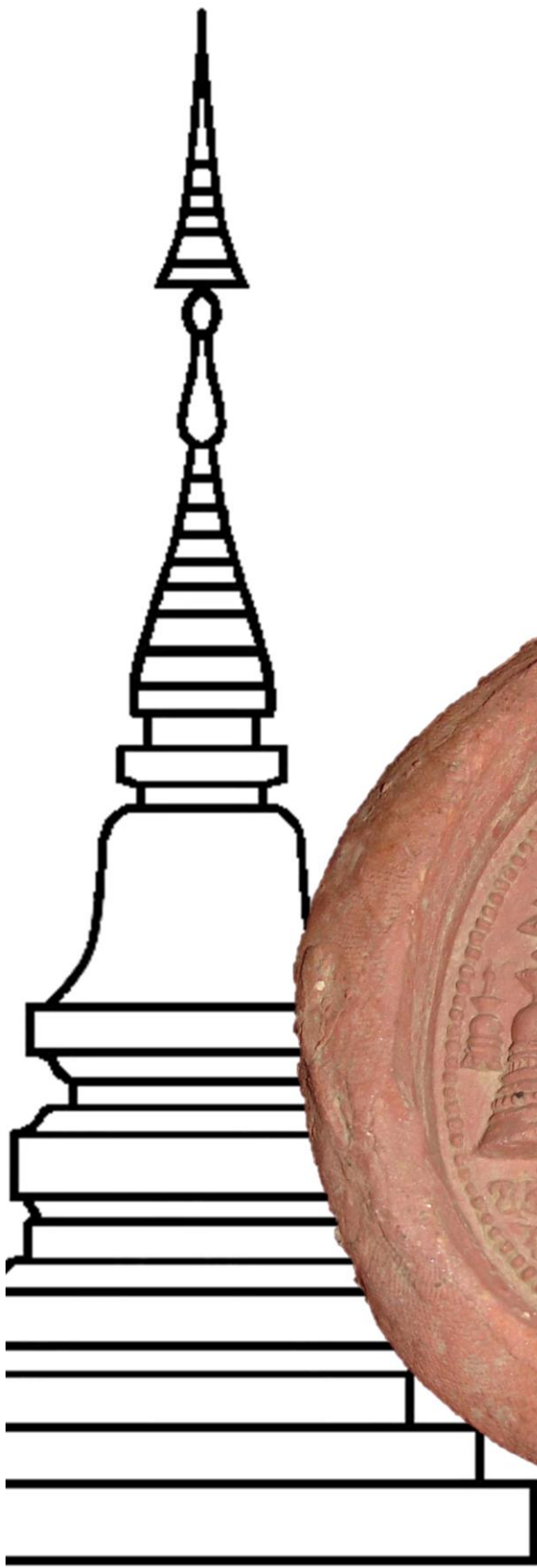


The British
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Journey Towards Belief

15 August 2019



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Journey Towards Belief

The Buddha taught that the cycles of rebirth include suffering. The way to escape suffering is to stop being reborn and enter *nirvana*. *Karma* (the combination of a being's good and bad deeds over all his or her lives) determines whether entering *nirvana* is possible and determines how good or bad future lives are. Buddhists believe that the merit from gifts improves *karma*.

The Buddha's original teachings are sacred, and various art forms include inscriptions of Buddhist texts. These are often a verse that explains the suffering in life and how to escape the cycles of rebirth.

Monks and nuns travel between monasteries studying Buddhist texts and exchanging ideas. Some monasteries were famous for learning, and people made pilgrimages to these sites.

Nalanda monastery was an important Buddhist university in the ancient Magadha kingdom, located in present-day Bihar (India), from the 5th-12th centuries. People came from all over Asia to study and make donations there.

Donations included such things as money, food, religious buildings and decorations, and art objects. Seals were also gifts to the monastery itself or were souvenirs to take home for personal shrines.



