

The ERC-funded research project *BuddhistRoad* aims to create a new framework to enable understanding of the complexities in the dynamics of cultural encounter and religious transfer in pre-modern Eastern Central Asia. Buddhism was one major factor in this exchange; for the first time the multi-layered relationships between the trans-regional Buddhist traditions (Chinese, Indian, Tibetan) and those based on local Buddhist cultures (Khotanese, Uyghur, Tangut) will be explored in a systematic way. The second volume *Buddhism in Central Asia II – Practices and Rituals, Visual and Material Transfer* based on the mid-project conference held on September 16th–18th, 2019, at CERES, Ruhr-Universität Bochum (Germany) focuses on two of the six thematic topics addressed by the project, namely on “practices and rituals”, exploring material culture in religious context such as mandalas and talismans, as well as “visual and material transfer”, including shared iconographies and the spread of ‘Khotanese’ themes.

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YUKIYO KASAI AND HENRIK H. SØRENSEN (Eds.)



## Buddhism in Central Asia II

*Practices and Rituals,  
Visual and Material Transfer*

EDITED BY

*Yukiyo Kasai and Henrik H. Sørensen*

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# Buddhism in Central Asia II

# Dynamics in the History of Religions

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*Edited by*

Yukiyo Kasai  
Henrik H. Sørensen



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# Foreword

*Dynamics in Buddhist Network in Eastern Central Asia 6th to 14th Centuries* (short: *BuddhistRoad*) aims to create a new framework to enable understanding of the complexities in the dynamics of cultural encounter and religious transfer in premodern Eastern Central Asia—a vast area extending from the Taklamakan Desert to north-east China. This region was the home of several neighbouring civilisations, something which to a large extent determined the complex dynamics of inter-religious and cultural exchanges that took place along the Silk Road. Buddhism was one of the major factors in this exchange; its consistent and extensive transfer of religious knowledge and artefacts took hold in virtually all the cultures existing along the Silk Road, thereby becoming a major civilising force. In many cases the spread of Buddhism overrode ethnic and linguistic boundaries in Eastern Central Asia creating a world shared by all, one which, despite its diversity, had Buddhism as its common point of reference. A primary aspect of this process was the rise of local forms of Buddhism. The *BuddhistRoad* project intends was set up to investigate these forms of local Buddhism that flourished between the 6th and the 14th centuries. At the core of the research are the areas of ancient Khotan, Kuča, Turfan, Dunhuang, and Ganzhou, as well as the territory of the Tangut Empire. The analytical themes of the project are envisaged to revolve around thematic clusters pertaining to doctrines, rituals and practices, the impact of non-Buddhist influences, patronage and legitimisation strategies, sacred spaces and pilgrimages, and visual and material transfers.

The PI of the project, Carmen Meinert, and the project coordinator, Henrik H. Sørensen, are pleased to announce the following expected outcome of the *BuddhistRoad* project in the series as follows:

- Three conference proceedings
- Buddhism in Central Asia I: Patronage, Legitimation, Sacred Space, and Pilgrimage, edited by Carmen Meinert and Henrik H. Sørensen, 2020.
  - Buddhism in Central Asia II: Practices and Rituals, Visual and Materials Transfer, edited by Yukiyo Kasai and Henrik H. Sørensen, 2022.
  - *Buddhism in Central Asia III: Doctrine, Exchanges with Non-Buddhist Traditions*, edited by Lewis Doney, Carmen Meinert, Yukiyo Kasai and Henrik H. Sørensen, forthcoming.

Moreover, two volumes to be co-authored by all *BuddhistRoad* team members featuring the core findings of the project, and a monograph by Carmen Meinert on the History of Central Asian Buddhism will be forthcoming upon the conclusion of the project in 2024.

*Carmen Meinert and Henrik H. Sørensen*



## Acknowledgements

The present volume is based on the proceedings of the mid-project conference “Establishing of Buddhist Nodes in Eastern Central Asia 6th to 14th C. Part II: Visual and Material Transfer, Practices and Rituals” of the ERC project *BuddhistRoad*. The conference was organised by Henrik H. Sørensen on September 16th to 18th, 2019 at Ruhr-Universität Bochum (Germany).

The conference convenor and book editors are grateful to the twelve conference participants and one further scholar, who contributed their fine pieces of scholarship to the present volume, and for allowing a smooth editing process in the difficult situation we all have endured with the unexpected, worldwide pandemic. The editing of the volume was originally begun by Haoran Hou and Yukiyo Kasai. Later on, Henrik H. Sørensen took over after Dr. Hou left the editing team. The elaborate, yet swift editing process would not have been possible without many helping hands. We are particularly grateful to Ben Müller, Tanja Heilig, and Vivien Staps for their always thoughtful and diligent assistance in all stages of the editing process, and to Joseph Leach for proofreading the final manuscript. Last but not least, our sincere thanks go to the anonymous reviewers, who kindly offered numerous suggestions to improve the volume as a whole.

We hope that this collective volume will contribute to the understanding of how Buddhist visuals and aspects of material culture, as well as related ritual practices, were transferred through Eastern Central Asia, and how these gained a foothold in the local societies, and effected various changes to the concerned cultures.

*Yukiyo Kasai and Henrik H. Sørensen*  
Bochum, September 6th, 2021

# General Abbreviations

alt.	alternative
BCE	Before Common Era
c.	century
ca.	circa
cat. no.	catalogue number
CE	Common Era
CERES	Center for Religious Studies (Centrum für Religionswissenschaftliche Studien), Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Germany
cf.	confer
chap.	chapter
Chin.	Chinese
d.	died
d.u.	dates unknown
e.g.	<i>exempli gratia</i>
ERC	European Research Council
etc.	<i>et cetera</i>
fig(s).	figure(s)
fl.	flourished
fn.	footnote
fol.	folio
FWF	Austrian Science Fund
Germ.	German
i.e.	<i>id est</i>
ibid.	<i>ibidem</i>
IDP	International Dunhuang Project at the British Library in London
Jap.	Japanese
Kh.	Khotanese
KHK	Käte Hamburger Kolleg
Lat.	Latin
ms(s).	manuscript(s)
Mt.	Mount
n./ns	note/notes
no(s).	number(s)
OU	Old Uyghur
repr.	reprinted
PI	Principal Investigator

pl(s).	plate(s)
r.	reign
Skt.	Sanskrit
tab.	table
Taf.	Tafel
Tang.	Tangut
Tib.	Tibetan
TID	Transcendence-Immanence Distinction

## Symbols

<	borrowed from
<<	indirectly borrowed from
>	borrowed into
[]	gaps in the fragments
(ä)	unwritten vowels and consonants
{ä}	deleted against the fragment
[...]	omission
₂	hendiadys
*	reconstructed titles or terminologies
□	illegible character

# Bibliographic Abbreviations

- A Chinese Manuscripts in the Karakhoto Collection of Koslov in The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.
- B Chinese Manuscripts in the Karakhoto Collection of Koslov in The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.
- BDRC Buddhist Digital Resource Center, <https://www.tbrc.org/#/footer/about/newhome>.
- BM British Museum in London.
- BnF Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.
- BT II Röhrborn, Klaus. *Eine uigurische Totenmesse: Text, Übersetzung, Kommentar, Faksimiles*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1971.
- BT III Tezcan, Semih. *Das uigurische Insadi-Sūtra*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1974.
- BT VII Kara, Georg and Peter Zieme. *Fragmente tantrischer Werke in uigurischer Übersetzung*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1976.
- BT VIII Kara, Georg and Peter Zieme. *Die uigurischen Übersetzungen des Gurūyogas 'Tiefer Weg' von Sa-skya Paṇḍita und der Mañjuśrīnāmasaṅgīti*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1977.
- BT IX Maitrisimit nom bitig. *Die uigurische Übersetzung eines Werkes der buddhistischen Vaibhāṣika-Schule*. 2 vols. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1980.
- BT XIII Zieme, Peter. *Stabreimdichtungen der Uiguren*. Berlin: Buddhistische Akademie Verlag, 1985.
- BT XVIII Zieme, Peter. *Altun Yaruk Sudur—Vorworte und das erste Buch: Edition und Übersetzung der alttürkischen Version des Goldglanzsūtra (Suvarṇaprabhāṣasūtra)*. Turnhout, Brepols, 1996.
- BT XXIII Zieme, Peter. *Magische Texte des uigurischen Buddhismus*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2005.
- BT XXIX Kasai, Yukiyo. *Der alttürkische Kommentar zum Vimalakīrtinirdeśa-Sūtra*. Berliner Turfantexte XXIX. Turnhout: Brepols, 2011.
- BT XXV Wilkens, Jens. *Das Buch von der Sündentilgung: Edition des alttürkisch-buddhistischen Kṣanti Kūguluk Nom Bitig*. 2 vols. Turnhout: Brepols, 2007.
- BT XXVI Kasai, Yukiyo. *Die uigurischen buddhistischen Kolophone*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2008.

- BT XXVIII Yakup, Abdurishid. *Prajñāpāramitā Literature in Old Uyghur*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2010.
- BT XXXIII Oda, Juten. *A Study of the Buddhist Sūtra Called Säkiz Yükmäk Yaruq or Säkiz Törlügin Yarumiš Yaltrimiš in Old Turkic*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2015.
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- BT XXXVIII Kasai, Yukiyo, unter Mitarbeit von Hirotohi Ogihara. *Die altuigurischen Fragmente mit Brāhmī-Elementen*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2017.
- Buddhist Vestiges Chen Xiejun 陈燮君, and Chen Kelun 陈克伦, edited by *Silu fanxiang*. *Xinjiang Hetian Damagou fojiao yizhi chutu bihua yishu 丝路梵相. 新疆和田达玛沟遗址出土壁画艺术 [Buddhist Vestiges Along the Silk Road. Mural Art from the Damago Site, Hotan, Xinjiang]*. Shanghai: Shanghai Museum and Shanghai Shuhua Publishing House, 2014.
- CBETA Chinese Electronic Tripiṭaka Collection, <https://www.cbeta.org/>.
- Ch/U Chinese/Uyghur Manuscripts preserved at the Turfan Collection in Berlin.
- Derge Kangyur, Derge edition.
- Domoko *Cele Damagou. Fofa huiji zhe di 策勒达玛沟. 佛法汇集之地 [Domoko in Chira: The Land of Accumulation of the Dharma]*, comp. Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan Kaogu yanjiusuo 中國社會科學院考古研究所. Hongkong: Dacheng tushu, 2012.
- Dunhuang gantonghua Zhang Xiaogang 張小剛. *Dunhuang fojiao gantonghua yanjiu 敦煌佛教感通画研究 [Research on the Buddhist Miracle Paintings in Dunhuang]*. Shenzhen: Gansu jiaoyu chubanshe, 2015.
- Tōhoku no. *Chibetto daizōkyō sōmokuroku 西藏大藏經總目錄 Complete Catalogue of the Tibetan Buddhist Canon (Bkaḥ-ḥgyur and Bstan-ḥgyur)*, edited by Ui Hakuju 宇井伯壽 et al. Sendai: Tōhoku Imperial University, 1934. Nara National Museum.
- DO
- EBTEA *Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras in East Asia*, edited by Charles D. Orzech, Henrik H. Sørensen, Richard K. Payne. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2011.
- FBU *Fragmenta Buddhica Uigurica: Ausgewählte Schriften von Peter Zieme*, edited by Simone-Christiane Raschmann and Jens Wilkens. Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2009.
- FDC *Foguang da cidian 佛光大辭典 [Great Dictionary of Foguang]*, 8 vols., edited by Ciyi 慈怡 et al. Gaoxiong: Foguangshan chubanshe, 1988 vols.
- HAR Himalayan Art Resources.
- IOL Tib J Tibetan Dunhuang Manuscripts preserved at the British Library in London (formerly in the India Office Library (IOL)).

