

# Buddhism in Central Asia II

*Practices and Rituals, Visual and Material Transfer*

*Edited by*

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# Central Asia: Sacred Sites and the Transmission of Religious Practices

*Yukiyo Kasai, Henrik H. Sørensen, and Haoran Hou*

## 1 Introduction

This book is the second volume born and conceptualised within the project “BuddhistRoad”,<sup>1</sup> the ERC funded collaborative scholarly endeavor which aims to shed light on the dynamics of the spread of Buddhism across Central and East Asia through several different cultures from India to China, Korea and Japan, the virtual ‘Buddhist Road’.

The present volume consists of the proceedings of the project’s second conference, “Establishing of Buddhist Nodes in Eastern Central Asia 6th to 14th C. Part II: Visual and Material Transfer, Practices and Rituals” which took place at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum on 16–18 September 2019 and represents an important part of the ongoing research activity according to the project’s formal road map for the study of Buddhism in Central Asia.<sup>2</sup>

Due to its location in the heart of the Asian continent midway between Europe and East Asia, Central Asia has been a region of great importance, not only as a space of transit, but also as a place where significant trade routes and lines of cultural and religious transmission intersected. Hence, the centres or important regional hubs of various exchanges located along the main arteries of this vast network have played important roles as places where human civilisations thrived and established the multi-lingual, -religious, and -cultural society often on their own terms. As Buddhism has been the primary civilising factor of cultural development in Central Asia for more than a millennium, the study of this tradition which only began a little over a century ago, has now become a major field of research, covering as it does several cultural groups

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1 For the detailed and actual information of the project, see <https://buddhistroad.ceres.rub.de/en/>. The research agenda of the BuddhistRoad project is also outlined in the report, BuddhistRoad Team, “Dynamics in Buddhist Transfer in Eastern Central Asia 6th–14th Centuries: A Project Report by BuddhistRoad Team,” *Medieval Worlds* 8 (2018): 126–134.

2 The conference program is available on the BuddhistRoad homepage, <https://buddhistroad.ceres.rub.de/en/activities/organised-conferences/>.

with their own separate and shared languages and scripts. Even though we now know so much more than they did at the outset of this research field, there are many sources and facts that still need to be assessed, discussed in connection with their related facts and placed in the Buddhist history in order for us to arrive at a better understanding.

When dealing specifically with the importance of the cultural hubs as centres of localisation and contact from the perspective of the spread and development of Buddhism in Central Asia, we find that important religious spaces such as the Mogao Caves (Chin. Mogao ku 莫高窟) in Dunhuang (敦煌), the Kızıl Caves in Kuča, Bezeklik in Turfan, and the many sites located around Khotan and Karakhoto in each their own ways were shaped by intercultural factors. This meant that while Buddhism was essentially a translocal and trans-cultural religion, it proved itself to be quite adaptable and culturally sensitive, and as such able to take shape after the cultures in which it took root. The intercultural contact afforded by Buddhism meant a sharing of a specific set of ideas, practices, and iconographical vocabulary, which was universally understood and recognised by the involved peoples.<sup>3</sup>

Every topic chosen as research clusters for the *BuddhistRoad* project highlights the flourishing of Buddhism as the religion gradually spread across Central Asia through several different cultures from India to China, Korea and Japan to form a virtual ‘Buddhist Road’.<sup>4</sup> Throughout history, Central Asian Buddhism established many important centres or ‘nodes’<sup>5</sup> along the Silk Road, as evidenced in surviving examples of religious structures and the development of distinct types of local folklore.<sup>6</sup> Various discoveries in Dunhuang,

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3 The significance of inter-religious contact has been highlighted in a number of recent publications including *Dynamics in the History of Religions between Asia and Europe in Past and Present Times*, ed. Volkhard Krech and Marion Steinicke (Leiden: Brill, 2011); Jason Neelis, *Early Buddhist Transmission and Trade Networks: Mobility and Exchange within and beyond the Northwestern Borderlands of South Asia* (Leiden: Brill, 2011); and *Locating Religions: Contact, Diversity and Translocality*, ed. Reinhold F. Gleis and Nicholas Jaspers (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2017).

4 All research clusters are listed in <https://buddhistroad.ceres.rub.de/en/research/>. Some of the research results are found under <https://buddhistroad.ceres.rub.de/en/publications/>.

