

PRODUCTION OF TANTRIC BUDDHIST TEXTS IN THE
TANGUT EMPIRE (11TH TO 13TH C.): INSIGHTS FROM READING
KARAKHOTO MANUSCRIPT ɸ 249 + ɸ 327 金剛亥母修習儀
JINGANG HAIMU XIUXI YI [THE RITUAL OF THE YOGIC
PRACTICE OF VAJRAVĀRĀHĪ] IN COMPARISON WITH
OTHER TANTRIC RITUAL TEXTS*

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ABSTRACT

Thanks to imperial patronage in the Tangut Empire (ca. 1038–1227, known in Chinese sources as Xixia 西夏) – situated at the crossroads of Central Asian, Tibetan, and Chinese cultures and languages in Eastern Central Asia – Tantric Buddhist texts were for the first time in history systematically translated from Tibetan into Chinese. This process began in the second half of the 12th century. The presence of Tibetan masters at the Tangut court established a trend that was continued for centuries to come by Mongol, Manchu, as well as Chinese rulers. We do not know yet enough about the actual translation processes from one language to another to safely reconstruct the contexts. Nonetheless, it is worthwhile to enhance our knowledge of the earliest production process of Tantric Buddhist manuscripts in the Tangut Empire. The present article takes a ritual text related to the female deity Vajravārāhī, namely the Karakhoto manuscript ɸ 249 + ɸ 327 金剛亥母修習儀 *Jingang haimu xiuxi yi* [The Ritual of the Yogic Practice of Vajravārāhī] and other similar ritual texts, as a case through which we may study the production and usage of tantric materials at the very beginning of this transmission from Tibetan to Chinese. I will also investigate interesting features related to how tantric texts were translated and provide further insights through a structural analysis of the text. The study thereby contributes to our understanding of how Tantric Buddhist texts were created to meet local needs.

* My sincere thanks for corrections to an earlier draft of the paper by Henrik H. Sørensen, Dylan Esler, Weirong Shen, Martin Boord, and Imre Galambos. Any remaining faults are my own.

1. Introduction

Various local people – be they Chinese, Khotanese, Tangut, Tibetan, or Uyghur – were part of the multi-cultural and multi-linguistic medieval societies that shaped localisations of Buddhism in Eastern Central Asia along an ancient, local political-economic-cultural system, often referred to as the “Silk Roads,” thereby participating in the grandeur of a pan-Asian Buddhist civilisation. The ERC-funded project *BuddhistRoad* at the Center of Religious Studies at Ruhr-Universität Bochum investigates, on the basis of multi-lingual textual primary sources, visual evidence, and archeological remains, how these multi-cultural societies living in and around the Tarim Basin between the 6th and 14th centuries contributed to the emergence of distinct local forms of Buddhism which we may regard as integrated systems in themselves and collectively refer to as Central Asian Buddhism.¹ Local appropriations occur as political circumstances change, which in turn shape material culture, whereby ideas, objects, or ritual systems become entangled with local politics and individual or special needs. The project as well as the present study aim at detecting palimpsests of reformulations, displacement etc. of religious meaning and patterns and motivations in a process of local appropriation for local ends (Thomas 1991: 184).

With regard to one aspect of this appropriation process in Central Asian Buddhism, namely, the transmission of Tantric Buddhism in Eastern Central Asia, I have suggested elsewhere (Meinert 2020: 244–245)² that texts and images from various sites and collections need to be studied together in order to better understand the continuity of tantric transmissions

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² The article is available open access at https://static.ceres.rub.de/media/filer_public/fd/cf/fdcf9c3e-95b6-47c8-8e4a-330d21b4476e/meinert_sorensen_2020_buddhism_in_central_asia_i_meinert_offprint.pdf.

as well as ruptures or reformulations – with the earliest Tibetan textual evidences from the 9th and 10th centuries, from the oasis of Dunhuang (敦煌) and later transmissions visible, e.g., in Chinese, Tangut and Tibetan textual and visual materials from the garrison Karakhoto situated in the northern periphery of the Tangut Empire.³ In previous studies I have analysed the creation of a network of tantric sacred spaces during the Tangut Empire, particularly under the rule of Tangut Emperor Renzong (r. 1139–1193, 仁宗), a paragon of a tantric patron (Meinert 2020). This also elucidated how one of the latest ritual techniques, the cult of Vajravārāhī (Meinert 2019), is likely to have been practised in the Mogao Caves (Chin. Mogao ku 莫高窟) in Dunhuang – then understood as actual tantric sacred spaces for ritual practice (Meinert forthcoming). I here present yet another angle for the interpretation of those materials in order to further our understanding of the earliest stages of the possible production and transmission of Tantric Buddhist knowledge for local ends. I shall be making a close reading of what appears to be a relatively complete evocation (Skt. *sādhana*) of the female tantric deity Vajravārāhī as found in the Chinese Karakhoto manuscript ɸ 249 + ɸ 327 金剛亥母修習儀 *Jingang haimu xiuxi yi* [The Ritual of the Yogic Practice of Vajravārāhī] (Shi, Wei, and Kychanov 1996–1998: vol. 6, 106–108, pp. 1–2), which I believe to be among the earliest examples of this type of ritual text in Chinese (fig. 1).

How does one approach such a neatly drafted manuscript that appears as if it was written in one sitting? Many years ago, I studied an equally carefully written Dunhuang manuscript on Chan Buddhism, the *Wolun chanshi kanxin fa* 臥輪禪師看心法 [The *dharma* of Gazing at Mind of Chan Master Wolun] from the private collection of Tokushi Yūshō (see a copy of the manuscript in Meinert 2008: 244–245).⁴ In that study I analysed the “biography of a manuscript” by showing through philological analysis how in a *longue durée* perspective a religious object – a Chinese Dunhuang manuscript on Chan Buddhism – was created by using quotes lifted from both Buddhist and Daoist sources. The layers of added cultural

³ A map of the Tangut Empire was published in that article (Meinert 2020: 252–253) and is also available on the *BuddhistRoad* website.

⁴ This article is now freely available online at <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24048053>.

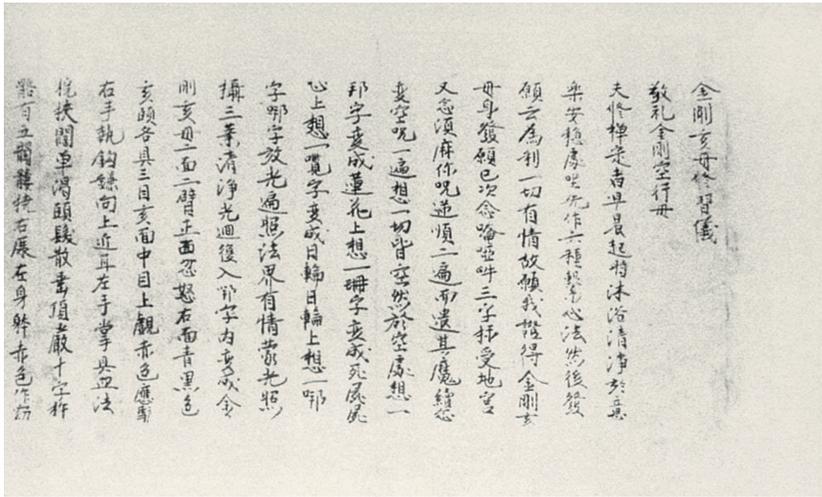


Figure 1. ϕ 249 + ϕ 327 *Jingang haimu xiuxi yi* 金剛亥母修習儀 [The Ritual of the Yogic Practice of Vajravārāhī]. Karakhoto, late 12th/early 13th c. (?). Shi, Wei, and Kychanov 1996–1998: vol. 6, ϕ 249 + ϕ 327, 106, p. 1.

and religious codes developed into the manuscript that still exists today: the religious sense visible in the manuscript thus adapted to different (cultural) contexts and allowed for various interpretations of religious semantics with shifts in meanings.

In the present article I intend to take a similar approach to our Karakhoto manuscript ϕ 249 + ϕ 327 *The Ritual of the Yogic Practice of Vajravārāhī*, including related tantric materials from the Tangut Empire. In order to enhance our understanding of the production and usage of this type of manuscript, various corrections, insertions, and structural and logical problems provide us with rare insights. As the manuscript in question, in common with many similar ritual manuals from Karakhoto, has neither a colophon nor mentions any further names or places, we are not yet able to safely reconstruct how and by whom such tantric ritual texts were actually translated and copied in the Tangut Empire.⁵ Were they,

⁵ I am aware of three Chinese manuscripts related to the Vajravārāhī cult in the Karakhoto Collection which have names of masters who “transmitted” (Chin. *chuan* 傳)

for example, part of a personal collection of ritual manuals, i.e. notes taken by disciples on the occasion of a teaching session by a tantric master and maybe later copied into a neat manuscript format? Were they a patchwork of various texts put together – with whatever motivation? Or was a given text systematically translated from one specific Tibetan template e.g. in the imperially funded office for the translation of Buddhist scriptures set up by the Tangut court in the capital Zhongxing (興州) modelled after the Chinese translation office in the Song (960–1279, 宋) dynastic capital Kaifeng (開封)?⁶ Were scriptoria immediately attached to the places where the texts were translated? Or were copies produced at a much later time and at a different place? These are still open questions, to which I do not have answers yet, as we still need much more research on the Karakhoto manuscripts and on the institutional infrastructure which patronised the spread of Buddhism in the Tangut Empire.

However, what I attempt to offer here is: firstly, to roughly sketch the context which facilitated the spread of tantric teachings under imperial patronage in the Tangut Empire; and secondly, to point out some problems in the physical manuscript, investigate interesting features related to how the text was translated in comparison with related Chinese Tantric Buddhist manuscripts from the Karakhoto Collection, and to analyse the structure of the described ritual procedure. I also provide a transcription of the text as well as an annotated translation in the appendix. Thus, my

Vajravārāhī teachings: The ritual text A 19 *Jingang haimu chanding* 金剛亥母禪定 [The Meditation on Vajravārāhī] bears the name *dharma* master Naxiduo (那悉多法師) (Shi, Wei, and Kychanov 1996–1998: vol. 5, 257, fol. 1.1); and No. 274 *Jingang haimu lue shishi yi* 金剛亥母略施食儀 [Ritual of Food-Offering to Vajravārāhī] (Shi, Wei, and Kychanov 1996–1998: vol. 6, 275, fol. 2.13) and No. 274 *Jingang haimu zisheshou yaomen* 金剛亥母自攝授要門 [The Quintessential Instruction of Self-Blessing of Vajravārāhī] (Shi, Wei, and Kychanov 1996–1998: vol. 6, 276, fol. 4.16) were both transmitted by *dharma* master Cumaye (龕麻謁法師). I do not have the necessary linguistic expertise to safely reconstruct what phonetic value the characters of the names 那悉多 and 龕麻謁 had in the 12th century Chinese dialect of the Hexi Corridor.

⁶ The Tangut imperial court had copied a model institution set up by the Song Dynasty, the Office for the Translation of Buddhist Scriptures (Chin. *yijing yuan* 譯經院), from which the Tangut imperial court ordered six copies of the Chinese Buddhist canon between 1031 and 1073. The institution was basically meant to facilitate the translation of Buddhist texts from Chinese into Tangut (Dunnell 1996: 36–49). The Tangut capital was renamed a few times and appears in sources as Xingzhou (興州), Xingqing (興慶) and Zhongxing (興州) (present-day Yinchuan 銀川) (Dunnell 1989).

interest is not to identify the Tibetan original on which the Chinese text might be based, which I was not able to do. Rather, my focus is a different one here: namely, to approach the question of text production with the help of a structural analysis and translation in comparison with yet another, rather complete Tibetan Vajravārāhī evocation (Skt. *sādhana*) from the Tibetan canon, namely, the *rDo rje phag mo grub pa'i thabs* [The Evocation of Vajravārāhī] (Derge 1542), translated a little earlier in time by the Tibetan Kagyü master Tsurtön Wangngé (11th c., Tib. mTshurston dbang nge), student of the Kagyü founding father Marpa (1012–1097, Tib. Mar pa), in the presence of the Indian master Vajrapāṇi.⁷ This specific Tibetan text certainly did not serve as template for the translation of our Chinese manuscript – the wordings are, in fact, quite different; nonetheless it does help to analyse the structure of the Chinese manuscript, and to detect corrupt passages. Moreover, Elizabeth English (2002) has presented the so far most elaborate study on the various forms of the tantric deity Vajravārāhī in Sanskrit ritual texts; I will thus also refer to her study and translation of the Sanskrit *Vajravārāhī sādhana* by Umāpatideva (early-mid 12th c.) (English 2002: 109–223) whenever it is relevant, particularly in the annotations to my translation. This is a rewarding approach as our Chinese text 卍 249 + 卍 327 basically seems to follow a similar structure. Although that Sanskrit ritual text has a distinctive structural framework consisting of four meditation stages that describe progressively longer meditations based on the visualisation of Vajravārāhī within her *maṇḍala*, the first one reads as a complete evocation in itself, similar to our Chinese text.

