



ABTEILUNGSKOLLOQUIUM

A TRIAD OF ANOMALOUS BUDDHIST SCRIPTURES FROM FIFTH-CENTURY CHINA

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As is well known, the Chinese Buddhist canon is riddled with problematic texts. For various complex reasons, some genuine translations are ascribed to the wrong translators or teams; other texts (often referred to as "apocrypha"), presented as translations, were actually composed in China; on a spectrum between genuine translation and full-blown Chinese composition, various hybrids are also possible. All these problems often entail incorrect dating of texts. In the present state of our knowledge, we arguably do not know the full extent of these problems, and yet, despite the explosion of interest in recent years in para- and extracanonical sources, including non-textual evidence, such texts and their dates often constitute the bedrock (or quicksand) upon which the edifice of our knowledge stands. In this talk, I will consider a triad of texts exemplifying several problems of this type, probably stemming from South China in the first half of the fifth century---an historical

context that increasingly shows itself to have been a hotbed of groundbreaking textual creativity, and an almost perfect storm of problems and opportunities for research. I consider these text using new computer-assisted techniques of analysis that I have developed in collaboration with programmer colleague Jamie Norrish, and the talk will therefore also function as a showcase for some of the potential of those tools. With the assistance of these methods, our texts provide open new windows on several facets of Chinese Buddhism, at a formative moment of great ferment in its history.



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SAI, Room E11

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