5 ‘Nodes’ as used here signifies those centres along the network of routes in Central Asia which were situated at the intersection of two or more routes, and which therefore tended to have a greater impact as transfer and contact ‘hot spots’. It goes without saying that there were greater and smaller nodes, i.e. centres which exerted different influences on the material that passed through them. Cf. BuddhistRoad Team, “Dynamics in Buddhist Transfer in Eastern Central Asia 6th–14th Centuries: A Project Report by BuddhistRoad Team.”

6 ‘Folklore’ as used here signifies the type of knowledge and cultural practices, including aspects of pre-modern science, such as medicine, mathematics, astrology, as well as beliefs and superstitions, which prevailed among a given population within a specific culture in

Turfan, Khotan, Karakhoto, and northern Tibet provide a wealth of examples underscoring the existence of material culture covering many centuries.

Among those topics of the project, two aspects of the transfer of religious knowledge, (a) visual and material aspects of religious culture, and (b) practices and rituals, form the core of themes dealt with in this volume. The first of these pertain to religious art and material culture more broadly conceived, the second to eschatological practices such as meditation and rites of transcendence.

‘Visual’ as employed here refers to pictorial representations such as wall-paintings in situ as found in cult sites, as well as votive paintings to be hung in a given ritual space, while ‘material’ indicates three-dimensional religious objects, including votive statues, special architectural elements *stūpas*, inscribed pillars, stele, altars, ritual objects, and holy books. One may conceptualise both categories as signifying two modes for representing religious, material culture, but ascribed with different levels of significance and function within a given religious context.

Unlike materiality, rituals and ritual practices have for a long time been key research subjects in academic discourses on religion, and the relevance of ritual praxis for the definition of religion has often been pointed out. For one scholar, Roy Rappaport, ritual action—is the performance of more or less regulated formal acts and utterances—as and such it stands as a fundamental component of religious traditions.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, ritual, is the component that generates ‘the sacred, the numinous, the occult and the divine.’ However, such formal acts and utterances, require an engagement with the material, i.e. concrete objects and physical spaces. As Grimes has recently argued: ‘Although rituals consist of actions, it’s almost impossible to discover, or even imagine, a ritual without its attendant material culture.’<sup>8</sup> Thus, material culture and Buddhist ritual come together as a complementary couple on the level of action, the first provides the physical context for the latter, while the latter necessitates the existence of the former.

‘Practices’ is a general term referring to all types of religious and cultural practices, i.e. it serves as an umbrella term for a wide range of religious behaviour. ‘Ritual’ as used here is a specific term, which indicates a special and formalised type of religious practice, i.e. an expression of religiosity which is being performed in accordance with a fixed template that sets forth a

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the medieval and pre-modern eras. Use of the term does not indicate something exotic nor primitive when seen from a modern perspective.

7 See Roy A. Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity* (Cambridge, UK, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 23–24.

8 See Ronald L. Grimes, “Ritual,” in *Key Terms in Material Religion*, ed. S. Brent Plate (London, Oxford, New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), 174.

preordained ritual structure to be followed. In order to explain this, we may use the case of Buddhist meditation or contemplation, which is a form of practice universally adhered to in virtually all Buddhist cultures. Ritual proceedings may in certain cases be part of such meditation practices, as for instance in many Esoteric and Tantric Buddhist rituals, where the rite itself is constituted by a series of progressive phases of increasing profundity.

As mentioned above, both practices and rituals are typically associated with and performed in front of deities located in a ritual space.<sup>9</sup> Over time, the spread of Buddhist practices and rituals gave birth to a profusion of Buddhist material culture and religious art, which range from large-scale and elaborate structures to house statues, murals, and paintings, such as monasteries and caves, to small-scale figurines, talismanic diagrams and amulets, ritual objects, etc., that circulated among the faithful. In the nature of things, therefore, both of the two themes discussed in this volume are in fact closely related as the visuals and materials are concerned with the space in which the practices and rituals are being played out. Beyond these physical forms in which images are usually represented, there are also more metaphysical ways in which the divine was believed to manifest. This could be in the form of a vision or through programmed visualisation-practices, which is found in some meditation and ritual performances, such as those represented in ritual texts, in instructive drawings, or as depicted in votive paintings. These were obviously a relevant part of Buddhist culture, and as such played important roles in the establishment and continuation of a wide range of practices and rituals. The texts and paintings from this region may in certain cases be used to document sometimes show that established practices and rituals were transferred throughout the region in cases where proper textual evidence is wanting.

