

LUMBINI GARDEN FOUNDATION



# GREAT BUDDHA PROJECT

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## WHAT IS THE LUMBINI GARDEN FOUNDATION?

The LUMBINI GARDEN FOUNDATION (LGF) is an international foundation, created in 2019 in Madrid and registered in the Registry of Foundations of the Autonomous Community of Extremadura, Spain in 2021.



*Govind Subedi (vice president), Niraj Shrestha (main patron),  
José Manuel Vilanova (president), Eakraj Giri (secretary).*

The mission of the LUMBINI GARDEN FOUNDATION consists of:

- I. **Promote and disseminate** among people of all conditions and beliefs the inspiring principles and values of peace, fraternity and integration that are typical of Buddhism, as an instrument of cultural and spiritual exchange.
- II. **Facilitate and coordinate** the project for the creation and inauguration in Spain of a Buddhist Center, within the framework and execution of the cooperation agreements signed with the city and region receiving the project.
- III. **Promote, coordinate and facilitate cooperation and development programs** in cultural, social, artistic, educational, tourism and sports of all kinds, which value or are the result of, or complementary to, the activities carried out within the framework of the Buddhist Center.



## CONTEXT AND ORIGIN OF THE GREAT BUDDHA PROJECT

European and Asian societies, and even the states that make them up, still do not know each other sufficiently and, although trade relations between them have increased in recent years, it could be said that their relations are still complicated because they have not paid the necessary attention to their sociocultural differences. There is still a lot of work to be done in the knowledge and understanding of the values and guidelines of their societies.



*Japanese illustration on the arrival of the Jesuits in Japan in the 16th century*

Asia presents the most dynamic economic growth in the world. Numerous experts in economic matters state that the TOP10 of the world's economies will be filled in 2030 by large Asian economies and other emerging economies. On the other hand, data from the World Tourism Organization and the United Nations world population prospects for 2030 maintain that tourism is and will be one of the largest global industries, representing a ten per cent of GDP and employment in the world. It is expected that on that date the number of tourists will reach 1.8 billion and, for the first time, Asia will become the main market and destination in the world.





For these and other reasons, the European Union as a whole and each of its member states are paying more attention to institutional, diplomatic and trade relations with Asia, with a special interest in the Pacific axis. In fact, the EU has established a dialogue architecture with the Asian countries that includes regular summits between political leaders of both parties, ministerial meetings and high-level committees that discuss economic, social, cultural and commercial aspects. But, what prevents the full development of relations between the two continents is the great ignorance of their respective values, which are different, and the lack of sincere dialogue of peace and friendship between their peoples.

Considering this, from the LGF we think that the relations between West and East must go beyond mere commercial relations, and take into greater consideration the true inspiring principles of peace, equality and cooperation between peoples. **From this conviction, the idea of developing a project whose mission is to establish permanent contact for exchange and collaboration between these two parts of the world arises.**



The philosophical background of the project is obviously Buddhism, since it is the tradition of thought that has largely shaped Asian societies. This philosophy, or religion according to opinions, makes a firm commitment to the human being, collecting and developing the concept of Ahimsa which, being common to all Indian religions, advocates non-violence and respect for all sentient beings. The ultimate goal is to avoid suffering in this life and to transcend it.

## CÁCERES AND LUMBINI

After analyzing the features of various locations and options, **the LGF has chosen the city of Cáceres as the ideal place to build and develop what would be the reference Buddhist Center in Europe.** In this city, the project has been welcomed by its City Council, which is providing the maximum collaboration so that the Buddhist Center can move forward. In the same way, the Provincial Council of Cáceres shows its support for the project by giving up its facilities for different cultural and exhibition activities, as well as getting involved in the development of infrastructures within its competence. The Junta de Extremadura -Regional Government-, for its part, makes evident its firm support for the project, materialized in a sustained cooperation with the LGF and in the different fields of action.

Cáceres is a Spanish city and municipality, capital of the province of the same name in the north of the Autonomous Community of Extremadura, western Spain. The city of Cáceres, with around one

hundred thousand inhabitants, preserves various vestiges of the different cultures that successively occupied it since its foundation by the ancient Romans. It was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1986, as it is one of the most complete urban ensembles from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance in Europe. Cáceres is a city open to the world, in which, as a Spanish city where there is freedom of worship, all religions are professed.



*Cáceres "Plaza Mayor"*

From the beginning of the project, within the LGF a twinning agreement between the cities of Cáceres and Lumbini was considered; which would result in a first West/East relationship that would develop over time.

Lumbini is a province in south-central Nepal, very close to the Indian border. The city of the same name is home to a first-class sacred and pilgrimage site: the Mayadevi temple, which contains the stone that, according to tradition, marks the place where the Buddha was born. In addition to this temple, there are several new temples, financed by Buddhist organizations from different countries. For this historical-religious reason, Lumbini is considered a city of peace. The city of Lumbini received the title of World Heritage Site conferred by UNESCO in 1997. For the world Buddhist community and all Asian countries with a Buddhist majority, Lumbini is a place of reference and pilgrimage.

Aware of the importance of the municipality as the administration closest to the citizen, and motivated by the fact that relations between municipalities constitute one of the pillars for the maintenance of peace and progress, Cáceres and Lumbini declared themselves twin cities on April 8, 2021. Both municipal corporations considered the different factors that unite the two cities, located in distant regions of the world that need sustainable economic development that allows the improvement of the quality of life and the rights



*World Peace Pagoda, Lumbini*

of their citizens. Both cities being World Heritage Sites, they also coincide in their willingness to establish links that allow them to develop a collaboration for peace in matters of common interest to them.





*Signing of the Twinning between Cáceres and Lumbini in Lumbini, Nepal*



*Signing of the Twinning between Lumbini and Cáceres in Cáceres, Spain*

## EUROPE AND ASIA

In the current world context tending towards multipolarity, Europe and Asia play an important role in the redefinition of world politics due to the magnitude and relevance of their respective economies, as well as the importance of their commercial exchanges. For their part, Cáceres and Lumbini aspire to become actors in the new international relations in the important role that, at the diplomatic level, cities play in the world. His will is to contribute to generating a common ethic and a change of consciousness at a personal and social level, where the person and the institutions develop as a “universal subject with full rights”, with the ultimate goal of allowing progress towards more inclusive societies together with a higher degree of integration and a lower degree of poverty.



Each of these cities, from its own culture and recognizing the great challenges posed by globalization and the technological revolution, works to find and propose solutions in favor of its territorial sustainability and its economic development in relation to its position in the international scene. At a strategic level, the group of World Heritage Cities is committed to increasing cultural tourism that intrinsically carries a higher level of economic activity.