Moreover, I will refer to the outstanding discoveries of my colleague Weirong Shen (2015) and build on his research.⁸ Shen (2015) was the

⁷ More about the reason for choosing this text is given below.

⁸ It is still an open question why texts with many correction marks and insertions were also stored in sacred sites such as *stūpas* in Karakhoto, a place which, after all, was an outpost of the Tangut Empire. Ruth Dunnell (2009: 62) provided an interesting hypothesis on how texts could have circulated there by taking the example of a certain Huiming (fl. late 12th to early 13th c., 慧明), a monk of Tangut origin working with prominent Tibetan translators and whose name is associated with more (Tangut) texts discovered in Karakhoto than any other single name. Dunnell suggested that he probably participated in translation projects of tantric texts in the capital where he also held the post of a deputy director of the *saṃgha* (Chin. *gongde sizheng fushi* 功德司正副使), but was also affiliated

first to point to a Tibetan tantric ritual text which he argued to be, despite quite a number of differences, the exemplar for a Chinese translation now preserved in a Karakhoto manuscript. I hereby hope to advance our knowledge of the production and transmission process of tantric teachings in Eastern Central Asia which, after all, was first established and facilitated more systematically thanks to the lavish patronage of Tangut rulers (Meinert 2020).

2. Sketch of the Historical Context of the Production of Tantric Texts in the Tangut Empire

Following the demise of the three major empires in the mid-9th and early 10th centuries – the Uyghur Khaganate (840), the Tibetan Empire (842), and the Chinese Tang Dynasty (906) – people in Eastern Central Asia managed to come to terms with the ruptures concomitant with the demise of the Tibetan dominion in the region, by establishing local rules in the various oasis towns within the following century. Moreover, they gradually developed a regional network of exchanges between the different oases in the Tarim Basin (e.g. through marriage alliances between Khotanese and Dunhuang rulers, envoys between Turfan and Dunhuang etc.), a process in which Buddhism played a formative role (Russel-Smith 2005; Forte 2019; Meinert and Sørensen 2020). Buddhism became the glue which held various people together and eventually helped to develop Central Asian lands into an internationally attractive Buddhist location. Once the Tanguts established their rule in the 11th century at the crossroads of Central Asian, Tibetan, and Sinitic cultural and religious influences – between the Ordos bend in the east, the oasis of Dunhuang in the west, the garrison of Karakhoto in the north, and parts of the northeastern Tibetan region of Amdo in the south – they further extended their exchanges to Song China and Tibet as well. Tangut monastics participated in the imperially funded translation project in the Chinese capital Kaifeng (Dunnell 1996: 29–32), also receiving transmissions in *vinaya* and tantric

with Wuming xiansheng Monastery (五明現生寺院) (probably located around Karakhoto). Dunnell envisions him to have retired at that monastery, possibly bringing back a collection of texts and images from the capital, some of which later served as fillings for *stūpas* in Karakhoto.

literature in Central Tibet (Davidson 2005: 349). By the 12th century the Tangut Empire had developed into a flourishing Buddhist centre in its own right, reaching its heyday in the second half of that century under the fifty-four-year reign of Emperor Renzong, who truly embodied the model of a Buddhist ruler (Davidson 2005: 348) by providing generous private and institutional support for Buddhism (Meinert 2020).⁹

During Renzong's reign the circulation of people, knowledge, and objects was reversed with the creation of new Buddhist centres, resulting in the reception of erudite Buddhist masters from the neighbouring regions and empires in the Tangut Buddhist realm. Just as the new Tibetan masters of the so-called second diffusion of Buddhism (Tib. *phyi dar*) in Tibet had sent their best students to remote Tibetan rural areas to proselytise the newly emerging Kagyü and Sakya teachings, their fame reached the Tangut Empire as well. The Tibetan Kagyü master Tsangpo (d. 1218, Tib. gTsang po pa dKon mchog seng ge), who traveled on imperial invitation to the Tangut court instead of his teacher the First Karmapa Düsum khenpa (1110–1193, Tib. Dus gsum mkhyen pa), became the first Tibetan (coming from outside the Tangut territory) to enjoy the title of imperial preceptor (Chin. *dishi* 帝師), from the 1180s onward (Meinert 2020: 266–271; Dunnell 2009: 57–58). He was just one among a larger group of foreign polyglot Buddhist masters (Chinese, Indians, Kashmiri, Tibetans, Uyghurs) who transmitted and translated tantric texts from one language to the next, e.g. from Tibetan into Tangut and Chinese and also back into Tibetan. Ruth Dunnell has convincingly shown this in her prosopographical sketch of eight prominent monks from the mid- and late-12th into the early-13th centuries of whom sufficient data exists in Tangut (and Chinese) Karakhoto manuscripts (Dunnell 2009). The relation between monastics and the imperial family was one of imperial reverence toward leading monks of the *saṃgha*, who occupied a relatively high status in relation to their patrons (Dunnell 1996: 67), a fact that is also illustrated in visual materials from the Tangut Empire (figs. 2 and 3) (Meinert 2020).

⁹ Following the Mongol's defeat of the Tangut Empire in 1227 this unique type of patronage in Eastern Central Asia appears to have stopped. The Tangut heritage only gradually found its way into a new support system developed by the Mongol rulers and their exchanges with Tibetan Tantric Buddhist masters (Sperling 1987, 2004; Shen 2010).



Figures 2 (left) + 3 (right). Left: State preceptor Bai Zhiguang presiding over a session of the office for the translation of Buddhist scriptures in the Tangut capital, with the Empress Dowager Liang and Huizong in attendance.

Print illustration to Yuan woodblock edition of the Tangut translation of the *Xianzai xian qie qian foming jing* [sūtra on the Thousand Buddha Names of the Present Bhadra Kalpa]. Ca. 1085. Beijing Municipal Library. Published as frontispiece in Dunnell 1996. Right: Thangka with a portrait of a Buddhist master (Tsangpopa?) with the Tangut imperial couple (Renzong?). Karakhoto, late 12th c. (?). x2400, The State Hermitage Museum.

It is under these conditions that we shall view the local, imperially supported production of tantric texts into Chinese, Tangut, and Tibetan, as they were serving the needs of a multi-cultural and multi-lingual society within the cosmopolitan Tangut Empire. We may assume that Buddhist texts were not only translated in the above-mentioned imperially funded office for the translation of Buddhist scriptures in the Tangut capital in a rather formal setting (as depicted in fig. 2); monks famous for their translations of (tantric) texts, as suggested by Dunnell, also resided in larger monasteries in the Helan Mountains near the capital, in the Wuming xiansheng Monastery (五明現生寺院) (perhaps located

around Karakhoto), and in Chongsheng Monastery (崇聖寺) near Liangzhou (涼州), a location with a larger resident Tibetan community (Dunnell 2009: 48–49, 55, 59).¹⁰ Given the fact that the Tangut court had modelled their capital translation office after the Song dynastic institution in Kaifeng where a certain number of Tangut monks had enjoyed long careers (Dunnell 1996: 29–32), it is not unrealistic to imagine that the translation of Buddhist scriptures in the Tangut Empire also followed a similar procedure to the one in Kaifeng. We are fortunate to have a description of the procedure of how a translation team in Kaifeng consisting of clergy and government officials cooperated thanks to a passage in the *Fozu tongji* 佛祖統紀 [Comprehensive History of the Buddhist Patriarchs] by the Song dynastic Buddhist historian Zhipan (ca. 1220–1275, 志磐) (T. 2035.49, 398b.2–19, full translation of the passage is in Sen 2003: 113–114). In summary, using Sen’s terminologies, a chief translator (Chin. *yizhu* 譯主) expounded a Sanskrit text. A philological assistant (Chin. *zhengyi* 證義) evaluated the text together with the chief translator. Next, a text appraiser (Chin. *zhengwen* 證文) listened to the oral readings of the Sanskrit text by the chief translator to check errors. A transcriber-monk of Sanskrit (Chin. *shuzi fanxueseng* 書字梵學僧) then transcribed the recited text into Chinese characters. A translator-scribe (Chin. *bishou* 筆受) translated the Sanskrit sounds into Chinese language. Thereafter, a text composer (Chin. *zhuiwen* 綴文) linked up the characters and turned them into meaningful sentences. Next, someone checked the translation (Chin. *canyi* 參譯) and corrected errors. An editor (Chin. *kanding* 刊定) edited and deleted unnecessarily long expressions and fixed the meaning of phrases. And finally, a stylist (Chin. *runwen* 潤文) improved the style and oversaw the work of the monks.

This might be a rather idealised picture of a professional set-up for the translation and editing of Buddhist texts in the Song capital Kaifeng, rather than reflecting the reality on the ground. We do not know (yet), whether a similar procedure was applied during translation and editing processes in the Tangut Empire and where scriptoria were situated in

¹⁰ For the location of the mentioned place kindly consult a map of the Tangut Empire on the *BuddhistRoad* website: <https://buddhistroad.ceres.rub.de/en/visual-aids/>.

which texts were copied.¹¹ However, when analysing tantric ritual texts from Karakhoto we may gather both information concerning the production and usage of manuscripts as well as information on interesting features of how such texts were translated.

3. The Chinese Karakhoto Manuscript ϕ 249 + ϕ 327 金剛亥母修習儀 *Jingang haimu xiuxi yi* [The Ritual of the Yogic Practice of Vajravārāhī] in Comparison with other Tantric Texts from Karakhoto

3.1. Insights on the Basis of the Physical Manuscripts and Insertions

The Karakhoto manuscript *The Ritual of the Yogic Practice of Vajravārāhī* is a relatively complete evocation of the female tantric deity Vajravārāhī. It was written on two pages (to which I refer as pp. 1 and 2), yet from the facsimile images in Shi, Wei, and Kychanov (1996–1998), it is not possible to see whether the text was written on the recto and verso of a single sheet or whether these are, in fact, two distinct pages. The publication spreads these two pages over five images (the first of which is seen in fig. 1). However, p. 1 runs from image one to the middle of image three and p. 2 from the middle of image three to image five. P. 1 has 34 and p. 2 has 36 lines (thus hereafter I refer to p. 1.1 etc. respectively).

The manuscript is very neatly written in regular script (Chin. *kaishu* 楷書) and shows only two corrections in the form of inserted characters: the first insertion is on p. 1.19 (section V, for the section numbers see my discussion below) where the second character of the term *fasheng gong* (法生宮) is added in a smaller script between the first and the third character; and on p. 2.8 (section VIII) where the character *ruo* (若), meaning “if” is added before *pijuan shi* (若疲倦時), “if [the practitioner] is tired” (see also the complete text and my translation in the appendix). Both insertions make sense, particularly the first one is important since *fasheng gong* is the Chinese rendering of the *terminus technicus* “source of *dharma*” – more about this below. The second one is an insertion of an omitted character.

¹¹ Dunnell (1996: 66), however, quotes from a 1312 preface of a Tangut translation of a *sūtra*, that in 1038 thirty-two people were put in charge of translating *sūtras* into Tangut.

Interestingly enough, whoever used the manuscript, missed to correct two further apparent mistakes. Firstly, the name of the deity Vajrāmṛta (Tib. rDo rje bdud rtsi) (p. 2.18–19) in section X is rendered wrongly. The Chinese characters constitute a semantic translation, however, the two elements are in the wrong order, namely, Ganlu jingang (甘露金剛, Amṛtavajra) instead of correctly Jingang ganlu (金剛甘露, Vajrāmṛta). This is a mistake that could easily have been corrected, similarly to the insertion of the missing second character in the term *fasheng gong* (法生宮), source of *dharma*, in section V (p. 1.19) in the text.

Secondly, there is an apparent mistake in a parallel sentence structure in section VIII.1: “When bliss [*lexing* 樂性] prevails, [the practitioner] visualises again emptiness; when emptiness prevails [*kongqiang* (= *xing*) 空強 (= 性)], he observes again meditative absorption of bliss.”¹² The binomial *kongqiang* (空強) is a spelling mistake for *kongxing* (空性), meaning “emptiness.” For a careful reader or user this would have also been a relatively easy correction.

Compared with another evocation of Vajravārāhī from the Karakhoto Collection, manuscript A 19 *Jingang haimu chanding* 金剛亥母禪定 [The Meditation on Vajravārāhī] (Shi, Wei, and Kychanov 1996–1998: vol. 5, 257–258, pp. 1–3) (fig. 4), I suggest that the manuscript in question here, ϕ 249 + ϕ 327, certainly is a much neater manuscript compared to the scruffier manuscript A 19. However, in both cases (A 19 and ϕ 249 + ϕ 327) we can be assured that experts in Vajravārāhī rituals were present during the copying of the manuscripts, otherwise meaningful corrections and/or insertions would not have been possible. The addition of *sheng* for the Chinese terms *fasheng gong* in ϕ 249 + ϕ 327 is a relatively easy correction of the text for someone conversant with the specific terminology used in tantric ritual texts.

