

RITUAL AND WORSHIP IN MEDIEVAL CHINESE BUDDHISM:
ON MAÑJUŚRĪ'S FORMLESS WORSHIP AS REFLECTED
IN THE DUNHUANG MATERIAL

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ABSTRACT

This essay concerns a ritual text, the *Wuxiang li* 无相礼 [Formless Worship], of which several copies have been found among the Dunhuang (敦煌) manuscripts. The study begins by identifying the earliest Chinese Buddhist material in which the concept of formlessness occurs and goes on to a discussion and analysis of various possible source-texts in the Buddhist canons, including commentaries from both Esoteric Buddhism (Chin. *mijiao* 密教) and the Huayan (華嚴) tradition. Following this, the link between the formless precepts of Chan Buddhism (禪宗) and the *Formless Worship* is explored at some length, and it is concluded that the two originated more or less at the same time. This indicates that the concept of formlessness to a greater or lesser extent was probably incorporated within ritual practices in Chinese Buddhism, across sectarian divides rather than as a practice unique to the Chan tradition. One may therefore speak about the *Formless Worship* and its take on the practice of formless worship as signalling the coming into existence of a transcendental and non-dualistic approach to ritual practice in late medieval Buddhism in China. The essay includes a fully annotated translation of one of the copies of the *Formless Worship*, namely that of BD 8371 (1).

1. Introduction

Chan Buddhism is not usually associated with worship and ritual practices, at least not in standard discourses, and it may therefore come as something of a surprise to some that rituals and liturgy actually played a considerable role in formal Chan practice, in particular in the tradition's

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communal settings, from early on. This fact is perhaps easier to understand if one remembers that sectarian Chan Buddhism gradually developed from the late Northern and Southern Dynasties period (386–589, 南北朝), within monastic communities in which meditation in various forms played a central role. In other words, Chan Buddhism as a sectarian phenomenon of the Tang Dynasty (618–907, 唐) period originally came into being in Buddhist communities that placed special emphasis on meditation, such as the Tiantai School (天台宗) established by and around the celebrated monk Zhiyi (538–595, 智顓) during the Sui Dynasty (581–618, 隋). Since rituals and worship form an integral part of standard Buddhist practice, it is self-evident that these meditation traditions would also have produced their own liturgies and ceremonies, whether they followed earlier forms or were created in accordance with specific needs, as appears was often the case with regard to this type of Buddhist ritual literature. After all we are dealing with a major aspect of Chinese Buddhist monasticism.

In this essay I shall be looking at one specific case of Buddhist ritual practice in which the concept of a “formless worship” (Chin. *wuxiang li* 無/无相禮) became the pivot around which the entire logic of the ritual proceedings revolved. The text in question, of which several manuscript versions have been found in Dunhuang, is entitled the *Wuxiang li* 无相礼 [Formless Worship], *Fashen li* 法身礼 [Dharmakāya Worship], etc.² The practice and the underlying doctrines brought forth in this ritual text first came to prominence during the early and middle of the Tang Dynasty, when doctrines informed by *prajñāpāramitā* thought came increasingly to the fore, transforming Chinese Buddhism across the board. It is therefore not surprising to encounter an entire range of related concepts and practices, such as formless precepts (Chin. *wuxiang jie* 無

² This text was first studied in some detail in Wang 1997. In that study Wang compares the various manuscript versions of the *Wuxiang li* (*Fashen li*, etc.) with Zhisheng’s *Text of Mañjuśrī for Worshipping the Dharmakāya Buddha* (T. 1982.47: 459bc). However, he does not attempt to trace the concept of formlessness in Chinese Buddhism, nor does he seem to realise that the *Wuxiang li* has a fairly convoluted and complex textual history. It may be that this was due to his use of *Dharmakāya Worship* as the title of the text, thus failing to see that formlessness as a concept is the very pivot around which the logic of the text revolves.

相戒) and formless repentance (Chin. *wuxiang chan* 無相懺), in nascent sectarian Chan Buddhism. At the centre of the formless worship we find the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, the personification of transcendental wisdom. The possible main source of the *Formless Worship* as found in the Dunhuang material would appear to have been the *Wenshushili li fashen fo wen* 文殊師利禮法身佛文 [Text of Mañjuśrī for Worshipping the Dharmakāya Buddha] (T. 1982.47: 459bc) attributed to Zhisheng (fl. first half of 8th c., 智昇),³ the celebrated editor and compiler of the *Kaiyuan shijiao lu* 開元釋教錄 [Kaiyuan Catalogue of Buddhist Texts] (T. 2154.55). The role of Mañjuśrī in relation to formless worship appears to have been particularly important in the early liturgical material, but gradually he fell somewhat into the background even though his name continued to be mentioned in most of the titles of the various texts in which formless worship appears. During the second half of the Tang, formless worship also began to appear in other sectarian contexts, including Esoteric Buddhism (Chin. *mijiao* 密教) associated with Amoghavajra (705–774, Chin. Bukong 不空), and in the Huayan School (華嚴宗) under Chengguan (778–840, 成觀). At that time the core text of the *Text of Mañjuśrī for Worshipping the Dharmakāya Buddha* was being increasingly adulterated and subjected to reformulation, redaction and re-writing in order to serve specific ritual contexts and particular sectarian interests. Thus began the rise of the several different incarnations of the *Text of Mañjuśrī for Worshipping the Dharmakāya Buddha* that appeared under various titles such as the *Formless Worship*, *Dharmakāya Worship*, and *Wenshu pusa wuxiang shi li* 文殊菩薩无相十禮 [Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva’s Ten Formless Types of Worship].⁴

My reason for singling out the *Formless Worship* for discussion here, is that its core ideology rests on various significant aspects of doctrine and practice current in medieval Chinese Buddhism, including Esoteric Buddhism, Chan and the Huayan traditions. It is also important for understanding certain salient developments relating to practices of repentance and the expiation of karmic transgressions across the board. Moreover, a sustained discussion regarding the “formless precepts” (Chin. *wuxiang*

³ Cf. T. 2154.55: 572b.

⁴ All of these appear in manuscripts found in the Dunhuang material.

jie 無相戒) as seen in the important Chan Buddhist text, the *Liuzu Huineng tan fa jing* 六祖慧能壇法經 [Platform Scripture of Huineng, the Sixth Patriarch; hereafter *Platform Scripture*] (T. 2007.48; Jorgensen 2005),⁵ has in recent years been a major issue in mainly Western scholarship. Thus a discussion of it in relation to the *Formless Worship* seems both relevant and timely (see: Schlütter 2018;⁶ Lin 2017).

Given that a number of manuscripts featuring the *Wuxiang li* and the notion of formless worship have been found among the Dunhuang manuscripts, this study will take this material as its point of departure. This will be followed by an attempt to relate this text to various other Chinese Buddhist sources in which the concept occurs, and to present a few illustrative cases which may serve to highlight the manner in which formless worship was being conceptualised in the various Buddhist traditions of medieval China. This will also involve tracing the textual origin of the *Formless Worship* itself, in particular its central liturgical passages, which, as we shall see presently, are to be found in a variety of contexts and formats transcending formal sectarian boundaries.

2. Formlessness and ethics in Pre-Tang Buddhism

Before we turn our full attention to the textual history and development of the *Formless Worship*, let us first review what we know about the concept of formlessness (Skt. *animitta/alakṣaṇa*; Chin. *wuxiang* 無相) as a salient concept in Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhism.⁷ As far as we can tell, it most likely developed from the early translations of the *prajñāpāramitā* literature. In time it underwent certain cultural modifications and gradually changed from what appears to have been a secondary position in Indian

⁵ This is an abbreviated title. The full title is given in the bibliography at the end.

⁶ In this study Schlütter remains focused on the precept platform for the bestowal of bodhisattva precepts in the Chan tradition associated with Huineng (638–713, 慧能), but acknowledges its possible indebtedness to especially the Tiantai tradition. However, formlessness as a salient concept in medieval Chinese Buddhist thought is not dealt with in any detail.

⁷ Despite the fact that formlessness as a concept also occurs in Indian Buddhism, the way it is defined and used in medieval Chinese Buddhism indicates a time-honoured cultural interest in the metaphysics relating to vacuity. This interest is not reflected in a similar manner in the Indian Buddhist tradition.

Buddhism to a primary and more clearly defined Sinitic concept within which a sense of vacuity and emptiness as absence had become firmly embedded. Thus, what was originally meant to indicate the non-substantial nature of contingencies and the absence of a permanent self-nature of phenomena, came to be endowed with a certain ontological status, i.e. from the absence of self to a kind of transcendent no-self.⁸ Although it can be argued that this development to some extent took place in tandem with the appearance of new translations of Indian Buddhist texts in China and the new doctrinal developments they reflected, local understandings – and misunderstandings in particular – of the foreign metaphysics and concepts certainly continued to play an important role in the processes of displacement and cultural transformation that took place in medieval Chinese Buddhism.

There are several canonical pre-Tang Buddhist texts in Chinese within which formlessness appears as a salient concept (Lin 2017). However, when seen in the context of ritual and contemplative practices, few works appear to have been quite as important as the *Guan Puxian pusa xingfa jing* 觀普賢菩薩行法經 [Samantabhadra Dhyāna Sūtra] (T. 277.9).⁹ In this text we find the following sentence to the effect that:

If one wishes to repent, one must sit erect [in meditation] and contemplate the form/mark of reality (i.e. emptiness), whereby the host of transgressions will be like dew, and the sun of wisdom will be able to evaporate them (lit. eliminate them).¹⁰

⁸ One may here add that the Chinese understanding of emptiness, as originally formulated in the *prajñāpāramitā* literature, tends to read an extra dimension of vacuity or absence of something in a concrete sense to emptiness, whereby it takes on an ontological quality that was not originally part of the concept in Indian Buddhism. It is possible that the development of the buddha nature (Chin. *foxing* 佛性) concept in Chinese Buddhism was a further factor towards this development, but one suspects that philosophical concepts pre-existing in China upon the arrival of Buddhism played a significant role in formulating this special East Asian Buddhist manner of conceptualising emptiness. Cf. Liu 1994. For an older take on the same topic, but with a slightly different focus and less detailed, see the classic study by Robinson [1967] 1976.

⁹ Translated by Dharmamitra under the Liu Song in 424.