A Buddhist Seal from Nalanda Monastery

This seal was excavated at Nalanda, which is a UNESCO World Heritage site. It was probably made for donation to the monastery. It is a flattened terracotta ball impressed with three large and six small stupas decorated with flags. Stupas are sacred structures housing relics that worshippers walk around during ritual activity. There is also a Sanskrit inscription of the Buddha's teachings about how to escape the cycles of rebirth.

9th – 10th Century

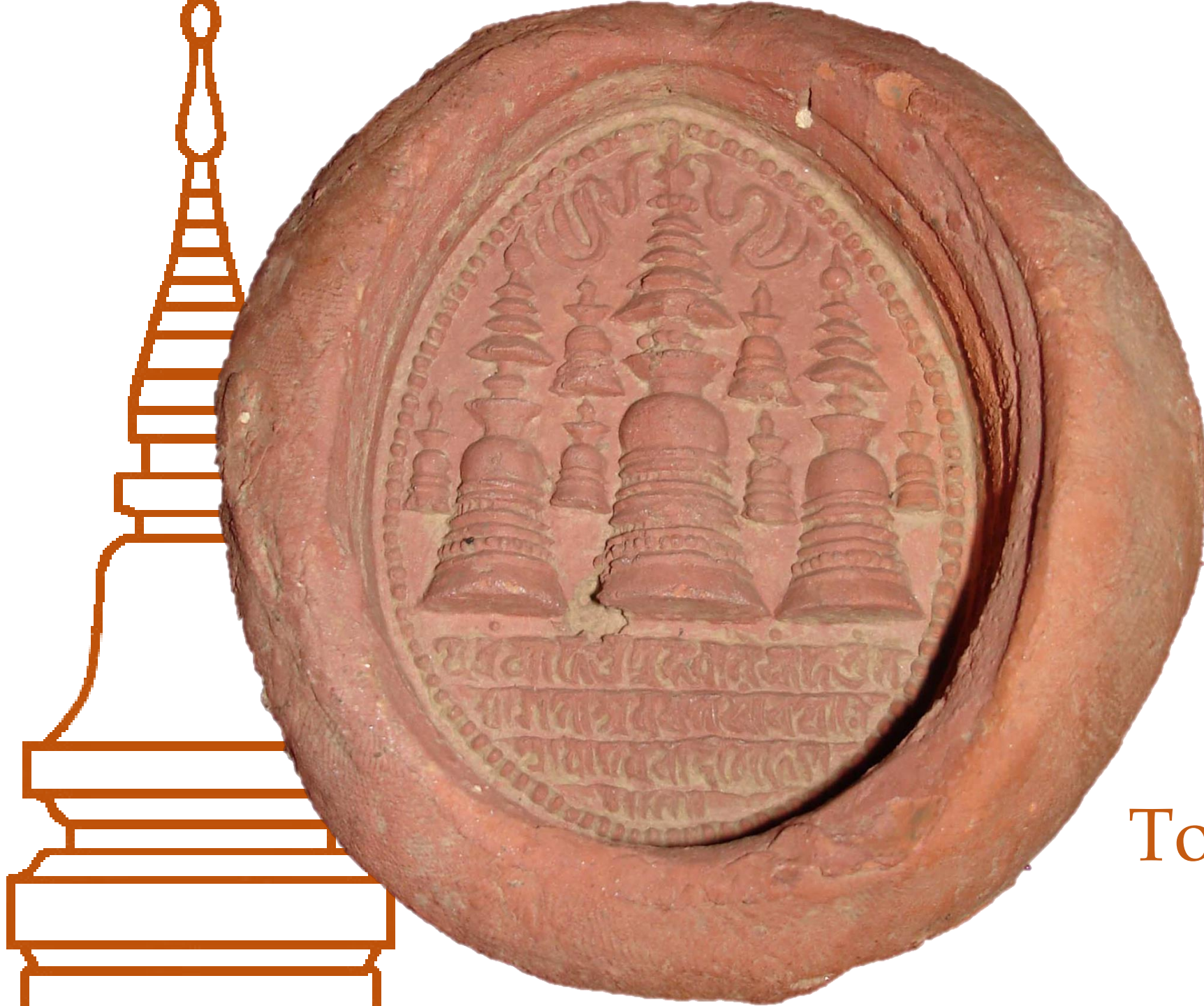
