

ERC project BuddhistRoad, start-up conference

Establishing of Buddhist Nodes in Eastern Central Asia 6th to 14th C. Part I: Sacred Space, Pilgrimage, Patronage, Legitimation Strategies

May 23–25, 2018 Beckmanns Hof, RUB (Germany)

The aim of the start-up conference, the first in a planned series of three, was to investigate the complexities concerning patronage and donors in Central Asian Buddhist communities on the one hand, and issues relating to sacred spaces and pilgrimage on the other. While the focus was on the cultures that thrived along the Silk Road during the period 6–14th centuries, the scope of the conference also included these topics in adjacent areas and cultures done in order to provide viable comparative and theoretical basis for further elucidation and discussion.

The first section on patronage and legitimation had a theoretical presentation on legitimation by Sem Vermeersch from the perspective of Koryō Buddhism. This was followed by a discussion on patronage in Khotan based on archaeological material by Erika Forte. Following this was a detailed presentation on legitimation in Uyghur Buddhism by Yukiyo Kasai. After that followed a presentation on the relationship between donors and Esoteric Buddhism in Dunhuang during the 9–10th centuries largely based on pictorial evidence, and the section was closed by a presentation by Kirill Solonin on the respective roles of Buddhism and Confucianism in the formation of Tangut ideology.

The second section featured presentations on sacred space and pilgrimage and included one relating to the trans-Himalayan regions (both sides of the range) by Verena Widorn. This was followed by a discussion of sacred space in the context of the Uyghur Buddhists by Jens Wilkens. After came a presentation on pilgrimage as reflected in the inscriptions in Old Uyghur by Simone Raschmann, followed by a discussion of the main Buddhist tableaux in Cave 3 at Yulin by Michelle McCoy, with a detailed response from Max Degg, and finally, a discussion of sacred spaces in Tantric Buddhism in Eastern Central Asia under Tangut rule was given by PI Carmen Meinert.

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