

DEPARTMENT OF BUDDHIST STUDIES

Buddhism arose in India during the 5th century B.C. and spread across Central Asia, China and the Korean Peninsula before arriving in Japan. Since reaching Japan, Buddhism has had a powerful influence on the ways of thinking of the Japanese people, and it constitutes one of the most important elements underpinning Japanese spiritual culture.

The prime focus of the Department of Buddhist Studies lies in elucidating the roots and origins of Buddhism through philological studies. Hence, our goal is above all else to understand the philosophy and history of Buddhism through reading primary source texts from India (in Pali or Sanskrit) and also Tibetan literature, which inherited those original Indian (particularly Sanskrit) sources while maintaining linguistic fidelity. Courses are thus designed primarily around reading Indian and Tibetan texts. Although the prime research interests of full-

time faculty members lie in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism, specialists from the Institute for Research in Humanities and part-time lecturers from outside the department cover other fields, such as Buddhism in China and Japan.

Students are expected to have reading skills in Sanskrit and Tibetan. Reading Chinese Buddhist materials is an important requisite, and often Middle Indic languages like Pali are also required in addition to Sanskrit. Because we deal with classic Indian literature, some of the courses we offer are shared with the department of Indological Studies. The two departments also cooperate in evaluating graduation theses, master and doctor dissertations, and even hold a joint farewell party for graduating students at the end of each academic year.

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PHOTO : The Samdhinirmocana-sutra in the Tibetan Canon