

CLAIRE R. MAES

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Latest update on: 22.02.2024

EDUCATION

- July 10, 2015 **Ghent University**
- Ph.D., Oriental Languages and Cultures
Dissertation: "Dialogues With(in) the Pāli Vinaya. A Research into the Dynamics and Dialectics of the Pāli Vinaya's Ascetic other, with a Special Focus on the Jain Ascetic other."
Promotor: Ann Heirman
Committee: Johannes Bronkhorst, Max Deeg, Bart Desein, Oliver Freiberger
- 2005-2007 **University of Mysore**
- Master of Philosophy
First class, Jayalakshamma Nanjundaiah Hebbale Endowment Cash Prize
- 2001-2005 **Ghent University**
- Master and Bachelor, Oriental Languages and Cultures
Master Thesis: "Jain and Buddhist *bhikṣuṇīs*. A Comparative Study."
Great Distinction

PROFESSIONAL APPOINTMENTS

- 1 September 2021 **Assistant Professor/ Junior Professorin (W1 Tenure-Track)**
Tübingen University, Department of Indology
- Sept. 2018-May 2021 **Lecturer**
University of Texas at Austin, Department of Asian Studies
- 2016-Aug. 2018 **Postdoctoral Researcher**
Fellow of the Robert H.N. Ho Family Foundation
University of Texas at Austin, Department of Asian Studies
- 2013-2016 **Lecturer**
Ghent University, Department of Languages and Cultures
- 2008-2012 **Researcher**
Ghent University, Department of Languages and Cultures

LANGUAGES

- Sanskrit: Advanced reading competency (fourteen years)
- Middle Indic Languages:
- Pāli Advanced reading competency (seven years)
- Ardhamāgadhī Intermediate reading competency (six years)
- Mahārāṣṭrī Intermediate reading competency (three years)
- Hindi: Intermediate reading, speaking, writing competency (seven years)

Spanish: Intermediate reading, basic speaking, writing competency (four years)
 Dutch: Native
 French: Bilingual competency
 English: Native-level competency

German: A2-level competency

GRANTS

06/01-08/31 2019 The Käte Hamburger Kolleg of the CERES at the Ruhr-Universität in Bochum (Germany) – Postdoctoral Fellowship
 2016-2018 The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Program in Buddhist Studies – Postdoctoral Fellowship
 2008-2012 FWO Research Foundation Flanders – Research Fellowship
 2005-2007 Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) – Full scholarship for studying Philosophy at the University of Mysore

PUBLICATIONS

Work in Progress

monograph *The Jain Soteriological Practice of Fasting to Death (sallekhanā): Classical Sources and Contemporary Challenges*
 book chapter “The Contested Cloak of Nakedness: Polemics and Identity Negotiations in Early Jainism.” In *Plurality in South Asia: Festschrift*, edited by Annemarie Mertens, Friederike Grenner, Nicolas Martin, and Ingo Strauch
 monograph *Buddhism, Jainism, and the Proximate other. Identity Formations in Early India.*

Articles, Book Chapters, Essays, and Reviews:

peer reviewed “Anger and Defamation in the *Pāli Vinaya*. A Semantic Analysis of the Stock Phrase “*manussā ujjhāyanti khīyanti vipācenti*.” *Journal of the International Association for Buddhist Studies*.
 forthcoming “‘I heard it through the grapevine.’ An Analysis of Gossip and Rumour in the Pāli Canon as Strategies to Deal with Religious Others.” *Religious Pluralism in South Asia* edited by Brian Black and James Madaio. Bloomsbury: New York & London.
 forthcoming “Buddhism and Other South Asian Religions,” *Brill’s Encyclopedia of Buddhism. Volume IV: History*. Brill: Leiden. Co-authored with Christopher Jones and Péter-Dániel Szántó.
 forthcoming Review Article of Jain, Shugan Chand & Chapple, Christopher Key, eds., *Sallekhanā: The Jain Approach to Dignified Death*. New Delhi: D.K. Printworld Ltd., 2020. *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung*.
 2023 “*Sallekhanā* and the End-of-Life Option of Voluntarily Stopping of Eating and Drinking: An Ethical Argument to Consider the Jain Practice of Fasting to Death as Different from Suicide,” *Religions of South Asia* 17.3, pp. 323-350. <https://doi.org/10.1558/rosa.27236>
 2023 “Objects of Asceticism: The Outfit of Jain Nuns” (Article and Video) for promoting the exhibition “Being Jain – Art and Culture of an Indian Religion” (18.11.2022-30.04.23), Museum Rietberg, Zürich. (published online on 7 March 2023) (<https://rietberg.ch/en/exhibitions/being-jain>)
 2022 “Jain Life Reimagined: A Study of Some Jain Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic,” for a special edition on “Religion and Pandemic. Shifts in Interpretations, Popular Lore, and Practices,” *Entangled Religions*, pp. 1-24.