Texts, one major form of the materiality, and rituals are by no means alien elements within the contemporary material turn. With regard to text, it has been argued that religious scriptures cannot be studied exclusively as vessels of meaning but must also be examined as devices subject to sensorial consumption and multileveled ritualisation. More precisely, according to Watts, the ritual dimension is a peculiar feature of sacred books—material objects with contents that require a direct bodily engagement (as, for instance, reading)—across time and space. In addition to being scriptures that carry holy intent, they are also material objects, which both inform on ritual practices

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9 'Practices' and 'rituals' are obviously general terms, and almost all religious activity can be covered under those categories. In a broad sense, the pilgrimages dealt with in the previous conference volume, for example, could also belong to the category of religious practices. However, in this volume, the religious practices are the main focus.

and themselves function as ritual objects. One can also argue that the ritualisation of the semantic, performative, and iconic dimension is what turns a book into a holy scripture proper. For religions ritualise the contents of scriptures by means of explanations; they ritualise the performance of scriptures with readings of their wordings or staging of their contents; they finally ritualise the materiality of the books by bringing them at the core of specific ceremonies. The common Buddhist practice of ‘turning the scriptures’ (Chin. *zhuanjing* 轉經), the ritualised way of ‘reading’ in which clerics unroll and roll up *sūtras* in a strictly formalised manner, is a clear example of the multifarious uses and functions of holy books.

Those texts, including those which are even dedicated to the rituals, furthermore, may or may not always be in conformity with the associated or pre-existing literature, thereby indicating that considerable variations did occur in local production. In terms of the rituals represented in the texts, what one often encounters is a mix of both ‘orthodox/canonical’ rites, and rites that grew out of local traditions and particular cultural environments. It goes without saying that, in as culturally and religiously diverse a region as Central Asia, where a number of cultures existed side by side, rituals and practices existed in many different forms and deviated from each other for various reasons. Such variations or differences could be the result of shifts in the cultural environments where they were used, or was due to conscious abbreviations or editorial changes to serve particular situations.

One of such local developments is well reflected in the formation process of the *Guan wuliangshou jing* 觀無量壽經 [Scripture on the Contemplation of Amitāyus]. This text stands as one of the most important *sūtras* of the Buddhist Pure Land tradition, a scripture that probably should be categorised as belonging to the so-called apocryphal class of scriptures.<sup>10</sup> Although the actual process through which it came about is still debated, many scholars suggest it was created in the Buddhist environment of Central Asian.<sup>11</sup> Among

10 For a now classical study of apocrypha in Sinitic Buddhism, see *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*, edited by Robert E. Buswell (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990). For an excellent overview of the issue of Buddhist canonical authority, see Jonathan A. Silk, “Canonicity,” in *Brill’s Encyclopedia of Buddhism* 1, ed. J.A. Silk et al. (Brill: Leiden, 2015), 5–37.

11 See, e.g., Kasugai Shinya 春日井真也, “Kanmurōjubutsukyō ni okeru shomondai 觀無量壽仏經に於ける諸問題 Some Problems in the Amitāyurdhyāna Sūtra,” *Jōdo shūkyōgakuin kenkyūjo* 浄土宗教学院研究所 *Studies in Buddhism and Buddhist Civilization* 3 (1953): 37–50; Kagawa Takao 香川孝雄, “Shōmyōshisō no keisei 称名思想の形成 Formation of the Concept of Calling the Name of Buddha,” *Indogaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 印度学仏教学研究 *Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies* 11.1 (1963): 38–49; Fujita Kōtatsu 藤田宏達, *Genshi jōdo shisō no kenkyū* 原始浄土思想の研究 *A Study of*



these scholars, Yamabe Nobuyoshi has actively investigated mural paintings in Toyok, a site near Turfan.<sup>12</sup> He established that the paintings there are closely connected with the *Scripture on the Contemplation of Amitāyus*. Yamabe compares them with the mural paintings in Dunhuang, which were clearly made on the basis of the established contemplation texts as found in the Chinese Buddhist canon, and concludes that the paintings in Toyok were primarily based on oral traditions. Thus, the place where the *Scripture on the Contemplation of Amitāyus* was created could possibly be somewhere between Toyok and Dunhuang.<sup>13</sup> This example shows that visual and material transfer, on the one hand, and practices and rituals on the other, were historically closely connected. Hence, the topics chosen and presented within the present volume are conceived of as closely related phenomena, which when examined together, provide a comprehensible framework for understanding the dynamics inherent in religious transfer in Buddhist Central Asia.