Krotkov Collection	Krotkov Collection in the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Science in St. Petersburg.
LACMA	Los Angeles County Museum of Art.
M	Manuscripts in Manichaean script preserved at the Turfan Collection in Berlin.
Mainz	Manuscripts in various languages preserved at the Turfan Collection in Berlin (formerly preserved in Mainz).
MMOA	Metropolitan Museum of Art.
Mogaoku	<i>Dunhuang Mogaoku</i> 敦煌莫高窟. The Mogao Grottos of Dunhuang, comp. Dunhuang wenwu yanjiusuo 敦煌文物研究所. Beijing, Tokyo: Wenwu chubanshe, 1982.
NBZ no.	<i>Dai Nihon Bukkyō zensho</i> 大日本佛教全書 [Complete Buddhist Works of Japan] no. 787, vol. 86, comp. Shikō (1662–1720, 志晃).
Or.	Stein Collection of Chinese Dunhuang Manuscripts preserved at the British Library in London (the old inventory nos. are referred to as Or. (Oriental) whereas they later changed to S.; identical to Or. xxx/S).
P.	Pelliot Collection of Chinese Dunhuang Manuscripts preserved at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.
P. T.	Pelliot Collection of Tibetan Dunhuang Manuscripts preserved at the Bibliothèque National in Paris.
Peking	Tengyur, Peking edition.
RMA	Rubin Museum of Art.
S.	Stein Collection of Chinese Dunhuang Manuscripts preserved at the British Library in London.
T.	<i>Taishō shinshu daizōkyō</i> 大正新脩大藏經 [Taishō Tripiṭaka], edited by Takakusu Junjirō 高順次郎 et al. Tokyo: Taishō issaikyō kankōkai, 1924–1935.
TK	Tangut and Chinese Manuscripts in the Karakhoto Collection of Koslov in The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.
U.	Uyghur Manuscripts preserved at the Turfan Collection in Berlin.
W.	The Walters Museum.
x	Visual images in the Karakhoto Collection of Koslov in The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.
XZJ	<i>Xuzang jing</i> 續藏經 [Extension to the Tripiṭaka]. CBETA edition, 2014.
ZWF	<i>Zangwai fojiao wenxian</i> 藏外佛教文獻 [Buddhist Textual Material Outside the Canon]. New Series, vols. 10–16, edited by Fang Guangchang 方廣鎔. Beijing: Zhongguo renmin daxue chubanshe, 2006–2011., second series, vols. 10–13.

- Z *Zhenyuan xinding shijiao mulu* 貞元新定釋教目錄 [Newly Revised Catalogue of Buddhist Scriptures Made during the Zhenyuan-Era, T. 2157], comp. 799 or 800 by Yuanzhao (d.u., 圓照).
- ZZ *Dainihon zokuzōkyō* 大日本續藏經 [Extension to the tripitaka [Compiled] in Japan], 90 vols, edited by Kawamura Kōshō 河村孝照 et al. Tokyo: Kokusho Kangyōkai, 1980–1988, vols. 1–90.

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# Central Asia: Sacred Sites and the Transmission of Religious Practices

*Yukiyo Kasai, Henrik H. Sørensen, and Haoran Hou*

## 1 Introduction

This book is the second volume born and conceptualised within the project “BuddhistRoad”,<sup>1</sup> the ERC funded collaborative scholarly endeavor which aims to shed light on the dynamics of the spread of Buddhism across Central and East Asia through several different cultures from India to China, Korea and Japan, the virtual ‘Buddhist Road’.

The present volume consists of the proceedings of the project’s second conference, “Establishing of Buddhist Nodes in Eastern Central Asia 6th to 14th C. Part II: Visual and Material Transfer, Practices and Rituals” which took place at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum on 16–18 September 2019 and represents an important part of the ongoing research activity according to the project’s formal road map for the study of Buddhism in Central Asia.<sup>2</sup>

Due to its location in the heart of the Asian continent midway between Europe and East Asia, Central Asia has been a region of great importance, not only as a space of transit, but also as a place where significant trade routes and lines of cultural and religious transmission intersected. Hence, the centres or important regional hubs of various exchanges located along the main arteries of this vast network have played important roles as places where human civilisations thrived and established the multi-lingual, -religious, and -cultural society often on their own terms. As Buddhism has been the primary civilising factor of cultural development in Central Asia for more than a millennium, the study of this tradition which only began a little over a century ago, has now become a major field of research, covering as it does several cultural groups

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- 1 For the detailed and actual information of the project, see <https://buddhistroad.ceres.rub.de/en/>. The research agenda of the BuddhistRoad project is also outlined in the report, BuddhistRoad Team, “Dynamics in Buddhist Transfer in Eastern Central Asia 6th–14th Centuries: A Project Report by BuddhistRoad Team,” *Medieval Worlds* 8 (2018): 126–134.
  - 2 The conference program is available on the BuddhistRoad homepage, <https://buddhistroad.ceres.rub.de/en/activities/organised-conferences/>.

with their own separate and shared languages and scripts. Even though we now know so much more than they did at the outset of this research field, there are many sources and facts that still need to be assessed, discussed in connection with their related facts and placed in the Buddhist history in order for us to arrive at a better understanding.

When dealing specifically with the importance of the cultural hubs as centres of localisation and contact from the perspective of the spread and development of Buddhism in Central Asia, we find that important religious spaces such as the Mogao Caves (Chin. Mogao ku 莫高窟) in Dunhuang (敦煌), the Kızıl Caves in Kuča, Bezeklik in Turfan, and the many sites located around Khotan and Karakhoto in each their own ways were shaped by intercultural factors. This meant that while Buddhism was essentially a translocal and trans-cultural religion, it proved itself to be quite adaptable and culturally sensitive, and as such able to take shape after the cultures in which it took root. The intercultural contact afforded by Buddhism meant a sharing of a specific set of ideas, practices, and iconographical vocabulary, which was universally understood and recognised by the involved peoples.<sup>3</sup>

Every topic chosen as research clusters for the *BuddhistRoad* project highlights the flourishing of Buddhism as the religion gradually spread across Central Asia through several different cultures from India to China, Korea and Japan to form a virtual ‘Buddhist Road’.<sup>4</sup> Throughout history, Central Asian Buddhism established many important centres or ‘nodes’<sup>5</sup> along the Silk Road, as evidenced in surviving examples of religious structures and the development of distinct types of local folklore.<sup>6</sup> Various discoveries in Dunhuang,

3 The significance of inter-religious contact has been highlighted in a number of recent publications including *Dynamics in the History of Religions between Asia and Europe in Past and Present Times*, ed. Volkhard Krech and Marion Steinicke (Leiden: Brill, 2011); Jason Neelis, *Early Buddhist Transmission and Trade Networks: Mobility and Exchange within and beyond the Northwestern Borderlands of South Asia* (Leiden: Brill, 2011); and *Locating Religions: Contact, Diversity and Translocality*, ed. Reinhold F. Gleis and Nicholas Jaspers (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2017).

4 All research clusters are listed in <https://buddhistroad.ceres.rub.de/en/research/>. Some of the research results are found under <https://buddhistroad.ceres.rub.de/en/publications/>.

5 ‘Nodes’ as used here signifies those centres along the network of routes in Central Asia which were situated at the intersection of two or more routes, and which therefore tended to have a greater impact as transfer and contact ‘hot spots’. It goes without saying that there were greater and smaller nodes, i.e. centres which exerted different influences on the material that passed through them. Cf. BuddhistRoad Team, “Dynamics in Buddhist Transfer in Eastern Central Asia 6th–14th Centuries: A Project Report by BuddhistRoad Team.”

6 ‘Folklore’ as used here signifies the type of knowledge and cultural practices, including aspects of pre-modern science, such as medicine, mathematics, astrology, as well as beliefs and superstitions, which prevailed among a given population within a specific culture in

Turfan, Khotan, Karakhoto, and northern Tibet provide a wealth of examples underscoring the existence of material culture covering many centuries.

Among those topics of the project, two aspects of the transfer of religious knowledge, (a) visual and material aspects of religious culture, and (b) practices and rituals, form the core of themes dealt with in this volume. The first of these pertain to religious art and material culture more broadly conceived, the second to eschatological practices such as meditation and rites of transcendence.

'Visual' as employed here refers to pictorial representations such as wall-paintings in situ as found in cult sites, as well as votive paintings to be hung in a given ritual space, while 'material' indicates three-dimensional religious objects, including votive statues, special architectural elements *stūpas*, inscribed pillars, stele, altars, ritual objects, and holy books. One may conceptualise both categories as signifying two modes for representing religious, material culture, but ascribed with different levels of significance and function within a given religious context.

Unlike materiality, rituals and ritual practices have for a long time been key research subjects in academic discourses on religion, and the relevance of ritual praxis for the definition of religion has often been pointed out. For one scholar, Roy Rappaport, ritual action—is the performance of more or less regulated formal acts and utterances—as and such it stands as a fundamental component of religious traditions.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, ritual, is the component that generates 'the sacred, the numinous, the occult and the divine.' However, such formal acts and utterances, require an engagement with the material, i.e. concrete objects and physical spaces. As Grimes has recently argued: 'Although rituals consist of actions, it's almost impossible to discover, or even imagine, a ritual without its attendant material culture.'<sup>8</sup> Thus, material culture and Buddhist ritual come together as a complementary couple on the level of action, the first provides the physical context for the latter, while the latter necessitates the existence of the former.

'Practices' is a general term referring to all types of religious and cultural practices, i.e. it serves as an umbrella term for a wide range of religious behaviour. 'Ritual' as used here is a specific term, which indicates a special and formalised type of religious practice, i.e. an expression of religiosity which is being performed in accordance with a fixed template that sets forth a

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the medieval and pre-modern eras. Use of the term does not indicate something exotic nor primitive when seen from a modern perspective.

7 See Roy A. Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity* (Cambridge, UK, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 23–24.

8 See Ronald L. Grimes, "Ritual," in *Key Terms in Material Religion*, ed. S. Brent Plate (London, Oxford, New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), 174.

preordained ritual structure to be followed. In order to explain this, we may use the case of Buddhist meditation or contemplation, which is a form of practice universally adhered to in virtually all Buddhist cultures. Ritual proceedings may in certain cases be part of such meditation practices, as for instance in many Esoteric and Tantric Buddhist rituals, where the rite itself is constituted by a series of progressive phases of increasing profundity.

As mentioned above, both practices and rituals are typically associated with and performed in front of deities located in a ritual space.<sup>9</sup> Over time, the spread of Buddhist practices and rituals gave birth to a profusion of Buddhist material culture and religious art, which range from large-scale and elaborate structures to house statues, murals, and paintings, such as monasteries and caves, to small-scale figurines, talismanic diagrams and amulets, ritual objects, etc., that circulated among the faithful. In the nature of things, therefore, both of the two themes discussed in this volume are in fact closely related as the visuals and materials are concerned with the space in which the practices and rituals are being played out. Beyond these physical forms in which images are usually represented, there are also more metaphysical ways in which the divine was believed to manifest. This could be in the form of a vision or through programmed visualisation-practices, which is found in some meditation and ritual performances, such as those represented in ritual texts, in instructive drawings, or as depicted in votive paintings. These were obviously a relevant part of Buddhist culture, and as such played important roles in the establishment and continuation of a wide range of practices and rituals. The texts and paintings from this region may in certain cases be used to document sometimes show that established practices and rituals were transferred throughout the region in cases where proper textual evidence is wanting.

Texts, one major form of the materiality, and rituals are by no means alien elements within the contemporary material turn. With regard to text, it has been argued that religious scriptures cannot be studied exclusively as vessels of meaning but must also be examined as devices subject to sensorial consumption and multileveled ritualisation. More precisely, according to Watts, the ritual dimension is a peculiar feature of sacred books—material objects with contents that require a direct bodily engagement (as, for instance, reading)—across time and space. In addition to being scriptures that carry holy intent, they are also material objects, which both inform on ritual practices

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9 'Practices' and 'rituals' are obviously general terms, and almost all religious activity can be covered under those categories. In a broad sense, the pilgrimages dealt with in the previous conference volume, for example, could also belong to the category of religious practices. However, in this volume, the religious practices are the main focus.

and themselves function as ritual objects. One can also argue that the ritualisation of the semantic, performative, and iconic dimension is what turns a book into a holy scripture proper. For religions ritualise the contents of scriptures by means of explanations; they ritualise the performance of scriptures with readings of their wordings or staging of their contents; they finally ritualise the materiality of the books by bringing them at the core of specific ceremonies. The common Buddhist practice of ‘turning the scriptures’ (Chin. *zhuanjing* 轉經), the ritualised way of ‘reading’ in which clerics unroll and roll up *sūtras* in a strictly formalised manner, is a clear example of the multifarious uses and functions of holy books.

Those texts, including those which are even dedicated to the rituals, furthermore, may or may not always be in conformity with the associated or pre-existing literature, thereby indicating that considerable variations did occur in local production. In terms of the rituals represented in the texts, what one often encounters is a mix of both ‘orthodox/canonical’ rites, and rites that grew out of local traditions and particular cultural environments. It goes without saying that, in as culturally and religiously diverse a region as Central Asia, where a number of cultures existed side by side, rituals and practices existed in many different forms and deviated from each other for various reasons. Such variations or differences could be the result of shifts in the cultural environments where they were used, or was due to conscious abbreviations or editorial changes to serve particular situations.

One of such local developments is well reflected in the formation process of the *Guan wuliangshou jing* 觀無量壽經 [Scripture on the Contemplation of Amitāyus]. This text stands as one of the most important *sūtras* of the Buddhist Pure Land tradition, a scripture that probably should be categorised as belonging to the so-called apocryphal class of scriptures.<sup>10</sup> Although the actual process through which it came about is still debated, many scholars suggest it was created in the Buddhist environment of Central Asian.<sup>11</sup> Among

10 For a now classical study of apocrypha in Sinitic Buddhism, see *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*, edited by Robert E. Buswell (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990). For an excellent overview of the issue of Buddhist canonical authority, see Jonathan A. Silk, “Canonicity,” in *Brill’s Encyclopedia of Buddhism* 1, ed. J.A. Silk et al. (Brill: Leiden, 2015), 5–37.

