

# Hyecho's Journey

## Abstract

During the seventh and eighth centuries, scores of Chinese monks undertook the perilous pilgrimage to India, the holy land of Buddhism. Most did not survive the journey. Among those who did, none traveled farther than Hyecho, an otherwise obscure monk from Korea who, at age eighteen, set off by sea from China. After traveling over much of northern India, he went as far west as Persia before traveling back to China along the Silk Road. His travel journal, surviving only in fragments, was discovered in 1908 at the cave-temple complex at Dunhuang.

This project seeks to virtually follow in Hyecho's footsteps in order to offer a new approach to the study of Buddhism. Most presentations of Buddhism are chronological, starting with the life of the Buddha in the fifth century BCE and ending with Buddhism in America in the twenty-first century. This project will instead survey the entire Buddhist world at a single historical moment as seen through the eyes of a single monk. Because Hyecho did not remain anywhere long enough to learn the local language, moreover, his encounter with the Buddhist world was largely through art and material culture.

The project, called "Hyecho's Journey," will have a number of outcomes, including a monograph, a new undergraduate course, a study abroad opportunity, and a graduate student conference on collaboration. The centerpiece will be an interactive map and app that will be featured at a three-year exhibition at the Freer|Sackler Galleries in Washington opening in October 2017.

## 2. Research Project

Some time around 721, an eighteen-year-old Buddhist monk left his native Korea (called the kingdom of Silla at the time) for China. Three years later, he set out by sea for India, spending three years on a pilgrimage to many Buddhist sacred sites, and continuing on to modern Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Iran. Turning east, he traveled along the Silk Roads, arriving back in Chinese territory in 727. For the rest of his life, Hyecho remained in China, translating esoteric Buddhist scriptures. Among the more than fifty Chinese and Korean pilgrims to India during the Tang Dynasty, his travels were by far the most extensive. Yet he left no apparent mark on the Buddhist world; we know him only from a fragment of his travel journal, discovered by the French Orientalist Paul Pelliot in 1908 among tens of thousands of documents in the Library Cave at Dunhuang.

This collaborative project, inspired by Hyecho's journey, offers an entirely new perspective on Buddhism in four ways. First, it focuses not on the philosophical doctrines or the meditative states of Buddhist elites. Instead, it will consider a far more ubiquitous form of Buddhist practice: pilgrimage. In an apocryphal passage, the Buddha on his deathbed said that those who visited four sites—the place of his birth, the place of his enlightenment, the place of his first teaching, and the place of his death—would be reborn in heaven. Over the centuries, Buddhists from across Asia have made their way to these sites in India, or to substitutes for those sites in their own lands.

Second, our project focuses not on the masterpieces of Buddhist literature by the famous masters of the tradition, but on a fragmentary travelogue by a young and, apparently, undistinguished monk. Although the history of the everyday has played an important role in European Studies in recent decades, it has yet to make its way into the conservative and text-based world of Buddhist Studies.

Third, the story of Buddhism has always been told as a historical narrative that begins with the Buddha and then branches out from this single source, with each step in its development representing a movement away from the original center and toward an ever-distant periphery. Our story of Hyecho will be different, presenting Buddhism as an international tradition at one of its most vibrant periods, seen through the eyes of a single monk. Instead of following a vertical trajectory, from past to present, it will offer a horizontal perspective, surveying the Buddhist world at a single moment—the eighth century—from horizon to horizon, from Korea in the east to Persia in the west. Buddhism will be presented as a network of interlocking traditions that cross national and cultural boundaries, a system without a single center but with many interconnected hubs.

Fourth, the fact that Hyecho did not stay anywhere long enough to master a local language is significant to the humanities more broadly. He journeyed so far over such a brief period of time that his encounter with Buddhism in the many regions of the Buddhist world was largely visual: he encountered Buddhism through art, architecture, and ethnography. This project will therefore be the first to seek to convey detailed knowledge of an Asian religious tradition through material culture rather than through doctrine. In the Asian humanities, textual scholars rarely work with images and art historians rarely work with texts; it is only in the last generation that it has been expected that scholars of Asian art be able to read the languages of the cultures they study. This project will seek to provide a new paradigm in the form of a rich and detailed narrative of the Buddhist tradition as Hyecho encountered it, a world that he saw *in situ* rather than read about in sutras. The approach of our project has no precedent, either individually or collaboratively.