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*Early Pure Land Buddhism* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1970), 116–136; Kōtatsu Fujita, “The Textual Origins of the Kuan Wu-liang-shou ching: A Canonical Scripture of Pure Land Buddhism,” *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*, ed. Robert E. Buswell (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1990), 149–173; Yamada Meiji 山田明爾, “Kankyō kō—Muryōbutsu to Amida butsu—觀經攷—無量寿仏と阿弥陀仏—Sūtra of the Contemplation on Amitāyus,” *Ryūkoku daigaku ronshū* 龍谷大学論集 *Journal of Ryūkoku University* 408 (1976) 76–95; Julian F. Pas, “The Kuan-wu-liang-shou Fo-ching: Its Origin and Literary Criticism,” *Buddhist Thought and Asian Civilization. Essays in Honor of Herbert V. Guenther on His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Leslie S. Kawamura and Keith Scott (California: Dharma Publishers, 1977), 194–218; Sueki Fumihiko 末木文美士, “Kanmuryōjūkyō’ kenkyū 『觀無量寿經』研究 A Study of the Guan-wu-liang-shou-jing,” *Tōyo bunka kenkyūjo kiyō* 東洋文化研究所紀要 *The Memoirs of the Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia* 101 (1986): 163–225; Sueki Fumihiko 末木文美士, “Kanmuryōjūkyō-Kanbutsu to ōjō 觀無量寿經—觀仏と往生 [Guan wuliangshou jing: Contemplation of Buddha and Attaining Birth],” in *Kanmuryōjūkyō, Hanjuzanmaikyō 觀無量寿經, 般舟三昧經 [Guan wuliangshou jing and Banzhou sanmei jing]* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1992), 1–195.

12 See the map on our website, accessed July 30, 2020. <https://buddhistroad.ceres.rub.de/en/visual-aids/>.

13 He discusses this topic in various articles. See, e.g., Nobuyoshi Yamabe, “Practice of Visualization and the Visualization Sūtra: An Examination of Mural Paintings at Toyok, Turfan,” *Pacific World: Journal of the Institute of Buddhist Studies Third Series* 4 (2002): 123–152; Nobuyoshi Yamabe, “An Examination of the Mural Paintings of Visualizing Monks in Toyok, Cave 42: In Conjunction with the Origin of Some Chinese Texts on Meditation,” in *Turfan Revisited—The First Century of Research into the Arts and Cultures of the Silk Road*, ed. Desmond Durkin-Meisterenst et al. (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 2004), 401–407; Nobuyoshi Yamabe, “Toyok Cave 20. Paintings and Inscriptions,” in *Epigraphic Evidence in the Pre-Modern Buddhist World. Proceedings of the Eponymous Conference Held in Vienna, 14–15 Oct. 2011*, ed. Kurt Tropper (Vienna: Arbeitskreis für tibetische und buddhistische Studien Universität Wien, 2014), 217–261.

Confession texts also represent their close connection with rituals. Rites of confession originated in early Buddhism in India and became an important Buddhist practice for both lay people and monks.<sup>14</sup> There are texts for confession and its rituals written in various Central Asian languages, which shows how widespread these practices and rituals were.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, in Central Asia, Manichaeism was also present, had contact with Buddhism in that area, and established a tradition of confession. The connections between Manichaean and Buddhist confession is still discussed, especially with respect to the Uyghurs who produced both kinds.<sup>16</sup> In that respect, the confession texts embody the multicultural nature of Central Asia, which is therefore not confined to Buddhist culture alone.