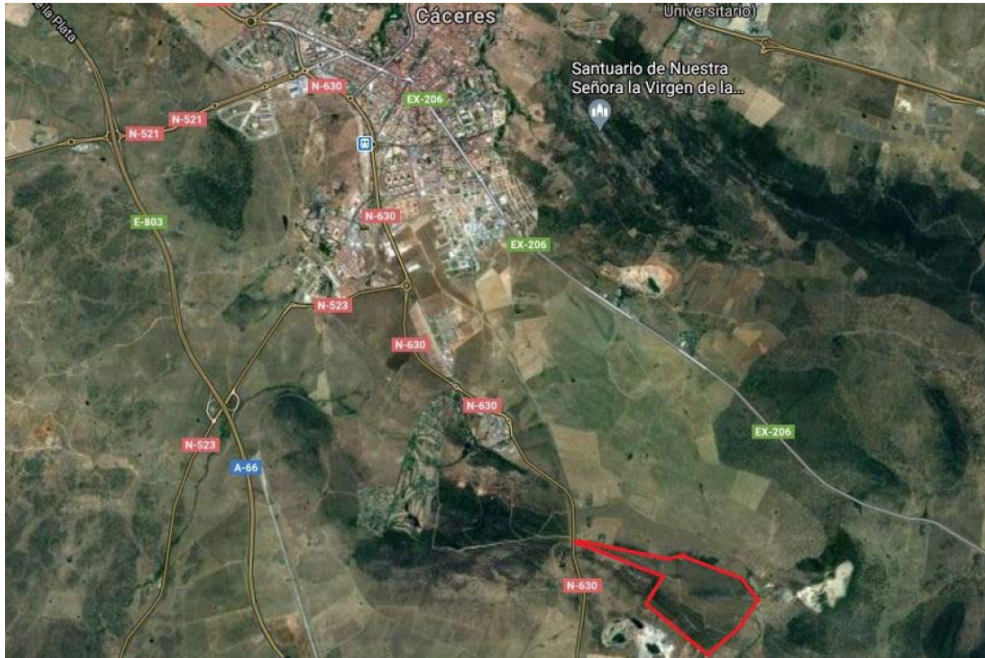
## GREAT BUDDHA PROJECT: OBJECTIVES

1. Based on *ahimsa*, the integral concept of peace promoted by Asian cultures, and which supposes the ethical root of the values of the societies of that continent, it is intended to **build a more solid bridge of dialogue and friendship** between the peoples of Asia and Europe, which will allow a greater relationship between its citizens and a greater economic development based on commercial exchanges.
2. **Provide content and dynamism to the Twinning Agreement between Cáceres and Lumbini** signed in April 2021. Both cities, which hold the title of World Heritage Site, agree on the need for sustainable economic and social development that allows the improvement of the quality of life and the rights of its citizens.
3. **Create the Great Buddha Center** for the dissemination of Buddhist philosophy and practices. Its differentiating characteristic is that it considers itself as a cultural, academic, tourist and religious complex, non-sectarian and open to all traditions and schools of Buddhism.
4. Due to the characteristics of the Buddhist Center and adding to the tourist attractions that make Cáceres worthy of the title of World Heritage Site, **promote the city as both a tourist and pilgrimage destination** for visitors from all over the world, paying special attention to Asian tourism.
5. **Create the “Lumbini Center for Buddhist Studies for Peace”** for training in peace values from the Buddhist perspective. Cultural and knowledge exchange will be promoted through its own academic programs and in collaboration with the University of Extremadura and university centers in Asia.
6. **Promote the exchange of knowledge, experience, as well as international cooperation** in the areas of agri-food, technological innovation, health and sports promotion.
7. **Introduce and position the region of Extremadura and the city of Cáceres in Asia**, while strengthening the Spain brand and the foreign image of our country.
8. **Support companies and professionals from Extremadura** and, by extension, Spanish in the export of their products and services to the Asian continent and in the management, development and construction of the necessary infrastructures in Nepal and other Asian countries participating in the Project.
9. In the different architectural projects that will make up the Buddhist Center, the characteristics and construction **techniques necessary for the comprehensive protection of the environment will be implemented** and contribute to reducing the harmful effects of climate change.
10. As a continuation of its historical tradition, **make Cáceres a universal and open city**, an example of the integration of cultures that largely correspond to the four great religions present in Europe and Asia: Christian, Islamic, Jewish and Buddhist.



## PLANNED INFRASTRUCTURES

The Lumbini Garden Foundation, after studying some lands proposed by the Cáceres City Council, decided to develop the Buddhist Center in what is known as “Monte Arropé”, a rustic farm located to the southeast of the city with main access by road.



*Aerial photo of the city of Cáceres and surroundings*



*Aerial photo of Monte Arropé*

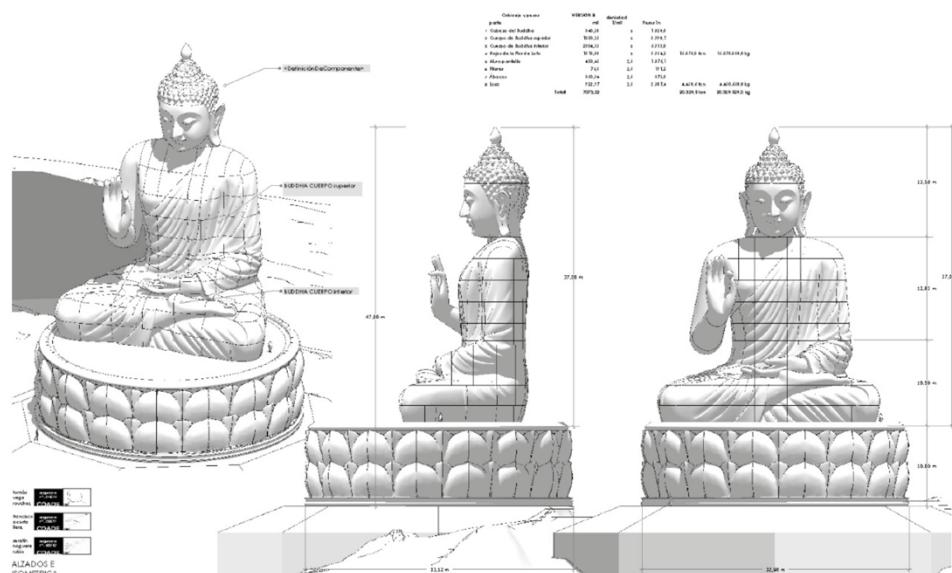
The LGF plans for the Monte Arropé Buddhist Center to have several areas, as shown in the image belonging to the Master Plan published up to the time of editing this document. All of them will revolve around the Great Plaza, the highest point of the mountain, where the great statue of the **Buddha Mahā Karuṇā** will be erected.

The Buddhist Center will have the following areas and facilities,

1. Great Square. Buddha statue
2. Circle of Prayer
3. Great Pagoda
4. Life of the Buddha Pond
5. Entrance and Bahil Patio
6. Cultural Houses
7. Temples and Monasteries
8. Meditation Center
9. Meditation Caves
10. Staff residence
11. Academic Center
12. Recreation area
13. Auditorium
14. Car park
15. Green areas

some of which are listed below:

**Statue of the Mahā Karuṇā Buddha.** The central area of the project for public use and located at the highest point of Monte Arropé is intended to house the main statue that presides over the Buddhist Center. It is the figure of the Buddha of Great Compassion (Mahā Karuṇā) recognizable by the position of his hands (mudra), which denote the transmission of the Teaching that the Buddha accomplishes out of compassion towards beings. Covered with a material known as white jade or buddha stone, it will be 47 m high, including the lotus flower on which the figure sits. Its dimensions will make it visible from a great distance.



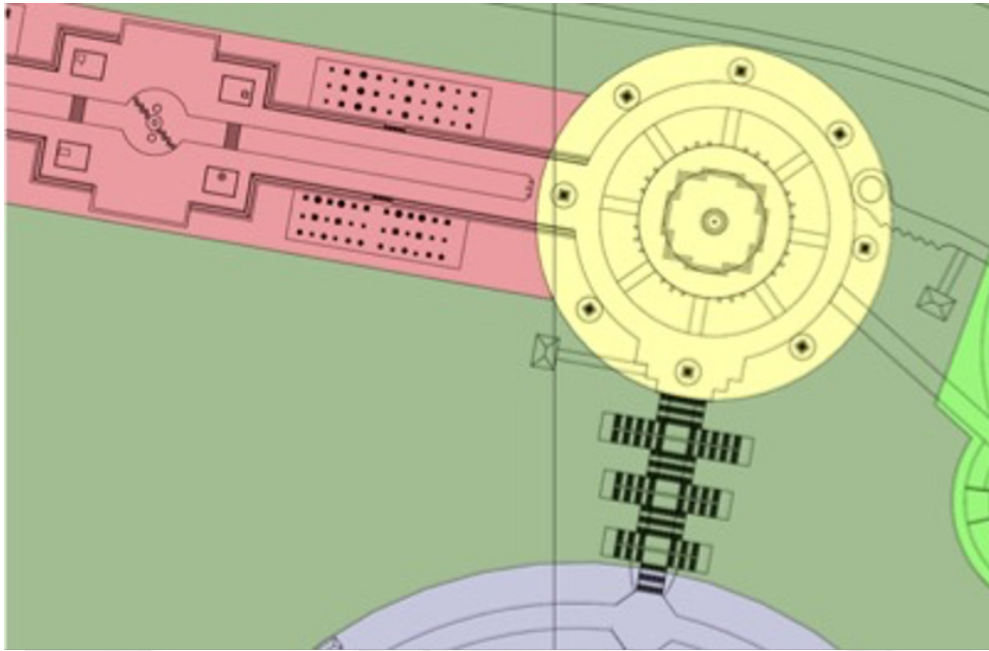
Buddha statue infographic

**Prayer Circle.** Around the statue and below the courtyard of the statue is a square. Its main purpose is to be able to carry out a common practice in Buddhism and Hinduism, consisting of circumambulating in a clockwise direction, always keeping the object of homage to the right. The



space houses incense burners, prayer wheels as well as sheds designed for rest located at the four cardinal points.

From the square, a stairway 8 m wide and 108 steps descends, an auspicious number for Buddhism and which responds to different reasons and interpretations in all Indian religions. On the sides of one of the sections, separate water features have been designed for the enjoyment of visitors, which will also have benches and covered rest areas. Its objective is to unite the great statue with the prayer ring and, below, the ring intended to house the replica of the Shwezigon pagoda or stupa, located in Nyaung-U, Myanmar.



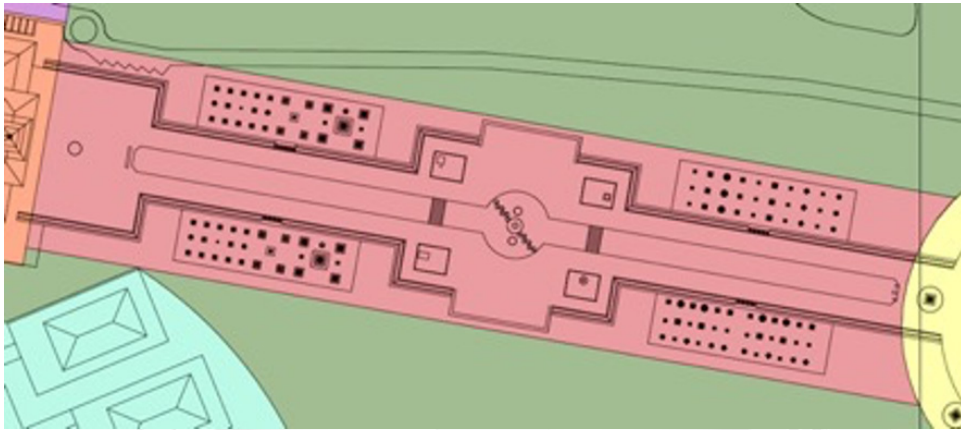
*Infographic of the stairway, stupa and pond*

**Great Pagoda.** The proposed stupa is 40 m. in diameter and the same height, of the Shwezigon type. The plan of the stupa area is based on the Dharmachakra (Wheel of Dharma). 8 small temples (cetiya) are arranged on the outside of the circumference. The stupa is designed to rise 2m high from ground level, giving the impression of a floating stupa in the surrounding pond. Eight inclined bridges will connect the stupa with the surrounding path.



