

Chinese Buddhism and the Scholarship of Erik Zürcher

Conference Program & all academic abstracts

Wednesday 12 February 2014

10.00-12.00: Book Presentation and Opening Lecture: Stefano Zacchetti, "A Unique Trajectory: Erik Zürcher's Studies of Chinese Buddhism."
Great Auditorium, Academy Building, Leiden University

Academic Presentations at the Museum for Ethnology Pavilion, Leiden:

13.30-14.15: Antonello **Palumbo**: Periods in the History of Chinese Buddhism
14.15-15.00: Eric **Greene**: Anti-Mahāyāna Polemics in the Earliest Phase of Chinese Buddhism.
15.00-15.15: Coffee break
15.15-16.00: **Kim** Minku: Early Buddhist Image-Making in China: Recent Discoveries and New Interpretations
16.00-16.45: Stanley **Abe**: The Copy in Chinese Buddhist Imagery
16.45-17.00: Coffee break
17.00-17.45: T. H. **Barrett**: Middle Kingdom and Wider World: Some Neglected Sources from Late Imperial China?
18.00-19.30: Reception, sponsored by the City of Leiden, City Hall
20.00: Dinner for conference speakers

Thursday 13 February 2014

9.30-10.15: Stefano **Zacchetti**: Blind spots and One way Tracks in Chinese Buddhist Historiography
10.15-11.00: Jan **Nattier**: "Anonymous Scriptures" Revisited: A Re-Evaluation of the Sources
11.00-11.15: Coffee break
11.15-12.00: **Funayama** Tōru: Difference in Genres of Chinese Buddhist Translations as (Non-) Reflections of Developments in Indian Buddhism
12.00-13.30: Lunch
13.30-14.15: Stephen **Bokenkamp**: Buddhist Influence on Early Daoism Reconsidered
14.15-15.00: Christine **Mollier**: Literary Expedients and Sacrality: Reconsidering the Buddho-Daoist Apocalyptic Literature of Early Medieval China
15.00-15.15: Coffee break
15.15-16.00: Barend **ter Haar**: Looking at Textuality among Chinese Monks in the *Gaoseng zhuan*
16.00-16.45: **Liu** Shufen: The Waning Years of the Life of the Eminent Buddhist Monk Xuanzang 玄奘 (600-664) and his Deification in Japan
16.45: Walk through Leiden (weather permitting)
19.00: Dinner for conference speakers

Friday 14 February 2014

9.30-10.15: Nicolas **Standaert**: Erik Zürcher's Study of Christianity in Seventeenth-Century China
10.15-11.30: Open Discussion
12.00: Lunch

The Copy in Chinese Buddhist Imagery

Stanley Abe

In China Buddhist texts were treated as not only the teachings of the Buddha but the Buddha himself. Texts could be powerful and efficacious like the Buddha. Copying and disseminating texts were meritorious acts. Buddhist images appear to have functioned in an analogous manner. But extant copies of Buddhist images are surprisingly few in number and were made for a variety of contexts and purposes. Some were originally produced as duplicate sets of images; others were pious replications in archaic styles. In the nineteenth century Buddhist images with ancient inscriptions were newly copied as reproductions for the Chinese antiquities market. And in the early twentieth century copies of Buddhist images proliferated as a global market for Chinese sculpture came into being. Archaism and anachronism, piety and fraud all played a role in the production of copies of Chinese Buddhist imagery. But can we as historians discern intention from visual and inscriptional evidence? This paper will address this question and introduce a range of copies, copying practices, and motivations in China.

Stanley Abe, author of *Ordinary Images* (Chicago 2002), teaches in the Department of Art, Art History, and Visual Studies at Duke University. He has published on Chinese Buddhist art, contemporary Chinese art, Asian American art, Abstract Expressionism, and the construction of art historical knowledge. He is writing a critical study of how Chinese sculpture became a category of Fine Art during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.



