

Report of the Guest Lecture of the BuddhistRoad Project

26 October 2022 Yi (Allan) Ding (Chicago)

FEASTING WITH A MAṄḌALA: GAṄACAKRA-RELATED TEXTS FROM DUNHUANG AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

invited lecture at the BuddhistRoad Project, CERES, Ruhr University Bochum

The team of the *BuddhistRoad* Project invited Dr. Yi (Allan) Ding, Assistant Professor at DePaul University, Chicago to give an online BuddhistRoad Guest Lecture on the *gaṇacakra*-related texts in the Dunhuang corpus. In this talk, Dr. Ding discussed the early reception of the tantric feast (Skt. *gaṇacakra*) in Tibet and its variations reflected in the Dunhuang manuscripts.

The lecture began with a discussion of different modes of antinomianism. Because antinomianism exists between rhetoric and practice, it can be considered symbolic as a form of rhetoric, visualised as a part of imagined reality, or performed in a matter-of-fact manner. Dr. Ding argued that there is no way to pin down the exact mode of a prescriptive account of the tantric feast, because practitioners can pick and choose how to translate a prescriptive account into an antinomian ritual on the ground.

In the second part of the lecture Dr. Ding then offered a comparison between the normative Buddhist feast (Skt. *upanimantraṇa*) and the tantric feast. He emphasised that the tantric feast involves the forming of a coterie (Skt. *gaṇa*) within a monastic community. And that the ritual purpose of the tantric feast is to renew and fortify both the in-group relationship and the bonds (Skt. *samaya*) between the coterie and oath-bound deities (Tib. *dam can*).

Finally, Dr. Ding explored two *gaṇacakra*-related texts in IOL Tib J 332 and one text in P. T. 840 and argued that both ‘coupling’ (Tib. *sbyor*) and ‘decoupling’ (Tib. *sgrol*) at Dunhuang should be considered derivative forms of the tantric feast. Furthermore, the importance of a taboo substance as a ritual element of the tantric feast was explained. The relevant Dunhuang documents also present the earliest evidence of the appearance of the century of peaceful and wrathful deities (Tib. *zhi khro’i tshogs*) and reveal the importance of the *Guhyagarbha* as an inspiration for the tantric feast in the ninth and tenth centuries.