¹⁰ T. 277: 393b: 若欲懺悔者，端坐念實相，眾罪如霜露，慧日能消除。 This sentence was immensely popular in medieval Chinese Buddhist discourses on the true nature of phenomena, and can be found used verbatim in several different doctrinal treatises and in different sectarian contexts. It also appears in the important *Fayuan zhulin* 法苑珠林 [Forest of Jewels in the Garden of Dharma] (T. 2122.55: 918a). This monumental

The “mark of reality” (Chin. *shixiang* 實相) referred to in this excerpt indicates the concept of all phenomena as empty of self-existence, thus following the standard *prajñāpāramitā* (and Madhyamika) idea of universal emptiness. By meditating on this principle, the practitioner comes to realise that all phenomena, including the act of repentance, are fundamentally empty, and thereby frees him or herself from being bound by the array of adventitious phenomena. It is this underlying understanding which is at the heart of the idea of the formless precepts, formless repentance, etc., and which leads directly to the formulation of formless worship, the topic of the present study.

With regard to formlessness and ritual practices, the *Fanwang jing* 梵網經 [Pseudo-Brahmajāla Scripture] (T. 1484.24), a celebrated 5th century Chinese composition concerned with the precepts for bodhisattvas, features an interesting passage which goes some way to elucidate the role of the notion of emptiness as applied to ritual worship. The passage in question reads:

Sons of the Buddha! As for the mind of patience (Skt. *kṣānti*, Chin. *ren* 忍), it has the formless wisdom as its essential nature (Chin. *wuxiang hui tixing* 無相慧體性), it is entirely void of [the concept] of patience. It is when one is completely dwelling in patience that it is called the unborn practice of patience (Chin. *wusheng xing ren* 無生行忍). [In contrast] when one is completely dwelling in obtaining, it is more like the endurance of suffering. When engaging in limitless practices, all of them may be referred to as “patience.” Without receiving and without taking, without swords or staves [used by] an angry mind, everything is suchness, free of all truths and forms, without the formless, having nothing in the way of form, neither

encyclopaedia was compiled by Daoshi 道世 (d. 683) around 668. It offers comprehensive information on numerous aspects of Chinese Buddhist practice during the first half of the 7th century. The work stands out in Chinese Buddhist literature as one of its truly major achievements, and its influence has been far-reaching. It is known that it was also present in Dunhuang in manuscript form during the second half of the Tang. For further information, see Teiser 1985. For a full translation of this important resource, see Shinohara 2019–2020.

This shows that the idea of the formless repentance was not an invention of the Chan tradition per se, but was a doctrinal position that was widely shared. However, it is quite possible that it was Chan Buddhism that took this concept through to its most radical application. See e.g. *Lidai fabao ji* 歷代法寶記 [Record of the Dharma-Jewel Through the Generations] (T. 2075.85: 186a). For a full translation and study of this seminal work, see Adamek 2007.

mind nor the form of mind, conditions without the form of conditions. Being at rest in motion and stillness, my followers attain release. All phenomena are like this, [which is why] the form of patience cannot be obtained (T. 1484.24: 998ab).¹¹

The text continues:

Sons of the Buddha! As for the mind in *samādhi* (Chin. *dingxin* 定心), it [means that it] is in the [state of] formless quiet extinction (Chin. *jimie wuxiang* 寂滅無相). When formless people (Chin. *wuxiang ren* 無相人)¹² enter emptiness (Chin. *ru neikong* 入內空), they are [concerned] with upholding the mind of the way [on behalf of] sentient beings, not the conditions of the way (Skt. *mārga*). They do not behold the formless (Chin. *bujian wuxiang* 不見無相), [but] in a limitless manner they practise the *samādhi* of limitless mind (無量心三昧).¹³

This passage shows clearly how formlessness was being conceived in a major Buddhist text of Chinese origin composed well before the Tang. Moreover, it introduces the category of practitioners referred to as “formless people,” i.e. those who have realised universal emptiness and who, on the basis of this insight, work for the salvation of all sentient beings.

When it comes to early Chinese Buddhist formulations of the concept of formlessness (or “signlessness”), it is certainly worth considering the *Renwang huguo banruo jing shu* 仁王護國般若經疏 [Running Commentary on the *Renwang Scripture*] (T. 1705.33). This work is said to have been written by Zhiyi and collated by his disciple Guanding (561–632, 灌頂), although it is uncertain to what degree the commentary actually reflects either the master or the disciple.¹⁴ In any case, this commentary again shows the great importance of the Tiantai tradition in formulating and propagating formlessness as a central concept in Chinese Buddhism.

¹¹ T. 1484.24: 998ab: 若佛子! 忍心者, 有無相慧體性, 一切空空忍, 一切處忍, 名無生行忍, 一切處得名如苦忍. 無量行一一名忍, 無受無打, 無刀杖瞋心, 皆如如. 無一諦一相, 無無相, 有無有相, 非非心相, 緣無緣相, 立住動止, 我人縛解, 一切法如, 忍相不可得.

¹² Not to be understood as invisible or shapeless people, but rather as people who do not dwell on forms, i.e. Buddhist adepts.

¹³ T. 1484.24: 998b. 若佛子! 定心者, 寂滅無相. 無相人爾時入內空, 值道心眾生, 不道緣不見無相, 無量行無量心三昧.

¹⁴ Although the Chinese Buddhist tradition has credited Zhiyi with authoring this commentary, whether it is actually from his hand is an open question.

Probably due to the fact that the *Renwang jing* 仁王經 [Scripture on Benevolent Kings] (T. 246.8) has been classified as belonging to the *prajñāpāramitā* class of *sūtras*, issues of emptiness in both its relative and absolute aspects, as well as formlessness, are naturally given much emphasis in this commentary. As such, we may consider it one of the truly important early Buddhist sources on formlessness formulated in China prior to the Tang. However, given that the wider impact of the commentary and its interpretations on early Tang Buddhism are unclear, it is not easy to establish to what extent it stimulated the interest in ritual practices that evolved around the concept of formlessness, the topic of this essay. Even so, a few samples illustrative of the conceptualisations of Zhiyi/Guanding in this respect should be of interest to us here:

Formlessness is taken as the essence (Chin. *wuxiang wei ti zhe* 無相為體者). The Four Teachings all have formlessness. Formlessness is eternally present and penetrates speech. It is said: “It takes the five patiences (Skt. *pañca-ksānti*)¹⁵ of the ten stages [in the bodhisattva’s progress] (Skt. *daśabhūmi*) as its essence.” Or, as stated in the following *sūtra*: “The five patiences are the bodhisattva’s methods” (T. 1705.33: 254c).

This passage shows how formlessness as a central doctrinal concept permeates early Tiantai discourse on the most fundamental level, placing it at the centre of a bodhisattva’s progress.

The concept of formless vows of emptiness (Chin. *kong wuxiang yuan* 空無相願) can also be found elsewhere in the commentary, where its importance is further underscored by the sentence: “One dwells in empty formlessness without vows” (Chin. *zhu kong wuxiang wuyuan* 住空無相無願) (T. 1705.33: 257a). In the latter case, Zhiyi links “being without vows” and the immutability of the *dharmakāya* buddha (T. 1705.33: 257b). The commentary continues:

There are three nirvāṇic gates, which are respectively explained as emptiness, formlessness, and inactivity. This refers to the gate of emptiness (Chin. *kongmen* 空門). When contemplating all phenomena, [one realises that] they are without self and what belongs to the self. All phenomena follow causal conditions on the basis of which they come together in order to be. [They are inherently] without activity, and without anything that may be received. This is called the gate of emptiness (T. 1705.33: 259c).

¹⁵ Soothill: 117b–118a.

Elsewhere in the commentary Zhiyi/Guanding contextualises formlessness with contemplation. The passage in question reads:

What is referred to as the “contemplation of emptiness” (Chin. *guankong* 觀空), is explained as the formless, wondrous wisdom that illumines the formless sphere (Skt. *viṣaya*). Inside and outside, it is a calm condition where everything is contemplated as being empty (T. 1705.33: 265a).

In this short passage, Zhiyi underlines the theory that in order to arrive at formlessness as a salient concept with which to understand the nature of transient phenomena, the practitioner engages in contemplation of emptiness. Via this process he (or she) accesses a state in which everything is quiescent and empty. Later the commentary elaborates on this and states:

By contemplating that the causes and effects of the threefold worlds are empty, one attains to the formless patient endurance. By testifying to the emptiness of cause and effect, one completes the formless contemplation (T. 1705.33: 270b).¹⁶

Hence, the actualisation of the phenomenological formlessness is achieved through formless contemplation. Elsewhere Zhiyi states: “Formlessness is the formless *samādhi*” (Chin. *wuxiang zhe shi wuxiang ding* 無相者是無相定) (T. 1705.33: 277b). In other words, formlessness itself is essentially the same as the empty state of mind in *samādhi*. This is a significant observation, the implication of which is that by accessing formlessness the practitioner becomes *de facto* formless (Chin. *xuxiang xingren* 無相行人), similar to the “formless person” referred to in the *Pseudo-Brahmajāla* above.

What has been shown above in no way exhausts Zhiyi’s comprehensive and lengthy exposition on formlessness as found across his impressive oeuvre, however it does go some way to elucidate some of the primary considerations that he was giving to the concept, as well as indicating that it enjoyed a pivotal position in his thought. What is important to keep in mind is that Zhiyi’s take on formlessness, as later represented in the *Formless Worship*, the primary object of this study, may be understood as the point of departure of several extended Buddhist discourses in

¹⁶ T. 1705.33: 270b: 觀三界因果空故得無相忍, 證因果空成無相觀也.

which formlessness was expressed. As we shall see presently, these included ethical issues as well as aspects of worship.

The brief survey of the role and meanings of formlessness in the 6th to 7th centuries as given above is admittedly neither exhaustive nor truly representative, nor is it intended to be so. My chief concern here is to provide an appreciation of the doctrinal background against which the primary concepts in the *Formless Worship* are to be understood. It goes without saying that a study on formlessness as a major doctrinal theme in Chinese Buddhism is really a topic for a doctoral dissertation in its own right, and would certainly require a much broader and deeper treatment of the relevant sources than has been given here.