- 2022 Review of Luithle-Hardenberg, Andrea; Cort, John E.; Orr, Leslie C., eds., *Cooperation, Contribution and Contestation: The Jain Community, Colonialism and Jainological Scholarship, 1800-1950. H-Asia, H-Net Reviews*. URL: <https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=56109>
- 2022 "Framing the Pandemic. An Examination of how WHO Guidelines turned into Jain Religious Practices," for a special edition on "Hinduism, Jainism, Yoga, and Ecology" edited by Christopher Key Chapple, *Religions*, pp. 1-18.
- 2022 "The Buddha is a Raft. On Metaphors, the Language of Liberation, and Religious Others in Early Buddhism." In *Buddhism and its Religious Others*, edited by Christopher V. Jones. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 48-67.
- 2021 "Time Wounds All Heels" Remembering Professor P. S. Jaini, *Ahimsa Center Newsletter* 2021, pp. 5-6.
- 2021 "A World Religions Reader. Edited by Ian Markham & Christy Lohr Sapp. Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2020," *H-Asia, H-Net Reviews*, book review, pp. 1-4. <https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=55420>
- 2020 "The Pandemic and My Conversation with a Young Jain," *Ahimsa Center Newsletter* 2019-2020, pp. 4-5.
- 2020 "Teaching Jainism Today: An Essay," *Jain Digest, Federation of Jain Associations in North America (JAINA)*, pp. 103-108. <https://www.jaina.org/page/JainDigest>
- 2020 "Jain Education in South Asia." In *Handbook of Education Systems in South Asia*, edited by P. Sarangapani and R. Pappu. London: Springer Nature, pp. 1-29.
- 2020 "Language of the Snakes. Prakrit, Sanskrit, and the Language Order of Premodern India. Andrew Ollett. Oakland: University of California Press, 2017," *Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni*, book review, pp. 808-811.
- 2020 "The Snake and the Mongoose: The Emergence of Identity in Early Indian Religion. Nathan McGovern. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018," *Entangled Religions* 11 (1), book review, pp. 1-4. <https://er.ceres.rub.de/index.php/ER/article/view/8575>
- 2019 "Gāhāvai and gihattha. The Householder in Early Jaina Sources." In *The Householder in Ancient Indian Religious Culture*, edited by Patrick Olivelle. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 75-91.
- 2017 "Strange Tales of an Oriental Idol: An Anthology of Early European Portrayals of the Buddha. Edited by Donald S. Lopez. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, book review, pp. 1-4.
- 2016 "Flirtation with the other. An Examination of the Processes of othering in the Pali *Vinaya*," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, pp. 1-23.
- 2012 "Jaina Narratives: SOAS Jaina Studies Workshop 2011," *Centre of Jaina Studies Newsletter* 7, pp. 12-15.
- 2011 "A Camouflaged Debate Between Early Buddhists and Jains: A Critical Analysis of Buddhist Monastic Rules Laid Down to Protect One Sensed Facultied Life (*ekindriyam jīvam*)," *Bulletin d'Études Indiennes* 28-29, pp. 85-204.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Undergraduate content courses:

- Death and Dying in South Asia (UT Austin, spring 2020)
- Introduction to South Asia (UT Austin, spring 2019, fall 2019, spring 2021)
- Hinduism in US Popular Culture (UT Austin, fall 2018)
- Jainism: Religion of Non-Violence (UT Austin, spring 2018, fall 2020)
- Introduction to Buddhism (UT Austin, spring 2017)
- Research Methods and Practice: South and Central Asia (Ghent University, 2014–2015)
 - Follow up of students' research papers and presentations