11 See, e.g., Kasugai Shinya 春日井真也, “Kanmurōjubutsukyō ni okeru shomondai 觀無量壽仏經に於ける諸問題 Some Problems in the Amitāyurdhyāna Sūtra,” *Jōdo shūkyōgakuin kenkyūjo* 浄土宗教学院研究所 *Studies in Buddhism and Buddhist Civilization* 3 (1953): 37–50; Kagawa Takao 香川孝雄, “Shōmyōshisō no keisei 称名思想の形成 Formation of the Concept of Calling the Name of Buddha,” *Indogaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 印度学仏教学研究 *Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies* 11.1 (1963): 38–49; Fujita Kōtatsu 藤田宏達, *Genshi jōdo shisō no kenkyū* 原始浄土思想の研究 *A Study of*



these scholars, Yamabe Nobuyoshi has actively investigated mural paintings in Toyok, a site near Turfan.<sup>12</sup> He established that the paintings there are closely connected with the *Scripture on the Contemplation of Amitāyus*. Yamabe compares them with the mural paintings in Dunhuang, which were clearly made on the basis of the established contemplation texts as found in the Chinese Buddhist canon, and concludes that the paintings in Toyok were primarily based on oral traditions. Thus, the place where the *Scripture on the Contemplation of Amitāyus* was created could possibly be somewhere between Toyok and Dunhuang.<sup>13</sup> This example shows that visual and material transfer, on the one hand, and practices and rituals on the other, were historically closely connected. Hence, the topics chosen and presented within the present volume are conceived of as closely related phenomena, which when examined together, provide a comprehensible framework for understanding the dynamics inherent in religious transfer in Buddhist Central Asia.

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*Early Pure Land Buddhism* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1970), 116–136; Kōtatsu Fujita, “The Textual Origins of the Kuan Wu-liang-shou ching: A Canonical Scripture of Pure Land Buddhism,” *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*, ed. Robert E. Buswell (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1990), 149–173; Yamada Meiji 山田明爾, “Kankyō kō—Muryōbutsu to Amida butsu—觀經攷—無量寿仏と阿弥陀仏—Sūtra of the Contemplation on Amitāyus,” *Ryūkoku daigaku ronshū* 龍谷大学論集 *Journal of Ryūkoku University* 408 (1976) 76–95; Julian F. Pas, “The Kuan-wu-liang-shou Fo-ching: Its Origin and Literary Criticism,” *Buddhist Thought and Asian Civilization. Essays in Honor of Herbert V. Guenther on His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Leslie S. Kawamura and Keith Scott (California: Dharma Publishers, 1977), 194–218; Sueki Fumihiko 末木文美士, “Kanmuryōjūkyō’ kenkyū 『觀無量寿經』研究 A Study of the Guan-wu-liang-shou-jing,” *Tōyo bunka kenkyūjo kiyō* 東洋文化研究所紀要 *The Memoirs of the Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia* 101 (1986): 163–225; Sueki Fumihiko 末木文美士, “Kanmuryōjūkyō-Kanbutsu to ōjō 觀無量寿經—觀仏と往生 [Guan wuliangshou jing: Contemplation of Buddha and Attaining Birth],” in *Kanmuryōjūkyō, Hanjuzanmaikyō 觀無量寿經, 般舟三昧經 [Guan wuliangshou jing and Banzhou sanmei jing]* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1992), 1–195.

12 See the map on our website, accessed July 30, 2020. <https://buddhistroad.ceres.rub.de/en/visual-aids/>.

13 He discusses this topic in various articles. See, e.g., Nobuyoshi Yamabe, “Practice of Visualization and the Visualization Sūtra: An Examination of Mural Paintings at Toyok, Turfan,” *Pacific World: Journal of the Institute of Buddhist Studies Third Series* 4 (2002): 123–152; Nobuyoshi Yamabe, “An Examination of the Mural Paintings of Visualizing Monks in Toyok, Cave 42: In Conjunction with the Origin of Some Chinese Texts on Meditation,” in *Turfan Revisited—The First Century of Research into the Arts and Cultures of the Silk Road*, ed. Desmond Durkin-Meisterenst et al. (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 2004), 401–407; Nobuyoshi Yamabe, “Toyok Cave 20. Paintings and Inscriptions,” in *Epigraphic Evidence in the Pre-Modern Buddhist World. Proceedings of the Eponymous Conference Held in Vienna, 14–15 Oct. 2011*, ed. Kurt Tropper (Vienna: Arbeitskreis für tibetische und buddhistische Studien Universität Wien, 2014), 217–261.

Confession texts also represent their close connection with rituals. Rites of confession originated in early Buddhism in India and became an important Buddhist practice for both lay people and monks.<sup>14</sup> There are texts for confession and its rituals written in various Central Asian languages, which shows how widespread these practices and rituals were.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, in Central Asia, Manichaeism was also present, had contact with Buddhism in that area, and established a tradition of confession. The connections between Manichaean and Buddhist confession is still discussed, especially with respect to the Uyghurs who produced both kinds.<sup>16</sup> In that respect, the confession texts embody the multicultural nature of Central Asia, which is therefore not confined to Buddhist culture alone.

Besides visualisations and confessions, Buddhist rituals tend to converge around forms and beliefs associated with Esoteric and Tantric Buddhism, something which is especially clear when discussing the relationship between ritual practices and meditation.<sup>17</sup> It is, therefore, not surprising to find that these evolved forms of Mahāyāna Buddhism played a significant role in the Buddhist cultures that thrived along the Central Asian Silk Road from the late medieval period up to and including the Mongolian Empire (ca. 1206–1368). Respectively, those rituals are reflected in material objects, including texts. However, during the period of more than a millennium when Buddhism held sway over the cultures along the Silk Road—and despite differences in the various cultural and religious nodes—Buddhist normative practices and beliefs tended to provide common reference points for those cultures involved. As the impact of Esoteric and Tantric Buddhism in the region increased in the course of the 9–10th centuries, a certain standardisation and sharing of these practices took place, something which was especially prevalent in the centres located along the eastern stretches of the Silk Road, from the Turfan Basin to in present-day Gansu (甘肃) and Ningxia (宁夏) provinces.

14 For the development of confession, see, e.g., Kuo Li-ying, *Confession et contrition dans le bouddhisme chinois du V<sup>e</sup> au X<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Publications de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient, 1994); Claudia Weber, *Buddhistische Beichten in Indien und bei den Uiguren* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1999).

15 For this topic, see Weber, *Buddhistische Beichten*, 153–166. For Chinese confession texts found in Dunhuang, see also, Wang Juan 汪娟, *Dunhuang lichenwen yanjiu 敦煌禮懺文研究* [Studies on the Confession Ritual Texts from Dunhuang] (Taipei: Fagu wenhua, 1998). Jens Wilkens, furthermore, discusses Old Uyghur confession texts in his contribution in this volume. See Chapter 13.

16 See, e.g., Weber, *Buddhistische Beichten*, 123–152.

17 This topic has already been extensively dealt with by Henrik H. Sørensen. Some of these results are available online, accessed March 6, 2021. <https://omp.ub.rub.de/index.php/BuddhistRoad/catalog/category/Practices>.

It is, however, not only the texts or ritual objects which were transferred through the networks in Central Asia, but also articles like papers, brush, colorant or pieces of wood which were used for creating those three-dimensional religious objects. Because these objects could not come into existence without these materials. It is not always so easy to follow the processes and directions of those material transfer in Central Asia, wherefore this topic still gives rise to much debate.<sup>18</sup> In this context, a note that is written at the beginning of an Old Uyghur Buddhist text preserved in Berlin under the signature Mainz 732 [T II Y 21], requires special attention. This note does not contain any explanations on the Buddhist text written after it, but it explains the origin of the paper used: “This is the paper from Shazhou [(沙州)].”<sup>19</sup> This indicates that the paper originated in or was transferred from Dunhuang, and used for writing an Old Uyghur text, which eventually ended up in Yarkhoto, where this manuscript was found. This example is probably not an exception, as various materials were transferred between different places and played a part in the flourishing of Buddhist culture in Central Asia.

## 2 Contents of This Volume

As stated above, this volume consists of two interrelated parts: Part 1 deals with visual and material transfer, and Part 2 with practices and rituals. The first chapter is George Keyworth’s “Did the Silk Road(s) Extend from Dunhuang, Mount Wutai, and Chang’an to Kyoto, Japan? A Reassessment Based on Material Culture from the Temple Gate Tendai Tradition of Miidera.” It serves as a historical and geographical introduction to all of the topics presented in the volume. Keyworth focuses on documents related to two famous Japanese Buddhist pilgrims to China, Enchin (814–891, 円珍) and Jōjin (1011–1081, 成尋). These pilgrims played important roles in transferring Buddhist visual and textual materials, including ritual objects, which came through the Silk Road to China, and thence to Japan. Using material preserved in Japan, Keyworth demonstrates that Buddhist rituals and material culture from the Silk Road reached

18 Parts of visual transfers, especially between Dunhuang and Khotan, have been addressed in the series of papers published as BuddhistRoad Paper 6.1. <https://omp.ub.rub.de/index.php/BuddhistRoad/catalog/category/Transfer>.

19 See, e.g., TT V, 340–341. The use of the cursive script indicates that this manuscript was written in the Mongolian period. For the dating of Old Uyghur manuscripts, see, e.g., Takao Moriyasu, “From Silk, Cotton and Copper Coin to Silver. Transition of the Currency Used by the Uighurs during the Period from the 8th to the 14th Centuries,” in *Turfan Revisited—The First Century of Research into the Arts and Cultures of the Silk Road*, ed. Desmond Durkin-Meisterernst et al. (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 2004), 228–233.

Japan early on and were integrated into the local Buddhist culture. Thus, while located far from the eastern stretches of the Silk Road, which formally terminated in Ch'ang'an (長安), the impact of the Buddhist road leading to East Asia extended, in fact, all the way to Japan.

In the second chapter “Representations of a Series of Large Buddha Figures in the Buddhist Caves of Kuča: Reflections on Their Origin and Meaning”, Ines Konczak-Nagel focuses on iconographic arrangements of rows of standing buddha figures painted in the caves in the Kuča area. Those images are so large that they were found to occupy the entire height of the wall. Because of their unusual size, they received considerable attention from scholars, who have suggested a variety of interpretations. Some of the large buddha figures are depicted in narrativised settings, indicating that they represent the Buddhas of the Past, to the extent that they can be individually identified. Konczak-Nagel compares them with similar rows of buddhas in other regions and suggests that, as a theme, they were most likely adopted from the art of Greater Gandhāra. The large standing buddha figures also appear in other oases like Khotan, which, when considered together, indicates that this iconographic theme was widespread in Central Asian. The author also points out that the Kuchean figures should be regarded as the direct predecessors of the large-scale buddha images we find on the temple walls in Turfan produced under the Uyghurs.

The third chapter “Buddhist Painting in the South of the Tarim Basin: A Chronological Conundrum” is by Ciro Lo Muzio. This chapter deals with Buddhist paintings unearthed in the Khotan oasis and at Karadong. In many previous studies, these paintings are dated to the 3rd century, in the case of Karadong, and the 6th–8th centuries, in the case of the Khotan oasis. Lo Muzio points out that these dates were established without detailed and proper examination, and remained undisputed for a long time. Because of the chronological issue Lo Muzio re-examines the iconographic programmes and individual elements and motifs in the paintings from Khotan and Karadong, and carefully compares them with other Central Asian and South Asian Buddhist paintings. As a result he proposes that the Karadong paintings should be dated to approximately the 6th century, which is closer to the date of the paintings from Khotan.

Chapter four, Erika Forte's contribution, develops around “Khotanese Themes' in Dunhuang: Visual and Ideological Transfer in the 9th–11th Centuries.” She investigates the mural paintings in the Mogao Caves (莫高窟) and Yulin Caves (榆林窟) that deal with themes related to Khotan. These are the so-called ‘auspicious images’ (Chin. *ruixiang* 瑞像) that originated in Khotan, the Eight Protectors (Khot. *haṣṭā parvālā*), the legend of the founding of Khotan, and depictions of a Khotanese Buddhist sacred place, Mt. Gośrīṣa/Gośrīṅga (Chin. Niutou shan 牛頭山/Niujiao shan 牛角山). Those paintings

were mainly produced between the 9th century and the early 11th century. A (semi-) permanent Khotanese community in Dunhuang most likely promoted their production at the Mogao Caves. Forte's contribution contains recent archaeological discoveries and demonstrates that those new materials warrant further research.

