

Report of the Guest Lecture of the BuddhistRoad project

22 February 2023 Alla Sizova (St. Petersburg)

TIBETAN TRANSLATION OF THE *UṢṢĪṢAVIJĀYADHĀRAṆĪSŪTRA* PRODUCED IN THE TANGUT EMPIRE

invited lecture at the BuddhistRoad project, CERES, Ruhr University Bochum

The BuddhistRoad team invited Alla Sizova, currently starting her PhD in Buddhist Studies at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich, to present her current work on the *Uṣṣīṣavijāyadhāraṇīsūtra* from the Tangut Empire (ca. 1038–1227, in Chinese sources known as Xixia 西夏). In 2018–2020, Alla Sizova participated in a project aimed at cataloguing the collection of Tibetan text from Karakhoto kept at the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts RAS in St. Petersburg, Russia. In the course of the work, she discovered that the unique Tibetan version of the *Uṣṣīṣavijāyadhāraṇīsūtra* was preserved in two sources that complemented each other, providing us with an almost complete text.

The first source which was shown is the manuscript Kh. Tib. 126/159, and the second is the famous Tibetan block print Kh. Tib. 67 and Kh. Tib. 63/68. From the colophon, damaged in both cases, it is known that the text was transmitted by Jayānanda (fl. 12th c.), the state preceptor (Chin. *guoshi* 國師) during the reign of the Tangut Emperor Renzong (r. 1139–1193, 仁宗), and translated by Gyurjékyi Lotsaba Garanakarita (fl. 12th c., Tib. sGyur byed kyi lo tsā ba 'Gar a na ka ri ta), who can be presumably associated with Anandakīrti (fl. 12th c.) whose name can be found in the colophons of the Tangut texts around the mid-12th century.

The versions of the *Uṣṣīṣavijāyadhāraṇīsūtra* differ by their narrative frame (Skt. *nidāna*) that serves to introduce the *dhāraṇī* itself. Versions in which Indra asks the Buddha to bestow the *dhāraṇī* in order to save the young God Supraṭiṣṭhita, whose lifespan is about to end, are considered to be more archaic than the versions where the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara addresses the Buddha Amitāyus. The text from the Tangut Empire belongs to this type, as well as the canonical translation made by Jinamitra (fl. mid-8th c. to early-9th c.), Surendrabodhi (fl. early-9th c.), and Yéshé Dé (fl. mid-8th c. to early-9th c., Tib. Ye shes sde).



Alla Sizova divided the text of the *Uṣṇīṣavijāyadhāraṇīsūtra* into thirteen structural parts:

- (1) title
- (2) worship formula
- (3) “Thus have I heard [...]”
- (4) Supraṭiṣṭhita finds out that he will die within a week and undergo all the evil destinies of rebirth
- (5) Supraṭiṣṭhita asks God Indra for help, and Indra decides to visit the Buddha
- (6) Buddha emanates light from his *uṣṇīṣa* and gives short instructions about the *dhāraṇī*
- (7) Indra urges the Buddha to bestow the *dhāraṇī*
- (8) text of the *dhāraṇī*
- (9) benefits of the *dhāraṇī*
- (10) Indra passes the knowledge to Supraṭiṣṭhita
- (11) Supraṭiṣṭhita escapes death and rejoices in praising the Buddha
- (12) Indra and Supraṭiṣṭhita bring presents to worship the Buddha
- (13) colophon

Each part was analysed from the point of its linguistic peculiarities and compared to the mentioned canonical translation. Alla Sizova showed that the version produced in the Tangut Empire and the translation by Jinamitra, Surendrabodhi, and Yéshé Dé were based on different Sanskrit sources that were, nevertheless, genetically related. And that the version produced in the Tangut Empire is distinguished by unusual syntax, presumably caused by the distorted perception of the Sanskrit text or the influence of the Tangut language. A comparative study of the Tangut and Tibetan texts will allow us to have more certainty.