Nalanda monastery, Bihar, India

Terracotta

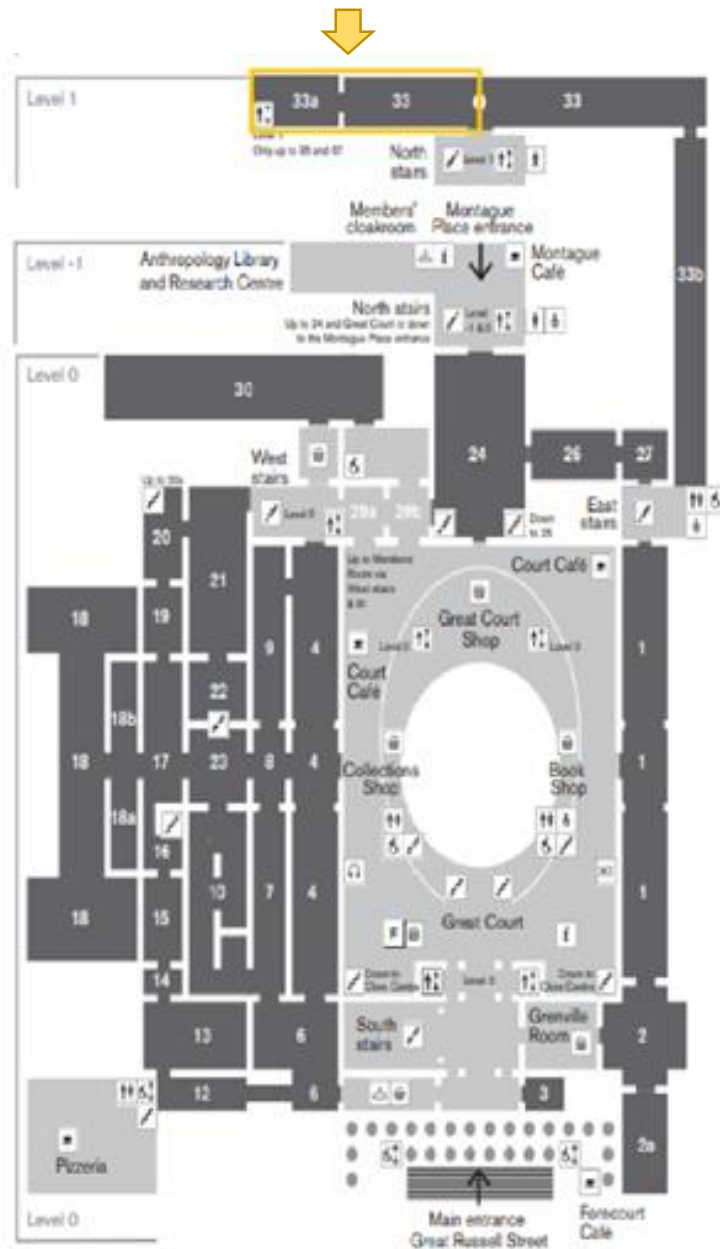
1937,0414.14

Donated by Director-General of Archaeology, India

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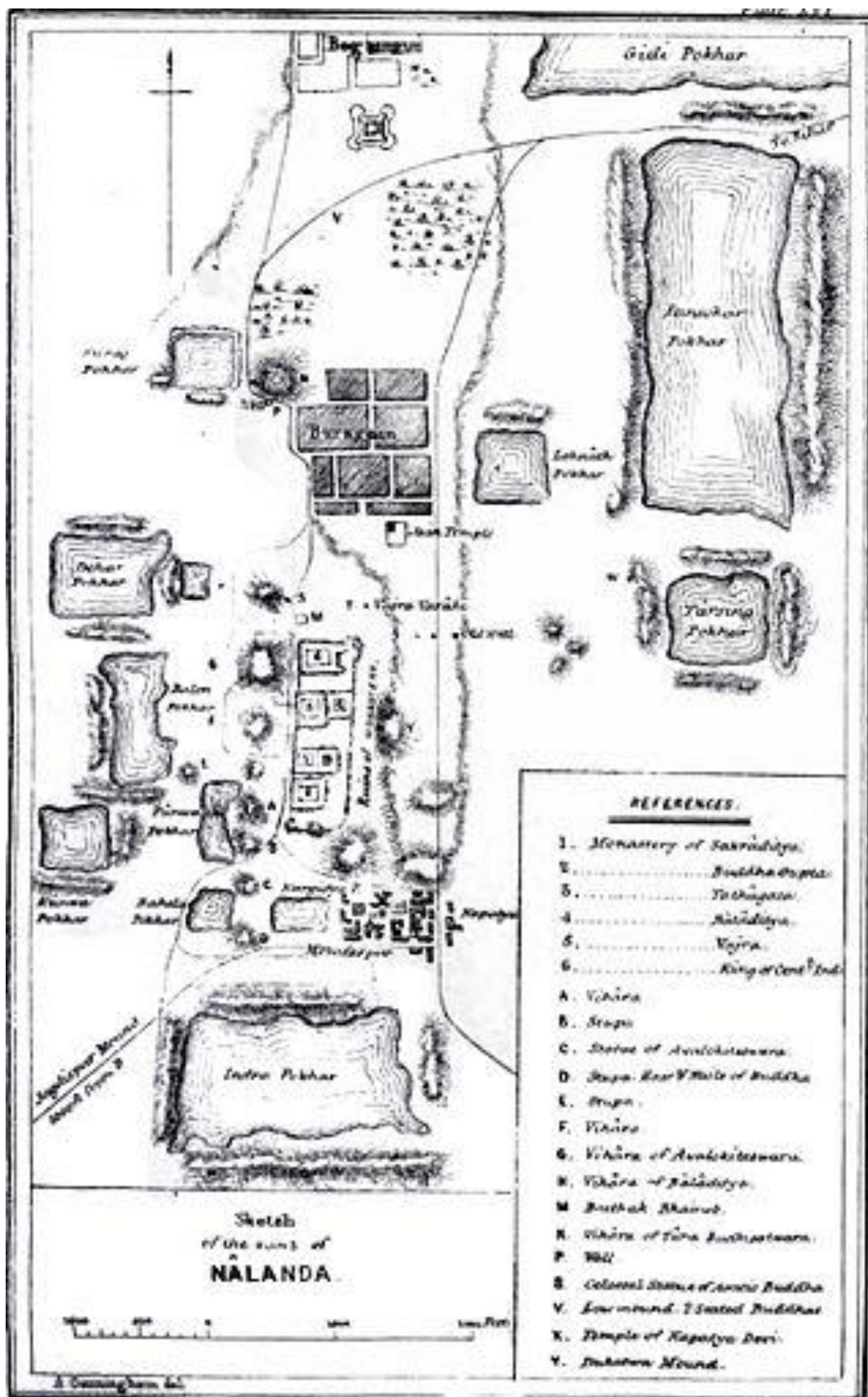