Undergraduate language courses:

- First Year Sanskrit I (UT Austin, fall 2018, fall 2019, fall 2020)
- First Year Sanskrit II (UT Austin, spring 2019, spring 2020)
- Second Year Sanskrit I (UT Austin, fall 2018, fall 2019, fall 2020)
 - Interactive reading from a selection of tales from the Hitopadeśa
- Second Year Sanskrit II (UT Austin, spring 2019, spring 2020)
 - Selective readings from the Kathāsaritsāgara; Jātakamāla; Gītagovinda; and Hemacandra's Yogaśāstra
- Sanskrit Bachelor I (Ghent University, 2010–Aug 2016)
 - Interactive reading from a selection of tales from Somadeva's Kathāsaritsāgara
- Sanskrit Bachelor II (Ghent University, Feb 2013–Aug 2016)
 - Interactive reading of canto III of Aśvaghōṣa's Buddhacarita
 - Interactive reading of Vālmīki's Rāmāyaṇa IV.10 & IV.11
- Sanskrit Bachelor III (Ghent University, Feb 2013–Aug 2016)
 - Interactive reading of a selection of Jātaka tales from Āryaśura's Jātakamāla
 - Selections of Patañjali's Yogasūtra
- Hindi Bachelor I (Ghent University, Feb 2013–Aug 2016)

Graduate language courses:

- Language, Text, and Context: Old and Middle Indo-Aryan (Ghent University, Feb 2013–Aug 2016)
 - Introduction to Prākṛit. Interactive reading of a selection of Prākṛit Mahārāṣṭri verses from the Vajjalaggam in combination with the Sanskrit *chāyā* of Ratnadeva
 - Interactive reading of a chapter of Daṇḍin's Daśakumāracarita

Seminars and other courses at Tübingen University:

- Forschungs-und Berufsfelder (Tübingen University, summer 2023)
- Fasting and the Ethics of Dying (Tübingen University, summer 2023)
- Jainism: Religion of Non-Violence (Tübingen University, winter 2022)
- Introduction to Modern South Asia (Tübingen University, winter 2022)
- Introduction to Indian Religions (Tübingen University, summer 2022, summer 2023)
- Death and Dying in South Asia (Tübingen University, winter 2021)
- Indian Philosophy and the Practice of Non-Violence (Tübingen University, winter 2021)

TRAINING SESSIONS ON TEACHING PEDAGOGY

- 2018 “Engage Your Students and Build Oral Proficiency Through the Written Communication Mode.” 1-day workshop, Texas Language Center, UT Austin, August 1.
- 2018 “Then and Now: Foreign Language Methodology Revisited.” 1-day workshop, Texas Language Center, UT Austin, July 27.
- 2017 “Dealing with Difficult People.” UT Austin, October 4.
- 2015 “Training on How to Advise Students to Write Papers.” Ghent University, October 29.

PARTICIPATION IN WORKSHOPS AND COURSES

- 2022-2023 Leadership Qualification Program (Führungskräftequalifizierungsprogramms). Personalentwicklung, Tübingen University, several sessions spread over SS2022-WS2023.
- 2022 “Athene Mentoring Training.” Tübingen University, January 28.
- 2019 “The 2019 Buddhist Studies Symposium.” The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation, University of New Mexico, NM, September 18-20.
- 2016 “Theravāda Buddhist Civilizations Project, Dissertation Workshop.” Seattle, March 30.
- 2013 “Eurasian Religions in Contact. Summer School of the Käte Hamburger Kolleg.” Center for Religious Studies, Ruhr-Universität, Bochum, Germany, July 3–10.
- 2012 “Advanced Academic English: Conference Skills.” Doctoral Schools, Ghent University, Belgium, September–January (20 contact hours)
- 2011 “Advanced Academic English: Writing Skills.” Doctoral Schools, Ghent University, Belgium, September–January (20 contact hours)
- 2009 “Prakrit Summer School.” Universität Würzburg, Würzburg, Germany, August 17–28.
- 2009 “Fifth International Summer School for Jain Studies.” India, May 30–July 19.
- 2008 “Pali Summer School.” Society for the Wider Understanding of the Buddhist Tradition (So-Wide), Oxford, England, August 15–27.

