

BuddhistRoad publications: abstracts

Meinert, Carmen and Henrik H. Sørensen, ed. *Buddhism in Central Asia I—Patronage, Legitimation, Sacred Space, and Pilgrimage*. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2020.

https://static.ceres.rub.de/media/filer_public/6c/a3/6ca37889-549c-4ee8-8e7f-1153b705780c/meinert_sorensen_2020_buddhism_in_central_asia_i_website_version.pdf

The ERC-funded research project *BuddhistRoad* aims to create a new framework to enable understanding of the complexities in the dynamics of cultural encounter and religious transfer in pre-modern Eastern Central Asia. Buddhism was one major factor in this exchange: for the first time the multi-layered relationships between the trans-regional Buddhist traditions (Chinese, Indian, Tibetan) and those based on local Buddhist cultures (Khotanese, Uyghur, Tangut, Khitan) will be explored in a systematic way. The first volume *Buddhism in Central Asia (Part I): Patronage, Legitimation, Sacred Space, and Pilgrimage* is based on the start-up conference held on May 23rd–25th, 2018, at CERES, Ruhr-Universität Bochum (Germany) and focuses on the first two of altogether six thematic topics to be dealt with in the project, namely on “patronage and legitimation strategy” as well as “sacred space and pilgrimage.”

(1) Vermeersch, Sem. “Who is Legitimizing Whom? On Justifying Buddhism’s Place in the Body Politic.” In *Buddhism in Central Asia I—Patronage, Legitimation, Sacred Space, and Pilgrimage*, edited by Carmen Meinert and Henrik H. Sørensen, 15–39. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2020.

https://static.ceres.rub.de/media/filer_public/ed/60/ed6066ce-7a8b-428f-a889-034a582413a7/meinert_sorensen_2020_buddhism_in_central_asia_i_vermeersch_offprint.pdf

Abstract:

The concept of legitimation is very useful in conceptualising the relationship between religion and worldly authority. Virtually every religion in every society has in some way acted to legitimise (or delegitimise) temporal power. But herein also lies the limitation of the concept. It has been turned into a blanket term that obscures more than it reveals. In what sense exactly does religion assist someone who wants to shore up his or her authority against rivals? If a religious text sanctifies or otherwise elevates a ruler, does this actually help the ruler, or is it merely empty phrasing? How can we ascertain the actual relations of power that lie behind the rhetoric? In order to rethink the notion of legitimation, in this chapter I assess first of all how it is employed in previous studies of Buddhist kingship in East Asia. The mere occurrence of terms like *cakravartin* in Chinese sources has often sufficed to conclude that Buddhism helped to legitimise temporal rule in China. This is often based on the assumption that there was an ideo-logical program or template that was referred to. While there is indeed a text that may be considered a seminal ‘legitimation text’, namely the *Renwang jing* 仁王經 [Scripture on the Humane Kings], it is open to many different interpretations and has been appropriated differently in various empires and kingdoms of East Asia. Most often, however, we cannot find any clear source for the why and how of Buddhist legitimation; historical precedent and local cultural and societal factors seem to have played a greater role than scriptural texts. In this chapter, after a critical review of the most important studies in the field, I take a closer look at historical cases to reveal the dominant mechanisms at play. I especially refer to cases from Korean history against the light of findings from Buddhism in Chinese history.

(2) Forte, Erika. "Images of Patronage in Khotan." In *Buddhism in Central Asia I—Patronage, Legitimation, Sacred Space, and Pilgrimage*, edited by Carmen Meinert and Henrik H. Sørensen, 40–60. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2020.

https://static.ceres.rub.de/media/filer_public/94/09/94094062-2398-498f-a668-22f8a60fab6b/meinert_sorensen_2020_buddhism_in_central_asia_i_forte_offprint.pdf

Abstract:

Textual evidence indicates that Buddhism in Khotan received strong support from royal families during its prime (5th–10th centuries). References to Khotanese kings who founded important monasteries are abundant in Tibetan texts on Khotan. Local legends preserved in the literature of Chinese Buddhism underline the constant in-volvement of the royals with Buddhist miraculous events.

If local and religious literature is explicit about royal patronage and depicts the ruling family as the guarantor of the country's existence as an established Buddhist kingdom, what does the art-historical material from Khotan tell us about such patronage? How were patronage (and legitimation) expressed in images, or through the sculptural and painted decorations of supported monasteries? Generally speaking, although figures of donors appear on wall paintings, it is difficult, given the poor state of the sparse dedicatory inscriptions, to ascertain their exact identities and the nature of their support. This chapter studies pictorial evidence from the Buddhist remains of Khotan related to two famous, local legends: the story of the Silk Princess and the story of the founding of the Gomatī Monastery. This study demonstrates that—despite the absence of explicit depictions of donors and inscriptions—a specific way of communicating patronage can be detected in the art-historical material. Ultimately, these paintings provide telling evidence of the 'language' used to express patronage through visual media in Khotan.