How erudite the persons who made corrections to such a manuscript with Tantric Buddhist contents must have been, however, becomes clearer when we compare it with manuscript A 19 which was written in a more cursive script with numerous deletions¹³ and a number of very meaningful

¹² ϕ 249 + ϕ 327, p. 2.6–7: 若樂性勝, 復想為空. 若空強勝, 復守樂定.

¹³ As I have not seen the original manuscript I am not able to decide what is meant by the sections blackened in the photocopies. Given my current state of knowledge, I think that the blackened sections are crossed out and partly corrected in the interlinear insertions.

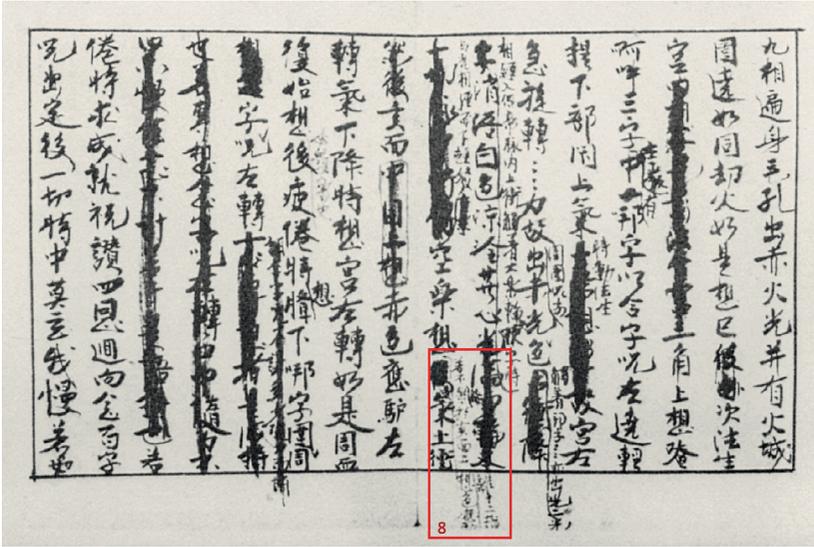


Figure 4. A 19 *Jingang haimu chanding* 金剛亥母禪定 [The Meditation on Vajravārāhī]. Karakhoto, late 12th/early 13th c. (?). Shi, Wei, and Kychanov 1996–1998: vol. 5, 257, p. 2.

amendments provided in interlinear insertions, some of which are even written beyond the margin of the text (fig. 4). I have already analysed various aspects of one of the two yogic exercises described in this manuscript, namely aspects of the deity yoga, the visualisation of the practitioner as Vajravārāhī and of the subtle body with the central channel – a yogic exercise said to result in the experience of bliss and emptiness (Meinert 2019, forthcoming). The text further describes a second yogic exercise as an alternative mode of practice in case the prescribed experience does not arise when the first exercise is practised. This information is given in an insertion to the right side of a deleted character at the bottom of p. 2.8 (see red square in fig. 4). The passage reads:

(Insertion in smaller characters between p. 2.7–8) If one does not experience bliss, visualise twelve finger [lengths] above the sow face a *svastika* with colour. p. 2.8) [When] the energy rises (p. 2.9), the sow’s face turns red, and the *svastika* (p. 2.10) turns counter clockwise. When the energy drops down, then visualise the

triangle turning counter clockwise. (p. 2.10) Then visualise (p. 2.11) like this again. (Insertion between p. 2.10–11) Then the bliss will certainly arise.¹⁴

Although the *svastika* does not appear in any Vajravārāhī *thangka* from Karakhoto (e.g. x2393, fig. 5), a Central Tibetan *thangka* from around the same period as the manuscript (late 12th to early 13th c.) does depict this relevant detail (figs. 6 a+b),¹⁵ important for the visualisation in the yogic practice as described in Karakhoto manuscript A 19. I wonder whether we could even interpret the insertion that the *svastika* is twelve finger lengths above the sow's face as a further commentary by the master expounding the teachings or being present during the copying of the manuscript? If we accept this assumption, manuscript A 19 could, in fact, rather be regarded as an evocation-cum-commentary – as an oral explanation on the correct performance of the visualisation practice put into writing, and not simply as a strict word-by-word translation from one single Tibetan evocation original – this is, however, only a suggestion.¹⁶ Thus, we may at least extrapolate that a ritual expert must have participated in some way in the copying process of this manuscript of a Chinese tantric ritual text, in the absence of whom such a meaningful and precise insertion would have been unlikely. We may assume that the presence of a ritual expert in such a case was the rule rather than the exception.

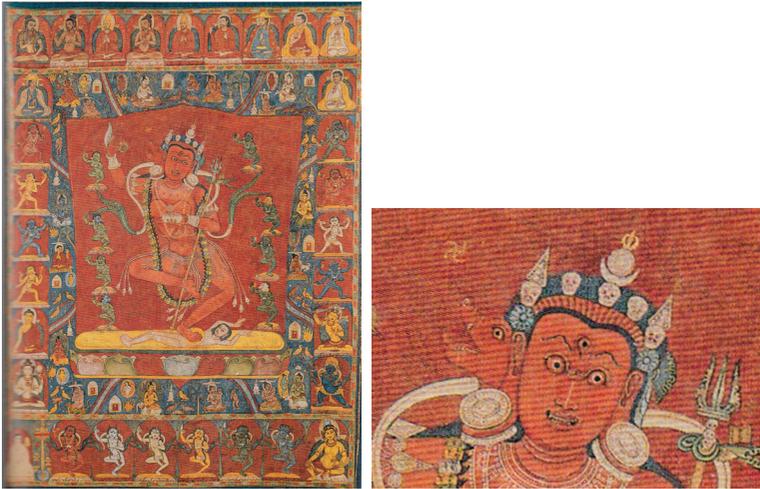
¹⁴ A 19 (a □ indicates a crossed out or highlighted character that is thus illegible; characters in grey are interpolations between the respective lines): (insertions in smaller characters between p. 2.7–8) 若不樂，於亥面上，離十二指，想色應驢。(p. 2.8) 氣上衝，(p. 2.9) □□亥面□□□□赤色，應驢左 (fol. 2.10) 轉。氣下降時，宮左轉。如是周而 (p. 2.11) 復始想，(insertion in smaller characters between p. 2.10–11) 必發樂也。

¹⁵ Another example of a Tibetan 13th century *thangka* depicting Vajravārāhī's sow head with the *svastika* is found in Kulturstiftung Ruhr Essen 2006: 349, cat. no. 58. Kira Samosyuk is quoted therein (p. 606, n. 26) with the reference that the Central Tibetan *thangkas* were brought by Karmapa monks (?) to the Tangut court in 1159. See also her article in: Pjetrovskij 1993: 146–149 and cat. no. 22.

¹⁶ Weirong Shen, who studied the Karakhoto manuscript A 15 *Menghuan shen yaomen* 夢幻身要門 [The Quintessential Instruction on the Illusory Body of Dream] (Shi, Wei, and Kychanov 1996–1998: vol. 5, 244–246, pp. 1–5), found a similar example of an addition in the Chinese text which is not included in the Tibetan text which he argues to be the template for the former. He wrote (2015: 212) with regard to A 15, lines 30–36: “This paragraph seems just an improvisation added by the lama who was expounding this text to his disciples.” This also points to an oral teaching session which might have been the source for the redaction of the manuscript.



Figure 5. Vajravārāhī *thangka*. Karakhoto, late 12th c. (?).
x2393, The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.



Figures 6 a+b. Vajravārāhī *thangka* (a) with detail of deity's faces with
svastika (b). Central Tibet, 12th to 13th c. Courtesy of Anna Maria Rossi and
Fabio Rossi, published in English 2002: pl. 1.

Compared with ϕ 249 + ϕ 327, A 19 is an example of a much more heavily edited manuscript of tantric materials in the Tangut Empire. It shows a certain degree of formality as the text is already written within a frame, which however, is countered by the mere fact of writing beyond the margin. Therefore, we may ask the question whether it could be that manuscript A 19 is an example which mirrors a stage in the production somewhere between personal notes taken by a disciple during a teaching session of a tantric master, or a first draft (of a translation) of the ritual text in Chinese, and an apparently more fully edited text as it is e.g. visible in the rather neatly written manuscript ϕ 249 + ϕ 327?¹⁷ I propose that the equally neatly written Karakhoto manuscript A 15 entitled *Menghuan shen yaomen* 夢幻身要門 [The Quintessential Instruction on the Illusory Body of Dream] (Shi, Wei, and Kychanov 1996–1998: vol. 5, 244–246, p. 1–5) as studied by Weirong Shen (2015), is of a similar type. Although Shen found a number of differences to a Tibetan template, he argued that A 15 is a “Chinese rendering” of Gampopa Sönam Rinchen’s (1079–1153, Tib. sGam po pa bSod nams rin chen) *sGyu lus bsgom pa’i man ngag* [Esoteric Instruction on Contemplating the Illusory Body] (Shen 2015: 190) and that “the *sGyu lus bsgom pa’i man ngag*, happens to be the original of the *Menghuan shen yaomen*” (Shen 2015: 198). Moreover, he drew his conclusions on the assumption that the text was based on a now lost original. He concluded:

In many cases, the translation seems not to be always faithful to its original. All these differences between two texts should not be simply attributed to the negligence of the translator. It is not always the case that the translation is erroneous wherever differences occur. There are cases when the Chinese translation seems more reasonable than its original. In addition, there is one whole paragraph in the Chinese translation which is not seen in its Tibetan original. It is very likely that this translation was based on a third version of the same text, which is however no more available to us today. (Shen 2015: 213)

Could it be that the person(s) responsible for the redaction of A 15 *The Quintessential Instruction on the Illusory Body of Dream* was/were not only meeting local interests – e.g. adding to the text comments or whole

¹⁷ Similarly, in the editing process of publications produced in the *BuddhistRoad* project we use track changes for additions by an expert proof-reader instead of handwritten interpolations – even in files that are already formatted to a certain degree.

passages which might originally have been given during an oral teaching session – but that an erudite person with knowledge of non-tantric Buddhist trends in Central Asian Buddhism was able to make meaningful amendments to what were partly corrupt passages of the Tibetan text? I suggest that the following examples provide evidence for this hypothesis: The Tibetan text speaks about a practitioner having marvellous dreams endowed with the experiences of miracles such as “your body catches fire” (Tib. *lus la me 'bar ba*) (Shen 2015: 199, 204). The meaning of this sentence is not clear. A rather erudite user of the Chinese text A 15, however, clarified this line with the sentence “fire comes out from the upper part of the body and water from the lower part of the body” (Chin. *shen shang chu shui* [correction in a smaller script] *huo shen xia chu shui* 身上出水火, 身下出水) (A 15, line 15; Shen 2015: 192–194). What is described here is, in fact, the so-called *Śrāvastī Miracle*, as performed by the Buddha during a miracle contest when he simultaneously emitted fire from the top half of his body and water from the bottom half of his body. A well-known depiction of the *Śrāvastī Miracle* is found in Gandhāran art, and depictions of monks emitting flames while flying and water underneath their feet also spread to Eastern Central Asia, e.g. as visible in a mural in Kızıll Cave 47 in Kuča.¹⁸ Thus, very erudite experts must have been involved in the redaction of the text to be able to correct and elaborate upon such a brief passage as found in the Tibetan text.

3.2. *Insights Gained from the Analysis of Interesting Features Related to How the Text Was Translated*

Despite the fact of having an apparently neatly drafted manuscript, φ 249 + φ 327, it is worthwhile to investigate some interesting features related to how the text was translated in order to gain further insights into how tantric materials might have been produced in the Tangut Empire. Note-worthy are:

¹⁸ A famous Gandhāran statue (3rd or 4th c.) of this event is kept in Musée Guimet in Paris (article no. RP019160). See e.g. <https://www.kunst-fuer-alle.de/english/fine-art/artist/image/afghan-school/9133/1/76651/the-buddha-of-the-great-miracle-or-miracle-of-sravasti-from-the-paitava-monastery-kapisa-school-3rd-4th-century/index.htm> (accessed December 18, 2020). The image from Kuča is found in Xinjiang Weiwu'er zizhiqu wenwu guanli weiyuanhui et al. 1989: vol. 1, pl. 150.