CONFERENCE ACTIVITY

Conference and Invited Papers:

- 2024 “Fasting to Death by Jains in India Today: Ethical Questions and Legal Debates.” Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages, University of Oslo, Oslo, February 16, 2024.
- 2024 “*Sallekhanā* and the End-of-Life Option of Voluntarily Stopping of Eating and Drinking An Ethical Argument to Consider the Jain Practice of Fasting to Death as Different from Suicide.” CERES - *South Asia Guest Lecture Series*, Bochum, January 10, 2024.
- 2023 “The Embodiment of Non-Violence. A Critical Examination of the Jain Philosophy of Fasting to Death.” *International Konferenz: Selbstvernichtung als Selbstverwirklichung*, Institut für Interkulturelle Religionsphilosophie, University of Vienna, Vienna, November 3-4, 2023.
- 2023 “Beyond Life's End. Towards an Ethical Evaluation of the Jain Practice of Fasting to Death.” *Second Ācārya Mahāprajñā Annual Lecture*, Ghent University, Erasmus, October 5, 2023.
- 2023 “Jain Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic.” Resources and the Construction of Forms of Wellbeing while Negotiating the Relationship between the Individual and the Social (SFB 10170, TP C06 Health as an Individual and Collective Resource), May 8-10, 2023.
- 2023 “Is Sallekhanā a form of Suicide? A Critical Examination of the Legality and Ethicality of the Jain Fast to Death.” Institute of Asian and Oriental Studies, Department of Indian Studies, University of Zurich, April 5, 2023.

- 2023 “Natural versus Unnatural Death Debates: The Case of Sallekhanā and VSED Compared.” Department of Cultural and Religious History of South Asia, Universität Heidelberg, January 16, 2023.
- 2023 “Anger and Criticism in the Pāli Vinaya. A Semantic Analysis of the Stock Phrase *manussā ujjhāyanti kkhīyanti vipācenti*.” World Sanskrit Conference, online, January 9-13.
- 2022 “Fasting and the Ethics of Dying: Comparing the Jain Practice of Sallekhanā with the end-of-life option of VSED (the Voluntary Stopping of Eating and Drinking).” Department of South Asian, Tibetan and Buddhist Studies, Universität Wien, November 25, 2022.
- 2022 “To Eat or Not to Eat Meat? Food and Identity in Early India.” Workshop – Vegetarianism/s as Religious, Ethical, Health-Based, and Environmentalist Practice. Institut für Religionswissenschaft, University of Bern, Switzerland, October 3-4, 2022.
- 2022 “The Art of Dying. Fasting, Sallekhanā, and End-of-Life Choices.” National Seminar – *Sallekhanā: A Multi-Dimensional Study* organized by Bhagwan Shreyansnath Jain Studies Fund, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi (Zoom), September 25-26, 2022.
- 2022 “Fasting in Context. Is the Voluntarily Fasting to Death a Uniquely Jain Practice?” Acharya Gyan Sagar Lecture Series, Zoom, September 15, 2022.
- 2022 “Fasting and the Ethics of Dying: Comparing the Jain Practice of Sallekhanā with the End-of-Life Option of VSED (the Voluntary Stopping of Eating and Drinking).” The Spalding Symposium on Indian Religions. Death, Immortality, and Consciousness, 47th Annual Conference, Zoom, April 22-24, 2022.
- 2022 “Fasting to Death (*sallekhanā*) in Jainism: Ethical Questions and Legal Debates.” University of Cambridge, Faculty of Divinity, Zoom, January 25, 2022.
- 2021 “Renouncing the World While Staying at Home: A Critical Engagement with Gr̥hastha: The Householder in Ancient Indian Religious Culture.” Panel Participant. American Academy of Religion, Zoom/San Antonio, U.S.A., November 20-23, 2021.
- 2021 “The Concept of Karma and Soul in Jain Philosophy,” Institut für Religionswissenschaft, University of Bern, Switzerland, November 29, 2021.
- 2021 “Jain Discourse and the COVID-19 Pandemic,” International School for Jain Studies (ISJS), Zoom, July 26, 2021.
- 2021 “Tattletale on the Grapevine. The Power of Rumor and Gossip in the Pāli Vinaya,” American Oriental Society, Zoom, March 13, 2021.
- 2020 Panel participation: “Jain Studies in North America and Community Sponsorship: Present and Future,” UC Riverside, L.A., November 7, 2020.
- 2020 “Jain Understandings of a Good Death,” The Chander Mohan Jain Memorial Lecture, Huron University, Ontario, Canada, October 7, 2020.
- 2019 “Jains and Buddhists in Ancient India. The Questions of Religious Contact, Identity, and Boundary Negotiations,” South Asia Seminar Series: Religious Boundary-Making in South Asia, SAI, University of Texas at Austin, September 26.
- 2019 “Encounters in the Pāli Vinaya,” The Archeology of Inter-religious Encounters in Ancient India, CERES, Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Germany, July 25-26.
- 2018 “The Buddha is a Raft. On Metaphors and Identity Negotiation in Early Buddhism.” Buddhism and the Religious Other Workshop, The Oriental Institute, University of Oxford, September 9-11.
- 2018 “*Gāhāvai* and *gihattha*: The Householder in the Early Jaina Sources” World Sanskrit Conference, Vancouver, Canada, July 9-13.
- 2018 “Householder in the Early Jaina Sources. A Philological Examination of the Ardhmāgadhī terms *gihattha* (Skt. *gr̥hastha*) and *gāhāvai* (Skt. *gr̥hapati*).” American Oriental Society, Pittsburg, PA, March 16-19
- 2017 “The (Im)materiality of Early Jain-Buddhist Interaction: Towards a Typology of Contact Opportunities.” Department of Religious studies, Yale University, November 9.
- 2017 “Keeping Up Appearances: Negotiating Ideal Monastic Behaviour in Early Indian Buddhism.” European Association for the Study of Religion, Leuven, Belgium, September 18-21.