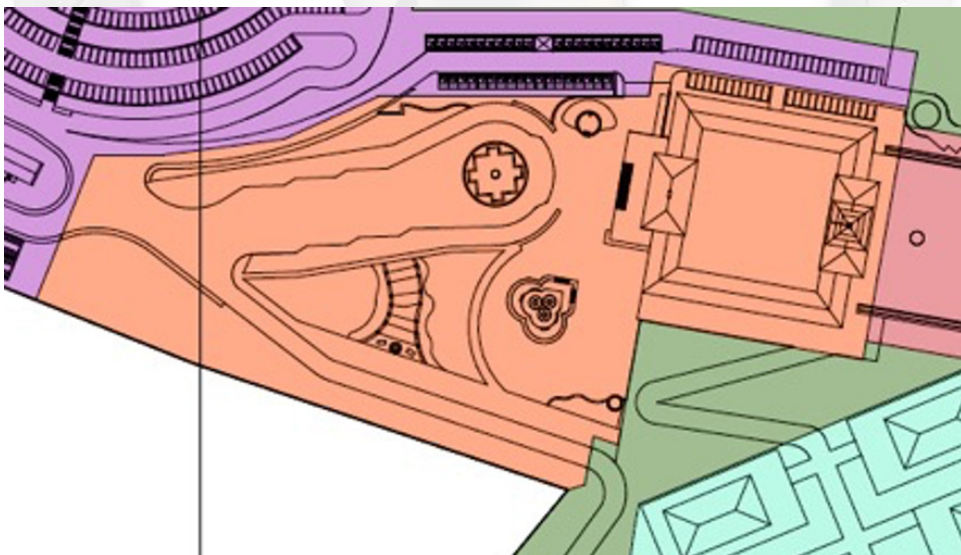
*Shwezigon Stupa,  
Nyaung-U, Myanmar*

**Life of the Buddha Pond.** At the exit of the reception building, and giving entrance to the rest of the complex, the “footprint of the Buddha” (Buddhapada) carved in stone, which traditionally marks the access to a sanctuary, is located on the ground. In this case, the footprint marks the beginning of a corridor presided over by a long water canal that, in Buddhism, symbolizes life, the purest form of food, as well as the calm, tranquility and transparency that characterize a pure state of mind. In the center of the canal, under a roofed structure, is a 2-meter-high white jade statue of the Buddha Mahā Karuṇā, a gift from Myanmar that is exhibited in the Pedrilla Museum in Cáceres.



*Infographic of the pond “Life of the Buddha”*

Surrounding the statue, at the four corners of the square where it stands, there will be memorial buildings for the four Buddhist pilgrimage sites. These are Lumbini, and the three cities in the Ganges basin in India where the great milestones in the life of the Buddha took place: Bodhgaya, Sarnath and Kushinagar. On both sides of the water canal a 36-meter-long mural and 6-meter-high will be extended; with a pictorial description of the Buddha’s life, combining copper plates and brass sculptures, with gold plating in some places.

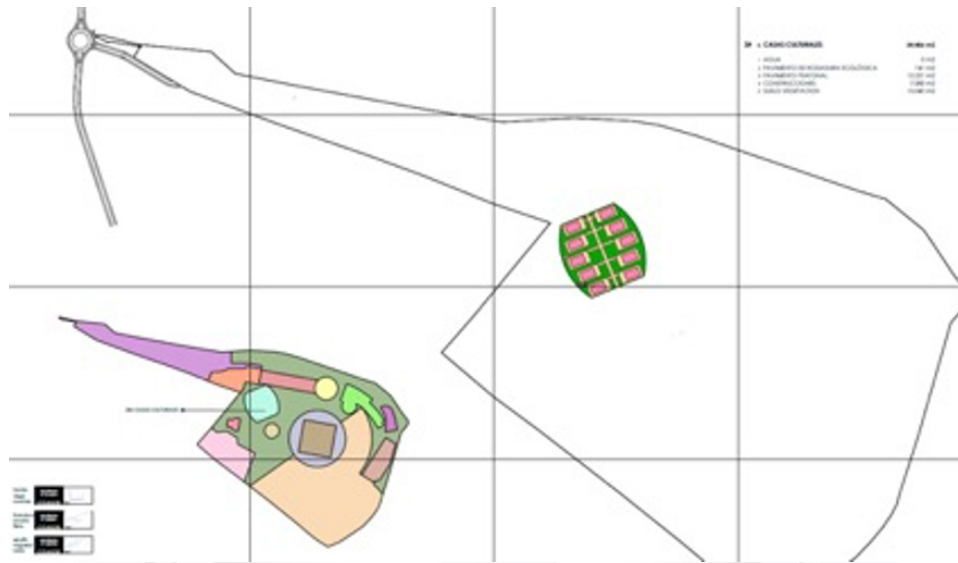


*Infographic of the Bahil Courtyard*

**Entrance and Bahil Court.** The entrance building to the complex is designed in Bahil architecture. It is designed to attract all visitors and residents to the environment of traditional Nepali architecture and authentic experience of Buddhism. The two-story building rises around a central square patio. The open courtyard has a raised stage plinth (dabali) in the northeast corner for various celebrations and performances. The building has its own facilities for visitor reception services.

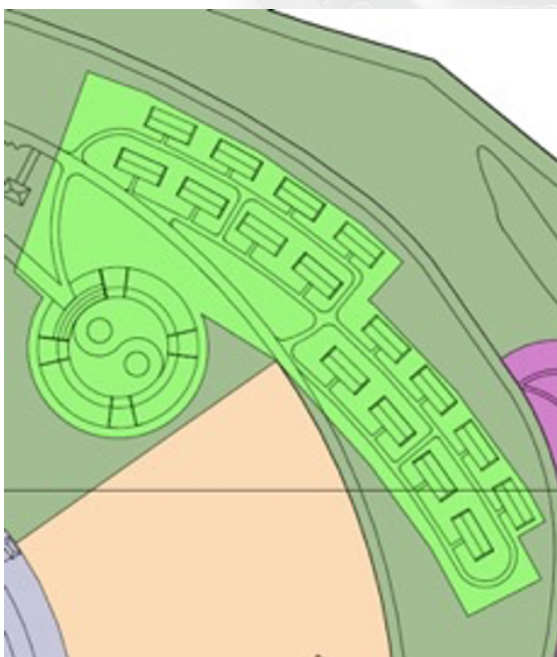


**Cultural Houses.** On the path that leads to the exit gate from the recreational area there is space for 10 cultural houses that, as an embassy, will represent various countries and Buddhist schools. These cultural houses will have different uses (exhibition, information, religious, etc.) at the discretion of the countries that manage them, but always intended for useful services to the public.



*Infographic of cultural houses and their location*

**Temples and Monasteries.** In an area of about 36 hectares located at the southern end of the grounds of the complex, is located what is perhaps the most important area of the complex, where Asia's commitment to the Great Buddha Project materializes. It is here where the direct contact of the public with monastic life and the culture and particularities of each of the Buddhist traditions and schools takes place. The different temples arranged with the Lumbini Garden Foundation, and according to their desire to be present in the Buddhist complex, will have the possibility of building representative monuments, temples of worship or monasteries for the practice of monastic life. Each one of them being managed by each of the owner institutions, their activity will be different according to their nature, but it will always be aimed at knowledge and the relationship with the public. Temples from Thailand, Laos, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Japan, China, etc., may be present in this area, some of which are already working on their respective projects as of the date of editing this document.