Besides visualisations and confessions, Buddhist rituals tend to converge around forms and beliefs associated with Esoteric and Tantric Buddhism, something which is especially clear when discussing the relationship between ritual practices and meditation.<sup>17</sup> It is, therefore, not surprising to find that these evolved forms of Mahāyāna Buddhism played a significant role in the Buddhist cultures that thrived along the Central Asian Silk Road from the late medieval period up to and including the Mongolian Empire (ca. 1206–1368). Respectively, those rituals are reflected in material objects, including texts. However, during the period of more than a millennium when Buddhism held sway over the cultures along the Silk Road—and despite differences in the various cultural and religious nodes—Buddhist normative practices and beliefs tended to provide common reference points for those cultures involved. As the impact of Esoteric and Tantric Buddhism in the region increased in the course of the 9–10th centuries, a certain standardisation and sharing of these practices took place, something which was especially prevalent in the centres located along the eastern stretches of the Silk Road, from the Turfan Basin to in present-day Gansu (甘肃) and Ningxia (宁夏) provinces.

14 For the development of confession, see, e.g., Kuo Li-ying, *Confession et contrition dans le bouddhisme chinois du V<sup>e</sup> au X<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Publications de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient, 1994); Claudia Weber, *Buddhistische Beichten in Indien und bei den Uiguren* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1999).

15 For this topic, see Weber, *Buddhistische Beichten*, 153–166. For Chinese confession texts found in Dunhuang, see also, Wang Juan 汪娟, *Dunhuang lichenwen yanjiu 敦煌禮懺文研究* [Studies on the Confession Ritual Texts from Dunhuang] (Taipei: Fagu wenhua, 1998). Jens Wilkens, furthermore, discusses Old Uyghur confession texts in his contribution in this volume. See Chapter 13.

16 See, e.g., Weber, *Buddhistische Beichten*, 123–152.

17 This topic has already been extensively dealt with by Henrik H. Sørensen. Some of these results are available online, accessed March 6, 2021. <https://omp.ub.rub.de/index.php/BuddhistRoad/catalog/category/Practices>.

It is, however, not only the texts or ritual objects which were transferred through the networks in Central Asia, but also articles like papers, brush, colorant or pieces of wood which were used for creating those three-dimensional religious objects. Because these objects could not come into existence without these materials. It is not always so easy to follow the processes and directions of those material transfer in Central Asia, wherefore this topic still gives rise to much debate.<sup>18</sup> In this context, a note that is written at the beginning of an Old Uyghur Buddhist text preserved in Berlin under the signature Mainz 732 [T II Y 21], requires special attention. This note does not contain any explanations on the Buddhist text written after it, but it explains the origin of the paper used: “This is the paper from Shazhou [(沙州)].”<sup>19</sup> This indicates that the paper originated in or was transferred from Dunhuang, and used for writing an Old Uyghur text, which eventually ended up in Yarkhoto, where this manuscript was found. This example is probably not an exception, as various materials were transferred between different places and played a part in the flourishing of Buddhist culture in Central Asia.

## 2 Contents of This Volume

As stated above, this volume consists of two interrelated parts: Part 1 deals with visual and material transfer, and Part 2 with practices and rituals. The first chapter is George Keyworth’s “Did the Silk Road(s) Extend from Dunhuang, Mount Wutai, and Chang’an to Kyoto, Japan? A Reassessment Based on Material Culture from the Temple Gate Tendai Tradition of Miidera.” It serves as a historical and geographical introduction to all of the topics presented in the volume. Keyworth focuses on documents related to two famous Japanese Buddhist pilgrims to China, Enchin (814–891, 円珍) and Jōjin (1011–1081, 成尋). These pilgrims played important roles in transferring Buddhist visual and textual materials, including ritual objects, which came through the Silk Road to China, and thence to Japan. Using material preserved in Japan, Keyworth demonstrates that Buddhist rituals and material culture from the Silk Road reached

18 Parts of visual transfers, especially between Dunhuang and Khotan, have been addressed in the series of papers published as BuddhistRoad Paper 6.1. <https://omp.ub.rub.de/index.php/BuddhistRoad/catalog/category/Transfer>.

19 See, e.g., TT V, 340–341. The use of the cursive script indicates that this manuscript was written in the Mongolian period. For the dating of Old Uyghur manuscripts, see, e.g., Takao Moriyasu, “From Silk, Cotton and Copper Coin to Silver. Transition of the Currency Used by the Uighurs during the Period from the 8th to the 14th Centuries,” in *Turfan Revisited—The First Century of Research into the Arts and Cultures of the Silk Road*, ed. Desmond Durkin-Meisterernst et al. (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 2004), 228–233.

