



RUHR UNIVERSITÄT BOCHUM  
International Consortium: Dynamics in the History of Religions between Asia and Europe

## Mantra and Dhāraṇī in the Religious Traditions of Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism

WORKSHOP AT RUHR UNIVERSITÄT BOCHUM: 12-13 APRIL 2012

### ABSTRACTS (IN ORDER OF PRESENTATION).

**Ronald Davidson (Fairfield, CT, USA): Dhāraṇī Pragmatics in Late Classical and Early Medieval Buddhist Texts.** Dhāraṇī textual descriptions suggest the applicability of the discipline of historical pragmatics to their use. This extends beyond the semantics of dhāraṇī into their injunctive use, and the implications of the verbal forms in dhāraṇī-s and contextualizing dhāraṇī-s.

**Gudrun Bühneman (Madison, WI, USA): A Dhāraṇī for Each Day of the Week: The Saptavāra Tradition of the Newar Buddhists.** The paper discusses a group of dhāraṇī-s associated with the seven days (saptavāra) of the week so that one dhāraṇī is recited on a specific day. The visual forms of the dhāraṇī-s were represented in miniature paintings in manuscripts of the saptavāra texts and in woodcarvings on the struts of two Newar Buddhist monasteries in Kathmandu. The paper shows that even though two members of the saptavāra group were originally male, eventually all members came to be conceived of as feminine in Nepal. It further provides evidence that the group is likely to have become known in Nepal in the sixteenth century.

**Pedro M. Castro Sánchez (Valencia): Linguistic Patterns and Figures of Speech in Dhāraṇī Formulas.** The dhāraṇī formulas are characterized by a special kind of language differing, on the one hand, from the language as used for ordinary communication, and on the other hand, from the religious language of a discursive nature. The present contribution will describe some of the most representative linguistic patterns and figures of speech appearing in dhāraṇī formulas, along with an interpretative analysis of their meanings and functions.

**Ingo Strauch (München): The Evolution of the Dhāraṇī Genre in the Light of New Evidence from Gandhāra** The Bajaur Collection of Kharoṣṭhī manuscripts, which has been studied in Berlin since 2005, includes one text which contains a magic formula. It is said to have been handed over to the Buddha by the nāga king Manasvin, a popular figure in the northern Buddhism of India. It is the aim of my paper to introduce this manuscript and to discuss its value for the exploration of the early evolution of rakṣā literature in North-West India. It will be shown that the style as well as the contents of the newly discovered Gāndhārī text is largely parallel to texts of the Pañcarakṣā tradition, especially to the Mahāmāyūrī.

**Jörg Plassen (Bochum): The Roles of Dhāraṇī in the East Asian Reception of the Avataṃsakasūtra.** This paper will explore the "rotating poem," a visual device ascribed to Ūisang and Chih-yen (both seventh century). The device gives a summary of the main contents of the Avataṃsaka in 30 verses. The diagram has been studied by several scholars but what is less known are the somewhat arcane practices surrounding it. Thus, in one tradition the verses are used for "meditation through writing," while others play mathematical games with the dhāraṇī, while yet others set out their objections to these practices.

**Tsering Gongkastang (Oxford):** For this workshop I take the opportunity to present a thirty minute documentary film prepared in Amdo at the time of a festival to mountain deities. The use of dhāraṇī-s on prayer flags can be seen in the context of this festival and is related to the instructions included in Tibetan dhāraṇī collections studied by Michael Willis (see his abstract below).

**Peter Bisschop (Leiden): The Five Brahma Mantra-s Reconsidered.** The five Brahma mantra-s are central to the formation and identity of the Pāśupata-s. The received opinion is that these five mantra-s, included at the end of the five chapters which together make up the Pāśupatasūtra, have been taken from the Taittirīyāraṇyaka. In this paper I will present counter-evidence to this view and look at early textual discussions about the use of these five mantra-s.

**Sven Bretfeld (Bochum): Dhāraṇī Practice at Abhayagiri in Sri Lanka and Mahāvihāra Responses.** The starting point for this paper is the dhāraṇī pillar from the Abhayagiri monastery at Anurādhapura and a large number of dhāraṇī plaques recently found in the grounds of the monastery that have yet to be published. Some of the texts have been identified and can be traced back to well-known Indian *Tantra*-s. In my paper I will focus on the anti-Mahāyāna and anti-Tantric position in the Mahāvihāra literature that led, finally, to our image of Sri Lanka as a purely Hināyāna religious culture. Vajrāyana practices were, however, popular even in the fourteenth century, two centuries after the reorganization of the Saṅgha, with the Saṅgharāja still expressing opposition to Tantric practices that were continued in secret.

**Gergely Hidas (Budapest): Two Dhāraṇī Prints in the Stein Collection at the British Museum.** This paper examines two tenth-century woodblock prints from Dunhuang acquired by Sir Aurel Stein that are now in the British Museum. Ch. 00151 is dedicated to Avalokiteśvara and Ch.00152 to Amitābha with formulas written in Siddham characters in square or circular fashion around the central image of the respective deity. Editions and translations/interpretations of both texts will be presented along with a study of the Chinese inscriptions on the left side of the xylographs with the help of a Sinologist colleague. An attempt will also be made to find parallels to the Sanskrit texts within the corpus of Buddhist Tantric literature and to consider possible ways the two objects were used.

**Liying Kuo (Paris): Indian Dhāraṇī-s and Chinese Gāthā-s in Medieval Chinese Buddhism.** The Dunhuang manuscript Pelliot Chinese N° 2197 contains important indications concerning the ritual use of some dhāraṇī-s. It is a collection of nine dhāraṇī-s written after a sketch showing each mantra (zhenyan 真言) with its corresponding planet, nine in total. Each dhāraṇī is preceded by a series of versified sentences of seven characters, called tuoluoni qiqing 陀羅尼啓請, “invitation to dhāraṇī” or “invocation of dhāraṇī”. Such stanzas, similar to the Chinese rendering of Indian gāthā-s are found only in a few Dunhuang manuscripts and on stone pillars engraved with dhāraṇī-s (known as dhāraṇī-pillars) not earlier than the ninth century. I shall examine the relations between these “invitation stanzas” and their respective dhāraṇī-s and specially analyse the case of the Buddhōṣṇīṣa vijayā dhāraṇī which is the seventh dhāraṇī of the MS.

**Michael Willis (Bochum): Using without Reading: Instructions for the Use of Dhāraṇī Texts in the Tibetan Tradition.** In this paper I examine two texts that are used on Tibetan prayer flags but which are seldom if ever read by Tibetans or western scholars of Tibetan religion and culture. These texts survive in several versions and can be found in Tibetan dhāraṇī collections (gzungs 'dus). In these collections, the dhāraṇī-s include instructions on their use which provide insights into the history, continuity and disjuncture of these texts in the Tibetan tradition.