3. Zhisheng, Amoghavajra and Mañjuśrī's Formless Worship

Zhisheng (fl. first half of 8th c., 智昇), the celebrated compiler of the *Kaiyuan Catalogue of Buddhist Texts*, is also known to have edited a liturgical text for repentance entitled the *Ji zhujing lichan yi* 集諸經禮懺儀 [Ritual Proceedings for Prostrating in Repentance Collated from All the Scriptures] (T. 1982.47) which he compiled in 730 (T. 2154.55: 572b). Within this compilation we find the liturgical text, *Text of Mañjuśrī for Worshipping the Dharmakāya Buddha*, part of which (T. 1982.47: 459bc) corresponds to a section in the manuscript copies of the *Formless Worship* from Dunhuang, to which we shall return shortly. However, so as not to jump to the premature conclusion that Zhisheng's *Text of Mañjuśrī for Worshipping the Dharmakāya Buddha* was the source for the latter, it must be understood that only parts of it correspond to the manuscripts from Dunhuang, and there are a sufficient number of textual variations and differences between them to rule out Zhisheng's text as their direct source. What the *Text of Mañjuśrī for Worshipping the Dharmakāya Buddha* does show, however, is that liturgical texts for use in repentance rituals were gaining in popularity during the middle of the Tang, and Zhisheng's text is only one of several. Furthermore, a text such as Zhisheng's shows that repentance texts were taken as templates for this type of ritual, and were used as part of a liturgical repository from which Buddhist practitioners could "assemble" their own texts for repentance.

As an example of the appropriation and reformulation of Zhisheng's liturgical text we have the *Da sheng Wenshushili pusa zan fo fashen li* 大聖文殊師利菩薩讚佛法身礼 [Ritual of the Great Holy Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva Praising the Buddha's Dharmakāya] (T. 1195.20).¹⁷ This liturgical text is attributed to Amoghavajra and was most likely created as part of his drive to create a special Esoteric Buddhist cult for Mañjuśrī on Mt. Wutai (五臺山) (Goble 2019: 190–191, 193–194). The preface of the text dates from 765, indicating that it was composed during the latter period of Amoghavajra's life. The preface specifically mentions that it was used in repentance rituals, similar to the manner in which Zhisheng's text was used (T. 1195.20: 936c). As we shall see in what follows, the text's use in repentance rituals continued even though the core text underwent considerable changes, as reflected in a number of the copies of the *Formless Worship* from Dunhuang (Wang 1998).

A brief look at the *Ritual of the Great Holy Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva Praising the Buddha's Dharmakāya* reveals that we have here a liturgical text that in an overall sense builds on the earlier *Text of Mañjuśrī for Worshipping the Dharmakāya Buddha*. Nevertheless, while it obviously makes use of Zhisheng's text as a source and inspiration, it did so in a highly eclectic manner. Moreover, Amoghavajra's liturgical text is considerably longer and adds new verse parts not found in the source text (cf. appendix I). It also rearranged the sequence of some of the text passages to better fit with Amoghavajra's own discourse (and agenda). What is perhaps most surprising with regard to the manner in which Amoghavajra's text deviates from that of Zhisheng – in addition to its overall length, of course – is that it refers neither to the *trikāya* nor to Mañjuśrī, elements which are otherwise prominent in Zhisheng. This is surprising, not only because of the importance of Vairocana as the manifestation of *dharmakāya* in Amoghavajra's Esoteric Buddhism, but also because the text itself was supposedly meant as a liturgical piece to be used in the cult of Mañjuśrī. To this we may also add that, for some undisclosed reason, the *Ritual of the Great Holy Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva Praising the*

¹⁷ A note states: “This ritual derives from the *Sarvabuddhaviṣayāvatāra-jñānālokā-lamkārasūtra*, not to be confused with the later translation by Dharmarakṣa from the early Northern Song” (T. 359.12).

Buddha's Dharmakāya was recast as a *sūtra*, even though it clearly is not.

Formless worship can also be found in other texts associated with Amoghavajra's name. One such is the *Renwang huguo banruoboluomi jing juanshang keshu* 仁王護國般若波羅蜜多經卷上科疏 [Classified Running Commentary on the *Renwang Jing*] (ZZ 517.26: 229a),¹⁸ which is ostensibly a commentary written for the master's own translation of the scripture in question (T. 245.8). It reads:

Incense, flowers and music: Then when preparing the proceedings of offerings, these should be displayed reverently and sincerely on a mat, and likewise offer incense as proof of one's sincerity. And moreover, sincerely display canopies for all the bodhisattvas, testifying to the virtuous fragrance [of the incense and flowers]. Hence one holds the flowers and presents them.

The wondrous cause of one's cultivation: Then perform the scattering of flowers, and music if one also [intends to] offer that. The flowery method illuminates and completes the buddha's way and is not [to be taken as] an insignificant cause.

The tathāgatas: Then make worship of the buddhas by worshipping with your head touching the ground, prostrating in this manner many times. This then is the third, venerating type of worship [involving] the five points of your body touching the ground (i.e. a full prostration), and offer [oneself] up respectfully and with deep devotion. After this there is then the fourth [type of worship], the formless worship, at which point true worship (Chin. *zhengli* 正禮) takes place. [By way of this] one deeply enters the dharma nature (法性).¹⁹ This is because one is removed from names, letters and forms. Even if there is nothing to accomplish, [in this contemplation] one extensively conveys body and mind like a shadow to extend everywhere. One worships without worshipping, and in doing so one worships everywhere. Inside the worshipping body is the *dharmakāya* of the real buddha. One should not try to seek for it, i.e. the true buddha, outside (of oneself), but gradually arrive at worshipping the [true] buddha. Whether inside or outside, together they constitute the one true form of *prajñā*.²⁰ This then is

¹⁸ In the following quoted passage, the sentences and phrases in italics correspond to the root text. The rest is Amoghavajra's commentary.

¹⁹ This sentence is repeated many times in various Chinese Buddhist scriptures in the course of history, indicating that it represents a pivotal element in the ritual process. One of the earliest occurrences could be the *Dazhi du lun* 大智度論 [Treatise on the Great Wisdom of Liberation] (T. 1509.25: 751c). See also the *Avataṃsakasūtra*, in which it is used a number of times (T. 279.10: 115a–117b, 133a–134c, 319a–319c).

²⁰ This is similar to the "form of reality." I.e. the form of reality is formlessness.

the rise of function. Inside one contemplates the form of reality when worshipping the buddha. [One then] collects one's thoughts with fixed attention (Chin. *ningshen* 凝神) and keeps silent (Chin. *morán* 默然) and raises one's head in supplication. This method is called withdrawing to sit with the hands in the *añjali* gesture. Then harness the mind when seeking to uphold the wondrous principle of the middle way, and reverently uphold the bodily deportments without fail. One must respectfully restrain the mind with determined devotion and for a long time aspire to the complete sound, extending the neck for the rain of the teaching like a starving person thinking about food, or similar to a thirsty person receiving liquid. Hence it is essential to attend to the three karmas (三業).²¹ With a focused mind one contemplates the buddha, his compassionate sound manifesting all around, full of compassion [towards] the people of the realm. This elevated *dharma* assembly then comes to a conclusion.²²

While it is obvious that Amoghavajra is here drawing on the plethora of scriptures at his disposal, one can immediately appreciate that his exposition of formless worship is by far the most complete and detailed we have encountered so far. In this commentary Amoghavajra successfully combines what we could call the outer and inner aspects of formal worship and returns them to their true form (Chin. *shixiang* 實相), which is formlessness. Thereby he elevates an ordinary ritual process to a transcendental event, something which is of course at the heart of the Esoteric Buddhist vision of reality in which relative phenomena are inherently transcendent and absolute. However, despite Amoghavajra's formless rhetoric, as is evident, the venerating attitude to be assumed by the practitioner suggests that the ritual per se was essentially to be carried out in much the same way as in ordinary dualistic worship. One therefore wonders to what extent, if any, the practical implications of formless worship changed the format of the actual ritual proceedings.

²¹ I.e. karma of body, speech and mind.

²² ZZ 517.26: 229ab: 香華音樂。即所供之儀藉此以表虔誠。亦表所證故。蓋諸菩薩證德已馨。故持華表之。妙因已修。故散華表之。若夫音樂之供。法華明成佛道。非小緣矣。如來。即所供之佛。然頂禮之禮有多種。此即第三恭敬禮。以五體投地。捧足殷勤故。亦即第四無相禮。以正禮時。深入法性。離名字相故。然雖無能所。普運身心。如影普徧。禮不可禮。雖徧禮一切。俱禮身內法身真佛。不向外求。馴至一禮佛時。若內若外。同一實相般若。此又是起用。內觀實相禮佛也。斂念凝神曰默然。翹行待法曰退坐。合掌即攝心於中。欲受持中道妙理也。恭約身儀無缺。敬約心志虔誠。久慕圓音。延頸法雨。如饑思食。似渴待漿。故三業精勤。一心觀佛。慈音徧布。悲滿人寰也。此上法會繇致竟。

The further impact of Amoghavajra's elucidation of formless worship as expressed in his *Classified Running Commentary on the Renwang Jing* is not well documented, and we can therefore not pass any serious judgment as to its wider importance after his death. What we can say with some degree of confidence, however, is that the ideas present in his elucidation did not fall on deaf ears, whether the commentary itself achieved great renown or not. When looking at developments on formless worship after Amoghavajra's passing – as we shall presently do – it is abundantly clear that his conceptualisation of formless worship had become widely acknowledged in Chinese Buddhism across sectarian boundaries by the close of the 8th century.