Japan early on and were integrated into the local Buddhist culture. Thus, while located far from the eastern stretches of the Silk Road, which formally terminated in Ch'ang'an (長安), the impact of the Buddhist road leading to East Asia extended, in fact, all the way to Japan.

In the second chapter “Representations of a Series of Large Buddha Figures in the Buddhist Caves of Kuča: Reflections on Their Origin and Meaning”, Ines Konczak-Nagel focuses on iconographic arrangements of rows of standing buddha figures painted in the caves in the Kuča area. Those images are so large that they were found to occupy the entire height of the wall. Because of their unusual size, they received considerable attention from scholars, who have suggested a variety of interpretations. Some of the large buddha figures are depicted in narrativised settings, indicating that they represent the Buddhas of the Past, to the extent that they can be individually identified. Konczak-Nagel compares them with similar rows of buddhas in other regions and suggests that, as a theme, they were most likely adopted from the art of Greater Gandhāra. The large standing buddha figures also appear in other oases like Khotan, which, when considered together, indicates that this iconographic theme was widespread in Central Asian. The author also points out that the Kuchean figures should be regarded as the direct predecessors of the large-scale buddha images we find on the temple walls in Turfan produced under the Uyghurs.

The third chapter “Buddhist Painting in the South of the Tarim Basin: A Chronological Conundrum” is by Ciro Lo Muzio. This chapter deals with Buddhist paintings unearthed in the Khotan oasis and at Karadong. In many previous studies, these paintings are dated to the 3rd century, in the case of Karadong, and the 6th–8th centuries, in the case of the Khotan oasis. Lo Muzio points out that these dates were established without detailed and proper examination, and remained undisputed for a long time. Because of the chronological issue Lo Muzio re-examines the iconographic programmes and individual elements and motifs in the paintings from Khotan and Karadong, and carefully compares them with other Central Asian and South Asian Buddhist paintings. As a result he proposes that the Karadong paintings should be dated to approximately the 6th century, which is closer to the date of the paintings from Khotan.

Chapter four, Erika Forte's contribution, develops around “‘Khotanese Themes’ in Dunhuang: Visual and Ideological Transfer in the 9th–11th Centuries.” She investigates the mural paintings in the Mogao Caves (莫高窟) and Yulin Caves (榆林窟) that deal with themes related to Khotan. These are the so-called ‘auspicious images’ (Chin. *ruixiang* 瑞像) that originated in Khotan, the Eight Protectors (Khot. *haṣṭā parvālā*), the legend of the founding of Khotan, and depictions of a Khotanese Buddhist sacred place, Mt. Gośīrṣa/Gośṛṅga (Chin. Niutou shan 牛頭山/Niujiao shan 牛角山). Those paintings

were mainly produced between the 9th century and the early 11th century. A (semi-) permanent Khotanese community in Dunhuang most likely promoted their production at the Mogao Caves. Forte's contribution contains recent archaeological discoveries and demonstrates that those new materials warrant further research.

The fifth chapter is Lilla Russell-Smith's "The 'Sogdian Deities' Twenty Years on: A Reconsideration of a Small Painting from Dunhuang". Here she reconsiders interpretations of the so-called 'Sogdian Deities', a sketch that was found among the manuscripts in Mogao Cave 17 at Dunhuang. This sketch shows two seated female deities, whose identity has eluded viable identification so far, due to their particular iconography and the attributes they hold. Previous studies identified these deities as Zoroastrian or Manichaean. Russell-Smith investigates, the deities' clothing and attributes, as well as the paper used for the drawing, in considerable detail and in comparison with iconographically similar depictions in the Turfan area, including Buddhist images. There is no consensus on ascribing a Zoroastrian identity to the two female deities. Some of their attributes could be interpreted as Buddhist or Manichaean. Based on such multi-religious characteristics, Russell-Smith concludes that the painting of the two divinities was probably patronised by a Uyghur Buddhist donor who maintained some Manichaean influence.