Middle Kingdom and Wider World: Some Neglected Sources from Late Imperial China

T H Barrett

One of the consequences of the “Buddhist Conquest of China” that emerges most forcefully from Erik Zürcher’s work on Buddhism and Daoism is the far greater awareness of vistas of time and space than is common in earlier sources that was provided by Buddhist texts. Plainly of particularly great cultural significance was the conclusion that China was but part of a wider whole. By the seventh century the notion of China as a Middle Kingdom ruling ‘all under heaven’ had been brought into open question, but thereafter one sees perhaps a reaction setting in. Late imperial China seems nothing if not sinocentric in its outlook. Yet right until the twentieth century the Buddhist outlook was preserved in a type of document that has been generally ignored so far. This paper introduces the materials in question.

Tim Barrett, is Research Professor of East Asian History at SOAS, University of London. His book publications alone include *The Woman Who Discovered Printing* (2008), *Poems of Hanshan* (2003), *The Wisdom of the Confucians* (2001), and *Taoism Under the T'ang: Religion and Empire during the Golden Age of Chinese History* (1996).



“Buddhist Influence on Early Daoism” Reconsidered

Stephen R. Bokenkamp

In a 2004 article, I criticized a number of scholars whose work tended to regard “Buddhist Influence” on Daoism as the impact of one discrete entity (Chinese Buddhism) on another (Daoism). Among the

articles I critiqued was Erik Zürcher's 1983 "Buddhist Influence on Early Taoism." In particular, I noted how Zürcher's article claimed that, in Daoism, "Buddhist terms are 'hopelessly misunderstood and mixed up,' doctrines are subjected to 'extreme distortion and devaluation,' or 'absorbed and digested to such an extent that they have virtually lost their identity.' Daoism, the 'receiving system,' is found guilty of 'confusion,' 'hybridization,' 'amalgamation,' 'merger,' 'fantastic notions,' and 'incorrect interpretations'" –as if the intent of early Daoists was to get Buddhism right and they had somehow failed. I still hold that this criticism is justified and even a necessary corrective to those who would use Zürcher's article. And yet, there is much of great value in "Buddhist Influence on Early Daoism." Here I would wish to focus on those aspects of Zürcher's work.

Stephen Bokenkamp is Professor of Chinese Arizona State University, one of the world's leading specialists on Daoism, is author of, among many other works, *Early Daoist Scriptures* (1997), and *Ancestors and Anxiety: Daoism and the Birth of Rebirth in China* (2007).



Difference in Genres of Chinese Buddhist Translations as (Non-) Reflections of Developments in Indian Buddhism

Funayama Tōru

Chinese Buddhism, roughly speaking, consists of elements imported from India and its neighboring areas, and elements transformed as Chinese. The former is heavily based on "Chinese Buddhist translations."

It is noteworthy that the renowned translator Kumārajīva (d. ca. 409) was well versed in the tenets of the Madhyamaka school, but totally ignorant of what is called Tathāgatagarbha thought, let alone the Yogācāra. Immediately after his death, several important Yogācāra texts were brought to China, and their translations became popular, but the word "Yogācāra" remained unknown until about a century later. This change of genres of translations, from Madhyamaka to Yogācāra, suggests that some movements in Chinese Buddhism were linked with Indian Mahāyāna in such a way that the formation of the Madhyamaka appeared first and the Yogācāra subsequently. Another example of a close connection of Chinese Buddhist translations with the historical development of Indian Buddhism can be found in the spread of Esoteric Buddhism in the Tang dynasty. While these cases show that Chinese Mahāyāna somehow followed the sequential order of developments in Indian Mahāyāna, a series of translations of vinaya texts in the early fifth century do not reflect any Indian situation in this period. Finally, two blank periods of translation, in the latter half of the fifth century and from the early ninth to the late tenth century, were caused by sudden and temporary stops of migrations of Indian monks to China, and also do not seem to link with the situation of Indian Buddhism. In this way the history of Chinese Buddhism had both a significant continuity with Indian Buddhism, and sometimes a remarkable discontinuity.