The fifth chapter is Lilla Russell-Smith's "The 'Sogdian Deities' Twenty Years on: A Reconsideration of a Small Painting from Dunhuang". Here she reconsiders interpretations of the so-called 'Sogdian Deities', a sketch that was found among the manuscripts in Mogao Cave 17 at Dunhuang. This sketch shows two seated female deities, whose identity has eluded viable identification so far, due to their particular iconography and the attributes they hold. Previous studies identified these deities as Zoroastrian or Manichaean. Russell-Smith investigates, the deities' clothing and attributes, as well as the paper used for the drawing, in considerable detail and in comparison with iconographically similar depictions in the Turfan area, including Buddhist images. There is no consensus on ascribing a Zoroastrian identity to the two female deities. Some of their attributes could be interpreted as Buddhist or Manichaean. Based on such multi-religious characteristics, Russell-Smith concludes that the painting of the two divinities was probably patronised by a Uyghur Buddhist donor who maintained some Manichaean influence.

In the sixth chapter, "Seeking the Pure Land in Tangut Art", Michelle C. Wang studies an intriguing group of paintings in the Hermitage Museum's Collection, which were unearthed in Karakhoto. The subject of all of the paintings is Buddha Amitābha receiving the soul of the devotee into the Western Pure Land. This theme was widespread throughout East Asia during the 12th–13th centuries. Even so, the origin and dissemination of these images has been the topic of intense scholarly discussion. In this chapter, Wang contributes a comparative and transcultural study of the Amitābha motif in Karakhoto, medieval China, Korea, and Japan. Unlike previous studies, Wang proposes that printing played a role as a mediating factor in the formation of the paintings that depict Amitābha's Welcoming Descent, in this way she emphasises the uniqueness of the Tangut imagery rather than the similarity to or subjection to the art of the surrounding area, such as Song China (960–1279, 宋). In this study, she aims to highlight the transcultural resonances of this visual motif, while at the same time showing the unique features of this type of Tangut Buddhist painting.

The seventh chapter "Avalokiteśvara Cult in Turfan and Dunhuang in the Pre-Mongolian Period" by Yukiyo Kasai picks up one of the most famous bodhisattvas, namely Avalokiteśvara, and discusses how the cult of this divinity was conceptualised in the Uyghur Kingdom of Turfan. First, she asserts that the scriptural sources for the cult of the bodhisattva were written in Old

Uyghur during the pre-Mongolian period. Then she discusses different manifestations of the cult in textual and visual sources from Dunhuang and Turfan. Although Chinese Buddhism from Dunhuang exerted a strong influence on the Uyghurs, the latter do not seem to have adopted the Avalokiteśvara cult from Dunhuang in its entirety. During the period under discussion, in Turfan, not only the Uyghurs, but also Chinese and Tocharians were active as Buddhists. Kasai suggests that the Avalokiteśvara cult was among the cults that were most strongly connected to Chinese Buddhists and that it could differ from that in Dunhuang. Furthermore, she pointed out that not all Uyghur Buddhists practiced the Buddhist cults under Chinese influence, although its impact is in many cases considerable. The manner in which the Avalokiteśvara cult unfolded in the Western Uyghur Kingdom, therefore, may not have been representative of cultic practices among the Uyghur Buddhists, broadly defined.

In the eighth chapter, “Bridging Yoga and Mahāyoga: Samaya in Early Tantric Buddhism,” Jacob P. Dalton emphasises the role of *samaya* vows in the early development of Tantric Buddhist rituals in Tibet on the basis of Tibetan language material from Dunhuang. In early tantric writings, *samaya* functions not only as a vow, or set of vows, to be observed, but also as the transcendent wisdom (Skt. *jñāna*) of the buddhas that is ritually installed within the heart of the practitioner. He shows in that context how *samaya* was central to both initiation and the post-initiatory ritual practices (Skt. *sādhana*) of the Yogatantra system, as formulated in the *Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgraha*. In both ritual contexts, the entry of the *samaya* into the practitioner’s heart represented a key moment. Turning to the slightly later ritual traditions of early Mahāyoga, he argues further that the sexualisation of the earlier concept of *samaya* produced the secret initiation (Skt. *guhyābhiṣeka*), as well as the self-administering of the sacramental drop of *bodhicitta*, that marked the culmination of sexual yoga, each paralleling the *Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgraha*’s initiation and self-consecration (Skt. *svādhiṣṭhāna*), respectively. The developmental continuities between Yoga and Mahāyoga are evident in certain early Mahāyoga works, where the drop of *bodhicitta* is referred to as the ‘supreme samaya’ (Tib. *dam tshig mchog*).

The ninth chapter, “Visualising Oneself as the Cosmos: An Esoteric Buddhist Meditation Text from Dunhuang” by Henrik H. Sørensen, focuses on a manuscript from the Pelliot Collection that features an Esoteric Buddhist meditation text from Dunhuang (P. 2649V<sup>o</sup>). This important text has, to some degree, been overlooked by current scholarship. In his study, Sørensen shows that the main elements of the document are detailed and vivid instructions in meditation. This document is essentially a text conveying the confluence between mainstream Esoteric Buddhist beliefs and practices and those of mature Tantric

Buddhism. Of greatest interest is the fact that the text reflects the entire process of meditation and visualisation, which is expressed as a sort of internal ritual of universal salvation. Through a philological approach, Sørensen provides a fully annotated translation of the text, as well as a critical edition of the Chinese original text. This contributes important new insights into the development of local Esoteric and Tantric Buddhist meditation practices in late medieval Dunhuang.

In the tenth chapter by Carmen Meinert, “Beyond Spatial and Temporal Contingencies: Tantric Rituals in Eastern Central Asia under Tangut Rule, 11th–13th C.,” the cult of Vajravārāhī is taken as a point of departure. Here she discusses what constitutes a sacred site, and provides a new reading of the sources by combining an analysis of material evidence. This is done in order to move a step closer to asymptotic convergence of the implications of what constitutes a divine or sacred space. The divinity Meinert examines, in this case the Tantric Buddhist goddess Vajravārāhī, is conceptualised by the practitioner in her sacred space together with an instruction on how to activate, through a stereotyped performance, her divine presence, both in this world and in one’s own body. The iconographical programme of Mogao Cave 465, which centres on the cults of Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhī, offers a useful ‘testing ground’ for a new approach to dealing with the physicality of a sacred space. Meinert’s analysis of ritual practice follows the definition of the concept laid out by the research consortium on Ritual Dynamics at Heidelberg University’s findings, and those formulated in the KHK Consortium of CERES at Ruhr-Universität Bochum.

In chapter eleven Iain Sinclair investigates “The Serlingpa Acala in Tibet and the Tangut Empire.” In doing so he focuses on a particular form of Acala, the so-called Serlingpa Acala, which is ascribed to the guru Serlingpa (Tib. Bla ma gSer gling pa), a teacher from the ‘Golden Isles’ of Southeast Asia. The vision of Acala, ‘the Unwavering,’ manifesting ten furious forms, and trampling on Gaṇapati, is a commonly found in the religious art of both Tibet and the Tangut Empire (ca. 1038–1227) and up to the end of the 13th century. It was transmitted to Tibet by Atiśa Dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna (982–1054). By researching the artistic and textual corpus related to the Serlingpa Acala, Sinclair illustrates the iconographic alterations of the divinity after its entry into Tibet and the Tangut Empire, and further demonstrates this distinctive version of Acala’s potential connections with Southeast Asia. This chapter sheds light on a rare case in the transmission of Tantric Buddhist iconography that flowed along the northern and southern maritime routes of the Silk Road.

The topic of chapter twelve is, “Mahākāla Literature Unearthed from Karakhoto” by Haoran Hou. Here the author provides a thorough introduction

to the Tibetan Buddhist Tantric manuscripts associated with Mahākāla found at Karakhoto. These documents are primarily written in Chinese and Tibetan and date to the 12th–14th centuries. Through a comparative study of bilingual materials, Hou identifies the corresponding Tibetan originals for the Chinese texts and explores the origins of the Mahākāla literature from Karakhoto. In his discussion of the historical context of the dissemination of these texts, he focuses on the Tibetan Master Ga Lotsaba Zhönnupel (1105/1110–1198/1202, Tib. rGwa lo tsā ba gZhon nu dpal), whose name can be connected with both the Chinese and Tibetan Mahākāla literature from Karakhoto. Through studying the master's biography, Hou reveals how Ga Lotsaba brought the teachings on the Mahākāla cult all the way from India, through Tibet, and to the Tangut Empire.

Chapter thirteen is by Jens Wilkens and deals with "Practice and Rituals in Uyghur Buddhist Texts: A Preliminary Appraisal." It consists of an overview of references to practice and ritual in Buddhist texts written in Old Uyghur. Wilkens underlines that this topic has not been explored in previous research on Uyghur Buddhism. He argues that not all text types currently available are sufficient to provide detailed information on the practice and rituals carried out by the Uyghur Buddhists. Nevertheless, the author discusses liturgies, blessings, confessions, texts describing the worship of Buddha Amitābha and the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, as well as ritual texts belonging to mature Tantric Buddhism, amulets and talismans, astrological and astronomical texts, texts containing spells and incantations, and those for consecration rituals. Most of this material is from Buddhist texts written in Old Uyghur that were mainly composed during the 10th–14th centuries. As such, and for the first time, we have here a study which provides comprehensive information on ritual and liturgical material in the surviving Buddhist textual corpus in Old Uyghur.

Each of these thirteen contributions represents a topic that, one way or another, reflects the complexities of shared cultural and religious elements in Central Asia. As such, they attest to the importance of active discussions beyond narrow geographical and cultural boundaries. We hope that the present volume contributes to the development of research into the transfer of visual and material, as well as into the less tangible ritual practices of the region, and thus inspires further studies on Central Asian Buddhism.





**PART 1**

*Visual Material and Transfer*





# Did the Silk Road(s) Extend from Dunhuang, Mount Wutai, and Chang'an to Kyoto, Japan? A Reassessment Based on Material Culture from the Temple Gate Tendai Tradition of Miidera

George Keyworth

## 1 Introduction: Did the Silk Road(s) Reach Early or Medieval Japan?<sup>1</sup>

Beyond the marvelous cache of textiles, manuscripts, and other ritual paraphernalia from China, Korea, and Central Asia that testify to the cosmopolitan

1 This research is generously supported by a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) Partnership Grant. <http://frogbear.org/>. I would also like to thank Prof. Ochiai Toshinori, director of the Research Institute for Old Japanese Manuscripts at the International College for Postgraduate Buddhist Studies (ICPBS) in Tokyo for making it possible to access the digital archives at the ICPBS library. I would also like to express special thanks to former abbot Otowa Ryūzen Shōnin (音羽隆全 上人), Ms. Inoue Sachiko (井上幸子), and Ms. Hirose Mitsuko (広瀬美子) of Myōren Temple (Jap. Myōren ji 妙蓮寺), who have provided generous time and support for my many visits to this splendid Hokkeshū (法華宗) temple to see and learn about the Matsuno'o Shrine scriptures and their conservation. The following abbreviations are used throughout:

Z. *Zhenyuan xinding shijiao mulu* 貞元新定釋教目錄 [Newly Revised Catalogue of Buddhist Scriptures Made during the Zhenyuan-Era, T. 2157], comp. 799 or 800 by Yuanzhao (d.u., 圓照). Nos follow the Nanatsudera ms in Miyabayashi Akihiko 宮林昭彦 and Ochiai Toshinori 落合俊典, "Jōgen shinjō shakukyō mokuroku nijūkyū sanjū 貞元新定釋教目錄 29 30 [On the *Newly Revised Catalogue of Buddhist Scriptures Made during the Zhenyuan-Era*]" in *Chūgoku Nihon kyōten shōsho mokuroku* 中國日本經典章疏目錄 [Catalogues of Scriptures and their Commentaries in China and Japan], ed. Makita Tairyō 牧田諦亮, et al. (Tokyo: Daitō shuppansha, 1998) and; Gakujutsu Furontia jikkō iinkai 學術フロンティア実行委員会 ed., *Nihon genson hasshu issaikyō taishō mokuroku tsuke Tonkō bukkyō bunken* 日本現存八種一切經対照目錄 [付] 敦煌仏教文献 [Catalogue Comparing Eight Buddhist Canons Currently Available in Japan with Buddhist Literature from Dunhuang] (Tokyo: Kokusai bukkyōgaku daigakuin daigaku, 2006), rather than T. 2157.