4. Formless worship and its connection with the formless precepts in Chan

The concept of formless precepts and, by extension, formless repentance, are central doctrinal issues in the history of Chan Buddhism, especially in the discourse of the *Platform Scripture* associated with Huineng as mentioned above. Much has been said about these precepts and their place in the *Platform Scripture*, even though a comprehensive and viable discussion of their origin and later history in Chan Buddhism is still wanting (Schlütter 2018; and Jorgensen 2005: 162–163, etc.). For good measure, let us briefly review Chan's position on formless repentance so as to appreciate the early Southern Chan tradition's radical take on formlessness in practice. A central passage in the Dunhuang version of the *Platform Scripture* reveals how Huineng understands formless repentance. It goes as follows:

“[...] on behalf of [you] good-knowing ones I will transmit the [instructions regarding] the formless repentance, which can destroy the karmic obstructions of the threefold worlds.” The Great Master [continued] saying: “Good knowing ones! Former, later and present thought, thought-moment by thought-moment, if you do not allow yourselves to be contaminated by stupid infatuation, and adherence to former evil actions is at the same time done away with, then this is repentance with the self-nature. If in former, later and present thought, thought-moment by thought-moment, you do not allow yourselves to be contaminated by stupidity but eliminate adherence to your former argumentative and deceptive disposition, which is eternally

cut off, this is called repentance of the self-nature. If in former, later and present thought, thought-moment by thought-moment, you are not contaminated by abscesses²³ but eliminate your adherence to your former disposition of envy, which is done away with in your self-nature, this is repentance. (Personally recite the above trice.) Good knowing ones! What is it we call repentance?²⁴ As for repentance (Chin. *chan* 懺), it is not to be done with your finite body. As for expiation (Chin. *hui* 悔), you must know that former bad and evil karma as a rule is not separate from your minds. Formerly all buddhas have spoken about this (i.e. expiation) as being without benefit. In this teaching of mine, [evil karma] is forever cut off through non-doing. This is called ‘repentance’.”²⁵

Despite the fact that Huineng’s discourse reveals a more radical and practical attitude to precepts and repentance, it is mainly a question of formulation. In terms of content, his radicalism is in fact much more rational and logical when seen in relation to the various quotations in the earlier Chinese Buddhist literature presented above.

The spiritual dimensions of the formless precepts have been explored at some length in Morten Schlütter’s recent study (Schlütter 2018), whereas their rise and place in Chan Buddhism more broadly defined have been given a more political and social reading by John Jorgensen, who sees the more radical formulations of precepts as a reaction against government control and restrictions on ordinations (Jorgensen 2005: 162–163).

My own take on the history of formless precepts in Chan Buddhism is that they primarily grew out of readings of the *prajñāpāramitā* literature, in particular the *Vajracchedikā* (T. 235.8), in the course of the 7th–8th centuries (Anderl 2013). However, as already noted, the preoccupation with formlessness was not a unique feature of the Chan tradition per se, but

²³ I consider this as metaphorical.

²⁴ Here Huineng is breaking up the compound signifying repentance, i.e. *chanhui* (懺悔), into its two constituent parts.

²⁵ T. 2007.48: 339bc: [...] 善知識授無相懺悔，滅三世罪障。大師言：“善知識！前念，後念及今念，念念不被愚迷染。從前惡行一時除，自性若除即是懺。前念後念及今念，後念及今念，念念不被愚痴染，除却從前矯誑心，永斷。名為自性懺。前念，後念及今念，後念及今念，念念不被疽疾染，除却從前嫉妒心，自性若除即是懺（已上三唱）。善知識！何名懺悔？懺者終身不作。悔者知於前非惡業恆不離心，諸佛前口說無益，我此法門中，永斷不作。名為懺悔” (T. 2007.48: 339bc).

See also the translation in Yampolsky 1967: 144. As can be seen, my translation differs from his on a few significant points.

more part of a general interest in rituals by various sectarian Buddhist groups of that time, including adherents of Jizang's (549–623, 吉藏) Sinitic version of Madhyamaka, the Sanlun School (三論宗), Northern Chan, and the later followers of Shenhui (670–762, 神會).²⁶ While the formulation of the formless precepts as they appear in the *Platform Scripture* may have been a special invention by the Chan tradition, it should not be ignored that the concept of formlessness was already widely used in ritual practices in Chinese Buddhism before the formless precepts appear in the *Platform Scripture*. It therefore makes little sense to consider the formless precepts as having attained “canonical status” on account of the *Platform Scripture* alone (Lin 2017).²⁷ As has been hinted at by various scholars, it seems more likely that, as the importance of formlessness as a central concept in Chinese Buddhism became widespread, the idea was extended to ritual practices as well, leading to formless repentance, formless precepts, and formless worship.²⁸

When it comes to contextualising the formless worship and its relationship with the formless precepts, it is evident that this development became very important in Chan Buddhist circles some time during the first half of the 8th century, possibly among followers of Northern Chan first of all, and then gradually spreading to the Southern Chan of Shenhui and eventually to the Baotang School (保唐宗) in Sichuan (四川) (Schlüter 2018). Although the formless precepts are usually associated with the *Platform Scripture* attributed to Huineng, this seminal Chan scripture in its earliest form, i.e. that represented by the Dunhuang manuscript versions, was most likely not compiled until the late 8th century at the earliest (Jorgensen 2005: 595–640). For this simple reason, it cannot be considered the origin of the formless precepts, nor even of formless worship per se, for both of these important concepts were already well established in some form more than half a century earlier.

²⁶ For the *Vajracchedikā*'s place in Shenhui's Chan, see Jorgensen 2005: 604–611.

²⁷ As already stated, I consider it most likely that the general discussion of formlessness in the ritual setting of Chinese Buddhism originated quite some time before the Chan tradition arose. Also I do not subscribe to the idea that the *Avatamsakasūtra* represents the actual textual origin of the formless precepts, although it is clear – as I also show in this paper – that formlessness in ritual settings was conceptually important in the later writings of the Huayan tradition as well.

²⁸ See also the brief but telling quotation by Jizang in Greene 2008: 64.

5. The Huayan tradition and the formless worship

At the time of Amoghavajra's death in 774, new doctrinal developments were at play which influenced the future direction of Chinese Buddhism, namely the processes leading to the conflation of teachings and doctrinal interpretations deriving from Southern Chan Buddhism with those from the Huayan School. The further history of formless worship during the Tang can to some extent be understood through a reading of the *Da fangguang fo huayan jing Puxian xingyuan pin biexing liushu* 大方廣佛華嚴經普賢行願品別行疏鈔 [Alternative Running Commentary on the Samantabhadra Chapter of the *Buddhāvataṃsakasūtra*] (ZZ 229.5) jointly authored by Chengguan (778–840, 澄觀), the official Fourth Patriarch of the Huayan School (cf. Hamar 2002), and his disciple Guifeng Zongmi (780–841, 圭峰宗密).²⁹ This work provides an illuminating series of statements which throw light on the way formless worship was conceptualised in what is essentially an integrated Huayan-Chan interpretation of Buddhist doctrines originating in the central heartlands of the Tang Empire during the first half of the 9th century.³⁰

Let us now see how the text in question conceptualises formless worship. The text first provides an overall reading of the concept, and then inserts it into a typical Huayan scheme of graded Buddhist teachings (Chin. *panjiao* 判教). It reads:

Commentary 4. “Formless worship:” [This means] deeply entering the dharma nature (法性),³¹ which is apart from what constitutes form.

Elucidation 4: Formless worship should correctly be the second of the initial teachings. It explains emptiness as the primary door of Mahāyāna, hence the *Madhyamakaśāstra* says: “The meaning is that since they are [inherently] empty (Skt. *śūnya*), all phenomena are [actually] complete.”³² [In

²⁹ The most comprehensive study on Zongmi's thought to-date is Kamata 1975. However, it offers mainly a survey of the range and extent of Zongmi's thought, and does not dwell on isolated topoi such as formlessness at any length.

³⁰ For a discussion of this important development in medieval Chinese Buddhism, see Yoshizu 1985: 219–336.

³¹ A phrase quoted directly from the *Avataṃsakasūtra* (T. 279.10: 155c).

³² In the formulation of Huayan Buddhism, this refers to the enlightened principle of universal emptiness inherent in all phenomena or suchness (Chin. *zhenru* 真如). This represents an elaboration of earlier conceptualisations that grew out of the East Asian Yogācāra Buddhism as well as the Tiantai. An elaborate and doctrinally evolved form of

other words,] as [this teaching] depends on emptiness it is therefore the initial teaching [of Mahāyāna].

Commentary 5. “Putting worship into practice:” Although one is unable to do so [in reality], widely convey body and mind, [which] are like shadows, everywhere, [even if] when worshipping there is [actually] no worship.

Elucidation 5: As for “putting worship into practice,” this is the third [type] of worship of the final teaching (Chin. *zhongjiao* 終教), where, in accordance with emptiness, the bodhisattvas enter the unreal by relying on one’s body for putting it into practice. By way of the above contemplation of emptiness, they awaken to teaching without effort and with nothing to achieve. Because they know that phenomena are without self-nature, and because one cannot set up their fixed (i.e. permanent) forms, this view enables them to worship by way of worshipping. All such shapes and images are one, and all have the nature of dependent origination, hence they extend everywhere.

Commentary 6. “Worship of inner contemplation:” This is simply the *dharmakāya* true buddha of the worshipping person, you should not seek him outside [yourself].

Elucidation 6: As for the worship of inner contemplation, it is the worship of the third teaching of reality, explained as praising the doctrine of reality and not setting up unreal illusion. [By doing this] one directly sees the fundamentally awakened true nature (Chin. *jian benjue zhenxing* 見本覺真性). Hence it is called “the true buddha *dharmakāya*.” Therefore, the *Qixin lun*³³ states: “It is apart from the conceptualisation of form, it is the realm of vacuity (Chin. *wukong jie* 虛空界).”³⁴ “This, then, is the *tathāgata*’s *dharmakāya* of equality and, when adhering to this *dharmakāya*, it is called original enlightenment.” It is said to be apart from concepts of form, and apart from imagination of unreal illusion. If one turns one’s back on awakening, embraces [the world of] dust, and is attached to conditions in the outer sphere, one cannot worship in a respectful manner. [On the other hand,] if the mind is not attached to the outer sphere but turns away from the [world of dust] and embraces awakening, one is able to take refuge and worship in

this can be found in the *Dacheng qixin lun* 大乘起信論 [Giving Rise to Faith in the Mahāyāna] (T. 1666. 32: 580c, etc.). Eventually these diverse teachings came together in the Chinese Huayan and Korean Hwaōm (華嚴) traditions, where *dharmā*-nature and the *dharmakāya* became essentially synonymous. For the use of the concept in Chan Buddhism, see Anderl 2020.

³³ I.e. *Giving Rise to Faith in the Mahāyāna* (T. 1666.32).

