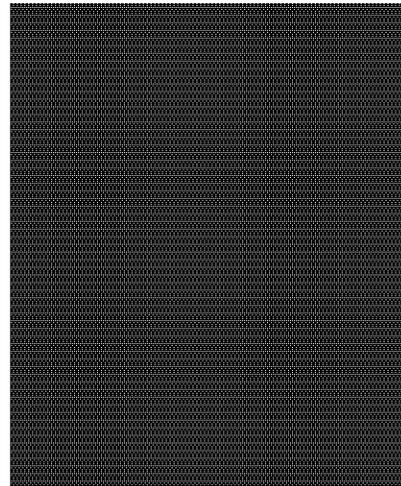
**Paul Nietupski, Associate Professor of Religious Studies, John Carroll University**

*Introduction.* Two key challenges face Western teachers of Asian studies. The first challenge is to make one's own study of Asia accessible and understandable to students, colleagues, and curricula by skillful delivery of information and interaction in and out of the classroom. The second challenge is to continue with new research in one's field, and whenever possible, to make this new research relevant to one's classes and campus curricula. Sounds easy—teaching and research. The details and combinations of these two vary in different institutions, whether in small liberal arts colleges or large research institutions. Still, in all cases, scholars of Asian studies working in Western colleges and universities face the problem of striking a balance between the demands of teaching and research, a problem addressed in the present project which employs both an interdisciplinary method and modern computer technology.<sup>1</sup>

This project began with text research in the history of medieval Indian Buddhist and Hindu institutions. Given that the Indian Buddhist Sanskrit texts are of uncertain provenance, the project turned to archeological and art historical materials to help place the texts in Indian history. Looking for relevant data outside of texts may seem obvious, but such investigation is still not commonly in use. This is surprising, given the proliferation of medieval Indian art throughout Asia which evidences a highly developed social, political, economic and religious culture. With the study of art objects as historical tools, the project attempts to verify or corroborate some specifics of Buddhist life in medieval India.

As for teaching, our team brought this research methodology into college level courses on Indian

Buddhism and Hinduism. Over a period of three years, the chronology of Indian art served as a corroborating outline for introductory undergraduate courses in Indian religions. That is, art history was used as a method for understanding the chronology of religious and social histories. Over several years the chief academic and specific object resources for this project came from the Cleveland Museum of Art. Moreover, study with the museum's curators in and out of formal classes held at the CMA and active programming with the museum's educators expanded this project from classrooms to a wider community audience.<sup>2</sup>



Nataraja, Shiva as the King of Dance  
South India, Medieval Period, Chola Dynasty, 11th century  
Purchased from the J.H. Wade Fund 1930.331  
Photo Courtesy of Marjorie Williams, The Cleveland Museum of Art

*Rationale.* This teaching and research agenda began with the Indian idea that a passionate attitude toward life is a crucial component of a life oriented toward liberation. Here, esthetics (and the related Indian ideas of *rasa* and *bhava*) are explained as how one understands and experiences the world and how one expresses oneself in the world. Moreover, and here very briefly, for devout medieval Indian Hindus and Buddhists, human experience is where religious practice takes place. Paradoxically, in this type of religious practice and from this philosophical perspective, one proceeds on the path to liberation through intense engagement with the world. In this culture, there was no prohibition about expressing these ideas in material media. On the contrary, Indians clearly felt that their religions encouraged passionate expression in literature and the arts. Thus, there is an important connection between Indian ideology and material culture and, more generally, between religion and art. In other words, there are "... metaphysical foundations which underlie much Indian [art and] sculpture."<sup>3</sup> In Indian art it is not the appearance, but the significance of objects, human or otherwise, that is sought for ... it is not the object, but a concept that stands before us."<sup>4</sup> There is then a solid rationale for teaching ideologies, philosophies, histories, and societies with or at the same time as teaching material cultures.

More generally, religions have visual components, a “visible language.” Examples include depictions of Hindu deities and representations of the concepts and bodies of Buddhist enlightenment. In India, these Hindu and Buddhist religious icons carry messages rich with philosophies, histories, and social expressions. “Indian and Southeast Asian art is art in service of religion. Consequently, it’s necessary to understand its religious, iconographic, and historic significance.”<sup>5</sup> Religion stimulated the production of art and material cultures,<sup>6</sup> a fact noted by Harle, Kramrisch, Huntington, in another context by Burke,<sup>7</sup> and recently by Owen.<sup>8</sup> Simply, this means that besides religion, art evidence can also be an accurate indicator of social and historical events. Increasing numbers of scholars of Asian studies are using art to complement and corroborate evidence found in texts.