On October 28, 2017, the Freer|Sackler Galleries in Washington will open an exhibition of Buddhist art entitled, “Resonance, Wonder, Relevance.” The exhibition will run for three years and then likely travel to other galleries (including UMMA), serving as a model for a new approach to the display of Buddhist art. One of the six spaces of the exhibition will be devoted to Hyecho’s pilgrimage. Because this project will include an art exhibition, this collaboration will not only bring together textual scholars and art historians of several regions of the Buddhist world, but will also contribute to Museum Studies. Over the past century, Asian art has moved from the category of ethnography (typically displayed in museums of natural history) to that of “fine art,” comprising national canons during the post-colonial period. Most recently, it has been presented as something to be “experienced.” Our collaborative project will provide an opportunity to both create such experience and to interrogate this new museological category.

The project advances the humanities in the academy in a number of ways. Most immediately and locally, the creation of a mobile app with the Multidisciplinary Design Project (discussed below) will involve four engineering undergraduates as collaborators in a humanities project. Among the many projects that have been supported by MDP over the years, ours is the first application with a PI from an LSA unit.

For a variety of reasons (some of which have been documented by members of our team), Buddhism and Buddhist Art are topics of constant fascination to a broad audience, both in the academy and beyond. Our project will provide an entirely new perspective on the Buddhist world, one that offers an alternative to much of the fantasy surrounding the tradition. The audience for the several products of our project will include undergraduate students with majors and minors outside the humanities, heritage communities from a wide range of Buddhist cultures now living in the US, members of the public, and high school students who might receive their first exposure to Buddhism through our project. For all these audiences, our project will demonstrate the power of the humanities to represent the human, literally bringing ethereal musings about Buddhism and its “spiritual path” down to earth, leading new travelers along the perilous and dusty path where the young Hyecho walked.

### 3. Collaborative Activity

Even in the most limited sense of the term, this project would be impossible without collaboration. No single scholar has the disciplinary training and the linguistic skills to carry out this project alone. However, our vision of collaboration is far broader, and is organized around two main themes, which we call the collaborative imagination and networks of collaboration. Thus, our model of collaboration, the method of our collaboration, and the product of our collaboration is the interactive map (and all of the scholarly research that underlies it), with intersecting lines of places and people, both past and present.

Because Hyecho's text is so fragmentary and because he is a largely unknown figure in the history of Buddhism, the imagination of many is required to consider such basic questions as: Why did he go? How did he communicate abroad? How did he choose his destinations? How did he find his way? Each member of the team has traveled extensively in Asia, facing these questions ourselves. We will seek to project ourselves back to his time, learning everything we can about the quotidian, turning away from the sacred texts and deep philosophy of Buddhism to focus on the far more mundane practices of pilgrimage. This exercise in collaborative imagination will allow us to blur the lines between expert and audience, teacher and student, reversing the hierarchy of authority. The team was conceived with the explicit aim to connect staff, faculty, and students from a range of backgrounds and generations, uniting them around a common research goal. Our collaboration will require us to contemplate the meaning and purpose of scholarship, with Team Hyecho engaged in everything from translating original sources to developing exercises for high school students. With the interactive map and the art exhibition having the potential to travel widely and simultaneously, and with the undergraduate course on Hyecho being taught repeatedly, the network of collaboration will continue to expand, using a kind of intellectual crowd-sourcing as a form of collaboration, in which the audience is involved in the "finished product," which is never really finished.