*Infographic of the meditation center*

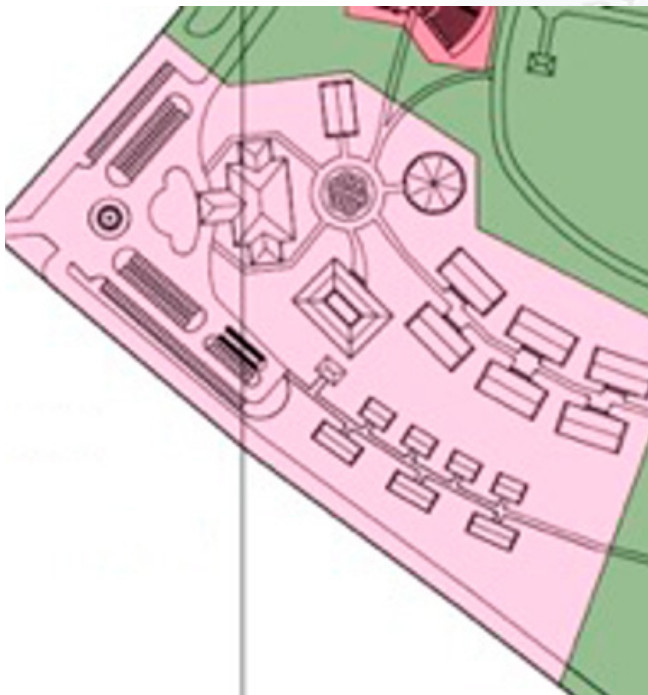
The residential monastic area, for private use, is proposed to the south of the large statue. It will understand the necessary residential facilities for the development of monastic life and will consider the different uses and ways of life of the three Buddhist traditions, with different monastic rules. In this area, the development of residential projects for students, monks and lamas is contemplated. The design of the buildings will be guided by the winter solar path in Cáceres and the relief of Mount Arropé.

**Meditation Center.** It is a unique structure with a circular plan, covered with a vaulted dome. Above it is drawn the universal symbol of yin and yang, which also appears on the flag of Korea, a country to which the center is offered for its sponsorship. This structure allows two open spaces for meditative practice, one semi-open and the other closed.

Associated with this space, accommodation is planned for long-term meditators, so that they do not have to go to the general services of the complex, thus maintaining the appropriate climate of tranquility for meditative practice.

**Meditation Caves.** These are individual and simple accommodations in the form of caves dug into the ground. The purpose is none other than to allow long-term individual meditation retreats in isolation, which responds to a specific type of practice, common to all Buddhist traditions.

**Academic Center.** Academic activity is central to the Great Buddha Project and arises from the collaboration between different academic institutions, mostly Asian, around the University of Extremadura, with which the LGF has signed an agreement for this purpose. The **Lumbini Center for Buddhist Studies for Peace** will be an open center, far from the exclusivity of the ethnic centers that have developed up to now in many countries. In this way, the Center is not identified with any Buddhist school in particular and with all of them at the same time.

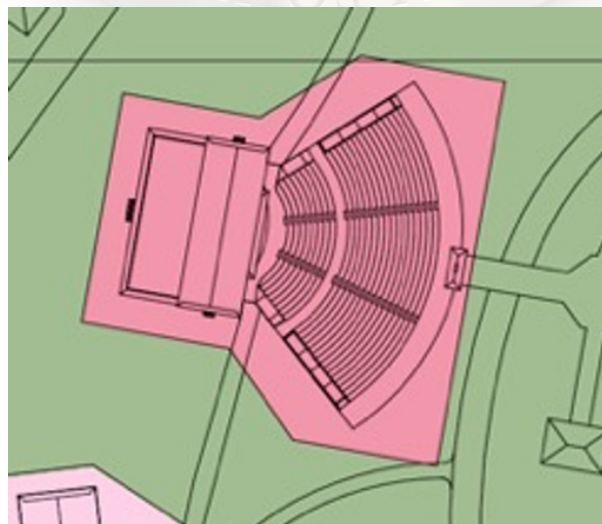


*Infographic of the academic center*

Located to the southwest of the Great Plaza, right on one of the limits of Mount Arropé, it is designed for 500 students of various courses, teaching medium and higher degrees on meditation, Buddhism and various sciences. Three classroom blocks are designed comprising 10 classrooms (20 students) in each block and a conference room. The conference room, with capacity for 600 seats, is another main part of the Study Center, as it forms part of its own nucleus as an articulating element of it. In addition, an administration block, library and faculty blocks are provided alongside student and faculty accommodation buildings.

**Auditorium.** A 1,200-seat open-air amphitheater is planned to be built on the northeast side of the complex. The orientation has been designed considering the climatic peculiarities of Cáceres. It is designed in such a way that solar radiation and its intensity do not harm the spectators or the

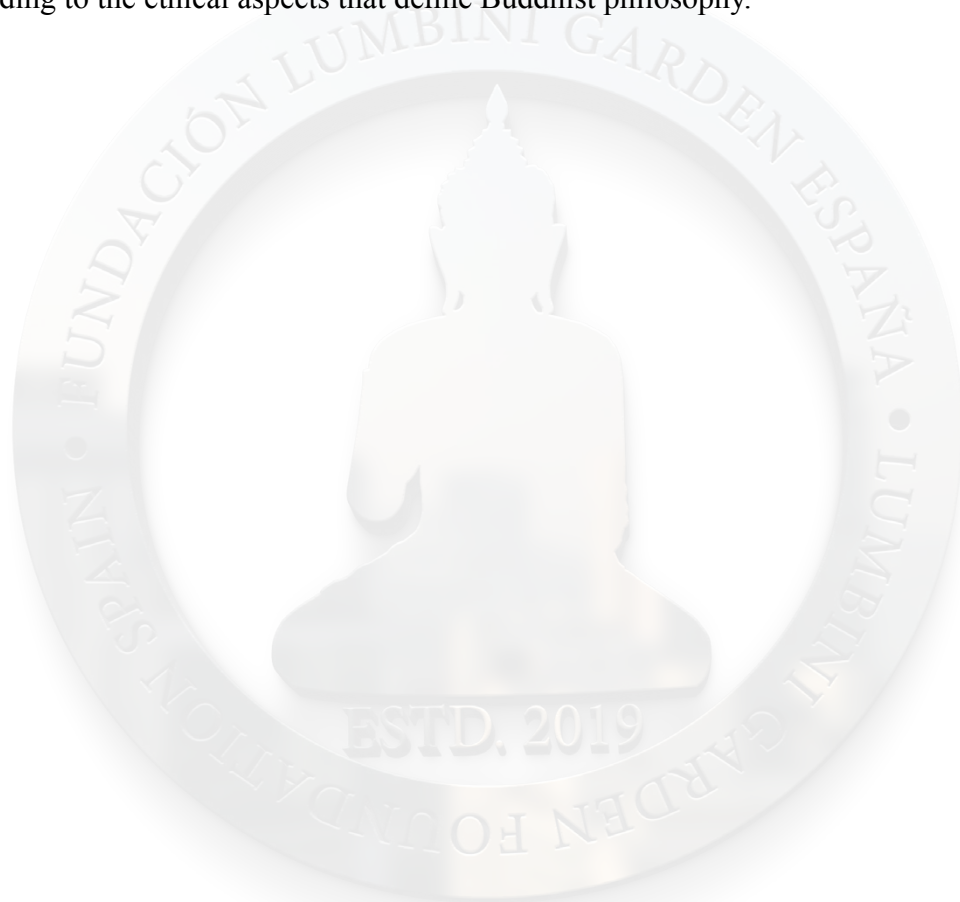
stage. In the same way, the slope of the land itself is used to optimize the generation of grandstands.



*Infographic of the auditorium*

**Parkland.** Special attention is paid to public use areas for natural parks with native characteristics, playgrounds and recreation areas for children, as well as leisure and relaxation areas for adults and, in general, all visitors. These green areas make up the majority of the intervention space. It is intended that the percentage of occupation of the different elements that are included in the Great Buddha of Cáceres project have the necessary swelling that an intervention fully integrated into nature must have. It is the criteria of the Lumbini Garden Foundation, guided by the precepts of Buddhist philosophy, not to establish a complete and complex transformation of the original environment where its temples, places of meditation and recreation are located, but to include them as integrated as possible in the natural environment, so that it contributes to the enhancement of the place and the nature that surrounds them.

**The use of the facilities will be made available to all accredited Buddhist organizations, both monastic and secular, Spanish or foreign,** that need it for the development of their activities. The Buddhist Center at Mount Arropé wants to become a benchmark for openness, plurality and collaboration according to the ethical aspects that define Buddhist philosophy.





# AWARENESS AND INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS

## COLLABORATION OF DONORS. MGJEA

Both the religious, cultural and academic activities contemplated in the Great Buddha Project would not be possible without the necessary funding. It would be naive to think that, in Spain or in Europe in general, with a Judeo-Christian tradition, the survival of a center of these characteristics would be possible with only the contributions of Spanish and European Buddhists or pro-Buddhists. If we only had this financing, the constant budgetary limitations would make both the maintenance of the center and a significant and continuous activity unfeasible over time.

Western Buddhists know that, for now and until our presence has more weight in our countries, our activity depends directly on the financial support of Asian Buddhist organizations, institutions and donors. One of them, and the most significant among those who have supported this project since its inception, is the Myanmar Gems and Jewelry Entrepreneurs Association -MGJEA- (Myanmar Gems and Jewelry Entrepreneurs Association), which provides its support by donating of a stone of pyroxene crystals known as white jade, considered the best possible material for carving images of the Buddha. The MGJEA carves six-foot-tall statues of the Buddha which it makes available to the LGF for

distribution on its behalf to major Buddhist temples and institutions in Asia, and in recognition of its support for the Great Buddha Project and its participation in the Buddhist complex.

