

ERC project BuddhistRoad, mid-project conference

Establishing of Buddhist Nodes in Eastern Central Asia 6th to 14th C. - Part II: Visual and Material Transfer, Practices and Rituals

September 16th–18th, 2019, Beckmanns Hof, RUB (Germany)

Following an introductory address by Prof. George Keyworth outlining the transfer of knowledge from Central Asia to medieval Japan, the conference began with a series of papers. These papers were concerning visual and material transfer in the Buddhist context as it unfolded along the so-called Silk Road by presenting discussions on the Buddhist Caves at Kucha (Ines Konczak-Nagel), the presence of Khotanese iconographical themes in Dunhuang (Erika Forte), Buddhist paintings found along the stretches of the Southern Tarim basin route (Ciro Lo Muzio), the enigma relating to the ‘Sogdian deities’ in A sketch from Dunhuang (Lilla Russell-Smith), and ending with an analysis of Pure Land paintings in Tangut Buddhist art (Michelle C. Wang). The second part of the conference on practices and rituals began with a presentation of the cult of Mahākāla as it unfolded in the Tangut Empire during the 13th century (Hou Haoran), followed by a paper on the contemplation of the bodhisattva Vajragarbha based on Chinese Dunhuang manuscripts (Amanda Goodman), a newly (re-)discovered text on Esoteric Buddhist visualisation and salvation from Dunhuang (Henrik H. Sørensen), a detailed presentation of Tibetan Dunhuang material on *samaya* practices (Jacob Dalton). The conference concluded by two papers on Uyghur Buddhism, one on the bodhisattva cult in Turfan and Dunhuang (Yukiyo Kasai), and a discussion of practices and rituals as they appear in the Old Uyghur documents (Jens Wilkens).

The conference, which was conducted in the atmosphere and feel of a workshop, took place in a highly positive spirit of investigation and sharing of information, and as such accounted for many fruitful and interesting exchanges. Any fears that it would be problematic for art historians and archaeologists to communicate with experts on religious practices and vice versa did not materialize. On the contrary, both sides came together in the acknowledgement that each perspective could and should in fact be seen as an extension of the other.

Henrik H. Sørensen