Titles in Japanese and (reconstructed) Sanskrit in the Taishō Canon follow Paul Demiéville et al., *Répertoire du canon bouddhique sino-japonais, édition de Taishō (Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō): [fascicule annexe du Hōbōgirin]* (Paris: Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient, 1978). Lewis R. Lancaster and Sung-bae Park, ed., *The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979) also provides translation and reconstructions for Sanskrit titles.

eye-opening ceremony held in 752 for the large image of Mahāvairocana Buddha in Great East Temple (Jap. Tōdai ji 東大寺) that were preserved in the Shōsōin (正倉院) in Nara (奈良), Japan, does sufficient material culture from the Silk Road(s) exist in Japan to substantiate the claim that the easternmost terminus was either Nara or Kyoto (京都)? Copious, sometimes much later records document how, during the 9th century, Enchin (814–891, 円珍, Chishō daishi 智証大師), among eight other famous pilgrims and envoys from Japan, visited and studied at the Green Dragon Temple (Chin. Qinglong si 青龍寺) in Tang (618–907, 唐) Chang'an (長安, modern Xi'an 西安) and received from Chinese or Central Asian teachers Esoteric Buddhist (Chin. *mijiao*, Jap. *mikkyō* 密教) ritual manuals, certificates, statues, and other symbols of transmission. Enchin is the patriarch for the Jimon (Jap. Jimonha 寺門派) or Temple Gate Tendai tradition (Jap. Tendaishū 天台宗) based at the Onjō Temple (Jap. Onjō ji 園城寺), a.k.a. Mii Temple (Jap. Miidera 三井寺). With the discovery of the cache of documents and art sealed around the beginning of the 11th century in Mogao Cave 17 (Chin. Mogao ku 莫高窟), also-called the Library Cave (Chin. Cangjing dong 藏經洞), near the city of Dunhuang (敦煌), in Eastern Central Asia (present-day Gansu (甘肅) province), and other archaeological finds at sites such as Turfan, Kuča, Khotan, and others in Eastern Central Asia and in present-day Pakistan and Afghanistan, the narrative of the decline of Buddhism—especially Esoteric—after the Huichang era (840–845, 會昌) in China and along the eastern Silk Road(s) has been subjected to considerable scrutiny by scholars from around the world. Manuscripts from Dunhuang in Sinitic,<sup>2</sup> Tibetan, and Uyghur from the 9th and 10th centuries also provide considerable evidence of a multilingual, cosmopolitan exchange of religion and culture in Central Asia that extended east to Mt. Wutai (Chin. Wutai shan 五臺山) and Chang'an and south to Hangzhou (杭州).

In this paper I take the two Tendai pilgrims to China who are central to the Jimon tradition of Mii Temple, Enchin, who remained in China from 853–858, and Jōjin, as bookends to address the question: did the Silk Road(s) extend to Japan through the Jimon Tendai tradition during the 9th–11th centuries? In the first section of the paper, I outline how the materials listed in travel diaries and catalogues (Jap. *shōrai mokuroku* 請來目錄) of the books, statues, and ritual objects brought back by Enchin confirm that the Buddhism he imported from

2 On 'Sinitic' to refer to the written language of Chinese, rather than Classical or Literary Chinese, see Victor H. Mair, "Buddhism and the Rise of the Written Vernacular in East Asia: The Making of National Languages," *Journal of Asian Studies* 53:3 (1994): 707–751; Peter Francis Kornicki, *Languages, Scripts, and Chinese Texts in East Asia* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 19–21.

the continent can be connected to cosmopolitan ritual practices that flourished along the eastern Silk Road(s) even after the Huichang era persecution of foreign faiths. One of the earliest statues of an indigenous *kami* (神) produced in Japan at Matsuno'o Shrine (Jap. Matsuno'o taisha 松尾大社) in Kyoto (and still housed there) is a key product from Enchin's experiences with cosmopolitan continental Buddhist rituals. In the next section, I investigate what Jōjin's diary that covers the years 1072–1073 during his travels, *Record of a Pilgrimage to Mt. Tiantai and Mt. Wutai*, tells us about his encounter with Central Asian and Indian teachers not only on Mt. Wutai but also at the *sūtra* translation bureau known as the Institute for Transmitting the Dharma (Chin. Chuanfayuan 傳法院) on the grounds of the imperially sponsored Monastery for Promoting Great Peace for the State (Chin. Taiping xingguo si 太平興國寺) in the Song (960–1279, 宋) capital of Bianjing (汴京, modern Kaifeng 開封). Several of the rituals that Jōjin describes performing for Song Emperor Shenzong (r. 1067–1085, 神宗) correspond to ceremonies we know were performed at the Daiun Temple (Jap. Daiun ji 大雲寺) and Jissōin (実相院) (located in the Iwakura (岩倉) section of northern Kyoto) and at key shrines like Matsuno'o, Kamigamo (上賀茂) and Shimogamo (下鴨) in Kyoto, and Atsuta (熱田) in Nagoya (名古屋) during the 12th–16th centuries. Finally, I describe how Buddhist—and Indic or Central Asian—rituals which were exchanged along the eastern Silk Road(s) during the 9th–11th centuries were employed in Japan with material culture (like statues and ritual paraphernalia) to venerate the *kami* by Tendai Jimon monastics using unambiguously cosmopolitan language to preserve the narrative of transmission along the Silk Road(s).

In the 2006–2007 issue of *Cahiers d'Extrême Asie*, Iyanaga Nobumi published a fascinating paper arguing that, fundamentally, elements of the indigenous religion of Japan, which scholars variously call Shintō (神道, lit. path or way of the gods), *kami* worship, (Jap. *jingi shinkō* 神祇信仰), *Jindō* (an alternative pronunciation for Shintō), or veneration of the gods of heaven and earth (Jap. *tenjin chigi sūhai* 天神地祇崇拜), has significant elements of Hinduism in it.<sup>3</sup> With (1) fire rituals (Skt. *homa*, Chin. *humo*, Jap. *goma* 護摩) performed inside—or outside—Shingon and Tendai Buddhist temples and by mountain

3 On *Jindō*, see Michael Como, *Weaving and Binding: Immigrant Gods and Female Immortals in Ancient Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009); Michael Como, "Immigrant Gods on the Road to *Jindō*," *Cahiers d'Extrême Asie* 16 (2006–2007): 19–48; cf. Donald F. McCallum, "Review of Shōtoku: Ethnicity, Ritual, and Violence in the Japanese Buddhist Tradition. By Michael I. Como. Oxford University Press, 2008," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 36.1 (2010): 189–193; Richard Bowring, "Review of *Weaving and Binding: Immigrant Gods and Female Immortals in Ancient Japan*. By Michael I. Como. University of Hawai'i Press, 2009," *Monumenta Nipponica* 65.1 (2010): 197–198; Iyanaga Nobumi, "Medieval Shintō as a Form of



Kornicki, and John Whitman, among others, have demonstrated that almost no Buddhist or Daoist or ‘Hindu’ or even ‘Shintō’ traveler in medieval times in Eastern Central Asia or Tang and Song China would have read texts or scriptures in the same vernacular language, we ought to wonder how communication was possible?<sup>6</sup>

If, as we know from Valerie Hansen’s research and to a lesser extent Peter Frankopan’s recent and popular new book, among others, that silk was probably among the least transported commodities across various trade routes that connected China with points west (or perhaps east), with precious gems, grains, glass, furs, ritual objects, and even slaves, not to mention books, ideas, and certainly languages, then one way to define the Silk Road(s) with far greater precision than Baron Ferdinand von Richthofen’s illusory terms ‘*Seidenstraße*’ and ‘*Seidenstraßen*’ (coined in 1877) is through the transmission of language. And not just any language, but Sanskrit and Indic *prākṛtās* (related vernaculars).<sup>7</sup> First, let us consider the conundrum that is the Sinitic language in East Asia as defined by Peter Kornicki:

What makes vernacular reading possible is the fact that Sinitic is a logographic written language: characters represent words not sounds. The phonetic realization of those words was not fixed, and in fact varied from one regional type of spoken Chinese to another [...] [C]haracters were open not only to a phonetic reading, that is, an approximation to the pronunciation in Chinese adapted to suit the phonology of the reader’s native language, but also a semantic reading using an equivalent word in that reader’s language.

An example of a semantic reading is the number 9 (Arabic numerals 1–9 are actually derived from Sanskrit), which can be read:

6 *Dari jingshu* 大日經疏 [Commentary to the *Mahāvairocana-sūtra*] 16, T. 1796.39,744a29. See also John B. Whitman, “The Ubiquity of the Gloss,” *Scripta (International Journal of Writing Systems, The Hunmin Jeongeum Society, Korea)* 3 (2011): 95–121; John B. Whitman “Ratengo kyōten no dokuhō to butten no kundoku ラテン語經典の読法と仏典の訓読 [The Reading of Sacred Texts in Latin and Vernacular Reading of Buddhist Texts],” in *Bukkyō bunmei no tenkai to hyōgen: moji, gengo, zōkei to shisō* 仏教文明の転回と表現: 文字・言語・造形と思想 [Buddhism as Movement and Expression of Civilisation: Philosophy, Fabrications, Language and Writing], ed. Shinkawa Tokio 新川登亀男 (Tokyo: Bensei shuppansha, 2015).

7 On the name ‘Silk Road’ see Valerie Hansen, *The Silk Road: A New History* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 6. Peter Frankopan, *The Silk Roads: A New History of the World* (London: Vintage, 2017).



‘nine’, ‘nove’, ‘neuf’, ‘neun’[...] or the equivalent in any language, so the character (九), which represents the numeral 9, can be read in any East Asian language with the vernacular equivalent.<sup>8</sup>

Sanskrit—and Indic languages related to it—functions entirely differently. *Sam̐skṛta*, which literally means ‘perfectly formed,’ is, of course, a language organised around phonetics—with numerous rules governing how to correctly pronounce not only words but syllables, including the rules of *saṃdhi* (lit. joining) to govern necessary sound changes. Before the introduction of Buddhism to China, Chinese characters were used phonographically. As Kornicki points out, the opening line of the *Lunyu* 論語 [Analects] (1:1) reads:

子曰：「學而時習之，不亦說乎？」

The Master said, “To study and then repeatedly put into practice what you have learned—is that not what it means to have pleasure?”<sup>9</sup>

The character *shuo* (說) usually means ‘to say’ or ‘explain.’ As ancient commentaries written after the script reforms by Qin Shi Huangdi (r. 221–210 BCE, 秦始皇帝) had to inform readers then as now, *shuo* (說) and *yue* (悅) are homonyms (*yue* means ‘delight’).<sup>10</sup> But after the introduction of Buddhism and the many technical terms in Sanskrit that required phonetic readings, e.g., Buddha (Chin. *Fotuo* 佛陀), *bhikṣuṇī* (Chin. *biqiuni* 比丘尼), *yoga* (Chin. *yujia* 瑜伽) and so forth, and especially after the introduction of Buddhist spells or incantations called *dhāraṇī* (Chin. *tuoloni* 陀羅尼), the problem became evident to most East Asians who wished to correctly pronounce these terms without any knowledge of Kharoṣṭhī- or Brāhmī-derived scripts for writing the sounds of Sanskrit, rather than reading (problematical) transliterations in Sinitic. Phonetics and the process of what Kornicki calls “vernacularization” in communities where Sinitic was primarily used was not only stimulated by the process of chanting Buddhist *sūtras*, but it may very well be among the most valuable things transmitted across the Silk Road(s).<sup>11</sup>

There is considerable debate about when to date the invention of the *katakana* script for writing how to phonetically pronounce Japanese (and

8 Kornicki, *Languages, Scripts, and Chinese Texts in East Asia*, 163.

9 D.C. Lau, trans., *The Analects (Lun yü)* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1992), 11.

10 Kornicki, *Languages, Scripts, and Chinese Texts in East Asia*, 55.

11 *Ibid.*, 157–186; Peter Francis Kornicki, “The Vernacularization of Buddhist Texts: From the Tangut Empire to Japan,” in *Rethinking East Asian Languages, Vernaculars, and Literacies, 1000–1919*, ed. Benjamin A. Elman (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2014), 29–57.

Sinitic characters). But we can be sure that what Gregory Schopen and others following him have called the ‘cult of the book’ (in the Mahāyāna) and the five practices of the preacher of the *buddhadharma* (Skr. *dharmabhāṇaka*)—preserving, reading, reciting, explaining, and copying *sūtras* or nonmeditational or meritorious acts (Skt. *kuśalena karmaṇā*)—has everything to do with it.<sup>12</sup> Along the Silk Road(s) to Dunhuang, Sui (581–618, 隋) and Tang Chang’an and Luoyang (洛陽), Mt. Wutai, and Mt. Tiantai (Chin. Tiantai shan 天臺山), Buddhist monastics had to learn how to pronounce the *sūtras* correctly. A lexicographer who assisted with Xuanzang’s (600/602–664, 玄奘) translation<sup>13</sup>

12 Eduard Naumovich Tyomkin, “Unique Fragments of the ‘Sūtra of Golden Light’ in the Manuscript Collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies (Russian Academy of Sciences),” *Manuscripta Orientalia (International Journal for Oriental Manuscript Research, St. Petersburg)* 1.1 (1995): 29–38; Gregory Schopen, “The Generalization of an Old Yogic Attainment in Medieval Mahāyāna Sūtra Literature: Some Notes on *Jātismara*,” *Journal of the International Association for Buddhist Studies* 6.1 (1983): 114. On the cult of the book in the Mahāyāna, see Gregory Schopen, “The Phrase *sa prthivīpradeśas caityabhūto bhavet* in the *Vajracchedikā*: Notes on the Cult of the Book in the Mahāyāna,” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 17 (1975): 147–181. Updated for the 21st century by Gregory Schopen, “On the Absence of Urtexts and Otiose Ācāryas: Buildings, Books, and Lay Buddhist Ritual at Gilgit,” in *Écrire et transmettre en Inde classique*, ed. Gérard Colas and Gerdi Gerschheimer (Paris: École française d’Extrême-Orient, 2009), 189–212; Gregory Schopen, “Redeeming Bugs, Birds, and Really Bad Sinners in Some Medieval Mahāyāna Sūtras and Dhāraṇīs,” in *Sins and Sinners: Perspectives from Asian Religions*, ed. Phyllis Granoff and Koichi Shinohara (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2012), 276–294; David Drewes, “Revisiting the Phrase ‘*sa prthivīpradeśas caityabhūto bhavet*’ and the Mahāyāna Cult of the Book,” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 50 (2007): 101–143; Natalie D. Gummer, “Listening to the Dharmabhāṇaka: The Buddhist Preacher in and of the Sūtra of Utmost Golden Radiance,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 80.1 (2012): 137–160; James B. Apple, “The Phrase *dharmaparyāyo hastagato* in Mahāyāna Buddhist Literature: Rethinking the Cult of the Book in Middle Period Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 134.1 (2014): 25–50. On the five practices, see Donald S. Jr. Lopez, *The Lotus Sūtra: A Biography* (Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2016), 69; see also the earliest discussion of the text in a European language: Eugène Burnouf, Katia Buffetrille, and Donald S. Jr. Lopez, *Introduction to the History of Indian Buddhism* (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 284–291.