³⁴ The passage reads: “This is explained as the essence of the mind being apart from thought. As it is apart from thought, it equals the vacuous realm of nothingness, and there is nowhere it does not reach [...]” 謂心體離念。離念相者，等虛空界無所不遍 [...]. (T. 1666.32: 576a).

a respectful manner. On the basis of this we can say: The fourth, the emptiness view of worshipping the true buddha; the fifth, the illusory view on worshipping the unrefined, true buddha; the sixth, worshipping according to the middle view, [all] constitute the first meaning of the true buddha [worship].

Commentary 7. “The worship of the form of reality” (實相禮): Whether inside or outside, it is the same form of reality.

Elucidation 7: As for the worship of the form of reality, it is [the same as] the fourth worship in the sudden teaching. The former worship of the formless merely refers to the principle of emptiness in the initial teaching, and cannot be called sudden. It is neither empty nor not empty, it is neither worship nor not worship, neither grasping at the inner buddha nor rejecting the falsehood of an outer buddha. Without relying on inside and outside, one destroys and cuts off dependency on an abode. If one just understands in this manner, without dwelling on phenomena, one will always experience the profound dharma realm (Skt. *dharmadhātu*) and constantly worship all the buddhas. It is for this reason that it is called the “worship of the form of reality” (實相禮) [...]³⁵

This lengthy exposition on formless worship constitutes essentially the doctrinal underpinning for both the *Formless Worship* as such as well as the formless precepts in Chan.

Zongmi also wrote on his own about formlessness, and his development of the concept of formlessness finds perhaps its most articulate expression

³⁵ ZZ 245.9: 267b:

疏四無相禮深入法性離能所相。

○鈔四。無相禮等者正當第二始教禮也謂空是大乘之初門故中論云以有空義故一切法得成既順於空故是始教。

疏五。起用禮雖無能所普運身心如影普遍禮不可禮。

○鈔五。起用禮等者第三終教禮也是從空入假依體起用之菩薩也由前空觀悟法無能無所故此知法無性不計定相故觀能禮所禮皆如影像一一全是性之緣起故得普遍也。

疏六。內觀禮，但禮身內法身真佛不向外求。

○鈔六。內觀禮等者第三教中實教禮也謂顯實宗不計空假直見本覺真性故云：法身真佛故起信論云：離念相者等虛空界即是如來平等法身依法身說名本覺言離念相者離空假之念也背覺合塵攀緣外境為不禮敬心不攀緣外境背塵合覺為歸依禮敬也亦可第四空觀禮真諦佛第五假觀禮俗諦佛第六中觀禮第一義諦佛也。

疏七。實相禮若內若外同一實相。

○鈔七實相禮者第四頓教禮也。前無相禮但是初教空理不名為頓今非空非不空非禮非不禮非取內真佛非棄外假佛內外無寄泯絕棲託但得如此不住於法自然常冥法界常禮諸佛故云實相禮也。

in the *Yuanjue jing dashu shiyi chao* 圓覺經大疏釋義鈔 [Great Interlinear Commentary on the Scripture of Perfect Enlightenment With Notes Elucidating the Meaning] (ZZ 245.9), where he refers to it as “the formless teaching” (Chin. *wuxiang jiao* 無相教) (i.e. = formless doctrine (Chin. *wuxiang zong* 無相宗)) (ZZ 245.9: 646a). When approached from the point of cultivation, this translates into “entering empty formlessness” (Chin. *ju kong wuxiang yi* 入空無相已), i.e. a special state of mind (ZZ 245.9: 665c) wherein one engages in “the contemplation of formlessness” (Chin. *wuxiang guan* 無相觀), or alternately is in possession of “the view of formlessness” (ZZ 245.9: 700c). He further states:

Concerning the contemplation of the mind as formless, this pertains to all phenomena. If, when [the adventitious] mind arises, one is able to turn it back (Chin. *fan* 反) and contemplate its source, the nature of the mind cannot be obtained. Then one will know that the ten thousand phenomena are all without basis (ZZ 245.9: 749a).

The logic behind this, of course, is that all phenomena are mind-made, and if the mind is formless and empty in its very nature, so are all phenomena. This is what he means when he states, “no-mind is then all forms, wherefore all forms are formless” (Chin. *wuxin ji yixiang, yixiang zhe wuxiang* 無心即一相，一相者無相) (ZZ. 245.9: 533a), and “[the mind] is without acting and without form” (Chin. *wuwei wuxiang* 無為無相) (ZZ 245.9: 467c). On a deeper level one may acknowledge that the doctrinal argumentation on which Zongmi bases himself is a blend of *yogācāra/tathāgatagarbha* and *prajñāpāramitā* thought funnelled through the vision of the *Avatamsaka*.³⁶ In this manner he provides the most clear and self-evident argument for the type of formless worship we see expressed

³⁶ An original thinker and Chan specialist, Zongmi expounded a brand of Chan Buddhism, which was firmly grounded in the doctrines and practices of Chinese Mahāyāna as well as the Chinese Classics. When later in life he came under the influence of the Huayan tradition as transmitted via his teacher Chengguan, he inherited the teachings of that tradition, including its special interpretation and integration of the major doctrines of Mahāyāna. On the basis of this synthesis Zongmi created his own version of Chan cum Huayan, which may be considered a new development of both traditions. The depth and breadth of his thinking and understanding of Chinese Buddhist doctrines of the late Tang can be found in his fairly extensive literary production, much of which has yet to be properly studied. The now classical study of Zongmi’s thought can be found in Kamata 1975. See also Ran 1988; and Yang 1999.

in the several Dunhuang documents under discussion here. In effect, “formless worship” just as “formless precepts” represent logical developments of Mahāyāna Buddhist thought passed through the Sinitic cultural filter and refined through the integrated doctrinal vision of Chinese Buddhism of the mid-Tang.

Elsewhere we find Zongmi addressing formless worship where he states:

As for the formless worship, it should be done by oneself with all of one’s illusory body³⁷ and speech. When respectfully worshipping, one should avail oneself of the contemplative wisdom (Chin. *guan zhi* 觀智) and not concern oneself with the body and speech parts. One should not [perform] the worship with [special] reverence, but only access the formless by which one should worship the buddha. You do well in reflecting upon this! If by way of the contemplative wisdom one is able to worship the buddha, it is not necessary to worship by use of the body (ZZ 245.9: 740c).³⁸

This is perhaps the most simple and straightforward instruction on how to perform the formless worship we have seen so far. Accessing the contemplative wisdom, the practitioner enters the realm of formlessness and in doing so performs the ultimate worship. A form of worship which does not require use of the body, i.e. prostrations. A truly formless worship. Although this is a far cry from Huineng’s take on the formless precepts, one nevertheless sees here the more absolutist and consequential interpretation of the application of formlessness in ritual worship.

The manner in which formless worship was being conceptualised in the Huayan *cum* Chan tradition promoted by Zongmi provides one of the most well-defined discourses in Chinese Buddhism, one in which a great number of doctrines were being integrated and elucidated. Therefore, with his explanations in mind, our excursion into the Dunhuang text of the *Formless Worship* – which takes up the rest of this study – should be a much easier task, especially when it comes to the underlying logic and format.³⁹

³⁷ The text has *shu* (述), which makes little sense, and is most likely a mistake for *mi* (迷) = illusory, which does make sense.

³⁸ ZZ 245.9: 740c: 無相禮者。自此已下。皆述身口恭敬禮時作此觀智。非謂身口都不敬禮。但將無相等。以當禮佛。善須思之。若以觀智。便名禮佛。不須身禮。

³⁹ Here it should be acknowledged that Chengguan and Zongmi’s works were not transmitted to Dunhuang until after the Tibetan occupation formally ended in the middle

6. The Dunhuang manuscript sources

Among the Dunhuang manuscripts that are concerned with Buddhist ritual practices is found a particular liturgical text that appears under a number of different names and in at least four or five different recensions, as indicated above (Wang 1997). A comparative approach to these manuscripts makes it clear that all of these versions may ultimately have derived from the *Text of Mañjuśrī for Worshipping the Dharmakāya Buddha* (T. 1982.47: 459bc) as contained in the *Ritual Proceedings for Prostrating in Repentance Collated from All the Scriptures* (T. 1982.47), a compendium that was compiled in 730.

In Dunhuang more than a dozen different manuscripts of the *Formless Worship* were in circulation during the late Tang and early 10th century. Most of them feature the core text associated with Amoghavajra, but the fact that they vary in length and scope, as well as context, could indicate that they were modified locally according to how they were used. The most well-known among these Dunhuang manuscripts is the *Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva's Ten Types of Formless Worship* (T. 2844.85, i.e. P. 2212). It is considerably shorter than the *Text of Mañjuśrī for Worshipping the Dharmakāya Buddha* referred to above, but nevertheless appears as a complete text in the various manuscript recensions in which it is to be found. Among other things, it is noteworthy for featuring a passage in its liturgical part in which a seemingly direct reference to the Northern Chan practice of mind contemplation (Chin. *kanxin* 看心) occurs (McRae 1986: 121–144; Anderl and Sørensen 2020; Anderl 2020).

BD 8371 (1), the main focus of this study, features a more condensed and somewhat different version of our text than that represented by T. 2844.85. It is there entitled *Formless Worship*. Its core text is essentially the liturgical part of the *Text of Mañjuśrī for Worshipping the Dharmakāya Buddha*, but with only a few passages of the section on repentance that otherwise makes up most of the original text. What is perhaps most

of the 9th century, and then only partly so. Hence, it is debatable how much, if at all, they actually impacted the local versions of the *Formless Worship* and related liturgical texts. Nevertheless, the Chan/Huayan formulations of formless worship show that by the early 9th century this concept had become central in Chinese Buddhism broadly speaking, informing ritual practices across the board.

significant for the present study is that the *Formless Worship* appears together with a number of primarily liturgical texts of varying lengths. We shall return to a discussion of these below.

A further two manuscripts of the *Formless Worship* are P. 3645A, the title of which appears at its end, and S. 5892, entitled *Wuxiang fashen li* 无相法身礼 [Formless Dharmakāya Worship]. Both texts feature the Chan passage referred to above, but even though the text in the former of these two manuscripts is relatively long, it still represents an abbreviated and re-organised form when compared to the original *Text of Mañjuśrī for Worshipping the Dharmakāya Buddha*. The latter manuscript, i.e. S. 5892, is in the form of a personal handbook.