Tōru Funayama (船山徹) is Professor at the Institute for Research in Humanities of Kyoto University. His research mainly covers Chinese Buddhism in the Six Dynasties period, and philological and philosophical issues in Buddhist epistemology and logic in India from the fifth/tenth centuries.



Anti-Mahāyāna Polemics in the Earliest Phase of Chinese Buddhism

Eric Greene

In recent years our understanding of what Erik Zürcher called the "embryonic phase" of Chinese Buddhism – the late second and early third centuries – has improved tremendously, largely thanks to the

continuation of the work, pioneered by Zürcher himself, of identifying those Chinese Buddhist texts that can be reliably dated to this period. In this paper I will consider one such, hitherto little-studied text known as the Scripture on the Fifty Contemplations of Transcendent Wisdom (Ming du wu shi jiao ji jing 明度五十校計經). As I will argue, this text appears to be not a translation – as it purports to be – but rather a Chinese composition, albeit one that does indeed likely date from the very earliest period of Chinese Buddhism. As such, this text provides us with a rare glimpse of how Chinese Buddhists of this period were responding to Buddhism as it had been presented to them. Remarkably, this text proves to be a virulent and surprisingly coherent criticism of Mahāyāna soteriology from the perspective of a more traditional understanding of Buddhism. Apart from noting its significance as one of the most extensive and detailed anti-Mahāyāna polemics from any Buddhist tradition, I will consider the question of what this text might tell us about the very early history of Buddhism in China.

Eric Greene is Lecturer in East Asian Religions at the University of Bristol. His research focuses on the history and development of Chinese Buddhism, Buddhist meditation practices in China, Chan, or, Zen Buddhism, Chinese translations of Buddhist texts, the transmission of Buddhism to China and Buddhism in the West.



Looking at Textuality among Chinese Monks in the *Gaoseng zhuan*

Barend Ter Haar

In this paper I will look at the use of writing (and speech) in the biographies of early Chinese monks. At first sight it may seem obvious that the introduction of “Buddhist religious culture” took place primarily through the introduction of sutras and other texts, which were translated and explained. Given the restricted availability of written materials before printing (and even afterwards, but that is outside the frame of this paper), it seems worthwhile to investigate precisely how the contents of Buddhist written materials were disseminated. Other sources will probably give a different picture, but the *Gaoseng zhuan* seems as good point as any other to look at this question. This contribution will be first and foremost a reconnaissance, hopefully to enable me to ask more focused questions in a later stage.

Barend ter Haar is Run Run Shaw Chair of Chinese at Oxford University, author of, among other works, *The White Lotus Teachings in Chinese Religious History* (1992), *The Ritual and Mythology of the Chinese Triads: Creating an Identity* (1998), and *Telling Stories: Witchcraft and Scapegoating in Chinese History* (2006).



Early Buddhist Image-Making in China: Recent Discoveries and New Interpretations

Kim Minku

Recent discoveries of archaeological and epigraphical data and new interpretations thereof allow us to reconsider the early, groundbreaking period of Buddhist image-making practice in China in a way that was not necessarily recognized by the Late Erik Zürcher (1928-2008). The paper will focus on the two often-overlooked gilt bronze Buddha images excavated in an Eastern Han tomb (M2) at Beisongcun, Shijiazhuang (Hebei), and their related group of early metal images from north China, among which includes the Kharoṣṭhī-inscribed one from Xi’an. In addition, results of metallurgical analysis provide

us with a new socio-ethnic insight to the manufacturing process that involves with the so-called piece-mold casting technology. With this new information put together, we can reach a new understanding of Buddhist material culture in Han-to-Sixteen Kingdoms China.