- word-by-word translations or phonetic renderings from Tibetan into Chinese, namely
 - (a) the above-mentioned Chinese term *fasheng gong* (法生宮) (p. 1.19), and
 - (b) the Chinese term *yinglü* (應驢) (p. 1.14);
- variations in translations of terms throughout the manuscript, namely
 - (c) varying methods for the Chinese renderings of various seed syllables (e.g. p. 1.6, 1.9–12 etc. versus 1.23),
 - (d) an unusual Chinese rendering of a *mantra* (p. 2.32), and
 - (e) three variations for rendering the important tantric ritual object, a “skull cup” into Chinese (pp. 1.16, 1.32, and 2.18);
- an apparent mistake and a logical problem, namely
 - (f) wrongly reading a simile as a fact (p. 2.12–13), combined with a conceptual problem in the passage.

Let us consider these peculiarities one by one:

3.2.1. Word-by-word Translations and Phonetic Renderings from Tibetan into Chinese

(a) The Chinese term *fasheng gong* (法生宮) (p. 1.19) is a composite of a word-by-word translation Chinese *fasheng* of Tibetan *chöjung* (Tib. *chos 'byung*, Skt. *dharmodaya*) with the character *gong* for “palace” added. It signifies an absolute, pure space that can give rise to all phenomena. In the case of the yogic practice related to Vajravārāhī, it is visualised as the seat of the deity. The Chinese rendering *fasheng gong* is commonly used in other tantric materials from Karakhoto as well, e.g. consistently in the related Vajravārāhī manuscripts (A 14, p. 2.14; A 19, p. 2.2 and 2.5) mentioned above.¹⁹

(b) The Chinese term *yinglü* (應驢) (fol. 1.14) is frequently used in Karakhoto manuscripts related to the cult of Vajravārāhī, i.e. in the above-mentioned manuscript A 19 *The Meditation on Vajravārāhī* (interpolation in smaller characters between p. 2.7–8; fig. 5 above) and in

¹⁹ In Meinert forthcoming I also discuss visual images from Karakhoto showing the source of *dharmā* (x2405, x2391, x2390, x2392).

A 14 *Jingang haimu jilun gongyang cidi lu* 金剛亥母集輪供養次第錄 [Stages of Making Offerings to and the Feast Gathering of Vajravārāhī] (p. 2.16), in the abbreviated alternative writing as *lü* (𠵼). Although I am not able to provide the proper linguistic reconstruction from Tibetan to Chinese, it seems to be read as a transliteration of the Tibetan term *yung-drung* (Tib. *yung drung*), meaning *svastika* (卐). This meaning is confirmed in the visual imagery as shown above (figs. 6 a + b).

3.2.2. Variations in Translations of Terms

Another peculiarity in manuscript ϕ 249 + ϕ 327 are the variations in Chinese translations used throughout the text instead of consistently staying with one type of translation for a specific term. With regard to (c) the Chinese renderings of various seed syllables, we can identify two different strategies, namely phonetically transcribing seed syllables with just one character versus the Chinese way of transcribing consonant clusters. Examples of the former are e.g. *an ya hong* (唵啞吽) representing Tibetan *om ah hum* (Skt. *OM ĀḤ HŪM*) (p. 1.6) and *bang* (邦 or 𠵼) transcribing Tibetan *bam* (Skt. *VAM*) (p. 1.9, 1.10). The latter method only appears in one section of the manuscript, namely in section VI of the ritual manual on the visualisation of six armour *mantras* for protection (p. 1.23–25) (see also the structural analysis of the text below). Moreover, in the method to render the phonetic value of a Sanskrit (or Tibetan) consonant cluster, the two characters *er he* (二合) (“[pronouncing] both together”) are written in smaller script next to each other to explain that two syllables belong to the same disyllabic word. Examples from our text (p. 1.23–25) are:

- *chi ling* (吃瀧) *er he* (二合) *chi ling* (吃瀧) to transcribe Tibetan *hrim hrim* (Skt. *HREM HRĪM*),²⁰
- and *fa da* (發怛) *er he* (二合) *fa da* (發怛) to transcribe Tibetan *phaT phaT* (Skt. *PHAṬ PHAṬ*).²¹

²⁰ The Tibetan text has *hrim hrim* (Derge 1542, fol. 182a.2) whereas the Sanskrit has *HREM HRĪM* (English 2002: 241). The Chinese here certainly follows Tibetan, not differentiating the vowels “e” and “i” in the two syllables found in Sanskrit when using the same phonetic rendering for both seed syllables (*chi ling* 吃瀧).

²¹ The correct Sanskrit equivalents are provided by English 2002: 219, 241.

(d) The closing section XI of the ritual manual provides a *mantra* for the dismissal of the deities upon the conclusion of the ritual. The Chinese transcription *an mo luo meng* (唵末蘿蒙) is unusual for that closing *mantra*. Most often appears the *mantra* *Oṃ vajra muḥ* (Tib. *om badzra mu*) (for the *mantra* see English 2002: 215, 299, and 513, n. 594). *Mo* (末) had a -t ending, often rendering a voiced -d. So, it was pronounced something like *mad*. Then *luo* (蘿) commonly transcribes the syllable *ra*. Finally, *meng* (蒙) could render *mu/muḥ* too. Although this was an unusual way of writing the *mantra*, the text nonetheless does include it.²²

(e) The text has three variations to render the term for the important tantric ritual implement, the skull cup (Tib. *thod pa*, Skt. *kapāla*), into Chinese. In section V of the text, which describes the visualisation of the yogin as Vajravārāhī, the Chinese term *fagong* (法觥) (p. 1.16) is used, in section VII on initiation given by the buddhas (p. 1.32) the term vessel/implement (Chin. *qi* 器) is used, whereas in section X, which describes the propitiation food offering, the Chinese term *fawan* (法碗) (p. 2.18), a close synonym to *fagong*, is used instead.

Although these variations indicate that the terminologies in Chinese for given Tibetan terms were not fixed yet, and may have varied from translator to translator or editor to editor, one would expect of expert translators and editors of one text at least the consistent use of a single term throughout that text. With regard to this evidence, we may wonder whether the translation was the outcome of a joint effort rather than a product of just one person (probably working without any unified translation policy); if this is the case, such inconsistencies would be bound to occur due to the very “team nature” of the work. A consistent use, on the contrary, does occur in other Vajravārāhī texts from Karakhoto, e.g. in the previously mentioned ritual text *A 14 Stages of Making Offerings to and the Feast Gathering of Vajravārāhī*. In the section where the *maṇḍala* of the deity to be used in the feast offering is established by the ritual master with various ritual implements, the same chosen term is twice used for skull cup (A 14, pp. 2.11 and 3.1), namely *touqi* (頭器); it means “skull implement” and is thus a correct translation of the actual meaning of the object (passage translated in Meinert forthcoming: 3.2).

²² Many thanks to Imre Galambos for assisting with this identification.

I thus suggest that *qi* (器) as used in our ritual manual (p. 1.32) is an abbreviation for *touqi* (頭器).²³ Interestingly enough, in text A 19 *The Meditation on Vajravārāhī*, again in the section on the visualisation of the yogin as Vajravārāhī, we find the Chinese term *fagong* (法觥) used (A 19, p. 1.9, passage translated in Meinert forthcoming: 3.3.1), which is a spelling variant for *fagong* (法觥) used in our text (¶ 249 + ¶ 327, p. 1.16).

3.2.3. Apparent Mistake and Logical Problem

Concerning an apparent mistake and a logical problem in our manuscript ¶ 249 + ¶ 327, let us look first at (f) section IX. Following the meditation practice for resting (section VIII.2), namely a *mantra* recitation which usually marks the end of the inner yoga practice, is however provided another *mantra* recitation with visualisation of a vase-buddha. In this section we have two problems: a misunderstanding, namely taking a simile as a fact; and a logical or conceptual problem, as usually a practice for resting is not followed by a further visualisation practice. Before we address the actual problems, a note on this practice is appropriate. It is a yogic practice in which the practitioner visualises a buddha as a vase filled with ambrosia in front of him. He further visualises the circulation of (according to this text) any type of *mantra* from his own heart to his navel where it leaves his body (visualised as the deity) to breathe it out at the navel. Then he visualises it going through a vase-buddha in front of him, and back, re-entering the practitioner through the mouth; finally, it descends through the central channel (Skt. *avadhūti*)²⁴ and comes out

²³ The relevant passage in our text (p. 1.31–33) reads (see also full translation in the appendix): “(p. 1.31) These four heavenly mothers, [namely in the east] black *Ḍākinī*, [in the north] green *Lāmā*, [in the west] red (p. 1.32) *Khaṇḍarohā*, and [in the south] yellow *Rūpiṇī* each hold a vessel [i.e. skull] cup filled with ambrosia (p. 1.33) and grant self-initiation.” This is a description of the fivefold *maṇḍala* of Vajravārāhī, composed of the central Vajravārāhī with a retinue of four two-armed goddesses located in each of the four cardinal directions. The fact that the four attending goddesses also hold skull cups in their left hands, so that the character *qi* in our manuscript has the meaning *touqi*, is visually confirmed e.g. in Karakhoto *thangkas* x2388 and x2394. These images are published and discussed in Meinert forthcoming: figs. 10.2 and 10.16.

²⁴ According to tantric physiology, inherent in the coarse body is the subtle body with channels through which energy is moving. The central channel is said to be the locus of

again at the navel (English 2002: 177). In this context, our manuscript (ϕ 249 + ϕ 327, p. 2.12–13, see my translation in the appendix) has a wrong description, taking a simile as a fact, and making us believe that the practitioner has to actually wind a thread around the finger during this meditation practice – which is meaningless in the yogic practice described here.²⁵ Elizabeth English (2002: 177) provides the following explanation to the use of the thread as a simile, and *not* as a real thread to be wound around a finger. She writes: “This process of circulating the syllables is said to be like ‘drawing in a thread’ [...] or like ‘counting the thread of a rosary’ [...]. This yogic practice also gives rise to the experience of clear light.”²⁶ As the Chinese text is here incorrect, I therefore chose in my translation in the appendix to add in square brackets “as if” to correct this mistake: “At the time of recitation [it is *as if* the practitioner] winds a thread around his own ring finger.”²⁷

The second problem with this passage seems to be more severe, as it is a logical or conceptual problem. In her description of the Sanskrit *Vajravārāhī sādhana* by Umāpatideva, Elizabeth English unambiguously characterises the visualisation of a vase-buddha as another *main* yogic exercise. It involves simultaneously reciting and visualising the deity’s *mantra* in coordination with the incoming and outgoing breaths, and is therefore a

awakening. See also my discussion of the yogic exercises of *Vajravārāhī* involving the meditations with the central channel in Meinert forthcoming.

²⁵ Nonetheless, there do exist (communal) rituals of medicinal accomplishment (Tib. *smān sgrub*) in the Tibetan tantric tradition, where such a *dhāraṇī* thread would be used to connect the practitioners reciting the *mantra* to the ambrosial elixir within the container on the shrine – all the while the visualisation of oneself as the deity, of the *maṇḍala* on the shrine, and of the medicinal pills placed in the container, are meditated on as being inseparable. During the meditation, the practitioners imagine that the ambrosia travels along the thread, dissolving into their hearts. For a reference to such a ritual context see Cantwell 2020: 200. Many thanks to Dylan Esler for pointing out this reference.

Moreover, this *dhāraṇī* thread is in common use whenever an inanimate object or substance is to be “empowered” or consecrated. Examples are the preparation of the flask to be used when initiating disciples (Boord 2015: 25), the corpse of a recently deceased prior to cremation (Boord 2015: 182), and the constructed *maṇḍala* for meditation during a major ritual practice (Boord 2015: 238, where it is referred to as endowed with the skillful compassion of awareness). Many thanks to Martin Boord for providing this reference.

²⁶ For a full translation of this passage from the Sanskrit text, see English 2002: 247–248.

²⁷ ϕ 249 + ϕ 327, p. 2.12–13: 正念咒時，自己無名指上纏線。

rather complex practice (English 2002: 177). It requires the practitioner to remain fully alert and could hardly be performed properly when one is tired. Usually, a ritual text provides *mantras* for recitation at the end of the main section of the evocation as “sealing” the visualisation without which it would not be complete. Although the visualisation just described is kept firmly in mind during the *mantra* recitation, it is practiced when feeling tired. This is, in fact, confirmed in both the Sanskrit text (English 2002: 178–179) as well as in the Tibetan text (Derge 1542, fol. 182a.2–3). The relevant passage in the Sanskrit text reads (English 2002: 247):

When he has grown tired in the meditation, the *mantrin* should utter, according to the rules, the best of mantras, the ten-syllabled [heart mantra of Vajravārāhī ...], which has been compared (*upamoktā*) by the Buddha himself with the [wishing] tree [or] wish-fulfilling jewel. [...] In this [meditation], the ten-syllabled heart mantra is: *Oṃ vajravairocanīye svāhā*.