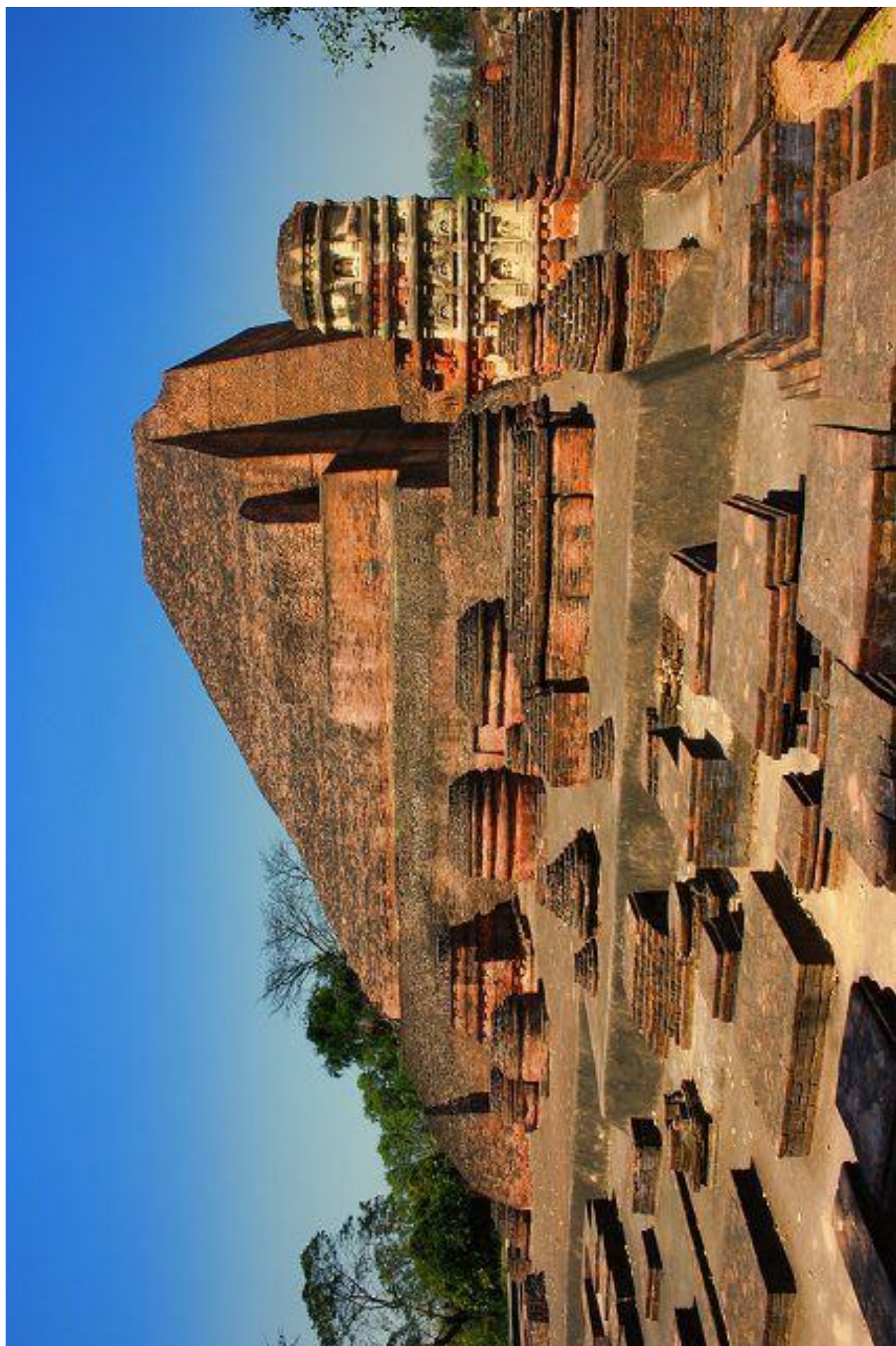
Visit the India section of the British Museum for more information about the religious structures of Buddhism and other relevant works.