Kim Minku, University of Minnesota, is an art historian specializing China between the Han and Six Dynasties, particularly in relation to Buddhism. He is currently working on two monographs: *Sculpture for Worship: Buddhism and The Cult of Images in Medieval China*, and *The Art of Buddhist Antiquarianism: Buddhist Epigraphic Data from Third- to Fourth-Century China*. A 2011 Ph.D. from the Department of Art History at the University of California, Los Angeles, he was Andrew W. Mellon Fellow of Scholars in the Humanities (2010-2012) at the Stanford Humanities Center.



The Waning Years of the Eminent Monk Xuanzang and his Deification in Japan

Liu Shufen

While the eminent monk Xuanzang 玄奘 (600-664) has long been renowned for his contributions to the historical development of Chinese Buddhism, the last years of his life were fraught with hardship. Caught up in the political infighting that raged around the reigns of the Tang emperor Gaozong 高宗 (628-683) and empress Wu Zetian 武則天 (625-705), Xuanzang spent his final days in self-imposed exile in northern Shaanxi 陝西 province while striving to finish some of his most important translation projects. He was not awarded any posthumous honors, and it took until the ninth century for a stupa and funerary inscription to be erected in his memory.

Xuanzang's stature continued to suffer during the Northern Song, with his achievements being ignored or excised from the historical record by scholar-officials like Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007-1072). At the same time, however, monastic and lay elites who supported Buddhism endeavored to preserve records of Xuanzang's deeds in their writings, while also worshipping him as a patriarch. The deification of Xuanzang continued in Japan from the twelfth to fourteenth centuries, where he ended up being worshipped as a bodhisattva. The goal of this paper is to trace the complex factors that resulted in the production of so many vastly different images of one of China's most famed Buddhist figures.

Liu Shufen is a Research Fellow at Academia Sinica in Taiwan. A historian focusing on the religious and social history of medieval China, she has published extensively in both Chinese and English on diverse aspects of Chinese Buddhism.



Literary Expedients and Sacrality : Reconsidering the Budhho-Daoist Apocalyptic Literature of Early Medieval China

Christine Mollier

For contemporary scholars, medieval Chinese Buddhist and Daoist apocalyptic scriptures involve a great paradox that has never been sufficiently investigated. The sacrality for which these scriptures were renowned and ultimately canonized, markedly contrasts with their literary paleness and their lack of rhetorical and discursive substance. Without linear narrative and stylistically redundant, their near unintelligibility and chaotic composition give the impression that these texts were not intended, in fact, to deliver a focused message or to be read. In virtue of what, therefore, were these scriptures sacred ?

In most cases, we have very little information concerning the socio-religious contingencies that contributed to their fame, canonization and, sometimes, exceptional diffusion, in this respect resembling the destiny of the great Mahāyāna sūtras. Despite this, we are able, through textual and comparative analysis, to define a set of standard literary expedients deployed in particular Buddhist and Daoist works to establish their supremacy and authority, and to promote their ritual efficacy. In my examination of this, I will focus on specific texts, mostly dating to the fifth and sixth centuries, issuing from both traditions.

Christine Mollier is a researcher specializing in the history of medieval Taoism at the French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS). She was a member of the French research group on Dunhuang manuscripts, and now belongs to the Center of Research on the Civilizations of East Asia (CRCAO, Paris). Her main interest is early Taoist eschatological literature and her recent work focuses on Buddho-Taoist scriptures and iconography. Her major publications include *Buddhism and Taoism Face to Face: Scripture, Ritual, and Iconographic Exchange in Medieval China* (2008).



“Anonymous Scriptures” Revisited: A Re-Evaluation of the Sources Jan Nattier

One of Erik Zürcher’s many interests was in the small group of scriptures he regarded as “anonymous translations”—that is, texts preserved in transmitted versions of the Chinese Buddhist canon (above all the widely used Taishō edition) that can be identified with titles registered by Daoan as the work of unknown translators (失譯). In a relatively obscure paper published in 1995, Zürcher wrote that, of the 142 titles classified by Daoan in this category, only “a pitiful residue of 17 texts . . . can be found in the Taishō canon.” A closer look at Daoan’s list of anonymous scriptures, however, reveals that far more texts from this group have survived than Zürcher believed. Already in 1941 Hayashiya Tomojirō 林屋友次郎 had discussed dozens of such works in his classic study *Kyōroku kenkyū* 經錄研究 and attempted to assign them tentative dates. And today it is possible to refine our knowledge of these anonymous scriptures still further, placing them more precisely in time and space and, in many cases, locating them within a specific “rhetorical community.”