- 2017 “Early Buddhists and their Jain Ascetic other, an Examination.” XVIIIth Congress of the IABS, Toronto, Canada, August 20–25.
- 2017 “Early Jain-Buddhist Interaction.” Jain Vishva Bharati Institute, Ladnun (Rajasthan, India). July 17.
- 2017 “From ‘Ascetic’ to ‘Ascetic other’. A Philological Examination of the Pāli Term *titthiya*.” American Oriental Society, L.A., U.S.A., March 17-20.
- 2016 “To Be or Not to Be Naked? An Examination of Identity Negotiation in Early Jainism.” American Academy of Religion, San Antonio, U.S.A., November 18-22
- 2016 “The Buddha is a Raft.” On Metaphors and Identity Negotiation in Early Buddhism. International Institute for Asian Studies, Leiden (Netherlands). April 28.
- 2015 “Dialogues With(in) the Pāli Vinaya.” Textual and Visual Dialogues Between Religions in South Asia, Bochum, Germany, July 9–10.
- 2015 “The Development of the Concept of Ahimsā in Early Jaina Scriptures.” Fourth International Jain Conference of the Gyansagar Science Foundation, Sonagiri (MP, India), December 5-6.
- 2015 “Buddhist Monasticism.” Background Education, Antwerp (Belgium), November 10.
- 2014 “Friend or Enemy? A Critical Examination of the *brāhmaṇa* Presence in the Pāli Vinaya.” XVIIth Congress of the IABS, Vienna, Austria, August 18–23.
- 2014 “The Development of Buddhist Monastic Communities, or the Dynamics of Inclusion and Exclusion.” Panel organized together with Paul Nietupski, John Carroll University. XVIIth Congress of the International Association of Buddhist Studies (IABS), Vienna, Austria, August 18–23.
- 2014 “Why Do We Know What We Know About Buddhism? A Critical Consideration of our Nineteenth Century European Heritage for the Study of Buddhism.” The Permanent Training in Buddhist Studies, Centre for Buddhist Studies at Ghent University, Belgium, May 13.
- 2014 “The Dialectic of the Religious other in the Pāli Vinaya. Tracing Boundaries in an Early Buddhist Monastic Text.” Buddhism’s Boundaries Conference, The University of Texas at Austin, U.S.A., March 1.
- 2013 “Early Jain-Buddhist Contacts.” Eurasian Religions in Contact, Bochum, Germany, July 9.
- 2013 “The Dialectic of the other: Identity Constructions within Early Indian Buddhism.” The Permanent Training in Buddhist Studies, Centre for Buddhist Studies at Ghent University, Belgium, March 12.
- 2011 “The Denomination of the ‘Other’ in the Pāli Vinaya: an Analysis of the Construction of a Buddhist Identity.” XVIth Congress of the IABS, Dharma Drum Buddhist College in Jinshan, Taiwan, June 20–25
- 2011 “Precepts and Vows.” Panel Moderator. XVIth Congress of the IABS, Dharma Drum Buddhist College in Jinshan, Taiwan, June 20–25.
- 2011 “Interaction Between Early Buddhists and Other Śramaṇas: an Analysis of the Representation of *titthiyas* in the Pāli Vinaya.” Oslo Buddhist Studies Forum, University of Oslo, Norway, December 13.
- 2010 “How to Understand a Jain Infiltration in Buddhist Monastic Texts? A Critical Analysis of Buddhist Monastic Rules Laid Down to Protect One Sense Facultied Life (*ekindriyaṃ jīvaṃ*).” American Academy of Religion, Atlanta, U.S.A., October 30–November 1.
- 2010 “Jainism’s Unique Classification of Living Beings in Early Scriptures and its Influence on Early Buddhism.” Jainism through the Ages, a Historical Perspective, Mysore, India, October 8–10.
- 2010 “Early Buddhists and Other Ascetic Traditions in India.” The Permanent Training in Buddhist Studies, Centre for Buddhist Studies at Ghent University, Belgium, April 20.
- 2009 “Interaction between ‘Buddhists’ and ‘Jains’ in the Pāli Vinaya.” Dagen der Belgische Oriëntalisten -XLVIIste Sessie, Ghent, Belgium, March 27.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

