

Papers submitted

*Cataria Fahrendholz, Start from the End: Khitan burial practices unravelled in reverse*

The semi-nomadic Khitan were a Turkic mounted tribe from the Mongolian and Manchurian Steppes. With the collapse of the Tang Dynasty, they succeeded in conquering vast parts of Northern China. They established a “Chinese-styled” empire, the Liao Dynasty (916-1125) and developed trade routes, following the Silk Roads, far beyond Persia. Script, they left scarcely. But instead, we discover well preserved underground tombs, furnished, painted, and hidden behind Chinese wood carved doors. Khitan burial practices, however, do not follow Chinese traditions alone. Their dealing with the deceased was different, multiple, and complex: in use were methods of embalming, trepanation, cremation, coffin burial, substitution of the body with effigies made of wood or straw, burial garments, burial masks, and netlike bodysheils shaped from metal wire. It even appears, that Khitan applied treatments for maintaining – and reducing the body – at the same time. Why they did so, remains unclear until today. Too long these customs were considered ethnocentric. New archaeological findings and their investigation with interdisciplinary methods, allow us to break through this narrow view. Approaching Liao research from the combined fields of art history and archaeology show, that the excavated tombs – and all they entail, reveal far more than something about death itself. They give rise to the presumption, that Khitan might have acted as proto-globalizers. Could the broad variety of death rituals be enrooted within ancient traditions from Eurasia? And did the Khitan transformed these older practices into new shapes, fitting the need of a sedentary, dynastic society? If we open up to a transcontinental perspective, will it be possible, to reconstruct the process behind the final and diffuse image, we are offered with?

*Abbas Riahi, A Study of the Optative Mood in Middle Persian and Parthian*

The optative in Western Middle Iranian languages (MP and Pth) is one of the most difficult and complicated issues in these languages. In spite of a large body of researches on verbal systems and modality in Iranian languages, I do believe that so far no comprehensive study has been done on this topic. If we want to understand the language completely, at first we must understand the grammar; and verbal system is a quite important part of the grammar. Understanding the verbs including their tense, mood, aspect, etc. can help us to understand the sentence and therefor the language correctly. Analyzing the optative which is a less well-understood part of MP and Pth will bring about a more comprehensive grasping of these languages and will lead us to a better understanding. It will also help us to understand NP and other Iranian languages more thoroughly. I am therefore going to study and analyze the optative in MP and Pth and try to clarify its different uses and the ways it can be interpreted.

*Nastaran Seddighi, Manichaean Abecedarian Hymns*

At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, expeditions to the Turfan oasis (Xinjiang, China) were undertaken by Russia, Germany, Japan, France, and England. The German archaeologists brought thousands of items, frescos, and other artifacts and 40,000 fragments of texts in different languages and scripts to Berlin. Among the found texts in Turfan, there are Middle Iranian texts. These fragments are now preserved in the BBAW collection. These fragments date to the 8th to 11th centuries and included Manichaean liturgical chants and hymnodies of eastern Manichaeans and belonged to the Iranian and Turkish Manichaean Mānestāns (monasteries) of Central Asia, some of which included hymnodies and psalms. These hymns and psalms are of great importance, as Mani used these texts in the liturgy. There are various manuscript fragments in Turfan collection which indicate some special characteristics. Sacred texts always used different elements to distinguish these texts from non-sacred texts. One of these distinctive elements is “Alphabetic Compositions.” By using Alphabetic Compositions, the Manichaeans tried to convey a hidden message through the text. This unique feature is used in a considerable number of Manichaean hymns. Studying this feature helps us discover why Manichaeans employed this feature and gives us some hints about the root of this tradition.

*Yunyun Yang*, Transformations of subsistence economy and landscape dynamics in Inner Mongolia from the Neolithic to the early Iron Age: an introduction to my PhD project

From the Neolithic Age to the early Iron Age, Inner Mongolia has seen cultural mixtures involving the local indigenous cultures (e.g. Hongshan culture), Zhongyuan cultures (eg Yangshao culture, Longshan culture, mainly from the Wei River / the middle-lower Yellow River), and pastoral cultures (e.g. Zhukaigou culture, Taohongbala culture, Maoqinggou culture). It is also notable that, during the late Neolithic Age to the early Bronze Age, the Inner Mongolia area has experienced a remarkable shift of site densities, and substantial changes in economic subsistence can also be observed. The highlighted cultural phenomena lead to questions about the driving forces behind changes of site density (population), questions about how the subsistence economy changed and possible impact of this on the population. This study will centre on archaeological sites from the Neolithic period, Bronze Age and early Iron Age (6200-300 BCE) in Inner Mongolia, to explore land-use practices of the different ancient groups, in order to understand the dynamics of the shifting site densities, the changes of economic subsistence, the transformation of societies, and the potential interaction between pastoral and agricultural groups.

*Abuduxikeer Aierken*, Focus Structures in the Old Uyghur text “Story of the two Princes”

Focus is realized through different linguistic devices in different languages. These linguistic devices include accenting, syntactic reordering, and other morphological marking devices. This article investigates different focus structures in the “Story of two Princess” as case study for the Old Uyghur narrative texts. Different focus structures in the text are expressed by using various grammatical means, including word order and morphological devices. These various focus structures lead to the different interpretations of the given linguistic expression. The article aims at finding the mapping between focus structure and linguistic means to outline a pattern for specific interpretation of the linguistic expression that caused by focus structure in the text.