The Tibetan *Evocation of Vajravārāhī* equally has a similar passage: “When tired [the *yogin*] recites the *mantra* *Oṃ vajravairocanīye huṃ huṃ phaṭ svāhā*.”²⁸

Moving back to our Chinese manuscript, we find just here in section VIII.2, one of the two corrections in the whole manuscript by a user, namely the insertion “if” (*ruo* 若) in the first sentence: “(p. 2.8) If [the practitioner] is tired, he can recite a *mantra*.” Here one would formally expect the end of the inner yoga practice, that is why I separated it from the following line, starting with a new section (IX): “(p. 2.9) If he recites a *mantra*, he can recite any *mantra* either with or without [visualising] a vase. Moreover, for the recitation with a vase (p. 2.10) [the practitioner] visualises a vase as a buddha [...]”²⁹ We may wonder whether here two sections were actually conflated, namely the instruction of how to practise when the practitioner feels weary (p. 2.8) (starting with the first “if”/*ruo*) and the instruction on yet another yogic breathing and visualisation exercise (p. 2.9ff.) (starting with the second “if”/*ruo*) which is a new

²⁸ Derge 1542, fol. 182a.2–3: *bsgom pas dub na sngags bzla’ol de nas sngags oM badzra bairotsanA I ye huM huM phaT svAhA*/ Both *mantras* are variations of Vajravārāhī’s heart *mantra* which evokes her essence. Vajravairocanī, a form of Vajravārāhī, points to her family association with the Buddha Vairocana (English 2002: 178).

²⁹ ㊦ 249 + ㊦ 327, p. 2.8–10: 若疲倦時，方可念咒。若念咒者，或對瓶 (p. 2.9) 念咒，或無瓶任意念咒。且如對瓶念咒者，(p. 2.10) 於瓶 [...].

section (IX) in itself? In any event, following the logic of the ritual procedure as visible in the Sanskrit text of comparison, we find a wrong order in the Chinese manuscript: The main yogic practice of visualising the vase-buddha should be *before* the general *mantra* recitation is performed when one is tired. I therefore suggest that there is a problem with sections VIII.2 and IX, and that the insertion of *ruo* might have been an attempt to join two different sections together (VIII.1 and VIII.2), however, without noticing the conceptual problem (in section IX) and thus not quite solving it completely.

In order to gain further insights into the production of the tantric ritual text, which are not immediately visible from the physical manuscript, I next provide a structural analysis of our text.

3.3. *Insights Based on Structural Analysis*

In his study of the Chinese Karakhoto ritual text A 15 *Quintessential Instruction on the Illusory Body of Dream*, and his comparison with Tibetan text *The Esoteric Instruction on Contemplating the Illusory Body*, Weirong Shen (2015), as mentioned above, has greatly advanced our knowledge of the transmission of tantric texts in the Tangut Empire. Nonetheless, he could not sufficiently explain the reasons for some apparent and significant differences in the two texts. On the one hand, he points out that the above-mentioned Tibetan text *is* the template for the Chinese translation (Shen 2015: 198), but on the other hand, he rates the Chinese text to be an incomplete translation (Shen 2015: 213) or was perhaps “based on a third version of the same text, which is however no more available to us today” (Shen 2015: 213).

Shen’s uncertainty of how to evaluate the relation between the two texts points to quite different questions, namely: How can we understand the production and usage of tantric materials in the Tangut Empire? Is there a different approach to answering the question why the texts Weirong Shen dealt with are the same, but in parts distinctively different? In order to investigate another option, I propose to make a structural analysis (and an annotated translation in the appendix) of our ritual text ϕ 249 + ϕ 327 *The Ritual of the Yogic Practice of Vajravārāhī*. My approach does not rule out the suggestion of Weirong Shen that one specific Tibetan text

was used as a template for a given Chinese translation. Here I would rather like to add another angle to the discussion of production and usage of tantric ritual texts.

When unsuccessfully searching in the Tibetan canon for a potential Tibetan original to our Chinese text, I also read a ritual text translated by Tsur Wangngé, one of which is, like our Chinese manuscript, also a description of the fivefold *maṇḍala* of Vajravārāhī: *The Evocation of Vajravārāhī* (Derge 1542). Although this Tibetan text describes a slightly different deity at the centre of the *maṇḍala* – a one-faced Vajravārāhī, whereas our Chinese text depicts a two-faced Vajravārāhī – it assisted me to identify ritual building blocks and thereby to analyse the structure of our Chinese text. Eventually, as mentioned in the introduction, further investigation of the structure of the text led me to the most complete Vajravārāhī evocation I could find, namely the *Vajravārāhī sādhana* by Umāpatideva (early-mid 12th c.) in Sanskrit studied by Elizabeth English (2002: 109–223). The comparison of the structure of the Tibetan text (and when necessary also of the Sanskrit text) with our Chinese version further helped me to discover places where the Chinese text is corrupt. The corrupt passages are not immediately visible since the manuscript is so neatly written. I provide in the following table (fig. 7) a structural analysis of the building blocks of our Chinese ritual text (¶ 249 + ¶ 327) in comparison with the Tibetan text *Evocation of Vajravārāhī* (Derge 1542).

Chinese text <i>The Ritual of the Yogic Practice of Vajravārāhī</i> (¶ 249 + ¶ 327)	Tibetan text <i>Evocation of Vajravārāhī</i> (Derge 1542)
(0) Title and homage (p. 1.1–2)	(0) Title and homage (fol. 181a.1)
(I) Preparations (p. 1.3–4)	(I) Preparations (fol. 181a.2–3)
(II) <i>bodhisattva</i> preparations, tantric wish of accomplishment (p. 1.5–6) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> taking refuge is missing 	(II) <i>bodhisattva</i> preparations, tantric wish of accomplishment (fol. 181a.3–5)
(III) Visualisation of deity's dwelling place (p. 1.6–7) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> conceptual problem: according to the logic of the ritual procedure, wrong order of section: (III) should be after (IV) 	(III) <i>mantra</i> of emptiness (fol. 181a.5–6)

(IV) <i>mantra</i> of emptiness (p. 1.7–8)	(IV) Visualisation of deity's dwelling place (fol. 181a.6–181b.2)
(V) Visualisations of deity	(V) Visualisations of deity
(V.1) Visualisation of the <i>yogin</i> as Vajravārāhī, visualisation of pledge deity (Skt. <i>samayadevatā</i>) (p. 1.8–18) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • variation: skull cup (<i>fagong</i> 法觥) (cf. 3.2.2. (e)) 	(V.1) Visualisation of the <i>yogin</i> as Vajravārāhī, visualisation of pledge deity (Skt. <i>samayadevatā</i>) (fol. 181b.2–7)
(V.2) Invitation of wisdom deity (Skt. <i>jñānadevatā</i>) (p. 1.19–22)	(V.2) Invitation of wisdom deity (Skr. <i>jñānadevatā</i>) (fol. 181b.7–182a.1)
(VI) Visualisation of six armour <i>mantra</i> for protection on six <i>cakras</i> (p. 1.22–28)	(VI) Visualisation of six armour <i>mantra</i> for protection on six <i>cakras</i> (fol. 182a.1–2)
(VII) Initiation of the five blissful buddha mothers and fathers in union (fol. 1.28–35) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • variation: skull cup (<i>qi</i> 器) (cf. 3.2.2. (e)) 	(VII) Initiation of the five blissful buddha mothers and fathers in union is missing
(VIII) Inner yogic practice (of the subtle body)	(VIII) Inner yogic practice is missing
(VIII.1) Union of emptiness and great bliss experienced in the central channel (pp. 1.36–2.8)	(VIII.1) Union of emptiness and great bliss experienced in the central channel is missing
(VIII.2) Practice for resting: <i>mantra</i> recitation	(VIII.2) Practice for resting: <i>mantra</i> recitation (fol. 182a.2–3)
(IX) <i>mantra</i> recitation with visualisation of vase-buddha (p. 2.9–17) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conceptual problem: according to the logic of the ritual procedure, wrong order of section: (IX) should be before (VIII.2) (cf. 3.2.3. (f)) 	(IX) <i>mantra</i> recitation with visualisation of vase-buddha is missing
(X) Propitiation food offerings (p. 2.17–30) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • variation: skull cup (<i>fawan</i> 法碗) (cf. 3.2.2. (e)) 	(X) Propitiation food offerings (fol. 182a.3–6)
(XI) <i>mantra</i> recitations and prayers (p. 2.30–34)	(XI) <i>mantra</i> recitations and prayers are missing
(XII) colophon with author and translator is missing	(XII) colophon with author and translator (fol. 182a.7)

Figure 7. Structural comparison of ritual building blocks of the Chinese (ϕ 249 + ϕ 327) and the Tibetan (Derge 1542) Vajravārāhī evocation. Missing sections are written in grey, corrupt sections are written in red, variations in black and marked with •. Table by Carmen Meinert.

Even from this simple comparison of the ritual building blocks in the Chinese and Tibetan Vajravārāhī evocations, we can conclude that our manuscript ㄎ 249 + ㄎ 327 is a relatively complete ritual text. It includes the main ritual elements

- for preparations (sections I to IV),
- for the main part of the ritual (sections V to IX), an instruction on the most crucial visualisation of the deity (section V) – even including protection *mantras* (section VI) and initiation of the yogin (VII) – followed by the core inner yogic exercise (section VIII) and a second visualisation practice (IX), and
- for conclusion of the ritual (X and XI).

Similarly to what Weirong Shen has suggested in his study of Karakhoto manuscript A 15: “Therefore, the *Menghuan shen yaomen* itself is complete and instructive, if it serves the purpose of the dream and the illusory body practice only” (Shen 2015: 213), I also suggest that our manuscript ㄎ 249 + ㄎ 327 is a complete evocation of Vajravārāhī including (almost) all important sections necessary for practising the cult, although some parts are rather cryptic (e.g. section III).

Moreover, from the above comparison of the ritual building blocks in the Chinese and Tibetan texts, we may also infer that ritual texts were dealt with in a rather dynamic and fluid manner, with some sections included and others left out, some shortened and others expanded – for whatever reason and with whatever motivation. Such ritual texts seem to have been anything but a stable and solid sequence of ritual elements, and the length of each ritual elements could vary dramatically. For example, it is remarkable that the Tibetan text is missing the core section on the inner yogic practice (VIII.1), only providing the exact *mantra* for recitation related to the deity (VIII.2), whereas our Chinese text does not provide the exact *mantra* for recitation but instead has a whole further section (IX) with a detailed meditation instruction: a long description of how to visualise the circulation of a *mantra* between the practitioner’s body and an imagined vase-buddha in front of himself (see also the relevant section in the annotated translation in the appendix, ㄎ 249 + ㄎ 327, p. 2.8–17). Of course, one would need to look at many more similar ritual texts (from Karakhoto) to be able to come to a much more informed decision about ritual structure than the impression gained from this investigation here.

On the other hand, it is noteworthy that the Chinese text in section II is missing a part of the very crucial *bodhisattva* preparations, namely, taking refuge. The important part of generating *bodhicitta* is, on the contrary, mentioned in just a half sentence: “In order to benefit all sentient beings.” Compared with other Vajravārāhī evocations from Karakhoto, this section is very terse. At the very beginning of the previously mentioned A 19 *The Meditation on Vajravārāhī* (p. 1.2–3) we read: “[The practitioner] takes refuge in the three jewels and generates *bodhicitta*” (Chin. *guiyi sanbao, fa pu [ti] xin* 皈依三寶, 發善[提]心). However, the question remains: Why is the refuge not included in our ritual text (¶ 249 + ¶ 327)? Either it is not included because it is such an integral component that, depending on those for whom the manuscript was produced, it may not have been absolutely necessary to spell it out in each and every case. Indeed, one could easily imagine that a tantric practitioner would have recited these lines from memory during the performance of the ritual. Or, it was in fact a mistake which occurred during the process of text production, e.g. a scribe simply overlooked one line when copying an earlier version with many interpolations into a neat, new manuscript. This could explain why a short but important sentence might have got lost in the process. Whether those responsible for the production of the text used just one template is a question that can only be answered more satisfactorily if we find one single Tibetan original.³⁰

Most obvious now is that from a logical point of view two sections (III and IX) have a conceptual problem: section III is misplaced (should follow section IV) as the practitioner first visualises everything dissolving into emptiness and from emptiness creates a divine palace, the sacred abode for the subsequently visualised deity (section V). The Tibetan text (Derge 1542 fol. 181a.5–181b.2) has, in fact, the correct order (also confirmed in the Sanskrit text, English 2002: 231–233). This hypothesis is corroborated by the following observation: Most often in our text

³⁰ Weirong Shen explained to me that he and his students have found many Tibetan originals to Chinese translations of tantric ritual texts from Karakhoto (personal communication, January 26, 2021). It would be desirable then, to study in more depth the differences between two texts, and to explore further the question of motivation behind leaving out certain sections and elaborating much more on others.

the next ritual building block is introduced by “next” (Chin. *ci* 次) or a similar term. The beginning of section III has, however, three further characters before the character *ci*, namely *fa yuan yi*: “Having expressed his vow, next he recites the three seed syllables *OM ĀḤ HŪM*” (Chin. *fa yuan yi, ci nian an ya hong san zi* 發願已, 次念唵啞吽三字) (see appendix, p. 1.6). I wonder whether the three characters were inserted in the text in an earlier copy, maybe in the attempt to smoothen the transition between the two sections, yet without solving the conceptual problem completely? A similar type of problem appears in section VIII.2 as analysed above (3.2.3. (f)), with the only difference being that the correction “if” (*ruo* 若) is still visible in the extant manuscript, yet with the same outcome that the conceptual problem with the misplaced section IX was not solved. (Normally, practice for when one is tired (VIII.2) should follow after visualisation exercises (IX).) Moreover, with regard to translation inconsistencies sections V, VII, and IX have different Chinese terms for rendering “skull cup” (see also above 3.2.2. (e)). Thus, in summary, the structural analysis helps to identify further corrupt places (column B) in the ritual text as outlined in the table on the following page (fig. 8).