Jan Nattier formerly taught at Indiana University, and was Researcher in the International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology at Soka University, before retirement. She has published widely, including *A Few Good Men* (2003), *Once Upon A Future Time* (1991) and *A Guide to the Earliest Buddhist Translations* (2008).



Periods in the History of Chinese Buddhism Antonello Palumbo

In the same year (1959) in which *The Buddhist conquest of China* made its appearance, Arthur F. Wright published his *Buddhism in Chinese history*, proposing an influential outline of the historical stages of Buddhism in China: Preparation (65-317 CE), Domestication (317-589 CE), Independent Growth (589-900 CE), Appropriation (900-1900 CE). Zürcher himself would adopt a virtually identical scheme about thirty years later. This paper will revisit the chronological framework in which these scholars, and several more in their wake, have understood the trajectory of Chinese Buddhism. It will

suggest that the exercise of periodisation, far from being the historian's recreation, can lead to remarkably dissimilar constructions of the same past and, in the case of Buddhism in China, to different appraisals of its nature and forms.

Antonello Palumbo is Lecturer in Chinese Religions at SOAS, University of London. He has published on the White Horse Monastery in early Chinese Buddhism and on Manichaeism in China.



Erik Zürcher's Study of Christianity in Seventeenth-Century China Nicolas Standaert

About half of some sixty total publications by Erik Zürcher (and one of his two books) is devoted to Christianity in China. Why did a scholar, known for his research on Buddhism, study to such an extent Christianity in China? Taking Zürcher's last public speech as a starting point, this presentation will analyze the reason behind this investigation. It will also expose his contributions to the study of intercultural contacts between China and other countries.

Nicolas Standaert is Professor and Head of the Department of Sinology at the Catholic University of Leuven. He is author of *Handbook of Christianity in China: Volume One (635-1800)*, (2000), *The Interweaving of Rituals: Funerals in the Cultural Exchange between China and Europe* (2008), *Faguo guojia tushuguan MingQing tianzhujiao wenxian* 法國國家圖書館明清天主教文獻 *Chinese Christian Texts from the National Library of France* (2009), and many others.



Blind Spots and One Way Tracks in Chinese Buddhist Historiography Stefano Zacchetti

One of the characteristic features of Chinese Buddhism is the development, from an early period, of a rich historiographical tradition. This paper will explore the influence exerted on modern historical studies devoted to the early period of Buddhist presence in China by traditional Chinese Buddhist historiography. The latter category, while primarily used in my paper with reference to works produced during the Liang period (6th century), such as Sengyou's *Chu sanzang ji ji* and Huijiao's *Gaoseng zhuan*, includes also isolated statements and reflections on the history of Chinese Buddhism contained in texts belonging to different genres (such as, for example, prefaces), which constitute a form of often highly influential historiography ante litteram.

My presentation will be centred on the analysis of some case studies, such as the treatment (or, rather, lack of it) of the late 4th century Indian monk Zhu Tanwulan in ancient and modern historiographical sources, and the formation of the image of Wu Kingdom Buddhism vis-à-vis the preceding Han period.

Stefano Zacchetti is Yehan Numata Professor of Buddhist Studies at Oxford University. His work revolves around Early Chinese Buddhist translations (2nd-5th centuries CE), Mahāyāna literature in Sanskrit and Chinese, and the history of the Chinese Buddhist Canon. He is author among other works of *In Praise of the Light: A Critical Synoptic Edition with an Annotated Translation of Chapters 1-3 of Dharmarakṣa's Guang zan jing* 光讚經 (2005).

