



Einladung zum Vortrag

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A New Interpretation of the Textual Programme of “Sengchou’s Cave” at Xiaonanhai

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In 1983, a cave in a cliff at Xiaonanhai 小南海 in northern Henan 河南 was excavated, and findings were first published in 1988. On this basis, it proved possible to identify the site with a cave previously known only from historical sources. This cave, constructed between 550 and 560, was associated with Sengchou 僧稠 (480–560), one of the most famous and influential monks in sixth-century China, who was especially renowned for his meditation practice. Though small, the cave is significant as the earliest case in China of carving extended excerpts from Buddhist scriptures in stone. It is also significant, I argue, as our most reliable source about Sengchou’s meditation practice. In this talk, I will present a new interpretation of the textual programme of the cave, with the aim of demonstrating a larger methodological point about the way that such sites can most profitably be interpreted. I will also attempt to cast new light on Sengchou as a pivotal moment in the history of practices called *chan* 禪 (**dhyāna*, “meditation”) in China, and the pre-history that led to the emergence of the eponymous “Chan” schools.