

# A Study of the *Vāstunāga*

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The *vāstunāga*, literally means “a serpent of site”, is the *nāga* drawn on the surface of the ground where a building is to be constructed. It was performed as a part of the traditional architectural ritual in India. In the period when Tantric Buddhism flourished, the *vāstunāga* ritual was applied to the procedure of *maṇḍala* construction. For the *maṇḍala* stands for the dwelling palace of the deities depicted in it, the Buddhists of this period followed the method of the architectural ritual for its construction.

The following ritual compendiums of Tantric Buddhism explain the *vāstunāga* ritual: the *Vajrāvalī* by Abhayākaragupta, the *Ācāryakriyāsamuccaya* by Jagaddarpaṇa, and the *Kriyāsaṃgrahaṇjikā* by Kuladatta. It is also mentioned in the ritual manuals written by Tathāgatavajra, Divākara-candra, Ratnarakṣita, Prajñārakṣita and Durjayacandra. The architectural texts of Hindu tradition, such as the *Śilpaprakāśa*, the *Vāstuvidyā* also provide the information of this ritual. In addition, some manuscripts in which the *vāstunāga* is depicted are available in Nepal and Tibet.

According to these information sources, I introduce the details of the *vāstunāga* ritual in this article. I, then, indicate the variety of this ritual found in them, especially the difference of the ritual purpose between Hindu architectural ritual and the *maṇḍala* construction of Buddhism should be distinguished.