- Projektstage Hölderlin-Gymnasium Stuttgart: introducing Indology and Jainism to 30 high school students, 10:00-13:00, 21 July 2023.
- Co-organization of and Moderator for “Documentary Films and Filmmakers from Japan, South Korea, and India” within “Gender, Diversity, (Anti-)Discrimination.” Lecture Hall 24, Kupferbau, Tübingen, February 10, 2023.
- Active participation in Studieninfotag Tübingen, November 16, 2022.
- Video and Text: “Objects of Asceticism: The Outfit of Jain Nuns” for promoting the exhibition “Being Jain – Art and Culture of an Indian Religion” (18.11.2022-30.04.23), Museum Rietberg, Zürich.
- Member of the Viva Committee for Erika Caranti’s dissertation (Universität Tübingen, August 3 2021). Topic: Interlocking Dimensions in Hindustani Music: Texts of *caitī*, *kajrī*, and *jhūlā*
- Dissertation committee member of Heleen Jonckheere (Ghent University). Topic: Jain Dharmaparīkṣās, 2016-present.
- Evaluating of Sanskrit credit-by-exam assessments for the Fairfax County Public Schools, Virginia, December 2018, December 2019, May 2021.
- Public lecture at the Jain Society of Houston, April 2018.
- Introducing high school students to Jainism in support of a cultural event. LASA High School (Austin, Texas), February 15, 2018.
- Radio interview for a Buddhist radio in the Netherlands (‘Boeddhistische Omroep Stichting’) on the history of Buddhist Studies, March 2014.
- Representing Ghent University and the Department of Languages and Cultures at National Study Fairs, 2012 and 2015.
- Creation and upkeep of the websites “Ghent Centre of Buddhist Studies” and “Sinologie” for the department of Languages and Cultures of Ghent University, 2008-2012.

ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP

American Academy of Religion

American Oriental Society

Association for Asian Studies

European Association for Religious Studies

Ghent Centre for Buddhist Studies

International Association for Buddhist Studies

International Association for Sanskrit Studies

Theravāda Buddhist Civilizations Project