4. Conclusion

To conclude, with this analysis of the physical manuscript, interesting features related to translation, and a structural analysis of the Karakhoto manuscript ϕ 249 + ϕ 327 we are able to gain further insights into the production and usage of tantric textual materials in the Tangut Empire. I have suggested that ritual experts must have participated in the redaction of this and related tantric texts, probably working under imperial patronage. In some ritual texts (e.g. A 19 *The Meditation on Vajravārāhī*) insertions seem to reflect the scriptural output of oral comments given by a ritual specialist on how to properly perform the yogic exercises. Whereas it is obvious from the physical manuscript that A 19 is clearly a much scruffier copy, it should be evident now that our ritual manual ϕ 249 + ϕ 327 is also not as polished as its physical appearance may make us believe it would be. Following the logic of the ritual procedure, most

A: ritual elements in right order	B: ritual elements in logically wrong order	C: translation inconsistencies of Chinese rendering for “skull cup”
(I) preparations		
(II) <i>bodhisattva</i> preparations (taking refuge is missing)		
	(III) visualisation of deity’s dwelling place (should be after IV)	
(IV) <i>mantra</i> of emptiness		
(V) visualisations of deity		(V.1) Visualisation of the <i>yogin</i> as Vajravārāhī, visualisation of pledge deity
(VI) visualisation of six armour <i>mantra</i>		
(VII) Initiation of the five blissful buddha mothers and fathers		(VII) Initiation of the five blissful buddha mothers and fathers
(VIII.1) inner yogic practice of subtle body: union of emptiness and great bliss in central channel		
(VIII.2) practice for resting: <i>mantra</i> recitation		
	(IX) <i>mantra</i> recitation with visualisation of vase-buddha (should be before VIII.2)	
(X) propitiation food offerings		(X) propitiation food offerings
(XI) <i>mantra</i> recitations and prayers		

Figure 8. Summary of research results of the Chinese Karakhoto manuscript ϕ 249 + ϕ 327 *The Ritual of the Yogic Practice of Vajravārāhī*.
Table by Carmen Meinert.

striking is the position of section IX. It points to the flexible structure of the ritual or to the inherent self-dynamic potential for change (Germ. *eigendynamisches Wandlungspotenzial*) dependent on specific historical and sociocultural frames (Harth and Michaels 2013: 126). As questioned in the introduction, we are now on safer ground when suggesting that the text consists of various ritual building blocks, a patchwork of various sections which all together make up a complete evocation to cater for local needs. After all, such ritual texts were texts in use. Thus, this study opens further research questions: How do we conceptualise the apparent fluidity of ritual texts with regard to shortening, expansion, omission, or addition of ritual building blocks? Is it possible to detect the motivation which led to variations? How can we explain modifications – always with the aim of ritual performance in mind, which is ritual success?

APPENDIX:

Chinese Karakhoto Manuscript ϕ 249 + ϕ 327 *Jingang haimu xiuxi yi*
 金剛亥母修習儀 [The Ritual of the Yogic Practice of Vajravārāhī]
 with my English Translation

<p>(0) Title and homage (p. 1.1) 金剛亥母修習儀 (p. 1.2) 敬禮金剛空行母</p>	<p>(p. 1.1) The Ritual of the Yogic Practice of Vajravārāhī. (p. 1.2) Homage to the <i>vajra dākinī</i>.</p>
<p>(I) Preparations (p. 1.3) 夫修禪定者，早晨起時，沐浴清淨，於意 (p. 1.4) 樂安穩處坐。</p>	<p>(p. 1.3) Now, when the meditation practitioner arises in the morning, he purifies himself by bathing, (p. 1.4) and sits down erect with a cheerful and peaceful mind.</p>
<p>(II) bodhisattva preparations (taking refuge is missing), tantric wish for accomplishment 先作六種心法³¹, (p. 1.5) 然後發願云：為利一切有情故，願我證得金剛亥 (p. 1.6) 母身。</p>	<p>At first, he generates the six kinds of mental fixations (?), then utters (p. 1.5) the vow: “In order to benefit all sentient beings, I vow to accomplish the body of Vajra (p. 1.6) vārāhī.”</p>

³¹ I was not able to identify the exact meaning of the Chinese term *liuzhong xin fa* (六種心法), however, I propose that this refers to a meditative technique.

<p>(III) Visualisation of deity’s dwelling place</p> <p>發願已³²，次念唵啞吽三字，標受地宮。³³ (p. 1.7) 又念須麻尼咒³⁴，逆順二遍而遣其魔。</p>	<p>Having expressed his vow, next he recites the three seed syllables <i>OM ĀḤ HŪM</i>, and receives the earthly palace (?) (p. 1.7). He further recites twice completely the <i>sumbhāni mantra</i> in order to dispel demons.</p>
<p>(IV) mantra of emptiness</p> <p>續念 (p. 1.8) 變空咒一遍，想一切皆空。³⁵</p>	<p>Next, he recites (p. 1.8) the <i>mantra</i> of emptiness once and visualises that everything [dissolves] into emptiness.</p>

³² Although we do have a marker here *fa yuan yi* (發願已) to express that a vow was uttered, it is nonetheless surprising that the formula for taking refuge, which is an essential prerequisite for tantric meditation practice, is missing here. In a similar Vajravārāhī evocation, we do have such a passage: A 19, fol. 1.2–3: 皈依三寶，發菩提[提]心已。Could it be that the three characters *fa yuan yi* would have been added during a previous copying of the text, before the character *ci* (次) which usually marks the beginning of a new section in our manuscript? A similar addition is visible at the beginning of section VIII below.

³³ The term *sheshou* (標受) “to receive/accept” renders Tibetan *bsdu ba* “to gather.” Thanks to Weirong Shen for pointing this out to me.

Section III basically hints to the part of the visualisation of the cosmos and of the deity’s temple on top of Mt. Sumeru. This section is provided in the Tibetan text (Derge 1542, fol. 181a.6–181b.2) which also includes a complete Mt. Sumeru *mantra*. For a description of the cosmos and the deity’s temple in this part of the ritual see English 2002: 144–146, 233. From a logical point of view, this section is misplaced here, as the practitioner first dissolves everything into emptiness and then recreates a new cosmos with the deity’s temple from emptiness. This is attested in both the Tibetan (Derge 1542, fol. 181a.5) and Sanskrit (English 2002: 231) texts for comparison. No one involved in the production process of the Chinese text noticed and amended this grave mistake here or copied from a mistaken text himself.

³⁴ *Xumani zhou* (須麻尼咒) seems to be a Chinese rendering for the *sumbhāni mantra* which is recited when creating a circle of protection around the deity’s palace and the whole *maṇḍala* in order to avert any types of negative influence. The reading *sumbhāni* refers to the mantric units *sumbha* and *nisumbha*, which “were originally names of terrible *asuras* who could be subdued only by the goddess Devī herself” (English 2002: 135). The whole *mantra* is provided in the Sanskrit text (English 2002: 133, 233): *Oṃ sumbhāni sumbhāni* [or: *sumbha nisumbha*] *hūṃ hūṃ phaṭ*. *Oṃ gr̥ṇṇa gr̥ṇṇa hūṃ hūṃ phaṭ*. *Oṃ gr̥ṇṇāpaya gr̥ṇṇāpaya hūṃ hūṃ phaṭ*. *Oṃ ānaya ho bhagavān vajra hūṃ hūṃ phaṭ*. Thanks to Dylan Esler for pointing out that *Xumani* is a phonetic rendering of *sumbhāni*.

³⁵ The Tibetan text provides the *mantra* *lde nas oM shUnyata dzNyAna badzrA sva-bhAbaba Atma ko nyra haM* (Derge 1542, fol. 181a.5–6) meaning: “I am identical with the essence of the nondual [i.e. *vajra*] knowledge of emptiness” (English 2002: 126). A longer version of the *mantra* is provided in the Sanskrit text (English 2002: 231): *oṃ svabhāva-śuddhāḥ sarvadharmāḥ svabhāvaśuddho ’ham. oṃ śūnyatājñānavajrasvabhāvātmaḥ ’ham* meaning: “All existents have the essence of the nondual knowledge of emptiness. I am identical with the essence of the nondual [i.e. *vajra*] knowledge of emptiness” (English 2002:

(V) Visualisation of the yogin as Vajravārāhī

(V.1) Visualisation of pledge deity (Skt. *samayadevatā*)

然於空處想一 (p. 1.9) 邦字，變成蓮花。上想一珊字，變成死屍，(p. 1.10) 心上想一攬字，變成日輪。日輪上想一𑖀𑖂 (p. 1.11) 字，邦字放光，遍照法界有情，蒙光照 (p. 1.12) 攝，三業清淨。光迴，復入𑖀𑖂字內，變成金 (p. 1.13) 剛亥母，二面二臂。正面忿怒，右面青黑色，(p. 1.14) 亥頭各具三目。亥面中目上覷赤色應驢³⁶。 (p. 1.15) 右手執鉤鎌，向上近耳。左手掌具血法 (p. 1.16) 觥³⁷。挾闊單渴，頭髮散垂。頂嚴十字杵，(p. 1.17) 髖有五骷髏。橈右展左，身體赤色，作窈 (p. 1.18) 窈相。五十一個新人頭³⁸為瓔珞或骷髏亦得³⁹。

He visualises that from emptiness the (p. 1.9) seed syllable *VAM* arises which transforms into a lotus flower. On top of this he visualises the seed syllable *SHAN*⁴⁰ which transforms into a corpse. (p. 1.10) In its heart he visualises the seed syllable *LAN*⁴¹ which transforms into a sun disc. On top of it he visualises the seed syllable *VAM*. (p. 1.11) It emanates and completely illuminates all sentient beings in the *dharma* realm. He completely absorbs the light (p. 1.12) to purify the three karmic deeds. The light returns and enters again into the seed syllable *VAM* which transforms into Vajravārāhī. (p. 1.13) She has two faces and two arms. Her main face has a wrathful [expression], the right [sow] face is bluish black. (p. 1.14) Each of her faces has three eyes. In the sow face the eyes look upwards towards a red *svastika*. (p. 1.15) The right hand holds a curved knife close to the ear, and in her left hand she holds a skull cup filled with blood. (p. 1.16) In her armpit she holds a tantric staff, her hair hangs down loosely. The top of her head is ornamented with a double *vajra*, (p. 1.17) her crown has five skulls. Her right leg is lifted, the left is bent, her body is of red colour and she has an (p. 1.18) enchanting expression. She has a garland of 51 freshly [cut] human heads made of pearls of bones.

128). The very fact that the Chinese text does not provide the pronunciations of the *mantras* means that it would need to be taught at the moment of transmission to a student.

³⁶ On *yinglü* (應驢) see above in the text 3.2.1. (b).

³⁷ The variation for translating the *terminus technicus* “skull cup” into Chinese is discussed above.

³⁸ Usually, the garland is described to consist of 50 head symbolising the 50 letters of the Sanskrit alphabet, namely 16 vowels and 34 consonants (see Kulturstiftung Ruhr Essen 2006: 350). Is the 51 here a variation or follows a different line of transmission?

³⁹ It is unusual to have the verb *de* (得) at the very end of the sentence for Classical Chinese.

⁴⁰ I was not able to identify the Sanskrit equivalent to Chinese *SHAN*.

⁴¹ I was not able to identify the Sanskrit equivalent to Chinese *LAN*.