I underscore here the importance of a systematic survey of archaeological sources (both from old and new excavations) in the study of Central Asian Buddhism. This study provides evidence of the productive methodological combination of archaeological and art historical sources vis-à-vis textual and philological ones, in clarifying understanding the many gaps in the historical developments of Buddhism in Central Asia.

(3) Kasai, Yukiyo. "Uyghur Legitimation and the Role of Buddhism." In *Buddhism in Central Asia I—Patronage, Legitimation, Sacred Space, and Pilgrimage*, edited by Carmen Meinert and Henrik H. Sørensen, 61–90. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2020.

https://static.ceres.rub.de/media/filer_public/bb/70/bb704e80-45c9-4ceb-a6ac-ab8e3c871708/meinert_sorensen_2020_buddhism_in_central_asia_i_kasai_offprint.pdf

Abstract:

From the 8th to the 14th century, Uyghurs experienced various changes in connection with the legitimation strategies of their rulers. The shift from their traditional religious beliefs to Manichaeism and then further to Buddhism, strongly influenced the presentation of the rulers' power. This chapter discusses changes to Uyghur rulers' legitimation strategies during this period.

(4) Sørensen, Henrik H. “Donors and Esoteric Buddhism in Dunhuang during the Reign of the Guiyijun.” In *Buddhism in Central Asia I—Patronage, Legitimation, Sacred Space, and Pilgrimage*, edited by Carmen Meinert and Henrik H. Sørensen, 91–122. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2020.

https://static.ceres.rub.de/media/filer_public/c7/e5/c7e50b1e-05a0-48a3-b7aa-31d87fb858ce/meinert_sorensen_2020_buddhism_in_central_asia_i_sorensen_offprint.pdf

Abstract:

This chapter highlights the relationship between mainly elite donors in Dunhuang during the Guiyijun period of governance (851–1036?, 歸義軍, Return-to-Allegiance Army) and Esoteric Buddhism. I discuss this relationship on the basis of examples of both scroll paintings and wall paintings that feature inscriptions by those who had them made. I also show that the members of Dunhuang’s social and political elite, were particularly interested in the cults and practices associated with Esoteric Buddhism, especially those related to the various forms of Avalokiteśvara.

(5) Solonin, Kirill. “The Formation of Tangut Ideology: Buddhism and Confucianism.” In *Buddhism in Central Asia I—Patronage, Legitimation, Sacred Space, and Pilgrimage*, edited by Carmen Meinert and Henrik H. Sørensen, 123–147. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2020.

https://static.ceres.rub.de/media/filer_public/76/c7/76c769f7-55d9-4bcb-8251-7b2f1f1b137f/meinert_sorensen_2020_buddhism_in_central_asia_i_solonin_offprint.pdf

Abstract:

This paper examines the issue of the ideological complex of the Tangut Empire (ca. 1038–1227, in Chinese sources known as Xixia 西夏). The focus of the paper is the reconstruction of Tangut ideology as it is reflected in several surviving Tangut compositions. Identifying the Tangut State as either ideologically Buddhist or Confucian is not really proper from a historical perspective. Instead, the chapter suggests that the core of Tangut ideology was national identity, rather than any specific ideological system. Moreover, it suggests that the core of Tangut self-identification was the idea of Tangut rituals associated with the Tangut writing system. The relative positions of Buddhism and Confucianism are discussed from this perspective.

(6) Widorn, Verena. “From Padmasambhava to Gö Tsangpa: Rethinking Religious Patronage in the Indian Himalayas between the 8th and 13th Centuries.” In *Buddhism in Central Asia I—Patronage, Legitimation, Sacred Space, and Pilgrimage*, edited by Carmen Meinert and Henrik H. Sørensen, 151–188. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2020.

https://static.ceres.rub.de/media/filer_public/bb/fe/bbfe73cc-e60a-44d9-90ef-0925eb007bb0/meinert_sorensen_2020_buddhism_in_central_asia_i_widorn_offprint.pdf

Abstract:

This chapter addresses a problematic perception of the authenticity of patronage that results from the different viewpoints of academic historical research and religious worship. This primarily art historical study focuses on a selection of objects and monuments from the areas of Kinnaur and Lahul, two districts in the Indian region of the Western Himalayas. Local tradition attributes the artefacts to important Buddhist personalities from the 8th to the 13th centuries. I show that these artefacts, which are associated with the mystical actions of the

legendary patrons, are very closely linked to topographical peculiarities of the landscape and occupy a special place in the sacred geography of the area. The aim is not to draw a historically authentic picture of the past, but rather to explore the relationship between art, architecture, landscape, and the local concept of patronage and religious heritage, not only in modern times.