There are many examples and applications. Comparative art historical evidence<sup>9</sup> shows that many centers of religion and art had singular and identifiable techniques and styles. Distinct schools of craftsmanship are recognizable and a history of the developments at separate locations can be reconstructed.<sup>10</sup> Patterns of worship and beliefs can be indicated in art. Additionally, religious sites are often located along trade routes and travel routes;<sup>11</sup> the arts flourished and traveled. Moreover, in further evidence of how art traveled, and how it can be used as historical and cultural data, whether signed or not,<sup>12</sup> there is stylistic evidence that shows evidence of origin and serves as proof that individual sculptors produced both brahmanical and Buddhist pieces.<sup>13</sup> In sum, these examples show that material cultures—and here, art in particular—can be used in classes about religious doctrines, ideologies, and philosophies, in history classes, in sociology, anthropology, and other classes.

However, while many would argue that visual components of world religions in their traditional forms of exegesis, prayer, contemplation, and the historical and social significance of religions in their original contexts need to be understood in relationship to one another, modern Western universities still typically and artificially separate these vital components of single cultures in different academic departments. Asia was and often is studied in disconnected language and literature, history, anthropology, and other departments.

In sum, new approaches such as these are liberative in that they transcend traditional boundaries and involve study and mastery of different academic disciplines. Language and literature specialists now may, or, better, must study not only language, but history, sociology, philosophy, anthropology, and not the least, art history. The rewards are in the high degree of accuracy that this method brings, and in the new discoveries and insights that will enhance scholarship in many fields. However, the price of this freedom to explore comes at the expense of time and resources necessary to master several different disciplines, and to carry out research in several fields at once.



Ganesha  
South India, Medieval Period, Chola Dynasty, 12th century  
Gift of Katharine Holden Thayer 1970.62  
*Photo Courtesy of Marjorie Williams, The Cleveland Museum of Art*

**Electronic media.** Scholars and teachers who choose to engage broader methods are faced with the problems of learning new disciplines and implementing them in research and teaching. Individuals employed in Western academic institutions must first collect data and resources for their new fields of study and then invent new ways of presenting non-traditional interdisciplinary teaching methods in largely traditional environments. New advances in information technologies expedite new research in method and provide new tools for teaching.

Computer and Internet-based technologies have the potential to be used as versatile pedagogical tools; they are wonderfully efficient and can enhance classroom instruction. These, however, require significant commitments of time and energy, much as in the other relevant fields. Moreover, as with other tools, the key factor in computer-assisted teaching and learning is effectiveness. Computer-assisted classrooms face many of the same pedagogical problems as classes without high technologies. For example, how can teachers stimulate students’ interest, to motivate them to actively engage often new and very foreign ideas? How can teachers communicate large amounts of often complex data to a group of individual students in a short time? How can teachers offer individual responses to students in often limited time? And so on. The crucial measure of this project and of all similar computer-assisted projects is the enhancement of the quality and extent of students’ learning.

For students, computer technology makes research easier and resources more accessible. It enables student-faculty communications, and facilitates student group work. Students can use discussion and response bulletin boards, and teachers can communicate with their students extensively in group mailings, class discussion boards, and interactive techniques for class assignments and testing.

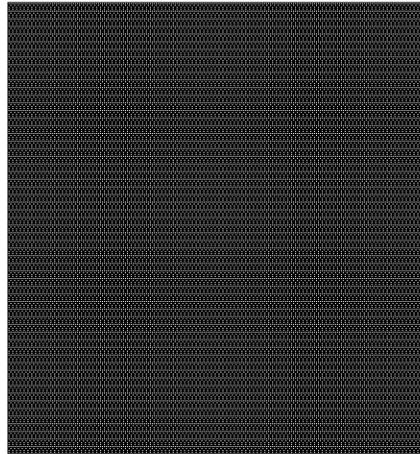
However, the fact that a classroom has computers does not guarantee anything. Computers are only tools, and there are pitfalls. For example, one common shortcoming of

many educational websites is their archival quality. Large sets of data and visible images in electronic format are fairly useless unless presented intelligently by teachers and engaged by students. While online databases are much easier to use than traditional card catalogues and encyclopedias, many Internet sites are merely online volumes of books or massive collections of art images with little interpretation or discussion. Computer usage must be an interactive component of the course, requiring appropriate user-friendly technology capable of student-software and student-faculty interaction. For example, in addition to communicating with faculty and other students individually and in groups, and in addition to having the capability to search through massive volumes of materials of poor quality<sup>14</sup>, students should be able to contribute written and/or visual data in the appropriate sections of pedagogical websites. A description of the experiments and findings used in this project are presented below.