The Association was established in 2009 with the purpose of coordinating the different activities involved in the industry, from the extraction of minerals to their final transformation into jewelry and their commercialization, as well as to ensure the protection and well-being of the people and groups whose work is directly related to this productive activity. The MGJEA is registered as a Commercial Limited Company to promote trade or any other economic development objective, and applies its profits (if any) or other income to the promotion of its objectives, prohibiting the payment of any dividends to its members. Thus, the MGJEA is a non-profit trade association; its prestige makes it a reference when it comes to Myanmar gems and jewelry.



*Mandalay quarries, Myanmar*



*Buddha statue prepared for transport*



This Association will be the donor of the necessary material for the construction of the great statue of the Mahā Karuṇā Buddha, an engineering work that will require their advice in the handling and carving of white jade. The statue will possibly be the most valuable jewel in the West.

## THE FIRST STATUE ARRIVES IN SPAIN

The first of the carvings donated by the MGJEA, weighing almost two tons, was sent to Spain in 2020 from Myanmar after its blessing by the venerable Bhamo Sayadaw, spiritual leader of the Burmese Sangha, the monastic community of that country. After a month of travel by sea, the image of the Buddha Mahā Karuṇā arrived at the port of Valencia on August 31, where it was exhibited in La Casa del Reloj of the city's port authority. In that same setting, a beautiful religious welcome ceremony was held with the presence of authorities. After spending a few days in Valencia, where it was visited by a large audience, the statue continued on its way by road to Cáceres. Currently, it is exhibited until its final location in the Pedrilla Museum of the Provincial Council of Cáceres.



*Exhibition of the Buddha statue upon arrival in Valencia*



*Exhibition of the Buddha statue at the Pedrilla Museum, Cáceres*

## CÁCERES, THE FIFTH SACRED LAND

In April 2021, the first milestone of the “Cáceres, Tierra Sagrada” initiative took place, through which it is intended that Mount Arropé, headquarters of the Great Buddha Project, be considered a sacred place for Buddhism, the first outside of Asia. This initiative will be a long process that must be endorsed by the great temples of Asia in ceremonies organized for this purpose and, ultimately, by UNESCO itself.

The Great Buddha Project was officially presented by the LGF in the Assembly of Extremadura, in Mérida, where the mayors of the cities of the Buddhist holy places in Nepal -Lumbini, Kapilavastu, Ramgram and Devdaha- traveled accompanied by the president of the National Assembly of that country.

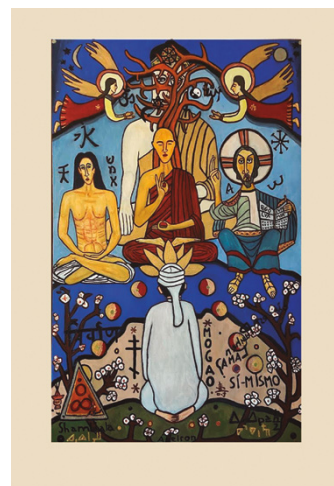


*Speech by the president of the National Assembly of Nepal in the “Asamblea de Extremadura”*

Exceptionally and with special permission from the government, the respective mayors brought with them land from the holy places, which, in a symbolic ceremony before the Cáceres authorities, was joined to the land from Monte Arropé. The ceremony took place before the image of the Mahā Karuṇā Buddha in the Pedrilla Museum, where the painting “Zéosis” by the famous painter Antonio Camaró, considered by UNESCO as the painter of concord and peace, is also exhibited. The painting reflects religious ecumenism as a plea for the union between East and West. This work seeks to show the essence and commonality of all human beings.



*Union ceremony of the land of Cáceres with those of the holy places of Nepal*



*“Zéosis”, by Antonio Camaró*



On those same days, the purification and sacralization ceremony of the grounds of Mount Arropé was also carried out by a group of monks from the Vajrayāna tradition of Buddhism. This ceremony, in which both monks and laymen participated, marked the starting point of the work that will culminate in the construction and establishment of the Buddhist complex.



*Sacralization ceremony of Monte Arropé, Cáceres*



*Union of the lands at the feet of the statue of the Mahā Karuṇā Buddha. Pedrilla Museum, Cáceres*

## BUDDHA STATUE IN NEPAL

The visit to Cáceres of the Nepalese delegation was returned at the beginning of November 2021 with a visit to Nepal by members of the LGF, who were accompanied by a delegation from the institutions of Cáceres and Extremadura. Previously, the LGF sent to the country a white jade statue of the Mahā Karuṇā Buddha, offered to the government of Nepal as a token of gratitude for their collaboration in supporting the Project.



*Ceremony at Gautam Buddha International Airport, Lumbini*



After a tour of the country in which, in its wake, it received homage and respect from the people of towns and villages, the statue was definitively placed in a place of honor at the new Gautam Buddha Lumbini International Airport. The welcome and inauguration ceremony was chaired by the Hon. Mrs. Bidhya Devi Bhandari, President of the Republic of Nepal, together with the highest representatives of the Government and the National Assembly of the country.



*Inauguration by the president of the Republic of Nepal*

During that same visit, a religious ceremony was held in front of the Lumbini Mayadevi Temple for the recognition of Cáceres as a Buddhist Sacred Land. This was the first of a series of 15 ceremonies planned for this very purpose and was attended by a large number of monks and nuns, as well as civil authorities and those in charge of the sacred place.



*Religious ceremony in Lumbini*



*Reception of the Nepalese people to the statue of the Mahā Karuṇā Buddha*



*Site of the statue at Lumbini International Airport*



## BUDDHA STATUE IN CHINA (HONG KONG)

The Lumbini Garden Foundation has a team of collaborators and delegates in different Asian countries, which makes it possible to establish preliminary contacts and relationships with institutions and temples likely to participate in the Great Buddha of Cáceres Project before proceeding to formal contacts. This structure has also allowed us to continue working during the many months of forced unemployment and confinement due to the Covid 19 pandemic.



*Site of the Buddha statue in China (Hong Kong)*

The LGF team in China (Hong Kong) has allowed the establishment of relationships, the signing of a collaboration agreement and a first commitment to participate in the Buddhist complex by one of the oldest and most prestigious temples in the training of Buddhist spiritual teachers of the Mahāyāna tradition. This is the Tung Lum Nien Fah Tong temple.



*Tung Lum Nien Fah Tong Temple, China (Hong Kong)*

The Temple received a white jade statue of the Mahā Karuṇā Buddha which, as on previous occasions, is a gesture of gratitude on the part of the Lumbini Garden Foundation and of commitment in the case of the China (Hong Kong) temple. The reception of the statue was celebrated in a solemn

welcoming ceremony. At the time, in the coming months, the opportune ceremony of recognition of Cáceres as a Buddhist Sacred Land will be held.



*Welcome ceremony to the Buddha statue, China (Hong Kong)*

## BUDDHA STATUE IN BHUTAN

The case of the LGF's relationship with Bhutan is very special for various reasons. The first contacts are established in early summer 2021 with the Bhutan Nuns Foundation -BNF-, an institution dedicated to empowering and educating Bhutanese women and girls in nunneries. Its activities are aimed at improving the living conditions, health, and well-being of these women, providing quality education and services, and promoting their independence. The Queen Mother of Bhutan, H.M. Tshering Yangdoen Wangchuck, holds the honorary presidency of the BNF.



*Site of the Buddha statue at the Bhutan Nuns Foundation*



The nature of this institution -a foundation- and its commitment to women fully coincide with those of the LGF and Western social movements in favor of the equal rights and against discrimination based on sex. These reasons led to a perfect harmony from the beginning between both institutions and, later, to formalize it through a first collaboration agreement.

In November 2021, the Royal Family of Bhutan along with Je Khenpo, head of the southern branch of the Drukpa Kagyu sect, which is part of the Kagyu tradition of Himalayan Buddhism, hosted the welcoming ceremony of white jade statue of the Mahā Karuṇā Buddha sent by the LGF. The restrictions caused by the pandemic prevented a delegation from the Foundation from attending said event.



*Je Khenpo, HM King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck and HM the Queen Mother Tshering Yangdoen Wangchuck*

However, a year later, members of the LGF traveled to Bhutan, at which time, in a solemn ceremony, it was formalized the collaboration and signed and forthe agreement for the participation in the Buddhist complex of Cáceres of the kingdom of Bhutan through the BNF. This will materialize in the construction of a representative building of Buddhism in that country.



*The president and members of the LGF and the executive director of the Bhutan Nuns Foundation*



The LGF's delegation sent to Bhutan is received in audience by H.M. King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, who is briefed in detail on the nature of the Great Buddha project. His Majesty shows great affinity with the objectives pursued in this Project and declares his support for it, stating that she will show his support to other Asian Heads of State.



*Meeting after working session on Gross National Happiness, promoted by Bhutan*

During this trip there is also a meeting with a delegation sent from Thailand on behalf of the Venerable Khuva Boonchum and with the purpose of establishing collaborative relations with the LGF and studying the possibility of a permanent presence in the Buddhist complex of Cáceres. Venerable K. Boonchum is a highly regarded monk of the so-called Forest Sangha, focused in meditation, who has been followed for decades by large numbers of devotees in Laos, China's Yunnan province, Myanmar's Shan State and Thailand for his solitary and serious meditation practice.