The other four manuscript versions are all without the Chan element and are of varying lengths. P. 2157A is entitled *Dharmakāya Worship*. It has a truncated beginning without the invocations to Vairocana and Mañjuśrī, but features a large part of the text of repentance. The version in P. 2690F bears the title *Wuxiang li*, but is a one sheet fragment. P. 3892 is similar to P. 2157A, but its text is shorter. It is entitled *Formless Dharmakāya Worship* like the version in the manual. Finally P. 4597A, also entitled *Dharmakāya Worship*, is similar to versions P. 2157A and P. 3892, i.e. without the full beginning of the liturgical section, but with much of the text of repentance.

In spite of the variety and lengths to be seen in these manuscripts, none of them represents the full text of Zhisheng's *Text of Mañjuśrī for Worshipping the Dharmakāya Buddha*. It is therefore apparent that the recensions of the *Formless Worship* found at Dunhuang developed from at least two similar texts in circulation during the late Tang and early Five Dynasties (906–978, 五代) period. As for those textual developments, let us turn to a closer look at the related material that has been transmitted via the printed Buddhist canons in East Asia.

7. Text and context of BD 8371

Having made a conceptual outline of how the idea of formless worship may have originated and its possible connection with the *Formless Worship*, let us now turn to the text of the *Formless Worship* as transmitted in Dunhuang. Given that BD 8371 is such a neat manuscript and easy to

work with, I shall be basing myself on that in what follows. However, before going into the text itself, let us first review the manuscript in its entirety as a way of understanding the formal context of the *Formless Worship*:

– First there is the text of the *Formless Worship* itself. It is in abbreviated form and only features a few passages from the text of repentance that ordinarily follows the main liturgical section (BD 8371 (1)).

– The *Formless Worship* is followed by yet another liturgical text for worship entitled, *Jingang wuli* 金剛五禮 [Fivefold Vajra Worship] (BD 8371 (2)).⁴⁰ It consists of ten lines of text and invokes the “Vajraprajñāpāramitā” a number of times. This is obviously a reference to the *Vajracchedikāsūtra* (T. 235.8), indicating that it was used in a rite in which this important *prajñāpāramitāsūtra* was adored or worshipped.

– After the *Fivefold Vajra Worship* we have the title of an unidentified *dhāraṇī* (BD 8371 (3)), the exact nature of which we can only speculate for nothing is given here apart from its title, *Foshuo da xianle tuoluoni shenmiao zhangju zhenyan* 佛說大獻樂陀羅尼神妙章句真言 [Buddha Utters the Great Bliss Dhāraṇī of Divine and Wondrous Section of Phrases of mantras].⁴¹ It is therefore impossible at this stage to issue any meaningful statements on its use within the context of the manuscripts, or its link with the other texts.

– A lengthy quotation from an unnamed *sūtra* (BD 8371 (4)), which at a closer look turns out to be a paraphrase of a passage from the opening chapter of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* in which the different beings who are coming to attend the Buddha’s assembly are enumerated, in this case four *gandharva* kings (T. 262.9: 482b). The exact logic behind inserting this piece of text in the manuscript is, however, unclear as it has no obvious bearing on or relation with the rest of the included material.

– Then follow three Buddhist hymns. The first of these is a version of the *Hao zhu niang zan* 好住娘贊 [In Praise of the Well-residing Woman] (BD 8371 (5)),⁴² and the second is a hymn entitled *Niepan zan* 涅槃讚 [In Praise of Nirvāṇa] (BD 8371 (6)). This second hymn derives from a textual compilation for use in Pure Land rituals entitled *Jingtu wuhui nianfo song jing xing yi* 淨土五會念佛誦經觀行儀 [Ritual Proceedings for the Pure Land Fivefold Assemblies for Invoking the Buddha by Chanting the Scriptures and

⁴⁰ See also ZWF 59A.7.

⁴¹ No spell with this title can be found in the Chinese Buddhist canons. However, two other cases have been recorded in the Dunhuang material. Cf. BD 8174 (3), and BD 6412V°.

⁴² There are several copies of this hymn among the Dunhuang manuscripts, cf. e.g. S. 1497, S. 1419, S. 5892, S. 4634, P. 2713, BD 7269, etc.

Contemplating] (T. 2827.85: 1246ab), put together by the monk Fazhao (747–821, 法照) from Nanyue (南岳).⁴³ The last of the three hymns is the *Nanzong zan* 南總讚 [In Praise of the Southern School] (BD 8371 (7)), a liturgical piece that reflects the type of radical Chan Buddhism usually associated with the dispensation of Shenhui. All three of these hymns indicate a general ritual setting without anything in the way of a clear sectarian position. We can say this because the conceptual and practice-related elements in these hymns are derived without bias from the Chan, Pure Land and Esoteric Buddhist traditions.

Given the composite nature of the manuscript, it does appear somewhat disjointed even if some of the texts that make it up do relate typologically to each other. It is not unlikely that the manuscript represents a Buddhist writing exercise of sorts. Nevertheless, the fact that it preserves a series of important liturgical texts makes it sufficiently interesting for our current purpose.

Having placed the text of the *Formless Worship*, as found in BD 8371 (1), in its textual setting, let us now turn to a translation of the text itself in order to understand to what extent it adheres to what was ostensibly its original source text, i.e. the *Text of Mañjuśrī for Worshipping the Dharmakāya Buddha* or one of its other derivatives. Before doing so, it is important to appreciate that while the BD 8371 version of the text may not necessarily be the oldest one we have of the *Formless Worship* from Dunhuang, it is nevertheless suitably representative of those texts and their ritual usage. As the texts of the *Formless Worship* were used for ritual purposes, most probably as part of ceremonies involving repentance with the customary prostrations, one can imagine that by doing formless worship, one would in effect be performing “formless repentance.” Moreover, with its evident stress on emptiness and transcendence in the ritual process, it is clear that the text was meant to instil in its users a new attitude to worship, one that stressed a non-dual approach in order to remove the separation between worshipper and that which is worshipped.

⁴³ His name is given in a note at the beginning of the manuscript. He was a Pure Land practitioner, and the author of a number of related tracts. It appears that his works enjoyed some degree of popularity in Dunhuang during the late medieval period. See e.g. T. 1983.47, and T. 2827.85. For biographical details, see FDC, 3416ab.

7.1. *The Dunhuang Wuxiang Li*

Having seen the type of text from which the *Formless Worship* developed, and how one of the popular versions was conceptualised and contextualised, let us now turn to the text itself, and see what it may reveal to us. The translation of BD 8371 (1) reads:

The Formless Worship
 Namō pure *dharmakāya* Vairocana Buddha!
 Namō complete *saṃbhogakāya* Rocana Buddha!
 Namō hundred thousand transformation bodies, all called Śākyamuni
 Buddha!

Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva dwelling in Mt. Qingliang,
 Sitting erect contemplating the mind,
 The mind which cannot be obtained,
 We offer worship to that which cannot be seen.

We extend our minds to take refuge in and worship the *dharmakāya* buddha
 of suchness,
 Without form and without shape, without root, and without a place to dwell.
 Because he is neither born, nor does he perish,
 We offer worship to that which cannot be seen.

We extend our minds to take refuge in and worship the *dharmakāya* buddha
 of suchness,
 Who does not leave and does not stay, who does not take and does not give.
 Because he is far removed from the six entries,⁴⁴
 We offer worship to that which cannot be seen.

We extend our minds to take refuge in and worship the *dharmakāya* buddha
 of suchness,
 Who has gone beyond the threefold worlds, all similar to empty space,
 As he is someone whom all desires do not infect,
 We offer worship to that which cannot be seen.

We extend our minds to take refuge in and worship the *dharmakāya* buddha
 of suchness,
 In whom all majestic rites are present, whether going or coming, as well as
 in sleep and awake.
 Because he constantly dwells in quiet purity,
 We offer worship to that which cannot be seen.

⁴⁴ Chin. *liuru* (六入). The six sense organs.

We extend our minds to take refuge in and worship the *dharmakāya* buddha
of suchness,
Who enters all formless *samādhis*, and who beholds that all phenomena are
quiescent and pure.
Because he constantly resides in quiescence and purity,
We offer worship to that which cannot be seen.

We extend our minds to take refuge in and worship the *dharmakāya* buddha
of suchness,
Whose going and coming is surely balanced, and who dwells in equanim-
ity.
Because he does not upset this equanimity,
We offer worship to that which cannot be seen.

We extend our minds to take refuge in and worship the *dharmakāya* buddha
of suchness,
As all buddhas have the form of voidness, and being void they are
formless,
Because they are removed from all causes and effects,
We offer worship to that which cannot be seen.

We extend our minds to take refuge in and worship the *dharmakāya* buddha
of suchness,
As in voidness there are no boundaries, all of the buddha's body is self-so,
Because the mind is the same as the void,
We offer worship to that which cannot be seen.

We extend our minds to take refuge in and worship the *dharmakāya* buddha
of suchness,
[Praying that] the buddha may constantly be in the world, and that we may
not be contaminated by conditioned phenomena.
Because he does not discriminate what is in the world,
We offer worship to that which cannot be seen.

We extend our minds to take refuge in and worship the *dharmakāya* buddha
of suchness,
As all phenomena originate from illusions, they are like illusions and cannot
be obtained.
Because [the *dharmakāya* buddha] is apart from all illusory phenomena,
We offer worship to that which cannot be seen.

We extend our minds to take refuge in and worship the *dharmakāya* buddha
of suchness,
All evenly worship without worshipping, and without not worshipping,
All prostrate, with common understanding,
And together we take refuge in the essence of the form of reality.

We extend widely the four kindnesses⁴⁵ to three existences, all the sentient beings in the dharma realm,
 May we be enlightened together, as we one and all set our hearts on repentance, and take refuge in and worship the three jewels.

What we see here reveals that although Mañjuśrī, the original hero of the earlier versions of our liturgical text, has been retained, his actual importance in the hymn per se has been greatly reduced, and his role has instead been replaced with the *dharmakāya* Buddha Vairocana. In fact, the text of the Dunhuang *Formless Worship* is a lengthy and direct praise of the cosmic buddha, something which is repeated numerous times in the text.

In doctrinal terms, the *Formless Worship* version of BD 8371 (1) has also retained the non-dual and absolutist teachings on reality as found in both Zhisheng and Amoghavajra's recensions of the hymn, although the non-dual nature of the text is certainly more accentuated in the Dunhuang manuscript in a manner reminiscent of Chan Buddhism. This could be read as evidence of influence from this school of Chinese Buddhism, which, as we know, was highly influential locally from the late 8th century onwards.