These points and up-to-date writing on Internet applications in all academic fields are addressed in the monthly *Journal of Education, Community, and Values: Interface on the Internet*, published by The Berglung Center for Internet Studies located at Pacific University in Oregon. (<http://bcis.pacificu.edu/journal>) A recent issue of this online publication contains articles by scholars who have developed and used Internet technologies in teaching at all levels. A representative example, Stanley Katz's piece on "Making Information Technology Serve Higher Education, Rather Than the Other Way Around," discusses pedagogical successes and mistakes in Internet technology.

In addition to the Journal, there are increasing numbers of well-crafted websites on Asia, although it is sometimes unclear just how these can be used, or even how they might be used in classrooms. The outstanding and voluminous site on Bhutan crafted by Francoise Pommaret and others is nothing short of an electronic textbook for Bhutan studies. The quality of its writing and use of media is remarkable and contains a staggering amount of data in text, audio, and visible formats.<sup>15</sup> Another recent and very pedagogically-oriented website, is on Indian sacred sites, located at University of California at Santa Barbara and moderated by Prof. B. Holdrege. This interesting project includes interactive visual studies and includes a very large body of materials in text, still images, video, audio, and other enhancements and approaches to the study of the Indian religious cultures. This site seems to be diverse and active enough for applications in college classrooms. It will be used on six college campuses and in fourteen classes. ([http://uctlrc.org/news/2001/12/feature\\_2.htm](http://uctlrc.org/news/2001/12/feature_2.htm)) Another well-archived and searchable catalogue-type site with potential for research is the Tibetan art collection at [www.tibetart.com](http://www.tibetart.com).<sup>16</sup> Subscription-only sites like AMICO and ArtSTOR offer large numbers of digitized art images with search features. Other sites offer primary texts in Asian languages, for example, the Asian Classics Input Project, the texts offered by Himalayan and Inner Asian Resources, and others with primary texts in electronic format. The list

goes on, but the fundamental problems for undergraduate classroom use remain.



Fasting Buddha  
Kashmir, 8th century  
Leonard C. Hanna Jr. Fund 1986.70

*Photo Courtesy of Marjorie Williams, The Cleveland Museum of Art*

**Applications.** This experiment brought together methods from religious studies, history, art history, and other disciplines in an Internet-based pedagogical device. It is a teaching tool for an introductory course in Asian religions, run at John Carroll University, a small comprehensive university in suburban Cleveland. The interdisciplinary experiment using art images evolved over four years and involved two sections of approximately twenty-five to thirty students per section each semester. Computer-assisted components have been in use for the last three years. Computer technologies were introduced, modified, expanded and eliminated based on effectiveness in enhancing classroom teaching and promoting student interaction. In all sections, art objects held by the Cleveland Museum of Art were featured, supported by related objects taken from other published sources. Most recently the experiment has used high-resolution photographs of objects in the Cleveland Museum of Art. These were enhanced by a special electronic "zoom" application developed by John Carroll University Computer Science students. The online experiment now includes JCU student class projects, and written JCU student interactions. In the early attempts to use computer technologies, we used *Blackboard* software in classrooms with individual student computer stations controlled by the instructor, with a large screen at the front of the room. Later attempts used classrooms with large-screen only, without individual student stations. This latter however included greatly enhanced Internet access, faster video and audio presentation, and more flexibility overall.

Digital photos of items in the Museum collections were the focus of classes and web pages with links to other representative art, text readings, maps, bibliographies, video clips, photo galleries, questions and suggested topics pages, and other elements. Student contact lists, drop boxes for

papers, and search resources had designated areas. In addition to routine class activities, groups of students were required to construct web pages for a term project, which were uploaded and presented in class.

Briefly, this 200-level Introduction to Asian Religions course began with an introduction to Indus River Valley civilizations, the Aryan invasion of the Indian subcontinent, and the eventual evolution of the Hindu religion. The art and architecture of the Harrappan civilization were used to illustrate the sophisticated community and religious structures of the time. They studied Vedic, Upanishadic, and later Hindu literatures, societies and ideas and at the same time studied, discussed, and wrote about the ideologies observable in material artifacts.

