

abstract

## **Female Donors in Dunhuang: Focusing on Cave 61 at Mogao Grotto**

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Was there any special role for female donors in the patronage of Buddhist art? Can we read any particular messages from the ways in which they are represented in relation to the works they sponsored? This presentation pursues the questions with an examination of donor images that are represented on the walls at Mogao Grotto in Dunhuang. In particular, this presentation focuses on Cave 61, a mid-tenth century cave in which we find a number of donor images, fifty two in total, and intriguingly enough, all female. While Cave 61 has enjoyed great deal of scholarly attention over the past decades mostly because of the presence of the famous mural on the rear wall, the depiction of Mount Wutai, little discussion has been made with regard to its donor images. First part of this presentation therefore examines how special it is to have all female images in the main chamber by surveying the ways in which donors are represented at Mogao Grotto before the construction of Cave 61. Then it moves to the analysis of donor images at Cave 61 with accompanying cartouches that identify each figures and consider if they have any special meaning with regard to the main theme of the cave, i.e., the depiction of Mount Wutai.