7.2. *The Buddhist context of formless worship in Dunhuang*

Although it is known that a longer version of the *Formless Worship*, partly following Zhisheng's *Text of Mañjuśrī for Worshipping the Dharmakāya Buddha*, was transmitted in Dunhuang (T. 2844.85 aka P. 2212), it appears that it was primarily the shortened version(s) such as that represented by BD 8371 (1) which were in widespread use. This can be known because, while there are only one or two longer versions extant among the manuscripts, several of the shortened version(s) have survived and as such constitute a clear majority. The longer version follows the text of Zhisheng's *Text of Mañjuśrī for Worshipping the Dharmakāya Buddha* to some degree, including the lengthy section on repentance, and the ritual expiation of transgressions. However, the fact that the long versions

⁴⁵ Chin. *si'en* 四恩. Probably a local take on the *sixin* (四心), i.e. kindness, pity, joy, and nondiscrimination.

are far from being textually similar to Zhisheng's text reveals that they circulated in redacted form.

The shorter versions are essentially limited to modifications of the long verse of the *Text of Mañjuśrī for Worshipping the Dharmakāya Buddha*, i.e. the text's liturgical section, and in all cases miss the lengthy section on repentance. These modifications are twofold and reflect the way in which the *Formless Worship* and its teaching on formless worship per se were used and contextualised in Dunhuang. Common to all the Dunhuang versions of the *Formless Worship* (including the longer version) is the passage on mind contemplation, i.e. they have had an element of Chan Buddhist discourse inserted into them. As far as we can judge, this Chan input primarily reflects the method of meditation associated with the Northern School (Anderl 2020), but the fact that this tradition coexisted with so-called Southern Chan and other derivatives in Dunhuang long after it became defunct in the central provinces of China means that we cannot be too sure of the nature of the local Buddhist context in which this liturgical text was used.⁴⁶

Although the text of the *Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva's Ten Types of Formless Worship* (T. 2844.85 aka P. 2212) shares certain parts of its text with the *Formless Worship* of BD 8371 (1), the two texts are in fact rather different, not only in terms of overall contents and ritual progress, but also with regard to their respective doctrinal stance. In a sense one may argue that the text of *Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva's Ten Types of Formless Worship* is closer to the Zhisheng and Amoghavajra recensions in so far as it represents a more formal ritual text for repentance and the expiation of karmic transgressions, but it is in fact a textual mishmash that mixes up several text passages from various sources. Its structure and sometimes wording as well differs radically from the short *Formless Worship* texts.

Interestingly, BD 8371 is not a solitary manuscript. In fact, it exhibits quite a close relationship to P. 3645V^o, in which we find more or less the same collection of texts, including both the *Formless Worship* (P. 3645V^o

⁴⁶ As an example of this are the Chan texts known to have been in the possession of the important local monk-leader Daozhen (c. 915–c. 987, 道真), which consisted of both Northern and Southern Chan material. For a discussion of this monk, see Sørensen 2020.

(3)) and the *Fivefold Vajra Worship* (P. 3645V° (6)).⁴⁷ This means that BD 8371 represents an anthology compiled for a specific purpose, possibly it is yet another collection of mainly ritual texts for private use.

The contextual relationship between the *Formless Worship* and the *Fivefold Vajra Worship*, as reflected in the Dunhuang manuscripts, is hardly a coincidence, not only because both texts share some of the same phrases and sentences but because their respective doctrinal frameworks point back to what was ostensibly a shared ideological background in the *prajñāpāramitā* literature. The authorship of the *Fivefold Vajra Worship* can be traced to a local Dunhuang monk, Ven. Yao (fl. first half of 9th century, 姚和尚) (Wang 1998: 224),⁴⁸ so we need not concern ourselves with this issue further. What is noteworthy is that Ven. Yao's composition, of which several copies have been identified among the Dunhuang manuscripts, is found in virtually all cases together with other Chan texts, especially those related to the Northern School.⁴⁹ Perhaps the best example of this contextualisation is P. 3664, where our text appears under the title *Yao he shang jin gang wu li* 姚和上金剛五禮 [Ven. Yao's Fivefold Vajra Worship] (P. 3664 (11), ZW 59A.7). Evidently, the *Fivefold Vajra Worship* arose under some kind of influence from the *Formless Worship*

⁴⁷ The sequence in P. 3645V° is slightly different to that of BD 8371:

- (1) *Saduo taizi zan* 薩埵太子讚.
- (2) *Dacheng jingtu zan* 大乘淨土讚.
- (3) *Jingang wuli wen* 金剛五禮文.
- (4) *Fomu zan* 佛母讚.
- (5) *Wutai shan zanwen* 五臺山讚文.
- (6) *Wuxiang li yi ben* 無相禮 一本.

Note that I do not agree with the description of P. 3645V° given in the French catalogue. Its editors failed to notice where the text of the *Wutai shan zanwen* 五臺山讚文 [Text of Praise for Mt. Wutai] ended and that of the *Formless Worship* begins. Instead they supposed that the manuscript consisted of two additional, unidentified text fragments. Cf. CMCT 4, 132. The reason for this may be because the manuscript does not provide an opening title for the text of the *Formless Worship*, but has the different texts run into one another without a clear break or marker to signify the end of one and the beginning of the next.

⁴⁸ Ven. Yao (full name Yao Liji, 姚利濟), was a monk from the Jinguangming Temple (金光明寺), one of the major temples in Dunhuang. See also the accompanying discussion in ZW 59A.7: 52a–54a.

⁴⁹ There are notable exceptions, such as P. 3792 where it can be found together with Buddhist funerary texts and a Buddhist biography. Cf. P. 3792V° (2), and P. 4597 which is a collection of liturgical texts including several texts also found in BD 8371.

and, by extension, Zhisheng's *Text of Mañjuśrī for Worshipping the Dharmakāya Buddha* (perhaps via one of its early derivatives). Whereas the *Formless Worship* in its abbreviated version reflects the cult of Vairocana and specific *dharmakāya* concepts, indicating a conceptual link with Huayan Buddhism, the *Fivefold Vajra Worship* relates more clearly to the scriptural cult of the *Vajracchedikā*, despite the fact that it also deals with the concept of the three buddha bodies (Skt. *trikāya*).

All in all, the several recensions and variant texts of the *Formless Worship* found among the Dunhuang manuscripts reveal that not only do they deviate considerably from the *Text of Mañjuśrī for Worshipping the Dharmakāya Buddha*, as well as from Amoghavajra's *Ritual of the Great Holy Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva Praising the Buddha's Dharmakāya*, which may have been their ultimate sources, or at least inspirational texts, but they also display too many variations between themselves for us to consider them the same text(s). Therefore, I would suggest that we understand the Dunhuang recensions of the *Formless Worship* as separate texts, different variations on a single textual and doctrinal theme. Such an understanding of the texts also allows us to argue that when it came to liturgy, including hymns, songs and verse-sections for ritual use, there was a lesser requirement for textual integrity than was the case with formal Buddhist scriptures, whether *sūtra* material or doctrinal treatises. The implications of such reasoning is that for much of the liturgical material no clear criteria existed regarding "canonical" authenticity nor, indeed, textual integrity. At least this is what one may argue on the basis of the findings of this study. This means that for much of the liturgical material from Dunhuang it makes more sense to see it as belonging to a category of "fluid text," which was most likely put together as the situation demanded, rather than as anything like fixed texts. In other words, when occasional liturgical pieces were needed, their authors/compilers would use whatever textual sources they had at their disposal to create "new" texts in a process that can only be described as a "revamping" of Buddhist literature. Since it is obvious that not all of these texts and their creative variants were actually produced locally in Dunhuang, one may well speculate that such copying, redaction, recombination and reformulation was taking place throughout the world of Chinese Buddhism during the late medieval period. Even when the first printed canons were being

introduced in temple libraries during the 10th–11th centuries, much liturgical material surely continued to be produced in much the same manner as documented in the hoard of Dunhuang manuscripts.

8. Conclusion

As we have seen, the concept of formlessness in Chinese Buddhism has its origin in the Indian Buddhist tradition and gained in importance in China in the course of the Northern and Southern Dynasties period. By the Sui Dynasty the practical consequences of its application beyond mere philosophy translated into new ways of conceptualising Buddhist practices, rituals in particular, as exemplified in Tiantai Buddhism and in the Sinitic Mādhyamika tradition associated with Jizang. Eventually, formlessness found its way into ritual practices or, more precisely, into the way in which they were conceptualised. Thus we find early traces of formless worship in Buddhist rituals of repentance, and in the tradition concerned with the taking of the special bodhisattva precepts, and this eventually gave rise to a special liturgy evolving around formless worship.

In the course of time, this formless liturgy underwent a series of transformations in accordance with its practical application in various sectarian contexts. In the earliest formulations from the first half of the 8th century, this was expressed in a special liturgical text composed by Zhisheng for the worship of the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, the *Text of Mañjuśrī for Worshipping the Dharmakāya Buddha*. This was followed a few decades later by Amoghavajra's *Ritual of the Great Holy Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva Praising the Buddha's Dharmakāya*. These liturgical texts appear to have gained considerable popularity across sectarian boundaries and were evidently circulated widely. Thus we encounter several manuscript copies and related versions among the hoard of Dunhuang manuscripts, all dating from the late Tang and early Five Dynasties period. The spread of both Zhisheng's core text and that associated with Amoghavajra occasioned the creation of various derived liturgies under various titles. Some continued to invoke Mañjuśrī but others were more concerned with formless worship per se, thereby giving rise to the *Formless Worship* from Dunhuang. These derived liturgical texts indicate that, although they all in various ways point back to the two earlier main texts,

i.e. those of Zhisheng and Amoghavajra, they may be seen as representing what one may refer to as “situational” liturgical texts. Because these texts were created and used whenever required in particular situations, we see much variety among them.