<p>(V.2) Invitation of wisdom deity (Skt. <i>jñānadevatā</i>)</p> <p>(p. 1.19) 次亥母臍間想赤色三角法生宮⁴²，中心⁴³想慧 (p. 1.20) 性赤色邦字出光，向烏延國，請智亥母至 (p. 1.21) 於面前，意作五供養。念拶吽鉢和⁴⁴，标入記句 (p. 1.22) 身，為一不二。</p>	<p>(p. 1.19) Next, [the practitioner] visualises a red triangular source of <i>dharmā</i> in the navel of Vajravārāhī. In her heart he visualises the red wisdom (p. 1.20) seed syllable <i>VAM</i> radiating light towards Oḍḍiyāna, inviting the wisdom Vajravārāhī to come (p. 1.21) in front of his own face, and in his mind making the five kinds of offerings. He recites <i>JAḤ HŪṂ VAṂ HOḤ</i> so that [the wisdom deity] aroused by her <i>mantra</i> (?) enters into his (p. 1.22) body and merges as non-duality.</p>
<p>(VI) Visualisation of six armour <i>mantra</i> for protection on six <i>cakras</i></p> <p>次嚴六甲咒而作擁護者⁴⁵，臍中 (p. 1.23) 赤色邦庵，心中青色頽礮，喉中白色吃哩二合⁴⁶ (p. 1.24) 癘，額上黃色吃澹二合吃澹，頂上綠色吽吽，諸 (p. 1.25) 肢上煙色發怛二合發怛。</p> <p>次三字标才受者⁴⁷，頂上 (p. 1.26) 想白色八輻輪，嚴白色庵字。喉中八葉蓮 (p. 1.27) 花，上嚴赤色阿字。心頭日輪，上嚴青色吽 (p. 1.28) 字。此是三業清淨也。</p>	<p>Next, [the practitioner] adorns the body with the six armour <i>mantra</i> for protection: In the navel (p. 1.23) are the red [seed syllables] <i>VAM OM</i>, in the heart the blue [seed syllables] <i>HĀM YOM</i>, in the throat the white [seed syllables] <i>HRĪM MOṂ</i>, (p. 1.24) on the forehead the yellow [seed syllables] <i>HREM HRĪM</i>, on the crown of the head the green [seed syllables] <i>HŪM HŪM</i>, and (p. 1.25) on the limbs the ash-coloured [seed-syllables] <i>PHAT PHAT</i>. Next, regarding the gathering of the three [seed] syllables: He (p. 1.26) visualises on the crown of the head a white eight-spoked wheel adorned with the white seed syllable <i>OM</i>, at</p>

⁴² On *fasheng gong* (法生宮) see above in the text 3.2.1. (a).

⁴³ The two characters *zhong xin* (中心) are in reverse order.

⁴⁴ A 14, p. 3.13–14 has different character for the same *mantra*: *zan hong jian he* (拶吽鑊和); maybe *jian* (鑊) is a spelling variant or spelling mistake of *bo* (鉢) which is in this manuscript? In any event, these syllables signify the union of the visualised pledge deity (Skr. *samayadevatā*) and invited wisdom deity (Skr. *jñānadevatā*). See also the discussion of this section in manuscript A 14 in Meinert forthcoming: section 3.2.

⁴⁵ In most Vajravārāhī evocations the protection of the yogin-cum-deity body with an armour of six *mantra* syllables (section VI) is performed *before* the pledge deity is infused with the wisdom deity (section V.2), as it is the case in the Sanskrit text (English 2002: 241). If this section comes, however, after the merging of the two beings, then the armouring functions as a purificatory prelude to the then following consecration (English 2002: 163–164). The Tibetan text (Derge 1542, fol. 182a.1–2) follows the latter structure, just as the Chinese text does.

⁴⁶ On the phonetic rendering of seed syllables here see the discussion above in the text 3.2.2. (c).

⁴⁷ According to English (2002: 166) in some evocations the further purification of body, speech, and mind is incorporating into the armouring meditation, just like in our Chinese text. The Tibetan text (Derge 1542, fol. 182a.2) follows the same structure.

	<p>the throat an eight-petaled lotus flower (p. 1.27) adorned with a red seed syllable $\bar{A}H$, and in the heart a sun disc adorned with a bluish-green syllable $H\bar{U}M$. (p. 1.28) These purify the three karmic deeds.</p>
<p>(VII) Initiation of the five blissful buddha mothers and fathers in union</p> <p>次巖者，自心⁴⁸咩字出 (p. 1.29) 光，請召自性宮中大樂五輪佛至空中時，(p. 1.30) 求索灌頂。如允許⁴⁸想，大樂心頭咩字出光，(p. 1.31) 有天母黑色空行母⁴⁹，綠色熾麻母，紅色 (p. 1.32) 具色母黃色頭生母，此四天母，各執滿甘露器⁵⁰ (p. 1.33) 與自灌頂。所有塵垢，悉皆清盡。⁵¹ 於大樂 (p. 1.34) 佛父四天母處，作五供養。供養已，天母復入 (p. 1.35) 咩字。</p>	<p>Next, the [thus] adorned [practitioner] has in his own heart the seed syllable $VA\bar{M}$ which radiates (p. 1.29) light. When he invites the blissful five wheel Buddhas from their seat of self-nature to come into the space [in front of him], (p. 1.30) he asks them for initiation. As he is authorised [Chin. <i>yunxu</i> 允許 ?] to visualise [like this (?)], from the heart of great bliss radiates light from the seed syllable $H\bar{U}M$ (p. 1.31) [from which arise] these four heavenly mothers: [namely, in the east] black $\bar{D}ākinī$, [in the north] green $Lāmā$, [in the west] red (p. 1.32) $Khaṇḍarohā$, and [in the south] yellow $Rūpiṇī$, each holds a [skull] cup filled with ambrosia (p. 1.33) and grants self-initiation. [Thereby] all sorts of defilements become completely purified. [The practitioner] performs the five kinds of offerings at the place of great bliss (p. 1.34) of the four buddha mothers [in union with] buddha fathers. Thereafter, the heavenly</p>

⁴⁸ The meaning of the two characters *yunxu* (允許) here is not clear to me. I suggest the translation “to authorize/instruct to do.” They also appear in section X, p. 2.31.

⁴⁹ Here is a description of the fivefold *maṇḍala* of $Vajravārāhī$, composed of $Vajravārāhī$ with a retinue of four two-armed goddesses in each of the four cardinal directions (e.g. Karakhoto *thangka* x2394, published and discussed in Meinert forthcoming: fig. 10.16 and in Karakhoto *thangka* x2388, published and discussed in Meinert forthcoming: fig. 10.2). English lists the names of the four attending goddesses as “ $\bar{D}ākinī$ in the east, $Lāmā$ in the north, $Khaṇḍarohā$ in the west, and $Rūpiṇī$ in the south” (English 2002: 183). On the contrary, the sevenfold *maṇḍala* of $Vajravārāhī$ is described in Karakhoto manuscript A 14 (fol. 3.12 has the term: six buddha mothers (Chin. *liu jia fomu* 六甲仏母)) and visually depicted in Mogao Cave 465 and Karakhoto *thangka* x2393 (fig. 6 above). See also my discussion of these images in Meinert forthcoming.

⁵⁰ The character *qi* (器) is here an abbreviation for *touqi* (頭器), skull cup; see also my discussion above on variations in 3.2.2. (d).

⁵¹ It is at this precise moment that the yogin is completely transformed into the deity $Vajravārāhī$, being fully consecrated and purified – in fact, the whole body is filled with ambrosia, a drop remains on the crown of the head (p. 3.6) so that the following inner yogic practice is performed in a divine body.

	mothers return again into (p. 1.35) the seed syllable <i>HŪM</i> .
<p>(VIII) Inner yogic practice (of the subtle body)</p> <p>(VIII.1) Union of emptiness and great bliss experienced in the central channel</p> <p>大樂降歸本處，灌頂已⁵²，頂上殘一滴 (p. 1.36) 水，成十字杵，成不動佛⁵³，亦得於上想上師 (p. 2.1) 坐蓮花日輪上，此乃增長定也。(p. 2.2) 若作究竟定者，依前增長定上，微分 (p. 2.3) 提閉上下二風。⁵⁴ 於自杵根，想六角輪，頂上亦 (p. 2.4) 想六角輪。⁵⁵ 下輪旋轉，身脈皆開，頂上上師 (p. 2.5) 本尊，從頂而入，遍身想圓滿之樂，其樂 (p. 2.6) 增長。若樂性勝，復想為空。若空強⁵⁶勝。(p. 2.7) 復守樂</p>	<p>Following the initiation, [when the ambrosia of] great bliss has fallen down and has returned to its original place, one drop of water remains on the crown of the head [of the practitioner]. (p. 1.36) [This drop] transforms into a double <i>vajra</i>, which [then] transforms into [the <i>tathāgata</i>] Akṣobhya. [The practitioner] visualises on top of him [his] teacher (p. 2.1) sitting on a sun disc and a lotus flower. Thereby the meditative absorption [Chin. <i>ding</i> 定, Skt. <i>samādhi</i>] increases. (p. 2.2) If [the practitioner] practises ultimate meditative absorption, relying on the previous increasing of meditative absorption, shortly (p. 2.3) he will raise up [the lower part] energy and press</p>

⁵² It is surprising that the beginning of this section VIII.1 is not marked by *ci* (次), meaning “next” (or a similar entry), as most of the other beginnings of sections. Moreover, it is noticeable that, similarly to the beginning of section III, which has *fa yuan yi* (發願已), meaning “upon having expressed this vow,” here we find *guanding yi* (灌頂已), meaning “following the initiation.”

⁵³ According to the theory of the five buddha families Akṣobhya is the Buddha presiding over the *vajra* family. I am not sure why he is mentioned here, as usually Vajravārāhī is associated with the buddha family of Vairocana, that is why the Tibetan text has the heart *mantra oṃ vajravairocanīṃe huṃ huṃ phaṭ svāhā* (Tib. *oM badra bairotsanA'i ye huM huM phaT svAhA/*) (Derge 1542, 182a.2–3, section VIII.2). Could it be a mistake that the Chinese text has Akṣobhya?

⁵⁴ The same yogic exercise is described in A 19, p. 2.5: *ti xiabu, bi shang qi* (提下部, 閉上氣), however, a little more elaborately: “(p. 2.5) Hold up the lower part [energy] [Chin. *qing ti xiabu* 輕提下部], close down the upper energy [Chin. *bi shang qi* 閉上氣], then swiftly turn the source of *dharma* [in the navel] (p. 2.6) anticlockwise. Because of the power of turning, the surrounding *mantra* syllables emanate red lights. These touch the syllable *VAM* [Chin. *bang* 邦], then from the syllable *VAM*, red [lights] emanate also.” See my translation and discussion on this yogic exercise in Meinert forthcoming.

⁵⁵ What is described here should refer to the two ends of the central channel, namely the tip of the sexual organ and the top of the crown (English 2002: 174). The yogic experience is described in more detail in the following section of A 19, p. 2.6–8: “(between p. 2.6–7) United in the central channel [Chin. *dimai* 帝脈, Skr. *avadhūti*], [the lights] go upwards and touch the great bliss *cakra* [i.e. the crown *cakra*] *HAM* [Chin. *hang* 禿] syllable. Then a drop of white and cool *bodhicitta* [Chin. *pu(ti) xin* 菩(提)心] melts down, (p. 2.8) and immediately, one visualises the emptiness and great bliss [experience of union].” See my translation and discussion on this yogic exercise in Meinert forthcoming. See also English 2002: 175.

⁵⁶ Here the binomial *kongqiang* (空強) is a spelling mistake for *kongxing* (空性). See also my discussion above.

<p>定。峯要而言，空樂境中，均平等 (p. 2.8) 之。⁵⁷</p>	<p>down [the upper part] energy. At his own <i>vajra</i> organ [i.e. the tip of the sexual organ] and also on the crown of his head [the practitioner] each visualises (p. 2.4) a six-spoked wheel. [When] the lower wheel rotates, the [central] channel in the body completely opens, so that the deity and teacher on the top of the head [of the practitioner] (p. 2.5) enter from the crown into the body. [The practitioner] visualises that the whole body [becomes filled] with complete bliss which then (p. 2.6) increases. When bliss prevails, [the practitioner] visualises again emptiness; when emptiness prevails, he observes again meditative absorption of bliss. (p. 2.7) [With regard to] the essence of the peak it is said: in the realm of emptiness and bliss, both are equal. (p. 2.8)</p>
<p>(VIII.2) Practice for resting: <i>mantra</i> recitation 若⁵⁸疲倦時⁵⁹，方可念咒⁶⁰。</p>	<p>If [the practitioner] is tired, he can recite a <i>mantra</i>.</p>

⁵⁷ The peak (Chin. *feng* 峯) is said to have been reached in the experience of the fusion of emptiness and bliss or clear light (English 2002: 176).

