

**AN INTENSIVE AND INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM
ON BUDDHISM AT UBC
(27-07 – 15-08-2018)**

SEGMENT TWO: “CHINESE BUDDHIST ICONOGRAPHY”

Lecturer: Christoph Anderl (Ghent University)



Introduction

The course aims to provide an overview concerning aspects of the development of Chinese Buddhist iconography. The material discussed dates between the period of the introduction of Buddhism (ca. 2nd c. CE) and ca. the 12th c. CE.

Geographically, focus areas include the Tarim Basin and the Eastern parts of the Silk Roads (Khotan, Kizil, Turfan, Dunhuang, Maiji shan, etc.), the cave sites of Yungang and Longmen, and sites of Buddhist art in the Sichuan area.

The material will be presented as case studies, focusing on specific Buddhist narratives (or sets of narratives). Their development will be traced diachronically and geographically. Important sites of Buddhist art production will be analyzed and visual expressions analyzed in their religious, cultural, and socio-political contexts.

There will be special emphasis on a comparative approach (e.g., the influence of Gandhāran art on early Buddhist art in the Tarim basin) and developments characteristic for China, including Buddhist iconography featuring complex *text-image programs*. The lecture series will include both *overview lectures* as well as lectures where *case studies* are discussed in greater depth.

LECTURE OVERVIEW (tentative)

Lecture One: Introduction / Development of Early Chinese Buddhist Art

In this lecture we will discuss a number of theoretical and methodological questions concerning the study of Chinese Buddhist narrative art. We will also shortly touch upon the Medieval Chinese discourse on the *visual* and the soteriological status of visually accessible “objects” related to the Buddha, and the development of “iconic” and “un-iconic” traditions. This topic will be further developed in subsequent lectures, especially in the lecture on the “Auspicious Images” (see below).

In the second part we will discuss the earliest phase of the introduction of Buddhist art to China and also look at the key sites we will be concerned with during the course.

Lecture Two: Tracing Some Key Motifs: Jātakas and Scenes From Buddha’s Life (Part One)

In Unit Two we will trace the development and transformation of a selection of *key narratives* which spread from India and Central Asia to China and beyond. The case studies will include some motifs of Buddha’s life (with special attention to the popular “Submission of Māra” motif) and key jātakas such as the Śyāma, Mahāsattva, and Vessantara. Of special concern will be the interrelation between text, image, and the material support of the representations, in addition to discussing certain typologies of transformation in the transmission of Buddhist narratives.

Lecture Three: Tracing Some Key Motifs: Jātakas and Scenes From Buddha’s Life (Part Two – continuation of the above)

Lecture Four: Devotional Buddhist Art and the Iconography of Devotional Deities (Overview lecture)

In this lecture an overview of developments concerning devotional Chinese Buddhist art will be provided. We will also discuss the key concepts of *merit production* (for one’s family and oneself) and *protection* as one of the key motivations in the production of Buddhist art, and their manifold iconographical manifestations. The lecture will cover early developments such the mass production of small devotional statues during the Northern Wei and Northern Qi Dynasties, in addition to developments concerning the depictions of Avalokiteśvara and Maitreya. The discussions will also concern the transformation of the motifs depending on the media and material supports used, as well as aspects of the integration of text and image.

Lecture Five: The Emergence of Chinese Historiographical Narratives and the “Auspicious Statues” (*ruixiang* 瑞像)

In this lecture we will discuss the complex phenomenon of the emergence and development of Buddhist historiographical wall paintings and Auspicious Statues, as

depicted in the Mogao and Yulin caves. From the mid-Tang period onward, reflections and imaginations concerning the introduction of Buddhism to China became an important topic in the wall paintings of the Dunhuang area. Inspired by the records of monks who had travelled to Central Asia and India, numerous depictions of “historical” events and narratives concerning the origin and transmission of Buddhism appeared on the walls of the caves.

Related to these developments, the interpretation of Auspicious Statues as means of the transmission of the Dharma to the Eastern regions became an increasingly important topic, peaking during the 10th century when Dunhuang was quasi-independent and Buddhist art production sponsored by the ruling families had reached its peak. The topic of the Auspicious Statues also reflects the close relations between Dunhuang and the Kingdom of Khotan, and as such art production was directly influenced by political and diplomatic developments. In addition to the narratives concerning the Auspicious Images, we will also shortly discuss the Dunhuang manuscripts of the *Zhufo ruixiang ji* 諸佛瑞像記 (*Records of the Auspicious Images of the Buddhas*) and other textual material related to the Auspicious Statues.

Lecture Six: Complex Text and Image Programs (Part One)

During this lecture an overview of the developments concerning the Sūtra Transformation tableaux will be provided, discussing the increasingly complex projections of key Mahāyāna texts on the walls of the caves. In addition, we will focus on new developments such as the emergence of “annotating” panels as part of the Sūtra Transformation Tableaux.

We will also resume the topic of Auspicious Images and analyze them as part of the programmatic Oxhead Mountain 牛頭山 (referring to the Oxhead Mountain near Khotan) tableaux, with a special focus on the topic as it was developed in Yulin Cave 33.

Lecture Seven: Complex Text and Image Programs (Part Two)

In the concluding lecture we will direct our attention to the hyper-complex tableaux as extant in the Dazu area of Sichuan, produced during the middle of the 12th century, and discuss the complicated text-image relations, questions of hybridity, and the techniques of how Buddhist cosmological and soteriological ideas were projected into the wall carvings.

As a case study, the “Buddha’s Filial Piety” tableau of Baoding-shan 寶頂山 will receive special attention, and we will try to approach the topic in the context of socio-religious developments of 12th century Sichuan.

Introduction of the lecturer

Christoph Anderl obtained his Master degree in Chinese and Japanese Studies at the University of Vienna, and his Dr. Art. degree in Chinese Linguistics at the University of Oslo.

He subsequently worked at Oslo University, the Swedish Collegium of Advanced Studies in Uppsala, and at the Käte Hamburger Kolleg (KHK) of the Ruhr University

Bochum. Since 2014 he has been Professor of Chinese Language and Culture at Ghent University. Currently, he is also leader of the research cluster “Typologies of Text-image Relations” of the Frogbear project “From the Ground Up,” as well as director of a digitization and database project on vernacular Dunhuang manuscripts, in collaboration with DILA, Taiwan.

Anderl’s research interests include various aspects of pre-modern Chinese linguistics, Chinese Chan Buddhism, and the study of medieval Chinese texts and manuscripts (he is presently working on a reference grammar of Late Medieval Chinese). During several years, another main research focus has been on aspects of the development of Chinese Buddhist iconography and specifically the analysis of text-image relations in Chinese Buddhist narrative art. Originally, the research on *jātakas* and *avadānas* has been conducted in collaboration with art historians and archaeologists at KHK, Ruhr University Bochum, whereas during recent years the focus has been on the emergence of the “Auspicious Images” iconography.

For more information and publications, see:
<https://research.flw.ugent.be/en/christoph.anderl>
<https://ugent.academia.edu/ChristophAnderl>