In the sixth chapter, "Seeking the Pure Land in Tangut Art", Michelle C. Wang studies an intriguing group of paintings in the Hermitage Museum's Collection, which were unearthed in Karakhoto. The subject of all of the paintings is Buddha Amitābha receiving the soul of the devotee into the Western Pure Land. This theme was widespread throughout East Asia during the 12th–13th centuries. Even so, the origin and dissemination of these images has been the topic of intense scholarly discussion. In this chapter, Wang contributes a comparative and transcultural study of the Amitābha motif in Karakhoto, medieval China, Korea, and Japan. Unlike previous studies, Wang proposes that printing played a role as a mediating factor in the formation of the paintings that depict Amitābha's Welcoming Descent, in this way she emphasises the uniqueness of the Tangut imagery rather than the similarity to or subjection to the art of the surrounding area, such as Song China (960–1279, 宋). In this study, she aims to highlight the transcultural resonances of this visual motif, while at the same time showing the unique features of this type of Tangut Buddhist painting.

The seventh chapter "Avalokiteśvara Cult in Turfan and Dunhuang in the Pre-Mongolian Period" by Yukiyo Kasai picks up one of the most famous bodhisattvas, namely Avalokiteśvara, and discusses how the cult of this divinity was conceptualised in the Uyghur Kingdom of Turfan. First, she asserts that the scriptural sources for the cult of the bodhisattva were written in Old

Uyghur during the pre-Mongolian period. Then she discusses different manifestations of the cult in textual and visual sources from Dunhuang and Turfan. Although Chinese Buddhism from Dunhuang exerted a strong influence on the Uyghurs, the latter do not seem to have adopted the Avalokiteśvara cult from Dunhuang in its entirety. During the period under discussion, in Turfan, not only the Uyghurs, but also Chinese and Tocharians were active as Buddhists. Kasai suggests that the Avalokiteśvara cult was among the cults that were most strongly connected to Chinese Buddhists and that it could differ from that in Dunhuang. Furthermore, she pointed out that not all Uyghur Buddhists practiced the Buddhist cults under Chinese influence, although its impact is in many cases considerable. The manner in which the Avalokiteśvara cult unfolded in the Western Uyghur Kingdom, therefore, may not have been representative of cultic practices among the Uyghur Buddhists, broadly defined.

In the eighth chapter, “Bridging Yoga and Mahāyoga: Samaya in Early Tantric Buddhism,” Jacob P. Dalton emphasises the role of *samaya* vows in the early development of Tantric Buddhist rituals in Tibet on the basis of Tibetan language material from Dunhuang. In early tantric writings, *samaya* functions not only as a vow, or set of vows, to be observed, but also as the transcendent wisdom (Skt. *jñāna*) of the buddhas that is ritually installed within the heart of the practitioner. He shows in that context how *samaya* was central to both initiation and the post-initiatory ritual practices (Skt. *sādhana*) of the Yogatantra system, as formulated in the *Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgraha*. In both ritual contexts, the entry of the *samaya* into the practitioner’s heart represented a key moment. Turning to the slightly later ritual traditions of early Mahāyoga, he argues further that the sexualisation of the earlier concept of *samaya* produced the secret initiation (Skt. *guhyaḥiṣeka*), as well as the self-administering of the sacramental drop of *bodhicitta*, that marked the culmination of sexual yoga, each paralleling the *Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgraha*’s initiation and self-consecration (Skt. *svādhiṣṭhāna*), respectively. The developmental continuities between Yoga and Mahāyoga are evident in certain early Mahāyoga works, where the drop of *bodhicitta* is referred to as the ‘supreme samaya’ (Tib. *dam tshig mchog*).

The ninth chapter, “Visualising Oneself as the Cosmos: An Esoteric Buddhist Meditation Text from Dunhuang” by Henrik H. Sørensen, focuses on a manuscript from the Pelliot Collection that features an Esoteric Buddhist meditation text from Dunhuang (P. 2649V<sup>o</sup>). This important text has, to some degree, been overlooked by current scholarship. In his study, Sørensen shows that the main elements of the document are detailed and vivid instructions in meditation. This document is essentially a text conveying the confluence between mainstream Esoteric Buddhist beliefs and practices and those of mature Tantric

Buddhism. Of greatest interest is the fact that the text reflects the entire process of meditation and visualisation, which is expressed as a sort of internal ritual of universal salvation. Through a philological approach, Sørensen provides a fully annotated translation of the text, as well as a critical edition of the Chinese original text. This contributes important new insights into the development of local Esoteric and Tantric Buddhist meditation practices in late medieval Dunhuang.