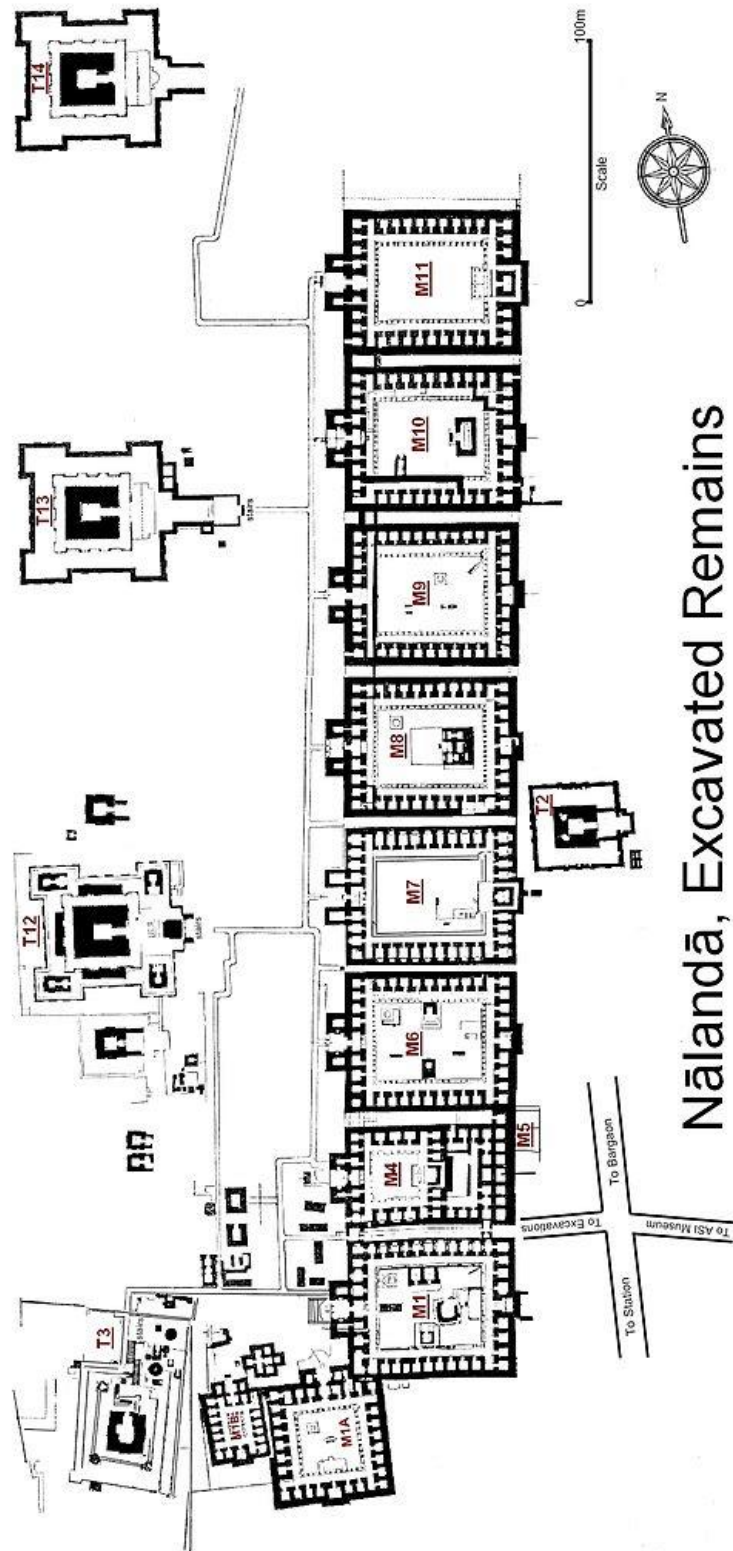
- Seal from Nalanda - another seal with a different sealing (Room 33, Case)
- Votive plaques – different offering objects (Room 33, Case)
- Amaravati - a real size stupa (The Asahi Shimbun Gallery, Room 33a)
- Buddhist shrines and relics - stupa models (Room 33, Case)

And also visit the British Museum shop for the publications.

- Indian Temple Sculpture
- The Great Empires of the Ancient World







Nālandā, Excavated Remains



Terracotta Seal

British Museum Collection Online:

https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A_1937-0414-14