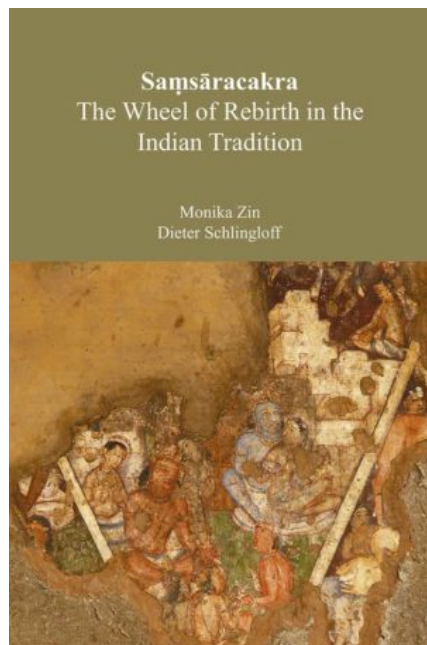


Samsaracakra: The Wheel of Rebirth in the Indian Tradition



About the Book

In Tibetan art, paintings of the Wheel of Rebirths (Samsaracakra) have remained popular to the present day. Divided into five (more often six) sections, the wheel shows the different possible realms of rebirth: in the world of the gods, (of the asuras), the humans, the animals, the hungry ghosts, and the beings residing in various hells. The prototypes of these depictions were devised in India where, however, only one such painting survived, namely on the veranda of Cave XVII in Ajanta. Corresponding with the Samsaracakra paintings, a number of texts preserved in Sanskrit, Tibetan and Chinese, provide instructions on how to paint this type of wheel. The mural in Ajanta corresponds most closely to a fragmentary Sanskrit manuscript found in Kucha. This manuscript describes not only the wheel of rebirth, but also the wheel's surroundings: Mara, god of sensuality and death – two of the main factors leading to rebirth – should be depicted there in his fourfold form, as well as representatives of various sciences, such as different branches of medicine. The wheel itself is defined as a ghatyantra, pot-machine, which scoops water, and is known today as noria or the "Persian wheel." The present book contains the edition, translation, and commentary of the fragmentary manuscript from Kucha, and a meticulous analysis of the corresponding Ajanta mural.

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Dieter Schlingloff

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About the Author

Monika Zin is a long-time collaborator of Schlingloff and herself the author of a number of foundational books and articles on the interpretations of Indian and Central Asian Buddhist art. Her book *The Kanaganahalli Stupa: An Analysis of the 60 Massive Slabs Covering the Dome* was published in New Delhi in 2018 (Aryan Books International), and her *Representations of the Parinirvana Story Cycle in Kucha* was published by DEV in 2020. Professor Zin leads the research centre “Buddhist Murals of Kucha on the Northern Silk Road” at the Saxon Academy of Sciences and Humanities in Leipzig.

Dieter Schlingloff is a scholar of South-Asian Buddhism specializing in narrative Buddhist art. Among his numerous contributions one may mention his ingenious edition and German translation of a meditation manual from manuscript fragments found in Kucha on the northern Silk Road (*Ein Buddhistisches Yogalehrbuch*, 1964, reprinted with additional fragments discovered after the 1964 published in 2006). In several articles, Schlingloff has accomplished ground-breaking work in the interpretation of themes of narrative art in South Asia, mainly in the paintings of Ajanta (*Studies in the Ajanta Paintings*, New Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1987). Professor Schlingloff was head of the Institute of Indology in Munich and is currently Honorary Professor at the University of Leipzig, Germany.

Schlingloff and Zin are the authors of *Ajanta – Handbuch der Malereien*. The English translation of Schlingloff’s contribution to this work, *Ajanta – Handbook of the Paintings 1. Narrative Wall-paintings* (3 vols.) was published in 2013 by the IGNCA and Zin’s contribution, *Ajanta – Handbook of the Paintings 2. Devotional and Ornamental Paintings* (2 vols.) still awaits publication. The booklets *Guides to the Ajanta Paintings*, indispensable companions for a visit of Ajanta, were published by Munshiram Manoharlal in 1999 and 2003.

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Second Floor, Prakashdeep 22, Delhi Medical
Association Road, Darya Ganj, New Delhi – 110 002

Phone No : +91-11-4357-2647

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