In the tenth chapter by Carmen Meinert, “Beyond Spatial and Temporal Contingencies: Tantric Rituals in Eastern Central Asia under Tangut Rule, 11th–13th C.,” the cult of Vajravārāhī is taken as a point of departure. Here she discusses what constitutes a sacred site, and provides a new reading of the sources by combining an analysis of material evidence. This is done in order to move a step closer to asymptotic convergence of the implications of what constitutes a divine or sacred space. The divinity Meinert examines, in this case the Tantric Buddhist goddess Vajravārāhī, is conceptualised by the practitioner in her sacred space together with an instruction on how to activate, through a stereotyped performance, her divine presence, both in this world and in one’s own body. The iconographical programme of Mogao Cave 465, which centres on the cults of Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhī, offers a useful ‘testing ground’ for a new approach to dealing with the physicality of a sacred space. Meinert’s analysis of ritual practice follows the definition of the concept laid out by the research consortium on Ritual Dynamics at Heidelberg University’s findings, and those formulated in the KHK Consortium of CERES at Ruhr-Universität Bochum.

In chapter eleven Iain Sinclair investigates “The Serlingpa Acala in Tibet and the Tangut Empire.” In doing so he focuses on a particular form of Acala, the so-called Serlingpa Acala, which is ascribed to the guru Serlingpa (Tib. Bla ma gSer gling pa), a teacher from the ‘Golden Isles’ of Southeast Asia. The vision of Acala, ‘the Unwavering,’ manifesting ten furious forms, and trampling on Gaṇapati, is a commonly found in the religious art of both Tibet and the Tangut Empire (ca. 1038–1227) and up to the end of the 13th century. It was transmitted to Tibet by Atiśa Dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna (982–1054). By researching the artistic and textual corpus related to the Serlingpa Acala, Sinclair illustrates the iconographic alterations of the divinity after its entry into Tibet and the Tangut Empire, and further demonstrates this distinctive version of Acala’s potential connections with Southeast Asia. This chapter sheds light on a rare case in the transmission of Tantric Buddhist iconography that flowed along the northern and southern maritime routes of the Silk Road.

The topic of chapter twelve is, “Mahākāla Literature Unearthed from Karakhoto” by Haoran Hou. Here the author provides a thorough introduction

to the Tibetan Buddhist Tantric manuscripts associated with Mahākāla found at Karakhoto. These documents are primarily written in Chinese and Tibetan and date to the 12th–14th centuries. Through a comparative study of bilingual materials, Hou identifies the corresponding Tibetan originals for the Chinese texts and explores the origins of the Mahākāla literature from Karakhoto. In his discussion of the historical context of the dissemination of these texts, he focuses on the Tibetan Master Ga Lotsaba Zhönnupel (1105/1110–1198/1202, Tib. rGwa lo tsā ba gZhon nu dpal), whose name can be connected with both the Chinese and Tibetan Mahākāla literature from Karakhoto. Through studying the master's biography, Hou reveals how Ga Lotsaba brought the teachings on the Mahākāla cult all the way from India, through Tibet, and to the Tangut Empire.

Chapter thirteen is by Jens Wilkens and deals with "Practice and Rituals in Uyghur Buddhist Texts: A Preliminary Appraisal." It consists of an overview of references to practice and ritual in Buddhist texts written in Old Uyghur. Wilkens underlines that this topic has not been explored in previous research on Uyghur Buddhism. He argues that not all text types currently available are sufficient to provide detailed information on the practice and rituals carried out by the Uyghur Buddhists. Nevertheless, the author discusses liturgies, blessings, confessions, texts describing the worship of Buddha Amitābha and the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, as well as ritual texts belonging to mature Tantric Buddhism, amulets and talismans, astrological and astronomical texts, texts containing spells and incantations, and those for consecration rituals. Most of this material is from Buddhist texts written in Old Uyghur that were mainly composed during the 10th–14th centuries. As such, and for the first time, we have here a study which provides comprehensive information on ritual and liturgical material in the surviving Buddhist textual corpus in Old Uyghur.

Each of these thirteen contributions represents a topic that, one way or another, reflects the complexities of shared cultural and religious elements in Central Asia. As such, they attest to the importance of active discussions beyond narrow geographical and cultural boundaries. We hope that the present volume contributes to the development of research into the transfer of visual and material, as well as into the less tangible ritual practices of the region, and thus inspires further studies on Central Asian Buddhism.