*LGF members, Mayor of Thimphu, Mayor of Cáceres and Rinpoche*



## SIGNING OF MOUs IN THAILAND

The LGF team delegated in Thailand has carried out important prospecting and contact work with the most significant and prestigious temples of Theravada Buddhism in the country. After learning about the nature and characteristics of the Great Buddha Project, three main temples in the country showed their determined willingness to participate. A delegation from the LGF Spain traveled to the country in December 2021 to sign separate memoranda of understanding with the three temples for their participation in the Project.

The first of these is Wat Nak Prok, located in Bangkok. It is one of the most distinctive and ancient temples in Thailand that takes its name in honor of Luang Pho Nak Prok, the most sacred Buddha image in the country, made of bronze and housed within the monastery. The temple was declared a national monument by the Department of Fine Arts in 1977.

The second is Wat Phra That Phanom, located in the eastern province of Nakhon Phanom, on the banks of the Mekong River. Its borderland location makes the Temple a place of worship for devotees from Thailand, Laos and Cambodia. It is one of the most important Theravāda Buddhist structures in the region. The temple is originally dated to the 16th century and was built by the kings of Laos. At present and for decades, it has the protection of the Royal House of Thailand. Every year the temple attracts many thousands of pilgrims to honor the shrine.



*Signing of the MOU at Wat Nak Prok Temple, Bangkok*



*Signing of the MOU at Wat Phra That Phanom Temple, Nakhon Phanom*

During said visit of the delegation there was a meeting with H.R.H. Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, in which she was informed of the signing of the agreement and of the activities of the LGF. In this case, the agreements with these temples include architectural projects, and a monastic presence in Cáceres is considered.



*HE Princess Sirindhorn, receives a gift from the LGF*



The third of them is Wat Jin Pracha Samosorn or Leng Hok Yi, an ancient Chinese temple in Chachoengsao province. It is a Buddhist monastery of the Mahāyāna tradition where a true syncretism occurs between it and the majority tradition of Thailand; an example of collaboration and respect between different practices.



*Signing of the MOU with the Wat Jin Pracha Samosorn Temple, Chachoengsao*

## AGREEMENT WITH SITAGU ACADEMY OF MYANMAR

LGF's relationship with the Sitagu International Buddhist Academy and its founder and director, the Venerable Ashin Nāṇissara, also known in Myanmar as Sitagu Sayadaw Gyi, dates back to 2018, at the very beginning of the Great Buddha Project's ideation and design. Since then, Ven. Sitagu showed his interest in the project, and his support was subject to its development in Spain and pending subsequent meetings in which the scope of collaboration and the possibilities and degree of participation will be determined.



*Sitagu International Buddhist Academy, Sagaing, Myanmar*



*Venerable Sitagu Sayadaw at the Interfaith Dialogue Conference for Peace, Harmony and Security, held at the Sitagu Academy, Sagaing 2017*

Myanmar has suffered a convulsive political and social situation in recent years, exacerbated by the restrictions due to the Covid 19 pandemic. After years of impossibility of access to the country, in September 2022 a delegation from the LGF traveled to Myanmar to return the visit that the Venerable Sobhita, the first collaborator of the Venerable Sitagu Sayadaw Gyi, made to Extremadura in February 2022.





*Visit of Ven. Sobhita. Reception at the presidency of the Junta de Extremadura*

On that occasion, he was received by the authorities of Cáceres and Extremadura, and expressed to them his commitment to participate in the Great Buddha Project, both in its formal aspect, as part of the Buddhist complex, and in the academic aspects for the development of the future “Lumbini Center for Buddhist Studies for Peace”, contributing the experience and prestige of the International Center for Buddhist Education, which he himself directs.

On that trip, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the parties confirming the construction in Cáceres of a replica of the Shwezigon pagoda, in Nyaung-U, and participation in a future international academic institution.



*Members of the LGF and Ven. Sobhita at the signing of the MOU*



## AGREEMENT IN SRI LANKA

In February 2022, a LGF's delegation travels to Sri Lanka to establish the first contacts with the Sangha of the country. There is a meeting with Mahā Nayaka Thero, one of the three Buddhist authorities in the country who is responsible for one of the most important temples in the Buddhist world, the Temple of the Tooth of the Buddha.



*Sri Dalada Maligawa, Temple of the Buddha's Tooth Relic, Kandy, Sri Lanka*

At the meeting, a commitment was reached to sign a collaboration agreement similar to those explained above for the participation of Sri Lanka in the Buddhist complex of Cáceres through the construction of a representative building. In the same way, it was agreed to hold a ceremony for the reception of the Buddha statue that the LGF would send and for the recognition of Cáceres as a Sacred Land of Buddhism. However, the signing of the agreement is on hold due to the political, social and economic crisis unleashed in the country shortly after the date of the meeting.

During the same visit, the first contacts were established with the Tea Research Institute of Sri Lanka, as part of an international cooperation initiative in the field of bio-agro-technology that is explained in detail later in this same document.



*Meeting with the Mahā Nayaka Thero, Kandy*



*Visit to the Tea Research Institute of Sri Lanka*



# INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

Throughout its history in the development of the Great Buddha Project, the LGF has received support, both formal and effective, from different public and private institutions, both in Spain and abroad.

## ROYAL HOUSES

Royal House of Bhutan  
Royal House of Thailand

## HEADS OF STATE

Republic of Nepal

## GOVERNMENTS

India government  
Laos government  
Nepal government

## PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF SPAIN

Caceres Town Council  
Madrid Town Council  
Provincial Council of Cáceres  
Junta de Extremadura (Regional Government)

## DIPLOMATS

Ambassador of Spain to India, Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka  
Ambassador of Spain to China  
Ambassador of Spain to Thailand

## GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS

Cervantes Institute

## BUDDHIST ORGANIZATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS

Asociación Hispana de Buddhismo, Spain  
Bhutan Nuns Foundation, Bhutan  
Dharma Relic Museum, Thailand  
Jinghui Symphony Orchestra, China  
Sangha Activa, Spain  
Famen Temple, China  
Shao Lin Temple, China  
Tung Lum Nien Fah Tong Temple, China (Hong Kong)  
Wat Jin Pracha Samosorn Temple, Thailand  
Wat Nak Prok Temple, Thailand

Wat Phra That Panom Temple, Thailand  
European Buddhist Union

### **ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS**

International Buddhist Education Center, Myanmar  
International Buddhist Studies College, Thailand  
Instituto de Estudios Buddhistas Hispano, Mexico  
Lumbini Buddhist University, Nepal  
Sitagu Academy, Myanmar  
Universidad de Extremadura

### **PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS**

Cámara de Comercio de Madrid  
Cámara de Comercio de Cáceres  
Club Polideportivo Cacereño  
Fundación Club Atlético de Madrid  
Fundación Toni Camaró, Valencia  
Myanmar Gems and Jewelry Entrepreneurs Association, Myanmar

### **BUDDHIST SANGHAS**

Bhutan  
India  
Laos  
Myanmar  
Nepal  
Sri Lanka  
Thailand



*Shao Lin Temple, China*



*Receptions at the headquarters of the Presidency  
of the Junta de Extremadura, Mérida*





*Presentation of "Cáceres, Sacred Land", Asamblea de Extremadura, Mérida*



*Presentation to the Ambassador of Spain to India, Mr. José R. Barañano, New Delhi*



*Presentation of the Project at FITUR to the Minister of Culture and Sports of Spain, Mr. Miquel Iceta*



*Presentation to the Consul of Spain to India, Mr. Jesús Díaz Carazo*



*The main authorities of the country*



*With Mrs. Manuela Carmena. Mayor of Madrid 2015-19*



*Mahā Nayaka Thero of Sri Lanka*









*Meeting with Venerable Khuva Boonchum, Chiangmai*



*Visit of a representation of the Burmese Sangha to Cáceres*



*China (Hong Kong) Sangha representation*



*The main mayors of the region*



*Toni Camaró Foundation*



*Signing of the agreement for the donation of white jade with Ma Lwin*



*Presentation to the Ministry of Tourism, Government of Myanmar. 2018*

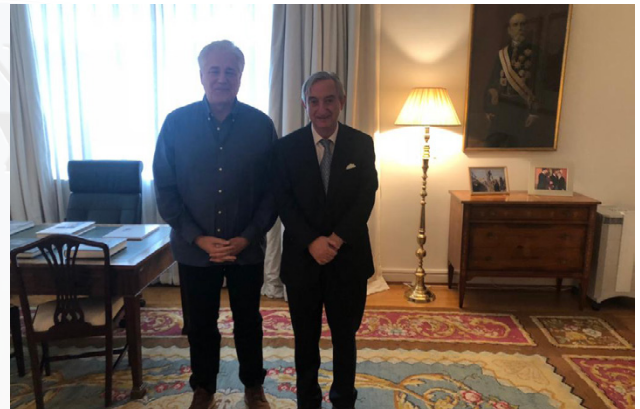




*Shao Lin Temple, China*



*Famen Temple, China*



*Presentation to the Ambassador of Spain to China,  
Mr. Jorge Dezcallar, Beijing*