⁵⁸ Section VIII.2 clearly belongs thematically to the previous section VIII.1, providing an alternative yogic meditation practice. Unusual, however, is the first sentence about what to do when the practitioner feels tired from the first one yogic exercise; see also my discussion of this section above 3.2.3 (f). The first character (*ruo* 若) is the one of the two visible corrections to the manuscript.

⁵⁹ I wonder whether various options of this ritual building block, how to practice when feeling tired, circulated. If we take another above mentioned Karakhoto manuscript for comparison, A 19 *The Meditation on Vajravārāhī*, (see also fig. 5 above), we find two sentences with varying instructions. P. 2.11–12: “If [the practitioner] feels tired, then he visualises the syllable *VAM* below the navel which is surrounded by the syllable *mantra* which turns counter clockwise” (後疲倦時，想臍下卍字周圍字咒左轉)。And p. 2.14–15: “Thereafter, if he feels tired, he asks [the wisdom deity] for accomplishment, makes offerings and praises, returns the merit to the four kindnesses, and recites the hundred seed syllable *mantra*” (若倦時，求成就，祝讚，四恩回向，念百字咒)。Whereas the former is an abbreviated version of section VIII.2 in our manuscript (ϕ 249 + ϕ 327), the latter appears then as an abbreviated version of our section XI. I suggest that the beginning of the second sentence (*ruo juan shi* 若倦時) has a mistake, as one would rather expect something like: After one has finished the practice when one feels tired ...; however, this mistake was not corrected despite the heavy editing still visible in the manuscript (fig. 4 above).

⁶⁰ The Tibetan text just provides for section VIII.2 the actual *mantra* (given above in n. 28) but not the visualisation of the vase-buddha (Derge 1542, 182a.2–3).

<p>(IX) mantra recitation with visualisation of vase-buddha</p> <p>若念咒者，或對瓶⁶¹ (p. 2.9) 念咒，或無瓶任意念咒。且如對瓶念咒者，(p. 2.10) 於瓶佛心頭蓮花日輪上，想赤色瑯字，周 (p. 2.11) 圍左繞咒字。自己心頭蓮花日輪上亦想 (p. 2.12) 𑖀𑖩𑖪字，周圍左繞咒字。正念咒時，自己無名 (p. 2.13) 指上纏線。⁶² 從自臍中，出於咒字。字等各具 (p. 2.14) 五色光，入佛瓶口中，至心頭咒字內。瓶佛 (p. 2.15) 心咒字，復臍中出，入自口中。至心頭咒字內。(p. 2.16) 如是往復，輪轉不絕。隨念遍數，不論 (p. 2.17) 多少。</p>	<p>(p. 2.9) If he recites a <i>mantra</i>, he can recite any <i>mantra</i> either with or without [visualising] a vase. Moreover, for the recitation with a vase (p. 2.10) [the practitioner] visualises a vase as a buddha and in his heart a sun disc and a lotus flower on top of which is a red seed syllable <i>VAM</i> (p. 2.11) surrounded counter clockwise by the <i>mantra</i> syllables. [Then the practitioner] visualises in his own heart a sun disc and a lotus flower, on top of which is also (p. 2.12) the seed syllable <i>VAM</i> surrounded counter clockwise by the <i>mantra</i> syllables. At the time of recitation [it is as if the practitioner] winds a thread around his own ring finger. (p. 2.13) From within his own navel come forth the <i>mantra</i> syllables, each of which has (p. 2.14) a five-coloured light. These enter the vase-buddha from the mouth to arrive at the <i>mantra</i> syllables in the heart. The <i>mantra</i> syllables of the vase-buddha (p. 2.15) leave again from his navel and enter into [the practitioner's] own mouth to arrive at the <i>mantra</i> syllables in [his] heart. (p. 2.16) As [the practitioner] lets [the <i>mantra</i> syllables] circulate back and forth uninterruptedly, the frequency of recitation is irrelevant. (p. 2.17)</p>
<p>(X) Propitiation food offerings</p> <p>若念畢時，作供養，放施食。若放施 (p. 2.18) 食者，面前置一法椀⁶³，入秘密等食⁶⁴，念甘 (p. 2.19) 露金剛⁶⁵</p>	<p>When the recitation is finished, [the practitioner] grants offerings and food offerings. When he offers food, (p. 2.18) he places a skull cup in front of himself, enters the</p>

⁶¹ The vase (Chin. *ping* 瓶, Tib. *bum pa*, Skr. *kalaśaḥ*) used for this exercise is often seen as a ritual object of the tantric master next to a skull cup in Karakhoto *thangkas*, e.g. in x2394 (published and discussed in Meinert forthcoming: fig. 10.16–17).

⁶² This sentence is incorrect, it describes a simile and not a fact, see also my discussion above in 3.1.

⁶³ The variation for translating the *terminus technicus* “skull cup” into Chinese is discussed above.

⁶⁴ In order to feed deities (in the next step, p. 2.27–28) with ambrosial offerings, these first need to be prepared ritually; this is the pledge ambrosia. The Chinese text does not mention that everything is boiled in the skull cup on top of a hearth first, so that liquid, which transforms into ambrosia, is produced (English 2002: 210, the equivalent translation of the Sanskrit passage is on p. 243). This is a good example to illustrate how the ritual process described in the Chinese text is actually an abbreviated form.

⁶⁵ The wrong rendering of the name of the deity Vajramrita is discussed above.

咒，唵末籀曳舌吽⁶⁶，而遣其魔。
 然 (p. 2.20) 放食上想一啞字，其食變空。
 空處想一 (p. 2.21) 唵字，成廣大法椀，外
 白裏紅，內想一吽 (p. 2.22) 字，出光，
 變成五藥五肉。吽字再出光，召 (p. 2.23)
 請空中智亥母心頭智甘露，入記句甘露
 (p. 2.24) 內，為一不二。念唵啞吽七遍而
 標受之⁶⁷。
 然 (p. 2.25) 後自心字種⁶⁸出光，請召瓶佛
 及空中一切 (p. 2.26) 智亥母等，至於空
 中，意作供養其佛 (p. 2.27) 等，舌上各想
 一赤色吽字，成空心杵，⁶⁹ 覷 (p. 2.28) 向
 法觥自結手印，⁷⁰ 念俵食咒三五遍而
 奉。(p. 2.29) 於食想佛等吸飲甘露，飽滿
 歡喜，如 (p. 2.30) 受法樂想。⁷¹

esoteric food [offerings, namely, the five nectars (i.e. semen, blood flesh, urine, and faeces) and five meats (i.e. flesh of cow, dog, horse, elephant, and man)], and recites (p. 2.19) the *mantra* of Vajrāmṛta *Amṛta yeshe* (?) *hūṃ* [Chin. *an mo luo ye she hung* 唵末籀曳舌吽] to be able to dispel demons. Thus, (p. 2.20) [the practitioner] visualises on top of the food the seed syllable *ĀḤ* (?). His food [offering] dissolves into emptiness. In emptiness he visualises (p. 2.21) the seed syllable *OM* which transforms into a large skull cup which is white outside and red inside. Inside [the skull cup] he visualises the seed syllable *HŪṂ* (p. 2.22) which emits light and transforms into the five kinds of medicine and five kinds of meat. The seed syllable *HŪṂ* once more emits light (p. 2.23) and from emptiness the wisdom Vajravārāhī is invited to the centre of the wisdom ambrosia. Aroused by her *mantra* (?) she enters into the ambrosia, (p. 2.24) mingling together so as to become non-dual. [The practitioner] recites [the seed syllables] *OM ĀḤ HŪṂ* seven times and

⁶⁶ I could not fully reconstruct this *mantra*, I am uncertain what *yeshe* could be in Sanskrit.

⁶⁷ The last part of the sentence is not completely clear to me.

⁶⁸ The two characters *zi zhong* (字種) are reversed, correct is *zhong zi* (種字) for seed syllable.

⁶⁹ English (2002: 212) explains that the yogin has to maintain the perception of non-duality so that there is no difference between object of worship, the worship, and the worshipper. This is reflected in the deity's *vajra* tongues. The Sanskrit text by Umāpatideva has the following line (English 2002: 293): the yogin "should offer that nectar to the deities whose tongues [should be visualized] as [white] vajras produced from *hūṃs*." The tongues of the deities which take on the form of a *vajra* with a hollow tube through its centre mean that the deities are able to suck up the nectar as we would drink through a straw. Thanks to Martin Boord for clarifying this phrase.

⁷⁰ The practitioner's look upward is explained by English (2002: 211) as follows: "Some texts add that the yogin has an upward gaze to the left, so that he projects his powerful yogic stare at the deities he wishes to ensnare." Moreover, the hand gesture is the flame gesture (Skr. *jvālāmudrā*), which is done by forming a triangle with both hands at the forehead as to summon the deities to rejoice in the offering (see English 2002: 211, fig. 35).

⁷¹ This reflects the envisioned result: the offering propitiates the deities and buddhas who experience the bliss inherent in the offering as the offering was transformed from ordinary foodstuff to an offering infused with wisdom. Thereby the deities are inclined to

	<p>absorbs this non-dual mixture [by tasting it]. After that (p. 2.25) the practitioner has in his own heart the seed syllable [VAM] which radiates light. When he invites the vase-buddha and all (p. 2.26) wisdom Vajravārāhīs from empty [space] to come into the space [in front of him], he makes in his mind offerings to these buddhas. (p. 2.27) He visualises on [their] tongues the red seed syllable HŪM which transforms into a vajra which is hollow through its centre. He looks (p. 2.28) upwards towards the [offered] skull cup as he [himself] applies the hand gesture [Skt. <i>mudrā</i>], recites the food offering <i>mantra</i> three or five times and makes the offering. (p. 2.29) In the food [offering], he visualises buddhas and so on who enjoy the ambrosia and are utterly delighted as (p. 2.30) he visualises them receiving <i>dharma</i> bliss.</p>
<p>(XI) mantra recitations and prayers</p> <p>次作五供養，求索二世成就 (p. 2.31) 如允許⁷²想。</p> <p>次念百字咒⁷³ 五七遍，補三業之 (p. 2.32) 闕。</p> <p>次請忍後迴向，念十二因緣咒。並念唵 (p. 2.33) 末蘿蒙，⁷⁴ 彈指奉送歸本位。畢。 (p. 2.34) 金剛亥母修習儀 竟。</p>	<p>Next, he makes the five kinds of offerings and asks for accomplishment in this life and in the coming life, (p. 2.31) as he is authorised [Chin. <i>yunxu</i> 允許 ?] to visualise [like this (?)].</p> <p>Next, he recites the 100-syllable <i>mantra</i> [of Vajrasattva] five or seven times to mend the mistakes of the three karmic deeds. (p. 2.32) Next, he asks for patience and transfers the merit [to all sentient beings], and recites the <i>mantra</i> of twelve links of dependent arising [Chin. <i>shi'er yinyuan</i> 十二因緣, Skt. <i>dvādaśāṅga pratīyasamutpāda</i>]. Furthermore, he recites <i>Oṃ</i> (p. 2.33) <i>vajra muḥ</i>,</p>

grant protection and accomplishment (asked for in the beginning of the following section XI) (see English 2002: 213–214).

⁷² The meaning of the two characters *yunxu* (允許) here is not clear to me; I suggest the meaning “is authorised/instructed to do.” They also appear in section VII, p. 1.30.

⁷³ *Baizi zhou* (百字咒) is the 100-syllable *mantra* of Vajrasattva for amending potential mistakes; it is important since the ritual works on the premise that only correct performance ensures success (English 2002: 215). This whole section XI is missing in the Tibetan text (Derge 1542).

⁷⁴ The potentially corrupt Chinese transcription of this closing *mantra* is discussed above in 3.2.3. (d).

	snaps with the fingers, and accompanies [the deities] to return to their original place. End. (p. 2.34) The Ritual of the Yogic Practice of Vajravārāhī is finished.
(XII) colophon with author and translator is missing	

Abbreviations

- A Chinese Manuscripts in the Karakhoto Collection of Koslov in The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.
- Derge Tibetan Kangyur, Derge edition.
- Derge Tōhoku no. *Chibetto daizōkyō sōmokuroku* 西藏大藏經總目錄 *Complete Catalogue of the Tibetan Buddhist Canon (Bkaḥ-ḥgyur and Bstan-ḥbyur)*, edited by Ui Hakuju 宇井伯壽 et al. Sendai: Tōhoku Imperial University, 1934.
- φ Chinese Manuscripts in the Karakhoto Collection of Koslov in The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.
- T. *Taishō shīnshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經 [Taishō *tripitaka*], ed. Takakusu Junjirō 高順次郎 et al. Tokyo: Taishō issaikyō kankōkai, 1924–1935.
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