13 There is, of course, a distinction to be made between a translation and a version of a text; Chinese or Tibetan translations “should not be regarded simply as ‘a translation’ of the text but as ‘a version’ representing a certain stage at which the text developed.” Seishi Karashima, *A Critical Edition of Lokakṣema’s Translation of the Aṣṭasahasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* 道行般若經校注 (Tokyo: International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology, 2011), xii; Apple, “The Phrase *dharmaparyāyo hastagato* in Mahāyāna Buddhist Literature,” 27, n. 24. Furthermore, individual translators did not work alone; they worked often in elaborate teams; see Jinhua Chen, “Another Look at Tang Zhongzong’s (r. 684, 705–710) Preface to Yijing’s (635–713, 義淨) Translations: With a Special Reference to Its Date,” *Indotetsugaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū* インド哲学仏教学研究 [Studies in

team named Xuanying (d. 661, 玄應) composed what looks like the first glossary of terminology used in Chinese Buddhist texts (those included in bibliographies of the canon as of 650),<sup>14</sup> which provides *fanqie* (反切), a method in traditional Chinese lexicography to indicate the pronunciation of a monosyllabic character by using two other characters, one with the same initial consonant as the desired syllable and one with the same remainder of the syllable (the final) readings, ca. 649, called *Yiqiejing yinyi* 一切經音義 [Pronunciations and Meanings in the Complete Buddhist Canon] (Z 1185) in 25 rolls; Huilin (737–820, 慧琳) enlarged Xuanying's text to 100 rolls in 807 (T. 2128.54).<sup>15</sup> When he catalogued the colophons to the Dunhuang manuscripts in the British Library collection, Lionel Giles observed that:

[...] for some reason with special frequency in copies of the *Chin kuang ming tsui sheng wang ching* (N. 126), is what I have ventured to call a phonetic glossary. This consists of just a few words selected from the preceding text, with their *fan-ch'ieh* (initial *plus* final) pronunciation.<sup>16</sup>

Zhang Yongquan and Li Lingling demonstrate that these glosses were on manuscripts of Yijing's translation (in 703) of the *Suvarṇabhāṣottamasūtra* (Z 158, T. 665.16.) at Dunhuang by 854 (P. 2274: roll seven). Therefore, it seems almost certain that these transcription notes or Chinese phonetic reading glosses

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Indian Philosophy and Buddhism] 11 (2004): 3–27; Ming Chen, “Vinaya Works Translated by Yijing and their Circulation: Manuscripts Excavated at Dunhuang and Central Asia,” *Studies in Chinese Religion* 1 (2015): 229–268.

- 14 Regarding the order of texts included in the Chinese Buddhist Canons up to the compilation of the *Kaiyuan lu* 開元錄 [Record of Śākyamuni's Teachings, Compiled During the Kaiyuan Era (713–741)] in 730, see Fuhua Li, “An Analysis of the Content and Characteristics of the Chinese Buddhist Canon,” *Studies in Chinese Religions* 2.2 (2016): 107–112.
- 15 On the Kōshōji ms. Canon, see Utsunomiya Keigo 宇都宮啓吾, “Kōshōji issaikyō ni okeru kuntei shiryō ni tsuite: Sono sujō o megutte 興聖寺一切經における訓点資料について: その素性を巡って [On the Features of Studying the Features of the Kōshōji [Manuscript Buddhist] Canon],” *Kamakura jidai go kenkyū* 鎌倉時代語研究 [Studies of Kamakura Period Language] 23 (2000): 662–690 and; Ochiai Toshinori, “Découverte de manuscrits bouddhiques chinois au Japon.” See also Chen Wuyun 陳五雲, Xu Shiyi 徐時儀, and Liang Xiaohong 梁曉虹, ed., *Fojing yinyi yu Hanzi yanjiu* 佛經音義與漢字研究 [A Study of the Sounds and Meanings of Sinitic Logographs in Buddhist Scriptures] (Nanjing: Fenghuang chubanshe, 2010); Xu Shiyi 徐時儀, *Xuanying he Huilin Yiqiejing yinyi yanjiu* 玄應和慧琳《一切經音義》研究 [Study of the *Yiqiejing yinyi* by Xuanying and Huilin] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2009).
- 16 Lionel Giles, *Descriptive Catalogue of the Chinese Manuscripts from Tunhuang in the British Museum* (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1957), xi.

were mostly copied—or added—during the late 9th and early 10th centuries at Dunhuang.<sup>17</sup> I have not found these phonetic reading glosses on any other Dunhuang texts.

In Japan, however, the situation is quite different. There are reading marks (Jap. *kunten* 訓点) of a sort on rolls of the *Suvarṇabhāṣottamasūtra* dated to 889 from Ishiyama Temple (Jap. Ishiyamadera 石山寺) which have received considerable attention.<sup>18</sup> There are also marks to facilitate reading in Japanese on an 8th century *Saishōōkyō* 最勝王經 [*Suvarṇabhāṣottamasūtra*] sponsored by Kudara no Toyomushi (白濟豐虫) preserved at the Saidai Temple (Jap. Saidai ji 西大寺) in Nara.<sup>19</sup> There is also a marvelous example of an even earlier *Suvarṇabhāṣottamasūtra* copied in gold ink on indigo paper (it looks red today) from Kokubun Temple (Jap. Kokubun ji 国分寺) in Hiroshima that can be dated to 742 and has been displayed at Nara National Museum (DO26284).<sup>20</sup> Roll 2 has corresponding *fanqie* (Jap. *hansetsu*) marks with the exemplars from Dunhuang and on the roll from Matsuno'o Shrine in Kyoto, which was copied either during the 3rd or 5th lunar month of 1115. The only other texts I have seen anywhere with these phonetic reading marks are Yijing's translations of the *Mūlasarvāstivādinayavibhaṅga* (Z 1010,

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- 17 See nos. 2052, 2130–2131, 2156–2157, 2269, 2377, 2390, 2452–2456 in *ibid.* See also Giles, *Descriptive Catalogue*, 53–60. For their research, Zhang and Li looked at a sample of 257 out of a total of 436 manuscript fragments of the *Jingguangming zuishengwang jing* 金光明最勝王經 [*Suvarṇabhāṣottamasūtra*] found at Dunhuang: Zhang Yongqiang 张涌泉 and Li Lingling 李玲玲, “Dunhuang ben *Jingguangming zuishengwang jing yin yanjiu* 敦煌本《金光明最胜王经音》研究,” [Research of Phonetic Notation Marks on Dunhuang Editions of Yijing's Translation of the *Suvarṇabhāṣottamasūtra*], *Dunhuang yanjiu* 敦煌研究 *Dunhuang Research* 6 (2006): 151.
- 18 Hironuma Mei 蛭沼芽衣, *Ishiyamadera kyūzō Konkōmyō saishōōkyō* 石山寺旧藏『金光明最勝王經』 [On the Manuscript Copy of the *Suvarṇabhāṣottamasūtra* Translated by Yijing from the Ishiyama Temple Archives] (Kyushu: Kyūshū University Institutional Repository, 2015). Cf. Ryuichi Abé, *The Weaving of Mantra: Kūkai and the Construction of Esoteric Buddhist Discourse* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 394–395.
- 19 Sōhon Saidaiji 総本西大寺 et al., *Kokuhō Saidaijihon Konkōmyō saishōōkyō Tenpyōhōji rokumen Kudara no Toyomushi gankyō* 国宝西大寺本金光明最勝王經天平宝字六年百濟豐虫願經 [Kudara no Toyomushi's Vowed Scriptures [of Yijing's Translation of] the *Suvarṇabhāṣottamasūtra* from 762, National Treasures from Saidaiji] (Tokyo: Bensei shuppan, 2013).
- 20 On the establishment of Kokubun Temple in 741 as state temples to promote ritual recitation of the *Saishōōkyō* according to a strict [ritual] calendar, see Marinus Willem de Visser, *Ancient Buddhism in Japan: Sutras and Commentaries in Use in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries AD and their History in Later Times*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1935), 443–446; Asuka Sango, *The Halo of Golden Light: Imperial Authority and Buddhist Ritual in Heian Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015), 1–23; cf. roll 10, accessed August 5, 2019. [http://web1.kcn.jp/west\\_fields/kokuho/kokuho\\_nara.htm](http://web1.kcn.jp/west_fields/kokuho/kokuho_nara.htm).

T. 1442.23.), *Mūlasarvāstivādinayakṣudrakavastu* (Z 1012, T. 1451.24.) and \**Mūlasarvāstivādinayasaṃgraha* (Z 1053, T. 1458.24.) from the Shōgozō (聖語藏), which dates to the first day of the fifth luni-solar month of the Tenpyō 天平 reign period (740), and means they were part of the manuscript canon copying project that Empress Kōmyō kōgō (701–760, 光明皇后) sponsored using the Buddhist canon (Skt. *tripiṭaka*) recently brought to Japan from Tang China in 736 by Genbō (d. 746, 玄昉).<sup>21</sup>

Do these phonetic reading marks demonstrate that either Nara during the 8th century or Kyoto during the 12th was the terminus of some node of the Silk Road(s) on the Eurasian continent? No, of course not. But these marks suggest much more tangible evidence of sustained influence from the linguistic culture that must have flourished along the Silk Road(s) during the 8th–12th centuries than can be gleaned from the magnificent treasures of Central Asian fabrics or ritual objects which were apparently gifts from guests who attended the opening ceremony for Tōdai Temple (752) from far-flung kingdoms that are preserved in the Shōsōin in Nara. Apart from the material culture of Tibetan and Mongolian Buddhism on the so-called ‘periphery’ of the borders of the People’s Republic of China today, unlike in Japan, for example, there is scant, though nevertheless intriguing, evidence of the Indic elements of Buddhism in China.<sup>22</sup> The same can be largely said for Korea. We know from medieval

21 Bryan Lowe, for example, published a ground-breaking book on the topic of copying scriptures with special—and well deserved—attention to the treasure trove of documents from the Shōsōin and the scriptorium at Tōdai Temple; see Bryan Lowe, *Ritualized Writing: Buddhist Practice and Scriptural Cultures in Ancient Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2017). See also Bryan Lowe, “Buddhist Manuscript Cultures in Premodern Japan,” *Religion Compass* 8–9 (2014): 287–301; Bryan Lowe, “Rewriting Nara Buddhism: Sutra Transcription in Early Japan” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2012); Bryan Lowe, “The Discipline of Writing: Scribes and Purity in Eighth-Century Japan,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 39.2 (2012): 201–239; Bryan Lowe, “Contingent and Contested: Preliminary Remarks on Buddhist Catalogues and Canons in Early Japan,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 41.2 (2014): 221–253.

