Goal of Lecture
To explore the pattern of donor inscriptions, donor portraits, and scenes of worship or consecration on (mainly) sculptures in eastern South Asia of the ca. 8th–12th c. Works of Brahmanical (i.e. “Hindu”), Buddhist and Jain themes will be considered, including representative sculptures in the Asian Art Museum’s collection. The data relating to patronage found on sculptures will be mined for information about the identities, intentions, and practices of the patrons, sculptors and intended viewers.

Vocabulary and Terms
Pāla dynasty: ruled much of Bengal and Bihar and at times parts of Odisha (Orissa) between the 8th and 11th centuries; many of the rulers were Buddhist, but Śaiva, Vaishnavite, Sakta and Jain religions and arts also flourished.

Sena dynasty: rivals and successors to the Pāla dynasty, mainly in Bengal during the 11th and 12th centuries; had connections to south India and especially promoted Brahmanical (Hindu) religion; many images of Viṣṇu were created during their rule.

Nālandā monastery: large Buddhist monastery in Bihar that was one of the centers of Buddhist art between the 9th and 11th centuries

Purohit: family priest in Brahmanical tradition; religious preceptor who conducts rituals

Ācārya: learned instructor; used here to refer to a Buddhist master who conducts initiations

Pratiṣṭā: “establishing”; installing and consecrating a religious image

Mūrti: consecrated religious image

Tīrthaṅkara: “ford-maker”; a Jain founding Jina, or enlightened teacher, of whom there are 24

Suggested Reading