Despite their individual titles, most of the manuscript versions of the *Formless Worship* from Dunhuang invoke Vairocana Buddha and his emanation Rocana as the central deities, even though the basic text on which they were based originally had Mañjuśrī as the main deity. While it is possible that Vairocana appears here because he is the primary buddha of the *Avataṃsakasūtra*, it may equally be because of his connection with Amoghavajra’s Esoteric Buddhist tradition. The conflation between Esoteric Buddhism and the Huayan School is a topic in its own right, one that requires further exploration before it can be understood in fine detail. However, as the concept of formless worship became central in later Huayan Buddhism (9th century), as exemplified in the few passages quoted above, this concept was most certainly an important factor in linking it not only with Esoteric Buddhism but also with Chan and, to a lesser extent, the Pure Land tradition. Hence we may argue that formless worship became a common and important reference point in Chinese Buddhist ritual practices beyond sectarian confines. As such it may have facilitated the sharing and transference of ritual techniques and styles among the various monastic communities in late medieval China.

The earliest developments of the formless worship in Chinese Chan probably took place more or less at the same time Zhisheng compiled his text collection on repentance, which includes the *Text of Mañjuśrī for Worshipping the Dharmakāya Buddha*. Slightly later, the formless worship, also as part of the Mañjuśrī cult, crops up in the liturgical material of Amoghavajra’s reformulation of Esoteric Buddhism during the second half of the 8th century. By the 9th century we encounter formless worship in an integrated manner with the doctrines of the *Avataṃsakasūtra* in the Huayan School, as represented by Chengguan and his disciple Zongmi. Given the importance of Mañjuśrī in Huayan Buddhism, the link with the Mañjuśrī text and the later *Formless Worship* would almost seem to have been a matter of course.

The presence of the formless precepts, formless repentance, etc., in Chan Buddhism of the mid-Tang – although somewhat more radical in

their formulations and interpretations – in fact do not deviate on essential points from what was at that time already a standard concept. In other words, the doctrinal underpinnings of formlessness seen in the liturgies on formless worship were part of the Chinese Buddhist tradition across sectarian divides. While the early discourses rely almost exclusively on the *prajñāpāramitā* literature, later formulations also incorporate buddha nature ideology and the integration of formlessness with *dharmakāya* beliefs, representative of both the Huayan tradition and Esoteric Buddhism.

To the extent that this developmental timeline can be upheld, it shows a type of liturgical and ritual practice which transcended sectarian boundaries in Chinese Buddhism to become a universally shared practice, reflecting a shared doctrinal vision of sorts. This brings us back to Buddhism in Dunhuang, and the ritual practices that were in vogue there during the 9th to 10th centuries. While we as scholars of Chinese Buddhism are wont to discuss canonical and canonised versions of certain Buddhist scriptures, describing them as normative and apocryphal, etc., these types of distinctions cannot really be applied to liturgical and ritual texts. Liturgical texts were seen as more malleable and were often modified, expanded, shortened or rearranged in accordance with the needs of the moment. Thus, to a greater extent, they constitute a truer reflection of “Buddhism on the ground.” This raises a number of intriguing questions about what actually constitutes an original composition, especially when texts are not only in flux but also have multiple authors.

APPENDIX I

A comparison between Zhisheng and Amoghavajra's texts

<p>Wenshushili li fashen fo wen 文殊師利 利礼法身佛文 [Text of Mañjuśrī for Worshipping the Dharmakāya Buddha] T. 1982.47: 459bc.</p>	<p>Da sheng Wenshushili pusa zan fo fashen li 大聖文殊師利菩薩讚佛法 身礼 [Ritual of the Great Holy Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva Praising the Buddha's Dharmakāya] T. 1195.20: 936c–937c.</p>
<p>至心歸命禮 願共諸眾生 無色無形相 不生不滅故 不去亦不住 遠離六入故</p> <p>出過於三界 諸欲不染故 於諸威儀中 常在寂靜故 去來悉平等 不壞平等故 入諸無相定 常入寂靜故 諸佛虛空相 離諸因果故</p> <p>虛空無中邊 心同虛空故 佛常在世間</p>	<p>真如法身佛 同歸真如海 無根無住處 敬禮無所觀 不取亦不捨 敬禮無所觀</p> <p>等同於虛空 敬禮無所觀 去來及睡寤 敬禮無所觀 已住於平等 敬禮無所觀 見諸法寂靜 敬禮無所觀 虛空亦無相 敬禮無所觀</p> <p>諸佛身亦然 敬禮無所觀 而不染世法</p>
	<p>無色無形相 不生不滅故 不去亦不住 遠離六入故 不住於諸法 行於平等故 出過於三界 諸欲不染故 於諸威儀中 常在寂靜故 去來悉平等 不壞平等故 入諸無相定 常在三昧故 無住無所觀 慧用常定故 不住於六根 常在一相故 入於無相中 遠離名色故 不住於有相 入相於無中 無分別思惟 諸念不起故 無藏識如空 遠離三世故</p> <p>無根無住處 敬禮無所觀 不取亦不捨 敬禮無所觀 離有離無故 敬禮無所觀 等同於虛空 敬禮無所觀 去來及睡寤 敬禮無所觀 已住於平等 敬禮無所觀 見諸法寂靜 敬禮無所觀 於法得自在 敬禮無所觀 不著於六境 敬禮無所觀 能斷於諸染 敬禮無所觀 亦離於諸相 敬禮無所觀 心住無所住 敬禮無所觀 無染無戲論 敬禮無所觀</p>

不分別世故	敬禮無所觀
諸法猶如幻	如幻不可得
離諸幻法故	敬禮無所觀

虛空無中邊	諸佛身亦然
心同虛空故	敬禮無所觀
諸佛虛空相	虛空亦無相
離諸因果故	敬禮無所觀
不著於諸法	如水月無取
遠離於我相	敬禮無所觀
不住於諸蘊	不著於處界
遠離顛倒故	敬禮無所觀
常等於法界	我見悉皆斷
遠離二邊故	敬禮無所觀
不住於諸色	非取亦非捨
遠離非法故	敬禮無所觀
證無障礙法	通達於諸法
遠離魔法故	敬禮無所觀
非有亦非無	有無不可得
離諸言說故	敬禮無所觀
摧折我慢幢	非一亦非二
遠離一二故	敬禮無所觀
身口意無失	三業常寂靜
遠離譬喻故	敬禮無所觀
一切智常住	應現無功用
遠離諸過故	敬禮無所觀
微妙無漏念	無限無分別
等情非情故	敬禮無所觀
以心無礙故	悉知一切心
不住自他故	敬禮無所觀
言說亦空故	敬禮無所觀
離諸幻法故	敬禮無所觀
佛常在世間	而不染世法
不染世間故	敬禮無所觀
證無分別定	得如幻三昧
遊戲神通故	敬禮無所觀
非一亦非異	非近亦非遠
於法不動故	敬禮無所觀
一念金剛定	剎那成等覺
證無影像故	敬禮無所觀
於諸三世法	成就諸方便

		不動涅槃故	敬禮無所觀
		涅槃常不動	無此岸彼岸
		通達方便故	敬禮無所觀
		無相無所有	無患無戲論
		不住有無故	敬禮無所觀
		智處悉平等	寂靜無分別
		自他一相故	敬禮無所觀
以此平等禮	無禮無不禮	一切平等禮	無禮無不禮
一禮遍含識	同會實相體	一禮遍含識	同會實相體

APPENDIX II

Chinese text of the Formless Worship
(Based on BD 8371 (1))

01. 无相礼
02. 南无清淨法身毘盧舍那佛 南无圓滿寶[報]法身盧舍那佛
03. 南无千百化身同名釋迦牟尼佛 清涼山中大聖文殊
04. 師利菩薩 端坐政看心 心亦不可得 至心歸命礼
05. 真如法身佛 无色无形像 无根无住處 不生不滅故 敬礼无所觀
06. 至心歸命礼 真如法身佛 不去亦不位 不取亦不捨 遠離六入故
07. 敬礼无所觀 至心歸命礼 真如法身佛 出過於三界 等同如虛空
08. 諸欲不染故 敬礼无数觀 至心歸命礼 真如法身佛 於諸威儀中
09. 去來及睡悟 常在寂靜故 敬礼无所觀 至心歸命礼 真如法身佛
10. 入諸无相定 見諸法寂靜 常在寂靜故 敬礼无所觀 至心歸命礼
11. 真如法身佛 去來悉平等 以住於平等 不壞平等故 敬礼无所觀
12. 至心歸命礼 真如法身佛 諸佛虛空相 虛空亦无相 離諸因果故
13. 敬礼无所觀 至心歸命礼 真如法身佛 虛空无中邊 諸佛身亦然
14. 心同虛空故 敬礼无所觀 至心歸命礼 真如法身佛 佛常在世間
15. 而不染勢法 不分別世間故 敬礼无所觀 至心歸命礼 真如法身佛
16. 諸法由如幻 如幻不可得 離諸幻法故 敬礼无所觀 至心歸命礼
17. 真如法身佛 一切平等礼 无礼无不礼 一礼遍含識 同歸實相體
18. 普為四恩三有及法界眾生同悟一如如至心懺悔歸命礼三寶。

Abbreviations

- BD Dunhuang Collection in the National Library, Beijing.
- CMCT *Catalogue des manuscrits Chinois de Touen-Houang, Fonds Pelliot chinois de la Bibliothèque Nationale*. Vols. 1–5. Paris: École française d'Extrême-Orient, 1970–1995.
- FDC *Foguang da cidian* 佛光大辭典 [Foguang Buddhist Dictionary]. 8 vols. Ed. Ciyi 慈怡 et al. Gaoxiong: Foguang chubanshe, 1988.
- P. Pelliot Collection of Dunhuang manuscripts in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.
- S. Stein Collection of Dunhuang manuscripts in the British Library, London.
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- ZWF *Zangwai fojiao wenxian* 藏外佛教文獻. Old Series 1–9. Ed. Fang Guangchang 方廣鎬. Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe 宗教文化出版社, 1996–1999 (CBETA: W); New Series 10–16. Ed. Fang Guangchang 方廣鎬. Beijing: Zhongguo renmin daxue chubanshe, 2008–2011.
- ZZ *Dainihōn zōkuzōkyō* 大日本續藏經. 90 vols. Ed. Kawamura Kōshō 河村孝照 et al. Tokyo: Kokusho Kangyōkai, 1980–1988.

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- Hao zhu niang zan* 好住娘贊 [In Praise of the Well-residing Woman]. BD 8371 (5).
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- Nanzong zan* 南總讚 [In Praise of the Southern School]. BD 8371 (7).
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