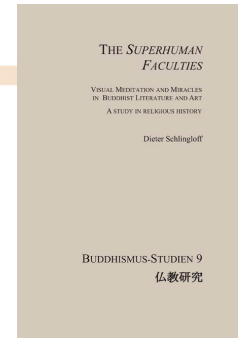


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Visual Meditation and Miracles in Buddhist Literature
and Art. A Study in Religious History

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This publication deals with a phenomenon that has been expressed in various aspects in both literature and art: people exist who have, or are able to gain, the ability to see in trance unreal figures appear and act. Depending on the visionary's spiritual or religious environment, these appearances take on meanings in accordance with the visionary's expectation and then, dogmatically interpreted, are entered by the visionary himself or by others into religious literature as stories of actual events – sometimes being so transformed in the process that their visionary origin is no longer apparent.

Our study examines this phenomenon in the so-called Hīnayāna Buddhism in India and its transmission to Central Asia, where this process can often be observed. The faculty of visions is naturally not limited to Buddhism; it can be equally observed in the three major monotheistic religions as well. One prominent example from the Bible is the transfiguration of Jesus, – perhaps the vision with the greatest consequences in the New Testament.

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