Hyecho's remarkable journey could not have occurred without a host of collaborators: the Chinese seamen who sailed his ship west to India, the Sogdian owners of the caravanserai where he slept as he traveled east along the Silk Road, the Indian villagers who fed a foreign mendicant. All of these collaborators, so essential to his success, remain unknown to history. Just as Hyecho's journey reveals Buddhism as a network of interconnected hubs, our vision of collaboration is based on ever expanding networks of collaboration—and named collaborators—along axes of age, language, gender, nationality, and interest. Each member of our team has already reached out to colleagues around the world. We have arranged for one member of Team Hyecho, Rebecca Bloom, to make her own pilgrimage to Washington, spending a year as a visiting fellow at the Freer|Sackler Galleries, working on the development and installation of the October 2017 exhibition where Hyecho will play an important role. She will extend the network of collaboration to the Freer|Sackler curators and staff, forming a new team that will design the exhibition. With the opening of the exhibition and with the app we will design for it, an entirely different network of collaborators will be added: the members of the public who attend the show will discuss it on social media, and provide feedback to the museum's visitor surveys. Based on their advice, we will revise the interactive map and the contents of the app. When the Hyecho course is taught at Michigan, another network of collaborators will be created: the students in the course, who will offer their views on how the course can be improved in future iterations. Yet another network of collaborators will be created when the GCC course is taught; the students who recreate Hyecho's journey will make their own film of their travels, with the footage added to the Hyecho site. Still another network of collaborators will be created when the yet-to-be announced Center for Silk Road Studies is established at Berkeley. We have reached out to its director and have begun conversations about a graduate student conference on Hyecho, presenting new models for collaboration.

In the next stage of this project, we expect a number of collaborative relationships to emerge. Beyond our close cooperation with the Freer/Sackler curators and staff (we plan to take Team Hyecho to Washington at least once), we will be expanding the team in the winter to include the app designers from the College of Engineering, which will include three programmers and a designer. We have already received approval for our application to next year's round of projects through the Multidisciplinary Design Project. The entire team has already received group training on CartoDB, the mapmaking software recommended by the Map Library, and we have already developed and begun to populate a Google Sheet with site data, including images related to the sites that Hyecho visited. We will continue to add content collaboratively, using the map in our biweekly meetings to highlight emerging research questions, track our progress, and set goals. Once we have the basic map data in place, we will divide into smaller teams for the production of the four levels of app commentary—targeting the scholar, the Buddhist, the general public, and high school students, respectively—with team members rotating among all four groups in order to provide maximum creativity. For developing content aimed at high school students, we will consult with faculty in the School of Education.

#### **4. Members of the Research Team**

**Donald Lopez** is a specialist in Buddhism. His books include works for both specialist and non-specialist audiences; he has collaborated in producing translations, monographs, and reference works.

**Carla Sinopoli** is a specialist in the archaeology and early history of South Asia. She brings extensive museum experience to the project, include exhibition curation and associated outreach and teaching.

**Kevin Carr** is a specialist in Japanese religious art. He has studied pilgrimage for many years and is currently writing a book on sacred space in premodern Japan.

**Keiko Yokota-Carter** is a library specialist, promoting digital humanities, scholarly and public communication, and research partnerships among staff, faculty, and students.

**Rebecca Bloom** is a PhD candidate specializing in Tibetan Buddhism and Himalayan art. Her research experience and interests extend into the realm of Museum Studies, particularly the display of Buddhist art in museums in America and monasteries in northwestern India.

**Chun Wa Chan** is a PhD candidate who studies the construction of religious worldviews in East Asian Buddhist through material culture of the eighth century. He has an M.A. in Museum Studies and is also interested in cultural politics surrounding the display of Buddhist artifacts within and beyond East Asia.

**Ha Nul Jun** is a PhD pre-candidate specializing in Indian Buddhist doctrine and Buddhism in Korea. He has worked on a number of Buddhist translation projects between Korean and English.

We do not anticipate any changes to this team during the two-year project.

This project could not be undertaken without diversity. Our team brings together faculty, staff, and graduate students from three departments (as well as the library), four nationalities, four native languages, and expertise in both South Asia and East Asia in the disciplines of Art History, Archaeology, Religious Studies, Information Sciences, and Engineering. Three members of the team (Sinopoli, Bloom, and Lopez) collaborated on an exhibition of Tibetan art at UMMA in 2013, inspiring them to undertake this much more ambitious project.

The three graduate students will play a wide variety of essential roles throughout the project, from providing text for the monograph, to selecting art for the interactive map, to composing the commentary for the app. When the Hyecho course is taught, they will serve as GSIs, bringing an unprecedented level of knowledge and breadth of perspective to their sections.

