

Patronage and the *Purification of All Negative Rebirths* in Early Tibet: A View from Dunhuang
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Tibetans stepped onto the stage of history in the seventh century, when the Pugyel family united all the other clans of central Tibet and spread their rule across most of Central Asia. By the second half of the eighth century and the reign of King Trisong Detsen, the Pugyel Empire controlled key points along the all-important Silk Road, from the kingdom of Brusha, located near Gilgit in present-day Pakistan, to Dunhuang, located at the western end of the Gansu Corridor in present-day Qinghai Province. Trisong Detsen (r. 755-797) was also the first Tibetan ruler to institute Buddhist monasticism in his country, building Samye Monastery around 780 C.E. The Tibetan empire's successes continued through the mid-ninth century, at which point a fight over succession to the throne combined with a pan-Central-Asian economic downturn to divide the dynasty and begin the empire's gradual slide into collapse.

In this talk, Dalton will examine the manuscripts recovered from the famous "Library Cave" near Dunhuang for what they can tell us about Buddhist patronage during Tibet's imperial period. Following an introduction to the Dunhuang manuscripts, Dalton will focus in particular on those items (ritual works and mandala images) relating to the *Purifications of All Negative Rebirths* (*Sarvadurgatipariśodhana*), an influential tantra of the eighth century.

Two readings are recommended: The first is a general introduction to the period by Dr. Sam van Schaik of the British Library, and the second is Sir Aurel Stein's first-hand account of his "discovery" of the Dunhuang manuscripts. Please note that the relevant maps may be found at the beginning of the van Schaik reading.

Key Names and Terms

King Songtsen Gampo (r. c. 617-650)

King Trisong Detsen (r. 755-797)

Samye Monastery (completed c. 780)

Dunhuang

Purification of All Negative Rebirths (*Sarvadurgatipariśodhana*)

Suggested Readings:

- Sam van Schaik, *Tibet: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), chs. 1-2.
- Aurel Stein, *Serindia: Detailed Report of Explorations in Central Asia and Westernmost China* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921), pp. 791-830.