22 *Dhāraṇī* pillars are one example, which primarily exist from the Tang period if in China proper and in Khitan (907–1125, in Chinese sources known as Liao 遼), Jurchen Dynasty (1115–1234, in Chinese sources known as Jin 金) territory before we find copious evidence of Tibetan and Mongolian religion in stone across China later. See Liying Kuo, “Dhāraṇī Pillars in China: Functions and Symbols,” in *China and Beyond in the Mediaeval Period: Cultural Crossings and Inter-Regional Connections*, ed. Dorothy C. Wong and Gustav Heldt (Amherst, New Delhi: Cambria Press and Manohar, 2014), 351–385; Sasaki Daiju 佐々木大樹, “Butchō sonshō darani kyōdō no kenkyū 仏頂尊勝陀羅尼經幢の研究,” [A Study of Sūtra Pillars of the *Uṣṇīṣavijayadhāraṇī*], *Chisan gakuho* 智山学報 [Journal of Chisan Studies] 57 (2008): B41–B67. On Khitan sites, see, for example, Sekino Tadashi 關野貞 and Takeshima Takuichi 竹島卓一, ed., *Ryō kin dai no kenchiku to sono butsumō* 遼金時代ノ建築ト其佛像. *Zuhan* 圖版 [Architecture and Buddhist Sculptures of the Liao and

accounts written in Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Tibetan, Khotanese, Uyghur, Tangut, and certainly Japanese that travelers and pilgrims encountered Indians and Indic culture in China.<sup>23</sup> It is, therefore, often and with good reason that in order to investigate the medieval period of the Silk Road(s) in East Asia we look to Japan for proof not only that Japanese pilgrims imported the Indic religion, but also to discover who they learned it from. The documents concerning two particular pilgrims, Enchin and Jōjin, who visited Song China during the mid-9th and mid-11th centuries, respectively, are particularly revealing because they demonstrate not only that these pilgrims sought out Indian teachers and to visit sites where Indic practices were most likely to be found, but also because some of what these accounts discuss looks strikingly familiar to some of the evidence from Sanskrit manuscript fragments found in Eastern Central Asia, Afghanistan, and Pakistan that Gregory Schopen, Oskar von Hinüber, and the late, great Karashima Seishi have devoted their academic lives to exposing.<sup>24</sup>

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Jin Periods. Illustrated Edition] (Tokyo: Tōhō bunka gakuin Tōkyō kenkyūjo, 1934–1935); Nancy Shatzman Steinhardt, *Liao Architecture* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997). The facsimile set is: Zhongguo fojiao xiehui 中国佛教协会 ed., *Fangshan shijing: Liao Jin kejing 房山石经 辽金刻经* [Fangshan Stone [Buddhist] Canon: Scriptures Cut during the Liao and Jin Dynasties], 22 vols. (Beijing: Zhongguo fojiao tushu wenwuguan, 1986–1993). On the Fangshan Stone Canon, see Jung-hsi Li, “The Stone Scriptures of Fang-shan,” *The Eastern Buddhist* 12 (1979): 104–113; Lewis R. Lancaster, “The Rock Cut Canon in China: Findings at Fang-shan,” (paper presented at the The Buddhist Heritage: Papers delivered at the Symposium of the same name convened at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, November 1985, 1989); He Mei 何梅, “Fangshan shijing yu Suihan lu Qidanzang Kaiyuanlu de guanxi zhi de tantao 房山石经与《随函录》《契丹藏》《开元录》的关系之探讨 [On the *Suihan lu* Edition from the Fangshan Stone Scriptures, the Khitan Buddhist Canon, and the *Kaiyuan lu*],” *Foxue yanjiu 佛学研究* [Buddhist Studies Research] 5 (1996): 262–268; Endymion Porter Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A Manual* (Cambridge: Harvard Council on East Asian Studies, 2000), 579, no. 533. Evidence for sponsored carving of scriptures during the Khitan is abundant; for examples from 965, 1110, 1117, 1118, a *dhāraṇī* pillar in 1136, and an undated list of newly carved *dhāraṇī* scriptures, see Yunjusi wenwu guanli chu 云居寺文物管理处 et al., ed., *Yunjusi zhenshi lu 云居寺贞石录* [Stone Records from Yunju Temple] (Beijing: Beijing yanshan chubanshe, 2008), 80–86.

23 See, for example, Imre Galambos and Sam van Schaik, *Manuscripts and Travellers: The Sino-Tibetan Documents of a Tenth-century Buddhist Pilgrim* (Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, 2012).

24 For example from Schopen's oeuvre, Gregory Schopen, “On the Absence of Urtexts and Otiose Ācāryas,” Oskar von Hinüber, “On the Early History of Indic Buddhist Colophons,” *International Journal of Buddhist Thought & Culture (Korea)* 27.1 (2017): 45–72; Oskar von Hinüber, “The Saddharmapuṇḍarikasūtra at Gilgit: Manuscripts, Worshipers, and Artists” [*Indo kokuritsu kōbunsho-kan shozō Girugitto Hokkekyō shahon-ban* インド国立公文書館所蔵ギルギット法華經写本一写本版], in *Gilgit Lotus Sutra Manuscripts from the National Archives of India*, ed. National Archives of India and Soka Gakkai Institute of

Furthermore, the type of Buddhism that Enchin and Jōjin sought in China is intimately connected to the transmission of phonetics to the extent that one of the documents I investigate in this paper has Sanskrit Siddham writing to dedicate the merit from copying a catalogue to the *dharma* and the Buddhist *saṃgha*.

Before I address the matter of Indic religion taken to and perhaps even knowingly transplanted in Japan from the Silk Road(s), let me tackle the obvious question: did the Silk Road(s) extend to early or medieval Japan? The short answer, in my opinion, is emphatically no. To begin with, putting aside the problematical spotlight on silk as a commodity which did, of course, reach Japan in significant quantities, just as it did points west in Central Asia from China, despite how uncomfortable I am with assigning value to terms like ‘centre’ and ‘periphery,’ especially when addressing the history of medieval East Asian Buddhism, it is nearly impossible to demonstrate bidirectional trade between China and Japan as can be deduced from archaeological, art historical, and textual analysis concerning the trade in all manner of goods and ideas between China and Persia or India and certainly Central Asia. During the medieval period Japan was, like Ireland in Europe, a small, ‘peripheral’ archipelago set quite apart from the broad trade networks that linked China with Eastern Central Asia. But, again like Ireland in terms of the preservation of medieval Christian manuscripts and religious regalia,<sup>25</sup> the fact that in Japan we have abundant material cultural evidence of the influence of Silk Road(s) culture, ideas, religion, and perhaps even—as Iyanaga postulates—a proclivity for the

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Oriental Philology (Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Philology, 2012), 35–59; Oskar von Hinüber, *Die Patola Śāhis: Ihra Steininschriften, Inschriften auf Bronzen, Handschriftenkolophone un Schutzzauber. Antiquities of Northern Pakistan 5* (Mainz: von Zabern, 2004); Oskar von Hinüber, “The Gilgit Manuscripts: An Ancient Buddhist Library in Modern Research,” in *From Birch Bark to Digital Data: Recent Advances in Buddhist Manuscript Research, Papers Presented at the Conference Indic Buddhist Manuscripts: The State of the Field, Stanford, June 15–19, 2009*, ed. Paul Harrison and Jens-Uwe Hartmann (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2014), 79–135. Seishi Karashima, “Some Folios of the *Tathāgataḡaṇāñācīntyaviṣayāvātāra* and *Dvādaśadaṇḡakanāmāṣṡaṡatav imalikaraṇā* in the Kurita Collection,” *International Journal of Buddhist Thought & Culture (Korea)* 27.1 (2017): 11–44; Seishi Karashima, “Stūpas described in the Chinese translations of the *Vinayas*,” *Annual Report of The International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology at Soka University* 21 (2017): 439–469; Seishi Karashima and Klaus Wille, ed., *Buddhist Manuscripts from Central Asia: The British Library Sanskrit Fragments*, 3 vols. (Tokyo: Meiwa Printing Company, 2006).

25 See Burnigh Eltjo and Jan Luiten van Zanden, “Charting the ‘Rise of the West’: Manuscripts and Printed Books in Europe, A Long-Term Perspective from the Sixth through Eighteenth Centuries,” *The Journal of Economic History* 69.2 (2009): 409–445.

reception of Indic religious norms does not mean that the Japanese were part or perhaps even a terminus of the medieval Silk Road(s).

Yet, as I demonstrate in this paper, it is uniquely through first-hand Japanese sources that we find evidence of how intent two of the more famous medieval pilgrims to China were to encounter Indian teachers and the latest Indic religious culture and perhaps even Sanskrit there. The Silk Road(s) as viewed through the lens of manuscripts that reveal what Enchin and Jōjin did and sought out in Tang and Song China not only demonstrates that the route(s) seem to have flourished during the post-An Lushan (703–757, 安祿山) and Shi Siming (703–761, 史思明) rebellions, the rebellion of Huang Chao (835–884, 黃巢) and the Huichang era suppression of the faith, but at least on Mt. Wutai and in Bianjing, well into the late 11th century. I definitely cannot subscribe to Iyanaga's (exaggerated) analysis of elements of the Shintō religion as Hinduism, but I will show that the practices these Mii Temple Tendai monastics brought back to Japan and seem to have been applied to the veneration of the indigenous *kami* at eight specific shrines can be fruitfully connected to the culture of the Silk Road(s).

## 2 Sacred Transmitted Documents and Calalogs of Items Brought Back from China Concerning Enchin in Tang China

The Japanese term *shōgyō* (聖教) is used to refer to religious, though not always, documents preserved in monastic libraries in medieval Japan that were catalogued locally. As in medieval Europe, xylographic printing technology, including the Buddhist canons in Sinitic (classical Chinese), was not widely adopted from the Eurasian continent, we have extensive documentation of the contents of several monastic libraries. The most extensive library from medieval Japan holds manuscript documents from the library of Mt. Kitano Shinpuku Temple Hōshōin (Jap. Kitanosan Shinpukuji Hōshōin 北野山真福寺宝生院), today known as Ōsu Kannon (大須観音) in Nagoya, which Abe Yasurō has shed more light upon than anyone else. There are now three book series of documents from Shinpuku Temple from Rinsen shoten (臨川書店).<sup>26</sup> Less than five per cent of more than 15,000 manuscripts from Shinpuku Temple have been published. In 2017, Bensei publishers (Jap. Bensei shuppan 勉誠出版) released two series of *shōgyō* documents from Mt. Amano Kongō Temple

26 Abe Yasurō 阿部泰朗 and Yamazaki Makoto 山崎誠, ed., *Shinpuku ji zenpon sōkan* 真福寺善本叢刊 [Meritorious Books from Shinpukuji], Series 1, 1998–2004: 12 vols.; Series 2, 2003–2009: 12 vols.; and Series 3: 4 vols. as of 2019, Kyoto: Rinsen shoten.



(Jap. Amanosan Kongōji 天野山金剛寺) in Osaka under the title *Amanosan Kongōji zenpon sōkan* 天野山金剛寺善本叢刊 [Collected Works from the Meritorious Books kept at Amanosan Kongō Temple]. Ochiai Toshinori and his team at the International College for Postgraduate Buddhist Studies (ICPBS) in Tokyo have brought considerable attention to the manuscript Buddhist canon from Kongō Temple, as well as from seven other sites, including most notably Nanatsu Temple (Jap. Nanatsu dera 七寺) in Nagoya.<sup>27</sup> But these *shōgyō* documents reflect aspects of the history of medieval Japan that do not seem to correspond with contemporary developments in China or Korea, including the roughly 40,000 mostly Buddhist manuscripts which were found at the turn of the 20th century in the so-called Library Cave near the city of Dunhuang.

In Northern Song (960–1126, 北宋) China, xylographic and perhaps metal-type printing was sufficiently widespread by the late 11th century that one of the most famous poets and statesmen, Huang Tingjian (1045–1105, 黃庭堅), meant it when he said that he had over 10,000 books in his library.<sup>28</sup> Based upon the fact that during the 10th–12th centuries the Sinitic Buddhist Canon was printed by the Khitan (907–1125, in Chinese sources known as Liao 遼), the *Qidan zang* 契丹藏 [Khitan Canon] (printed ca. 1031–1064), Koryō Koreans (936–1392, 高麗國, printed ca. 1011–1087), and Jurchen Dynasty (1115–1234, in Chinese sources known as Jin 金), the *Zhaocheng zang* 趙城藏 [Zhaocheng Canon] (printed ca. 1149–1173), who primarily followed the Song xylographic edition entitled *Shuban da zangjing* 蜀版大藏經 [Shu (Sichuan) Canon] or *Kaibao zang* 開寶藏 [Kaibao Canon] (compiled 983), scholars have mostly presumed that Buddhist texts on the continent were, like secular works

27 Ochiai Toshinori, et al., ed., *The Manuscripts of Nanatsu-dera. A Recently Discovered Treasure-House in Downtown Nagoya* (Kyoto: Italian School of East Asian Studies, 1991); Ochiai Toshinori, Frédéric Girard, and Li-Ying Kuo, “Découverte de manuscrits bouddhiques chinois au Japon [Conférence prononcée par Monsieur Ochiai Toshinori],” *Bulletin de l’École française d’Extrême-Orient* 83 (1996); Ochiai Toshinori 落合俊典, ed., *Kongōji issaikyō no sōgōteki kenkyū to Kongōji shōgyō no kisoteki kenkyū* 金剛寺一切經の総合的研究と金剛寺聖教の基礎的研究 *Heisei 16–18 nendo kagaku kenkyūhi hojokin kiban kenkyū* (A) *kenkyū seika hōkokusho* [General Research Report on the Kongōji Manuscript Canon and a Basic Survey of the Kongōji Sacred Texts] 平成 16–18 年度科学研究費補助金基盤研究 (A) 研究成果報告書 [2004–2006 Grant-in-Aid Scientific Research (Category A) Research Report], 2 vols. (Tokyo: Kokusai Bukkyōgaku daigakuin daigaku, 2007), vol. 1. Cf. Gakujutsu, *Nihon genson hasshu issaikyō taishō mokuroku tsuke Tonkō bukkyō bunken*, op. cit.