We expect our project to have a broad international scope, bringing the contributions of the graduate students to the attention of scholars around the world. For our two students working in Art History, the project will give them invaluable museum experience and allow them to develop longstanding relationships with curators at Freer|Sackler, the national museum of Asian art.

The intellectual and professional skills the students will develop through this project are described below in section 6.

The undergraduates from the College of Engineering who will create the app will add further diversity to our team and will have unprecedented involvement in a humanities project, playing essential roles not only in technical matters but also in design. We intend to take all of the students to Washington to see the artworks and galleries in person.

## 5. Project Outcomes

Our team has already created an extensive collection of materials (shared on M+Box) that will be essential to our collaboration, with over two hundred books and articles (sixty-eight of which deal with collaboration) and almost two hundred image files. With this foundation and the collaborative work we have done to date and will do over the course of the award period, we are planning eight outcomes:

1. The collaboration will produce an interactive map and app, providing a virtual art exhibition, with commentary for four types of audience: (1) the scholar, (2) the Buddhist, (3) the general public, and (4) high school students. For example, for those places where Hyecho wrote poetry, we will provide the Chinese and the English, with the Chinese having audio files for both Tang Dynasty and modern pronunciation. This will be made available both to museums and to individual users through a website. Technological support for the app will be provided by the College of Engineering; this is included in our budget. A beta version of the map is available through [this link](#) (click on “About” and “More Details” for a fuller explanation of the map and its functions). In addition to the online version, we plan to develop the map for both wall and floor projection.
2. The collaboration will produce the most traditional of humanities products: the monograph. In this case, however, the model will be film, with the author as the writer of the screenplay, providing the plot, and with all manner of credited collaborators offering light, color, content, and nuance. This new model of collaboration will be described in the preface to the book, where the names of all team members will appear on the title page. In June, a contract for the book was received from the University of Chicago Press.
3. Our collaboration will be described in an essay that we will collectively write entitled “Collaboratory (n.)” to be submitted to the *Chronicle of Higher Education*.
4. Major Freer|Sackler exhibitions produce an edited volume. Assuming all approvals are received, the edited volume for the Buddhist art exhibition will be a co-publication with the University of Michigan Press, to which all members of the team, including the graduate students, will contribute essays.

5. The collaboration will produce a new undergraduate course, providing an engaged learning setting for an approach to the Buddhist world as seen through the eyes of an eighteen-year-old monk, the same age as a first-year student. Because prior to the course the team will have generated a huge amount of original material in a variety of interactive media, the class will provide an ideal setting to “flip the classroom” in more creative ways than are usually available.

6. The collaboration will produce a Global Course Connections course, which will travel to Asia during the break after the Fall Term (travel to South Asia in the spring is not possible because of the heat of North India). Students will retrace a part of Hyecho’s route and act as videographers, producing content that will be added to the interactive map.

7. The collaboration will produce a graduate student conference, likely hosted by the yet-to-be announced Center for Silk Road Studies at Berkeley, where, using Hyecho’s journey as a model, new approaches to humanities collaboration by textual scholars and art historians will be explored, thus introducing collaboration to a new generation of humanities scholars.

8. The collaboration will produce an art exhibition at UMMA after the exhibition in Washington is closed and begins to travel.

## **6. Project Management Plans**

In addition to the basic responsibilities of the PI listed in the call for applications, he and the other faculty members will foster collaboration within the team, manage tasks through Gantt charts and project management software (Trello or smartsheet), and coordinate broader collaborations with other people and units on campus, as well as international partnerships.

Three of our team members are graduate students working with one or more of the faculty team members. Therefore, mentoring relationships are already in place and each of the students has been presented with a range of professional development opportunities. Part of this project involves a kind of apprenticeship, in which students will observe and emulate how faculty mentors formulate and execute research plans, manage collaborative projects, cultivate connections with other experts, design courses, and produce deliverables, including an exhibition-related edited volume and a trade publication meant to reach audiences beyond the academy. Each of the members of the team will be responsible for leading sub-projects on a smaller scale, as we have already done with our “data master” who was in charge of the creation of the spreadsheet.

At the same time, our vision of collaboration seeks to disrupt traditional academic hierarchies, with each member of the team recognized as an equal partner in and contributor to the multiple outcomes of our project.