(7) Wilkens, Jens. "Sacred Space in Uyghur Buddhism." In *Buddhism in Central Asia I—Patronage, Legitimation, Sacred Space, and Pilgrimage*, edited by Carmen Meinert and Henrik H. Sørensen, 189–203. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2020.

https://static.ceres.rub.de/media/filer_public/f3/86/f3860299-9040-4200-84d2-461ab05bc06a/meinert_sorensen_2020_buddhism_in_central_asia_i_wilkens_offprint.pdf

Abstract:

Uyghur Buddhism was deeply anchored in its Central Asian environment. The religious category of sacred space within and without the primary Uyghur settlement areas has not been investigated in great detail so far. This paper will examine whether sacred space can be traced in the written sources, and if so, how the concept is elaborated and whether there is a specific Uyghur approach. With regard to a working hypothesis in addressing the research materials, the translated Buddhist works will most probably yield rather few results whereas inscriptions, poems and colophons are likely to provide answers to the question of whether there is a peculiar Uyghur take on sacred space.

(8) Raschmann, Simone-Christiane. "Pilgrims in Old Uyghur Inscriptions: A Glimpse begin Their Record." In *Buddhism in Central Asia I—Patronage, Legitimation, Sacred Space, and Pilgrimage*, edited by Carmen Meinert and Henrik H. Sørensen, 204–229. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2020.

https://static.ceres.rub.de/media/filer_public/de/6c/de6c1641-73d2-4c5f-ac2d-2b662e4af437/meinert_sorensen_2020_buddhism_in_central_asia_i_raschmann_offprint.pdf

Abstract:

When dealing with the subject of pilgrimage in Old Uyghur manuscripts, we encounter a lack of detailed personal reports like those of the famous Chinese pilgrims Xuanzang, Faxian or Yijing. On the other hand, a huge amount of Old Uyghur Buddhist scriptures of varying content, as well as records of Buddhist communities and monasteries, are preserved and clearly demonstrate the widespread and fairly long-lasting Buddhist orientation of the Uyghurs. Since pilgrimage is an important Buddhist practice, it is worth looking for traces of pilgrims in the remains of Old Uyghur inscriptions to find out their story. Old Uyghur pilgrim inscriptions discovered in the Hexi and Turfan regions are the focus of this chapter. By using the results of a multi-disciplinary re-search project of ruin Q in Kočo, the significance of this site as a 'holy place' for Buddhist pilgrims is revealed.

(9) Deeg, Max. "Looking from the Periphery: Some Additional Thoughts on Yulin Cave 3." In *Buddhism in Central Asia I—Patronage, Legitimation, Sacred Space, and Pilgrimage*, edited by Carmen Meinert and Henrik H. Sørensen, 230–243. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2020.

https://static.ceres.rub.de/media/filer_public/dc/f7/dcf76e85-94c4-4cdf-b5ba-4101f53ce0be/meinert_sorensen_2020_buddhism_in_central_asia_i_deeg_offprint.pdf

Abstract:

This paper discusses some details of a diptych from Yulin Cave 3. It focuses on a possible link between the motifs/figures depicted and textual sources: one refers to Xuanzang (600/602–664, 玄奘) within a proto-*Xiyou ji* 西遊記 [Record of the Journey to the West] context; the other suggests Sudhana in the context of the *Avatamsakasūtra*. Both figures are discussed in the relation to their possible connection with the main figures in the diptych, Samantabhadra and Mañjuśrī and are tentatively positioned in a wider pan-Buddhist narrative background of a drainage and foundation legend.

(10) Meinert, Carmen. “Creation of Tantric Sacred Spaces in Eastern Central Asia.” In *Buddhism in Central Asia I—Patronage, Legitimation, Sacred Space, and Pilgrimage*, edited by Carmen Meinert and Henrik H. Sørensen, 244–271. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2020.

https://static.ceres.rub.de/media/filer_public/fd/cf/fdcf9c3e-95b6-47c8-8e4a-330d21b4476e/meinert_sorensen_2020_buddhism_in_central_asia_i_meinert_offprint.pdf

Abstract:

The spread of Tantric Buddhism in the multi-cultural context of Eastern Central Asia can be traced to various textual and visual sources. The earliest evidence, probably dating from the 10th century, can be found in Tibetan manuscripts within the Dunhuang Collection. The next major transmission of Tantric materials is evident in the Tangut and Chinese manuscripts from Karakhoto, produced from the 11th century onwards, probably as a result of a strong production in the 12th century. I argue that it was only due to the imperial patronage of a series of powerful Tangut rulers (ca. 1038–1227) that the foundation was laid for the deliberate creation of an extended network of sacred sites with visual evidence of Tantric Buddhism and its ritual practices, especially in the Tibetan form. It is from this perspective that I analyse Mogao Cave 465, the sole Tantric Buddhist cave in the Mogao cave complex, as an important Tantric sacred site, as well as in the context of the production of Tantric visual art across other sites in the Tangut Empire.