*Reception of the President of the Republic of Nepal to the LGF and Club P. Cacereño*



# IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

## FACETS OF THE GREAT BUDDHA PROJECT

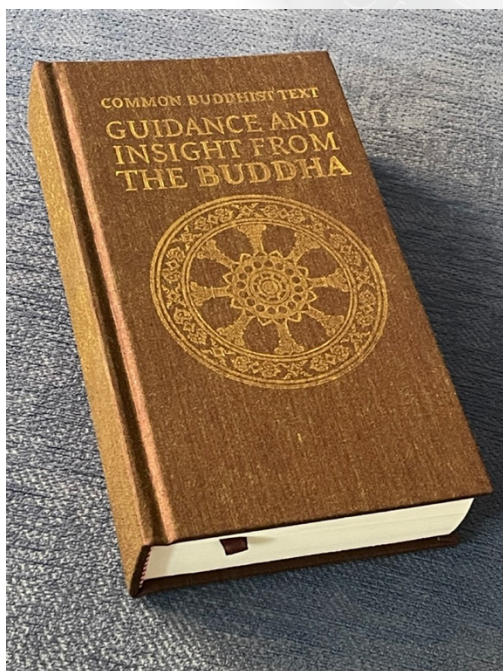
In its commitment to society, both local and international, the activity of the LGF as a Great Buddha Project goes beyond the promotion of the Buddhist complex in Cáceres. In order for the peace mission that it promotes to reach broad layers of society, the actions must also be of a different nature. In some Buddhist traditions it is affirmed that the gates to the Dharma (the Teaching) are infinite, and that it does not matter through which one is accessed. In the same way, the LGF also develops its work on different fronts, ranging from didactic or academic to international cooperation.

## THE DHARMA AND ITS PRACTICE

The term Dharma (in Sanskrit, Dhamma in Pali language), is a difficult word to translate because of its different meanings. One of its most significant and common uses refers to “teachings” or “doctrines”. In Buddhist literature, Dharma often refers to Buddhist teachings and practices in general, that is, it would encompass everything that each tradition considers the Buddha to have taught. In general terms, the spiritual training taught by the Buddha is a double process of self-transformation and self-transcendence that results in complete emancipation from suffering. The self-transformation process includes the elimination of harmful mental dispositions and their replacement by positive dispositions that lead to the benefit of oneself and others; the process of self-transcendence emphasizes the abandonment of egocentric notions from a direct vision of the non-essential nature of the mental and bodily processes that we normally take as ‘me’ and ‘mine’. When that process of self-transformation is complete, suffering is extinguished, since, with the awakening of wisdom the craving backed by ignorance, which is the basic root of suffering, disappears.

Thus, knowledge of the Teachings and the different fields in which it can be put into practice is a fundamental guide for the mission of the LGF and becomes the backbone of all its actions.

### *TRANSLATION OF THE COMMON BUDDHIST TEXT*



The LGF assumes among its commitments that of providing the Spanish-speaking public with the Spanish version of what is perhaps the most important text of Buddhism, the “Common Buddhist Text. Guidance and Insight from the Buddha”.

The work is an anthology of texts from the three Buddhist traditions, Theravāda, Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna, compiled by a multidisciplinary team of academic and monastic experts and scholars. It is the fruit of seven years of work by a project led by the Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University of Thailand to provide a selection of texts that reflect the depth and richness of Buddhism without favoring any particular tradition, so that it can be accepted by all Buddhists open to the teachings attributed to the Buddha and subsequent philosophical developments, corresponding to various schools and in different languages.



*Signing of the transfer of the rights of translation into Spanish.  
With Ven. Dr. P. Brahmmapundit and Ven. Dr. K. Dhammasami*

The agreement for the assignment of the Spanish translation rights of the original work was signed in Bangkok in 2018 and subsequently assumed by the LGF through an agreement signed in 2020.

In collaboration with institutions in Extremadura, the LGF directs the translation into Spanish of these texts from the source languages, Pali, Sanskrit, Chinese and Tibetan. The publication of the Spanish version of the Common Buddhist Text will be a true cultural milestone in Spanish and the work will become an essential academic reference for students of Buddhism throughout the Spanish-speaking world, helping to clarify concepts and facilitating a good understanding of their various philosophies.

The book will be presented in Spain and to the entire world academic and publishing sector in Spanish in June 2024, one month after it was presented in Thailand at the international meeting on the occasion of the United Nations Day of Vesak Celebration.



*Presentation of the "Common Buddhist Text". Vesak, Sri Lanka 2017*



## ***EASTERN PHILOSOPHY COURSES AT THE UEX (UNIVERSITY OF EXTREMADURA)***

In April 2021, the LGF signs a collaboration agreement with the University of Extremadura on educational cooperation, international mobility, research and dissemination of information.



In the first case, the collaboration begins with the organization of the Introduction to Buddhist Studies Course, in the format of a summer course, both face-to-face and on-line, and held in Cáceres in September 2022. The course was very successful with 74 students enrolled from 11 countries, which has led to a commitment to continue advancing in the educational offer related to Peace and Cultural Dialogue between East and West.

The academic department of the LGF and the Rector's Office of the UEX have agreed to prepare and present a two-year Master Course whose launch is scheduled for the 23/24 school year.

Regarding international mobility, the LGF has established to date other agreements with the Lumbini Buddhist University of Nepal and the International Buddhist Education Center on behalf of the Sitagu Academy of Myanmar, in addition to maintaining relationships with universities in Thailand and China (Hong Kong) for collaboration in the development of educational programs,

as well as facilitating the mobility and exchange of students and teachers.



*Summer Course: Introduction to Buddhist Studies*



*Teachers and students of the Course. University of Extremadura*



*Signing of the collaboration agreement with the Lumbini Buddhist University*

## ***CULTURAL ACTIVITIES***

The LGF considers that its mission of peace and that of promoting greater knowledge between East and West has an important axis of action in the organization and development of cultural activities and events. As the Buddhist complex develops and the various participants in it become established, opportunities to organize cultural and educational activities will arise almost naturally. With this objective, the construction of infrastructures and facilities has been planned that will allow to propose:

- Exhibitions
- Concerts
- Conferences
- Ritual ceremonials
- Festive celebrations



*Jinghui Symphony Orchestra*



*Arts and Crafts School, Thimphu, Bhutan*



## ***SPORTS PROMOTION. FOOTBALL FOR PEACE***

In October 2022, the LGF and the Club Polideportivo Cacereño sign a collaboration agreement whereby they undertake to promote at a national and international level, through the sport of soccer, the message of peace that the Great Buddha Project represents and underlies the twinning of the two World Heritage cities, Cáceres and Lumbini.

Both institutions are committed to holding various sporting events with the aim of visualizing and celebrating that collaboration, support and friendship between people of different nationalities, cultures and religions is not only possible, but also very positive for mutual knowledge and respect, which is essential for the achievement of peace.

As a first initiative, the Club Polideportivo Cacereño and the FLG agree to hold two sporting events in Nepal which finally were held on December 28 and 29, 2022, in Pokhara and Kathmandu.



*Members of the LGF together with the president of the Cacereño Sports Club*



*Soccer match for Peace in Kathmandu, chaired by  
K P Sharma Oli, Ex-Prime Minister of Nepal*

Previously, in 2018, the FLG organized a mission to Nepal in which it was accompanied by the Club Atlético de Madrid Foundation based on a collaboration agreement signed that same year. The objective of the mission was to carry out the necessary actions for the development of the “Proyecto Katmandú -Comedor social y Campo de Fútbol”-(Kathmandu Project -Soup kitchen and Soccer Field) consisting of providing the economic support to cover the food needs for twelve months of 80 children from the soccer school of West Kathmandu.

In the same way, the existing sand soccer field is leveled, preparing it for proper use of the facility, and all the facilities and sports equipment necessary for the practice of the activity itself are provided.



*Mission of the Atlético de Madrid Foundation in Kathmandu*



*Soccer for peace*



## ***PROMOTIONAL AND DISSEMINATION MATERIAL***

Last but not least, the LGF carries out the necessary actions to promote and disseminate its work in the development of the Great Buddha Project. The purpose is to inform society of the different aspects of the project in different formats and also aimed at different audiences.

### **MAKING A DOCUMENTARY**

For this, from the first steps taken in its presentation in Madrid, the events, meetings, meetings, signatures, trips and missions are being documented both in video and photographic support. The purpose is the production of a documentary film that, once finished and ready for exhibition, will be presented to different documentary film festivals and will be marketed as a source of income to finance the activities of the LGF.



*Shooting of the documentary film 'Cáceres, Sacred Land'*

### **EDITION OF THE COMIC “CÁCERES, SACRED LAND”**

At the beginning of 2022, the making of a 40-page comic was finished, both in its Spanish and English versions, which explains in a simple and didactic way the nature of the Great Buddha Project and its insertion and reception by the Cáceres' society. The purpose is its future free distribution coinciding with some of the milestones that must take place in the near future, once all the pertinent administrative licenses have been obtained. From that moment on, construction work on the Buddhist complex can begin, which will be carried out in different phases over the years and in coordination with the different international collaborating entities.