The class proceeded to study visible artifacts and ideologies throughout the semester, proceeding through the early histories of Hindu and Buddhist cultures. They read about Shaivite, Vaishnavite, and goddess religions and cultures. In classrooms and in on-campus computer labs students studied maps, watched video clips, and listened to Indian pandits reciting Sanskrit or singing hymns. Galleries of photographs enhanced the Museum art images. Videos of Indian devotional (bhakti) practices, temple and pilgrimage rituals were especially dramatic.

As the course went on, students examined the transmissions of Indian religions and cultures along the northern and southern international trade routes, studying the artifacts and cultures that traveled with the dissemination of many new ideas, again using digitized maps, texts, and featuring art objects held at the Cleveland Museum of Art. These were again supplemented by other digitized photographs, online readings, video and audio clips, lectures and discussions. Students contributed weekly comments online, as well as prepared group projects in consultation with the instructor and with reference to posted select bibliographies. They suggested research topics and selected internet links. Individual student projects included one on the international trade routes with a focus on Dunhuang religion, culture, politics, and art. Others centered on the cultures of Myanmar/Burma, Java, Cambodia, Tibet, Bhutan or elsewhere. These student projects were especially successful in that they often took different methodological approaches based on student interests (often students' academic majors), for example business, history, political science, and sociology to name a few.

**Conclusion.** The interdisciplinary approach served to bring students new to Asian studies into the field along academic routes familiar to them. The use of new visual and interactive technologies made the work more accessible, more immediately present, and more relevant. While it was successful, this project required considerable time and attention and required total immersion for both the instructor and the students. This experiment evolved over several terms and although it utilized technology with some measure of success, it did not replace teacher and student interaction in classrooms. While the quality of instruction and student

learning were greatly enhanced by technologies, the courses continued to include traditional components as well, for example, written research papers (though optionally submitted in electronic format). This was not "distance learning" in classes with no instructor. This project, while successful in promoting students' independent active learning, did not replace individual mentoring and consultation. Electronic media can be an effective tool to enhance student learning, but in this project the tool had to be used skillfully. Since the time this presentation was given, new technologies appropriate to this project have continued to emerge, offering even greater potential for enhanced research and teaching. Several ASIANetwork colleagues have already implemented these and plan to move ahead with new interdisciplinary methods and research projects.

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<sup>1</sup>One challenge for college teachers worthy of mention at the outset does not deal with technology. The problem, reported in the February 22, 2002 issue of the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, is that modern Western colleges and universities do not recognize Internet-based writing and pedagogy as peer-reviewed published scholarship. Some college teachers have created very successful website tools, however these did not satisfy or count towards the publication requirement for college tenure. In the immediate future at least, college teachers will not be given publication credit for developing Internet tools or Internet writing.

<sup>2</sup>This project was first developed at John Carroll University by Paul Nietupski, Department of Religious Studies; Wendy Shapiro, JCU Faculty Technology Innovation Center; Marjorie Williams, Cleveland Museum of Art, Department of Education and Public Programs; and Dave Shaw, Cleveland Museum of Art, Information Technology Division. Many other faculty and staff at both institutions assisted. In 2001 and 2002 this project was presented at the ASIANetwork Conference on panels with Marjorie Williams (2001, 2002), Paul Nietupski (2001, 2002), and with relevant presentations by Elizabeth Ayer, Hartwick College (2001), Lisa Safford, Hiram College (2001), Mary Colan, John Carroll University (2001), Jim Lochtefeld, Carthage College (2002), and Dave Shaw (2002).

<sup>3</sup>J.C. Harle. *The Art and Architecture of the Indian Subcontinent*. New York: Penguin. (1986) 89. See Sherman E. Lee. *A History of Far Eastern Art*, Fifth Edition. Prentice Hall/Abrams (1993) 121.

<sup>4</sup>Ananda Coomaraswamy in Stanislaw J. Czuma. *Kushan Sculpture: Images from Early India*. Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art (1985)10.

<sup>5</sup>Stanislaw Czuma. *The Cleveland Museum of Art Members Magazine*, (April 2000) 6-7.

<sup>6</sup>See the dialogue between King Menander (Milinda) and the monk Nagasena in the "Questions of King Milinda," from approximately the second century BCE. T.W.