Although the team members already share a qualitative sense of the positive effects of collaboration and mentoring, at the start of the second stage of this project, we will establish an initial baseline using a questionnaire based on the Kirkpatrick/Phillips five levels of evaluation. We will revisit the same questions at various stages of the process to continually increase the benefits of the project for all team members. Faculty members on the team will also meet on a regular basis with individual students to check in, offer advice, and gather feedback.

## 7. Documentation and Assessment Plans

Currently, we are planning to develop a robust website, the centerpiece of which will be an interactive map. Although we will be developing a mobile app and other interfaces, our initial plan is to establish a site that will include the electronic map itself (designed with ArcGIS software and based on the spreadsheet data we have already created), together with supporting text, links, and other resources that will use WordPress (or a more sophisticated content management system), managed and updated during the life of the project by a UROP student. We have had preliminary discussions with staff in charge of the Michigan Library online exhibits, which already include a number of digital maps. We are also interested in a single Humanities Collaboratory platform created and hosted by the library's "Design and Discovery" office.

We have also consulted with the UM Visual Resources Collection about image protocols. Based on their guidelines, we plan to set up a database to catalog the images and manage copyrights, following the imaging protocols established by the LSA Museums Steering Committee. Based on this, we will produce archival quality digital assets that will be available to the UM research community.

For the planned mobile app, we have applied to the Multidisciplinary Design Program (College of Engineering) for design of an iOS map app that will be keyed to places and museum objects. Funding for the app is included in the budget. We will also contract to have the Android version developed.

Throughout the process, we will promote real-time collaboration by maintaining as many of the resources as possible on sharing services such as Google Drive and M+Box.

We will have multiple backup locations (Cloud-based and hard copies) of all of our data, especially the spreadsheet, relational database for image management, the interactive map, and the app.

As we enter into the next stage of this project, we will be coordinating an increasingly broad range of stakeholders, including colleagues at Berkeley, the Freer|Sackler Galleries, and scholars in Asia. Each of those partnerships will entail clear deadlines for various products of this collaboration. At those junctures, we will not only evaluate the perspectives of group members, we will also solicit a "360° review" from all parties to ensure that we are taking full advantage of each collaborative opportunity.

Among the first agenda items for the next stage will be to discuss our progress so far and to strategize how to maximize the creative potential of this unique collaborative work. That discussion will provide a baseline for later evaluation while also laying out a set of research, mentoring, and collaborative goals.

Ultimately, the success of this project will be measured in a variety of ways. The first and most obvious will be quantitative, including such things as museum attendance, class enrollments, book sales, and website clicks. These results will also be assessed qualitatively, through such means as visitor feedback and student course evaluations. The larger questions we hope to answer include: What are the fruits of creative collaboration that can expand individual and institutional notions of public humanities? And what does our experiment with collaboration suggest for the future of scholarship in the twenty-first century?

## 8. Project Timeline

A Gantt chart that details our plans on Google Drive can be found at this [link](#) (note that there are multiple tabs in the spreadsheet).

Donald Lopez will remain as PI for both years of the project. The other members of Team Hyecho (faculty, staff, and graduate students) will also remain the same. Over the course of the two years, we will hold a two-hour meeting of the full team twice a month, with members communicating with the full team and individually regularly using e-mail and Google Drive, M+Box, and Skype. The full team will make a trip to Washington to meet with Freer|Sackler curators in Winter 2017. The team will also make two trips to Asia, one each year, the first to Korea and China, the second to India.

Milestones will include the completion of the manuscript of the monograph and submission to the University of Chicago Press by the end of Fall 2016; the selection of the engineers and designers for the app in October 2016, with work to begin in January 2017 (the app creation project is a Winter and Fall two-semester Engineering course). The interactive map and app will be ready for installation at Freer|Sackler in time for the opening of the exhibition on October 28, 2017. Fall 2017 will be devoted to the teaching of the Hyecho course and the GCC course over the mid-semester break. Winter 2018 will be devoted to refining the interactive map and app based on student input from the course and visitor feedback at Freer|Sackler. Also in Winter 2018, we plan to organize a graduate student conference on collaboration.