*Comic 'Cáceres, Sacred Land'*



## AXES OF ACTION

### ***SUSTAINABLE AGRO-BIOTECHNOLOGY AND BIODIVERSITY***

In the different missions to Asian countries, the LGF has received requests for help and cooperation in different areas, among which it is worth mentioning agricultural production and health services. In both cases, the LGF has found the best specialized partners to be able to give the best possible response to these requests.



In the case of agrobiotechnology, the LGF collaborates with the company TECNOCE based in Extremadura, the latter being the one that has developed the SASSĀKALA (harvest time) and HIMAPĀSADA (snow purity) approaches in order to be implemented first in the Terai region of the Himalayas. The objective is to promote the creation of international multi-stakeholder partnerships, capable of preparing and executing projects that may qualify for international funds for adaptation to climate change in agriculture and the protection of biodiversity.

The main objective is to help achieve a real and effective impact on the ground. The method consists of preparing international consortia, bringing together successful individual initiatives from different areas of the world where the rural population faces the effects of climate change. From the creation of the consortium, it is about preparing proposals for biodiversity and agriculture, and presenting them to the financial instruments following the rules of each one of them.

In this approach, special emphasis is placed on collaboration with the most isolated communities, threatened ethnic minorities, in close relationship with Buddhist traditions and schools.

### ***INTERNATIONAL HEALTH COOPERATION***

In the area of health, the municipality of Lumbini has requested help from the LGF for the construction in the city of a health center oriented to the comprehensive care of women's health. To date, this requested help has materialized in several missions of Spanish medical teams to Nepal, in which dozens of women have been treated.



*Sanitary campaigns in Lumbini*

The problem that is intended to be solved has its origin in a socio-cultural and religious tradition. Specifically, it is about Buddhist women from all over Asia traveling to Lumbini to give birth with the claim that their baby will be born in the same place as Prince Siddhartha, who later became the Buddha. The limitations of the public health system in Nepal mean that this large number of women cannot be adequately cared for, so many of the deliveries are miscarried. The LGF coordinates the future creation of a maternal and child health center in collaboration with public administrations of Buddhist countries. For its part, the Lumbini Development Trust, in charge of the management of the Lumbini holy places, grants land free of charge for the construction of said hospital.



*Sanitary campaigns in Lumbini*

## ***MISSIONS AND BUSINESS COOPERATION***

In its daily activity to achieve the purposes mentioned throughout this document, the LGF establishes contacts at very different levels, from institutional relations to people who provide their voluntary work, going through commercial relations, which are very useful for his own support. It must be remembered that the LGF is a non-profit foundation, which does not mean that it does not need funds to finance its activity and, later, that of the Buddhist Center itself.

The international prestige gained by the LGF after many years of work means that it has open channels and access to institutions from very different fields, so that it has the possibility of organizing business missions.



*Meeting between the chambers of commerce and industry of Cáceres and Rupandehi, Lumbini, 2021*



In these missions, the LGF deals with facilitating communication and promoting the meeting of business organizations, public and private, large and small, with common interests. In this way, beneficial activity and synergies are generated for all parties, and agreements are signed that, otherwise and through the usual channels, including those of the public administration, would be very difficult if not impossible to sign.

The institutions, organizations or companies benefited from these missions are requested to collaborate in financing and sustaining the activities of the LGF.

### ***SOCIAL COMMITMENT AND CITIZEN ACTION***

Based on ethics, which, together with the mental training that meditation entails, is one of the basic pillars of Buddhist practice, the LGF intends to explore actions and implement strategies aimed at building a fairer and more participatory society through volunteering, cooperation and work in the third sector.

For this, it will promote and coordinate the work of all the participating institutions in the Buddhist complex, both monastic and secular, with the general objectives of:

1. Fight poverty, injustice and discrimination in all its aspects.
2. Defend human rights, especially those of the most disadvantaged groups.
3. Defend the integral well-being and the right to education of the people.
4. Respect individual and group differences.
5. Respect the environment and its protection within a framework of balanced development.

## FIRST STONE OF THE BUDDHIST COMPLEX

The construction of the complex will begin with a ceremony of laying the first stone with the participation of the highest national and foreign authorities. This first white jade stone, donated by the Myanmar Gems and Jewelry Entrepreneurs Association, will also be the first of those that will constitute and shape the great statue of the Mahā Karuṇā Buddha.



*Archaeological remains of the Tilaurakot citadel, Kapilavastu*

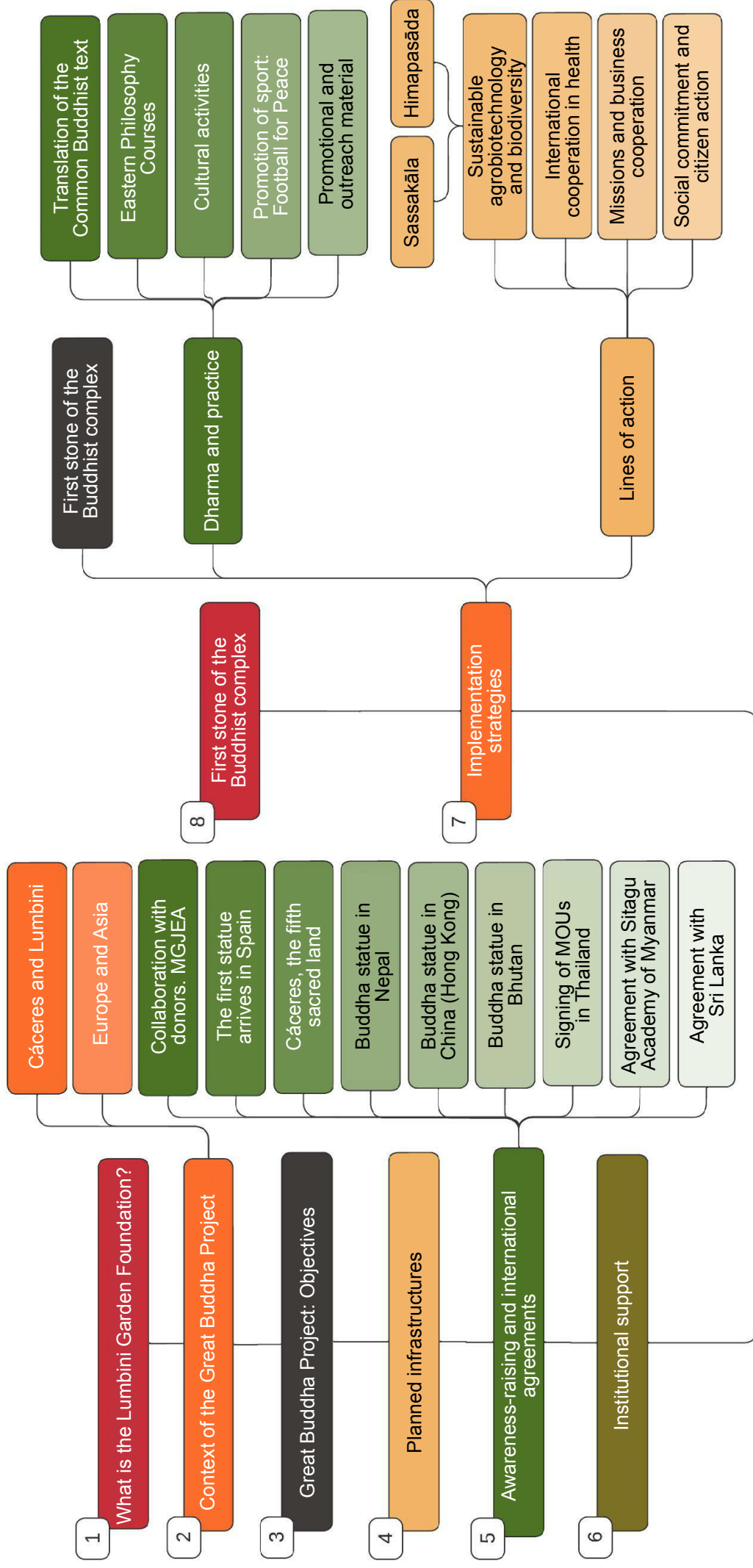
On the other hand, according to the agreements signed with the different administrations of Nepal, and once the administrative and legal procedures for an export of cultural goods have been completed, the arrival of a fundamental archaeological piece of incalculable value is expected, which will contribute to the consideration of the complex and all of Mount Arropé as Buddhist sacred land. This is a brick from the archaeological remains of the Tilaurakot citadel in ancient Kapilavastu. These remains are considered to correspond to the old palace of King Suddhodana, father of the future Buddha, and in which he lived until he was 29 years old. This fact is considered exceptional, since, despite multiple requests from other Buddhist countries, the Nepalese government has never previously agreed to the export of a cultural archaeological asset of these characteristics.

The foundation stone laying ceremony will mark the beginning of the construction of the great statue of the Buddha and the Buddhist complex itself. The dimensions of the statue will make it the tallest in the West and it will be a true beacon located in Cáceres to send a message of peace to the world.



*White jade statue of the Mahā Karuṇā Buddha,  
Gautam Buddha Intl. Airport, Lumbini*







AYUNTAMIENTO  
**cáceres**

