

## Report of BuddhistRoad Guest Lecture

13 July 2022 Marcus Bingenheimer (Philadelphia)

### **ON THE USE OF HISTORICAL SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS IN THE STUDY OF CHINESE BUDDHISM**

invited lecture at the BuddhistRoad project, CERES, Ruhr-Universität Bochum

The team of the *BuddhistRoad* project invited Marcus Bingenheimer, Associate Professor of Religion at Temple University, Philadelphia, to give a lecture on the use of Gephi, a popular open-source network analysis software, for the study of Chinese Buddhism. The previous day, during the workshop “Using Gephi with the Historical Social Network of Chinese Buddhism,” Prof. Bingenheimer had introduced the *BuddhistRoad* team to the basic functions of Gephi and demonstrated how to identify individuals in a network, how to understand and trace connections back to primary sources, how to visualise ego-networks, and how to enrich the dataset with new data collected.

After this rather technical introduction, the aim of this guest lecture was to illustrate the practical application and possibilities of formal network analysis and visualisation techniques as a contribution to the historical study of Chinese Buddhism through two case studies conducted on a particular network dataset, the "Historical Social Network of Chinese Buddhism" ([https://github.com/mbingenheimer/ChineseBuddhism\\_SNA](https://github.com/mbingenheimer/ChineseBuddhism_SNA)), which contains about 18,000 actors and 26,000 connections.

The first, case study focused on a network region covering the late 3rd and early 4th centuries. As the data reveal, the early teaching and transmission of Chinese Buddhism was mainly dominated by a network centered around the three monks Dao'an (312–385, 道安), Huiyuan (334–416, 慧遠), and Kumārajīva (344–413, Chin. Jiumoluoshi 鳩摩羅什). As Prof. Bingenheimer suggests, the firm establishment of Mahāyāna as the dominant form of Buddhism in China derives from this threefold formation and in particular from the lineage of Kumārajīva as visible in the data.



The second example focused on a network region modelling the late 16th and early 17th centuries, revealing two distinct phases in the Buddhist revival of the late Ming Dynasty (1368–1644, 明). Following the so-called Wanli (萬曆) revival, brought about by a group of well-trained, famous monks, Prof. Bingenheimer identified the lineage of Miyun Yuanwu (密雲圓悟, 1567–1642) and his disciples, who played a key role in the transmission of Buddhism in the 17th century, which, according to Bingenheimer, differed considerably from the syncretic, inclusive Buddhist discourse of the “great monks” of the Wanli era.



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