Rhys Davids (trans.). *The Questions of King Milinda, Part II*, Dover Publications, New York (1963) 206-212. See Buddha's admonition to his own disciples to leave his presence: "'Go forth, bhikkhus...expound the Law, teach it in its spirit and its letter.' There can be no doubt that Buddhism ...was a religion of propaganda, a missionary movement. It is no less certain that such propaganda was pursued from the beginning." Quoted in E. Lamotte (Webb-Boin, S., trans.). *History of Indian Buddhism: From the Origins to the Saka Era*, Peeters Press, Louvain-Paris (1988) 297. "More important in some cases than the date, the provenance of a given sculpture accounted for its style and other distinguishing features. There can be no question that major sites such as Bodh Gaya, Nalanda and Kurkihar maintained fairly large groups of artisans at all times during this period of activity and had little need to import artists or craftsmen from other places. Thus, while the sculpture produced at individual sites certainly bears similarity to other sculpture of the period from different locales, distinct schools of craftsmanship may be discerned and a history of the developments at separate locations may be propounded." Susan L. Huntington. *The "Pala-Sena" Schools of Sculpture*. Leiden: E.J. Brill (1984) 5.

<sup>7</sup> See Peter Burke. *Eyewitnessing: The Use of Images as Historical Evidence*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.(2001)

<sup>8</sup> Nadine Owen. "Constructing Another Perspective for Ajanta's Fifth-Century Excavations," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, 24:1,(2001) 27-59.

<sup>9</sup>"[T]he influences which these artistic expressions had abroad, primarily in the Buddhist countries of T'ang and Sung China and especially Yunnan, Java, Sumatra, Burma, Nepal and Tibet, kept the traditions alive to some extent. In Buddhist terms, the Pala-Sena period is one of intense international activity, with scholars and monks from India travelling abroad and with great numbers of devotees from other Buddhist countries coming to India for pilgrimage or for study...the broad characteristics of the Pala-Sena style of art had such bearing on the developments of Buddhist art in other regions that it might well be termed an international style." Susan L. Huntington. *The "Pala-Sena" Schools of Sculpture*. Leiden: E.J. Brill (1984) 7.

<sup>10</sup>Susan L. Huntington. *The "Pala-Sena" Schools of Sculpture*. Leiden: E.J. Brill (1984) 5. In this text the author identifies several distinct styles of sculpture from different locations in India, providing excellent references for the analysis of Buddha images in Central Asia, China, and Tibet.

<sup>11</sup>This is obvious in places like the modern Karakoram Highway, for example in the rock carvings near Chilas and Gilgit. See Vidya Dehejia. *Early Buddhist Rock Temples: A Chronology*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. (1972) 30-31; Stanislaw J. Czuma. *Kushan Sculpture: Images from Early India*. Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art (1985) 7; J.C. Harle. *The Art and Architecture of the Indian Subcontinent*. New York: Penguin. (1986) 48; James Heitzman. *The Origin and Spread of Buddhist Monastic*

*Institutions in South Asia 500 BC-300 AD*. South Asia Seminar Student Papers, Number 1, Department of South Asia Regional Studies. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania (1980).

<sup>12</sup>Contemporary scholarship often points to the anonymous character of Asian art. While this is true for some religious pieces, for others it is not. An example of signed Buddhist art is found in some Tibetan art. See David Jackson. *A History of Tibetan Painting: The Great Tibetan Painters and Their Traditions*. Vienna: Verlag der Osterreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. (1996).

<sup>13</sup>J.C. Harle. *The Art and Architecture of the Indian Subcontinent*. New York: Penguin. (1986) 64.

<sup>14</sup>It seems almost unnecessary to note that the fact of being online in a website is not a guarantee of quality, or of editorial review. Still, like printed media, this necessary component can easily be implemented.

<sup>15</sup>At the time of this writing it appears that Francoise Pommaret's English language site is no longer accessible via the Internet. There is a similar site on Bhutan, in German, that is very impressive, at [www.ifs.univie.ac.at/~bhutan/test002/b-home/b-home/start.php3](http://www.ifs.univie.ac.at/~bhutan/test002/b-home/b-home/start.php3).

<sup>16</sup> See also the site on art and ideas at <http://bcis.pacificu.edu/journal/2002/07/staley.php>.



A moment from the "Technology and Teaching Beyond the Written Word" Session  
Marjorie Williams and Paul Nietupski (pictured)  
James Lochtefeld, Chair