

Report of BuddhistRoad Guest Lecture

16 December 2021 Costantino Moretti (Paris)

'PIÈGES À COPISTES' AND LAYOUT VARIANTS IN DUNHUANG BUDDHIST MANUSCRIPTS

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

The ERC project BuddhistRoad invited Dr. Costantino Moretti of the École Française d'Extrême-Orient (Paris, France) to give a virtual lecture entitled “‘Pièges à copistes’ and Layout Variants in Dunhuang Buddhist Manuscripts”. This topic is analysed in his recent paper “Scribal Errors and ‘Layout Genetics’ in Dunhuang Buddhist Manuscripts”, published in the review *T'oung-Pao* (2021). In his talk, Dr. Moretti has explored the mechanisms linked to the production of specific mistakes and textual alterations in manuscripts from Dunhuang (敦煌), which provide information of codicological interest, in particular on the formal characteristics of a manuscript archetype, on its production phases/techniques, and its formal evolution.

In the field of Chinese manuscript studies, the question of scribal errors has mainly been addressed to explore the scribal practices employed to rectify or highlight mistakes made during the copying of a manuscript. Apart from the techniques for correcting scribal errors, what is particularly interesting are the mechanisms related to the production of mistakes which provide indications about the characteristics of the ‘source text’ and of the ‘source manuscript’ which served as an antigraph to a given copy. Furthermore, determining the cause of scribal errors by identifying subsequent corrections is an important tool to glean information regarding the copying process and the various phases of manuscript production in a scriptorium or in a private context.

Moreover, in this lecture, Dr. Moretti has highlighted that in the field of manuscript studies, the notion of mistakes or scriptural alterations somehow goes beyond the notion of mistakes in the context of Buddhist philology, where this term is applied only to the core element of manuscripts (the text) and not to the archaeological object containing a text, with its specific structure and layout. Indeed, mistakes may also occur during any of the production phases. Errors involving either the textual layout or the structure of the material support, which can



also affect the transmission of the text, may occur while organising the page structure or assembling the material support. As such, from a codicological standpoint, the notion of mistake or alteration might be more broadly defined as an element that deforms the manuscript which served as an antigraph, either by altering its original content or by altering its text/page layout and formal characteristics in such a way as to affect the meaning of the ‘original’ text or its core message. We can include in this type of alteration intentional modifications of the *mise en page* or of the *mise en texte*, in several cases due to the evolution of manuscript standard formats.

In conclusion, Dr. Moretti has drawn attention to the importance of surveying the alterations in the arrangement of textual and paratextual elements by means of a structural analysis revealing manuscript filiation based on formal characteristics, an approach that can help to explore not only the codicological evolution of a book in manuscript form, but also its philological ties with branches of a specific tradition.