28 Yugen Wang, *Ten Thousand Scrolls: Reading and Writing in the Poetics of Huang Tingjian and the Late Northern Song* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2011). On typography during the Song and afterward, see Michela Bussotti and Qi Han, “Typography for a Modern World? The Ways of Chinese Movable Types,” *East Asian Science, Technology and Society* 40 (2014): 9–44.

such as collections of poetry, encyclopedias like the *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 [Extensive Records from the Taiping Era], and so forth, kept, read, and used for a variety of purposes in printed editions.<sup>29</sup> For Shingon documents, because we have caches of manuscript documents from libraries, which we do not from China or Korea earlier than the late Ming (1368–1644, 明)—from sources preserved in Japan—and Chosŏn (1392–1897, 朝鮮) Dynasties, the situation in medieval Japan—as in Europe—looks quite different.<sup>30</sup> But the situation is far more complex when investigating the history of the Tendai of Enryaku Temple (Jap. Enryaku ji 延暦寺) and Onjō Temple (alt. Miidera). The *shōgyō* documents from Shinpuku Temple and Kongō Temple reveal much,

- 29 The most extensive survey in English with details about the printed editions of the Buddhist Canons in Sinitic is Florin Deleanu, “The Transmission of Xuanzang’s Translation of the *Yogācārabhūmi* in East Asia: With a Philological Analysis of Scroll XXXIII,” in *Kongōji issaikyō no sōgōteki kenkyū to Kongōji shōgyō no kisoteki kenkyū: kenkyū seika hōkokusho* 金剛寺一切經の総合的研究と金剛寺聖教の基礎的研究：研究成果報告書 [General Research Report on the Kongōji Manuscript Canon and a Basic Survey of the Kongōji Sacred Texts, vol. 1] Heisei 16–18 nendo kagaku kenkyūhi hojokin kiban kenkyū (A) kenkyū seika hōkokusho 平成 16–18 年度科学研究費補助金基盤研究 (A) 研究成果報告書 [2004–2006 Grant-in-Aid Scientific Research (Category A) Research Report vol. 1], ed. Ochiai Tshinori 落合俊典 (Tokyo: Kokusai Bukkyōgaku daigakuin daigaku, 2007), 1–44; 632–589. See also Chōnen (983–1016 喬然, in China 983–986) returned to Japan in 986 with a copy of the newly printed *Kaibao Canon* and an additional forty rolls of newly translated texts (for a total of 5425 texts he brought back to Japan). The esteemed statesman Fujiwara no Michinaga (966–1028, 藤原道長) acquired this canon during the early 11th century, when he oversaw the construction of a lavish, private temple for his clan in Kyoto called Hōjō Temple (Jap. Hōjō ji 法成寺). See Yoritomi Motohiro 頼富本宏, *Nicchū o musunda bukkyōsō: hatō o koete kesshi no tokai* 日中を結んだ仏教僧：波濤を超えて決死の渡海 [Connections between Chinese and Japanese Buddhist Monks who Crossed the Surging Sea Prepared for Death] (Tokyo: Nōsan Gyoson bunkakyōkai, 2009), 420–425. On the history of the *First Koryō Canon*, see Sem Vermeersch, “Royal Ancestor Worship and Buddhist Politics: The Hyōnhwa-sa Stele and the Origins of the First Koryō Tripitaka,” *Journal of Korean Studies* 18 (2014). Li Fang 李昉, *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 [Extensive Records from the Taiping Era] (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1961).
- 30 Three revealing studies are on the book trade between late Ming and early Qing (1644–1912, 清) China and Korea: Wang Yong 王勇, Chen Xiaofa 陳小法, and Ge Jiyong 葛继勇, *Zhong-Ri ‘shuji zhi lu’ yanjiu* 中日「書籍之路」研究 [Study of the Sino-Japanese ‘Book Road’] (Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 2003); Benjamin A. Elman, “Sinophiles and Sinophobes in Tokugawa Japan: Politics, Classicism, and Medicine During the Eighteenth Century (*Shiba shiji zai Dechuan Riben Songhuazhe he Bianhuazhe de wenti: Yi Zhongyi ji Hanfang weizhu* 十八世紀在德川日本‘頌華者’和‘貶華者’的問題—以中醫及漢方為主),” *East Asian Science, Technology and Society: An International Journal* 2 (2008): 93–121; Richard D. McBride II, “Wish-Fulfilling Spells and Talismans, Efficacious Resonance, and Trilingual Spell Books: The Mahāpratisarā-dhāraṇī in Chosŏn Buddhism,” *Pacific World, Third Series* 20 (2018): 55–93.

much more information. Although, because there are so many more Buddhist texts than there are books in the *Vulgate*, historians of Japanese religion, literature, and textual editions and language (Jap. *bunkengaku* 文献学) are just beginning to piece together conclusions like Eltjo Buringh and Jan Luiten van Zanden about European books, and even then about only the textual world of Shingon Esoteric Buddhism (Jap. *tōmitsu* 東密), as in the esoteric teachings of the Eastern Temple in Kyoto (Jap. Tōji 東寺) in medieval Japan, contrasted with Tendai so-called *taimitsu* (台密, the esoteric teachings of the Tendai tradition), leaving aside for the moment other traditions including Zen (禪), Pure Land, and so forth.<sup>31</sup>

What I hope to eventually investigate by looking at *shōgyō* documents from Shinpuku Temple and Kongō Temple is what *shōgyō* documents may have once been within the library at Matsuno'o shrine-temple complex or multiplex (Jap. *jingūji* 神宮寺, alt. *jinguji* 神供寺 or *miyadera* 宮寺) in Kyoto during the 12th–16th centuries.<sup>32</sup> My research into the manuscript canon kept there until the mid-19th century, which was sponsored and vowed by father and son shrine priests (Jap. *kannushi* 神主) Hata no Chikatō 秦親任 (Chief shrine proest or *kannushi* 神主 on 1076/2/20) and Hata no Yorichika 秦頼義 (*kannushi* on 1128/8/12) over 23 years (1115 to 1138), demonstrates that much of that manuscript canon was copied from the library of the Bonshaku Temple (Jap. Bonshakuji 梵釈寺), a Tendai library-temple that was established between 783

31 Burnigh Eltjo and Jan Luiten van Zanden, “Charting the ‘Rise of the West’: Manuscripts and Printed Books in Europe, A Long-Term Perspective from the Sixth through Eighteenth Centuries,” *The Journal of Economic History* 69.2 (2009). On the genre but will scant attention to Tendai Esoteric—Taimitsu (台密)—monks, see Ian Astley, “Esoteric Buddhism, Material Culture, and Catalogues in East Asia” in *Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras in East Asia*, ed. Charles D. Orzech, Henrik H. Sørensen, and Richard K. Payne (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 709–718. For an overview of the Taimitsu tradition in Japan, see Lucia Dolce, “Taimitsu: The Esoteric Buddhism of the Tendai School”, in *Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras in East Asia*, ed. Charles D. Orzech, Henrik H. Sørensen, and Richard K. Payne (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 744–767.

32 On *jingūji* and *miyadera*, see Sagai Tatsuru 嵯峨井建, *Shinbutsu shūgō no rekishi to girei kūkan* 神仏習合の歴史と儀礼空間 [History of Shintō-Buddhist Syncretism and Ritual Space] (Kyoto: Shibunkaku, 2013), 105–110. For the term ‘multiplex’ see Allan Grapard, “Institution, Ritual, and Ideology: The Twenty-Two Shrine-Temple Multiplexes of Heian Japan,” *History of Religions* 27.3 (1988): 246–269; and his synopsis in Donald H. Shively and William H. McCullough ed., *The Cambridge History of Japan, Vol. 2, Heian Japan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), chap. 8. See below and Neil McMullin, *Buddhism and the State in 16th Century Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 8–32; Peter Kornicki, *The Book in Japan: A Cultural History from the Beginnings to the Nineteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1998; repr., Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, 2001), 252–253; cf. George A. Keyworth, “Apocryphal Chinese Books in the Buddhist Canon at Matsuo Shintō Shrine,” *Studies in Chinese Religions* 2.3 (2016): 1–2.

and 792 by Emperor Kanmu (737–806, r. 781–806, 桓武) when he renamed the southern ridge Bonshaku Temple of what had been called Sūfuku Temple (Jap. Sūfuku ji 崇福寺). This temple was located just northwest of the city of Ōtsu (大津), on the lower ridges of Mt. Hiei (Jap. Hiei zan 比叡山).<sup>33</sup> It appears this temple once held a copy of the Kaiyuan-era Chinese Buddhist canon that Genbō returned from Tang China with and his disciple Segyō (d. 807, 施暁) may have copied it. These scriptures were augmented by scriptures brought back from China by Eichū (alt. Yōchū, 743–816, 永忠), a Buddhist monk who studied in China for nearly thirty years at Ximing Temple (Chin. Ximing si 西明寺) in the Tang capital of Chang'an, met Kūkai (774–835, 空海, Kōbō daishi 弘法大師, in China 804–806) there, and returned to Japan on the same ship as Saichō (767–822, 最澄, Dengyō daishi 傳教大師, in China 804–805); Eichū was made abbot of Bonshaku Temple by Emperor Kanmu sometime around 806.<sup>34</sup> The edition of Annen's (841–915?, 安然) *Shō ajari shingon mikkyō burui sōroku* 諸阿闍梨真言密教部類惣録 [Comprehensive Catalogue of the Shingon Esoteric Teachings of the [Eight] Ācāryas] (T. 2176.55., hereafter *Comprehensive Catalogue of the Shingon Esoteric Teachings*) from Shinpuku Temple, as we will see, shows that this library was still a well-respected library when he compiled this catalogue. Based on colophons describing how scriptures were copied for Matsuno'o during the 12th century by Hata no Chikatō and Yorichika and also between 1159 and 1165, when Ryōkei (d.u., 良慶), the abbot of Myōhō Temple (Jap. Myōhō ji 妙法寺), one of two known temples in the southern valley (Jap. Minamidani 南谷) of the Matsuno'o Jingū Temple precincts, vowed and added scriptures, I believe that Matsuno'o was once a Tendai-linked centre, unlike either Shinpuku Temple or Kongō Temple which are clearly associated with the medieval Shingon temples like the Daigo Temple (Jap. Daigo ji 醍醐寺),

- 33 *Jimon denki horoku* 寺門傳記補録 [Supplemental Record of the Transmission Record of the Temple Gate Branch], *Dai Nihon Bukkyō zensho* 大日本仏教全書 [Complete Buddhist Works of Japan] no. 787, vol. 86, comp. Shikō (1662–1720, 志晃), 6; *Dai Nihon Bukkyō zensho* 787.86,145b–148a contains a brief history of Sūfukuji called *Sūfukuji engi fu sangō* 崇福寺縁起付山号 [Chronicle of the Origins of Sūfukuji and the Naming of the Temple]. On the dating of Shikō's compilation, see Miyake Hitoshi 宮家準, "Shugendō no kyōten keisei to Tendaishū 修験道の教典形成と天台宗 [On the Formation of Shugendō Scriptures and the Tendai Tradition]," *Tōkyō daigaku shūkyōgaku nenpō* 東京大学宗教学年報 [Annual Report of Religious Studies Research of Tōkyō University] 32 (2015): 33. This text cites *Shoku Nihongi* 続日本紀 [Continued Chronicles of Japan] 38, and the date 792 comes also from Kokan Shiren's (1278–1346, 虎関師鍊) *Genkō shakusho* 元亨釋書 [Buddhist History of the Genkō Era [1321–1324]], chap. 23: Fujita Takuji 藤田琢司, *Kundoku Genkō shakusho* 訓読元亨釈書 [Japanese Reading of Kokan Shiren's Buddhist History of the Genkō Era [1321–1324]] (Kyoto: Zen bunka kenkyūjo, 2011), 2, 380.
- 34 *Genkō shakusho* 16, *Dai Nihon Bukkyō zensho* 470.6, 149b–c.

the Eastern Temple, and other sites in the Kinki (近畿) region.<sup>35</sup> Investigating extant *shōgyō* documents related to particularly the Tendai tradition of Mii Temple runs through Enchin and the surprisingly prominent role he may have played even in so-called ‘rival’ Shingon communities.<sup>36</sup>

Only one of the five extant catalogues written by Enchin specifically tallies books by a temple in the western Tang capital Chang’an and two cover temples named Kaiyuan Temple (Chin. Kaiyuan si 開元寺, common practice during the Tang after the Kaiyuan-era) in Fuzhou (福州), Wenzhou (温州) and Taizhou (台州). Table 1.1 provides a list of these catalogues.

Although Ennin’s *Nittō guhō junrei kōki* [alt. *gyōki*] 入唐求法巡礼行記 [Record of a Pilgrimage to Tang China in Search of the Dharma] is well-known today, and we have a catalogue by the Shingon ‘patriarch’ Kūkai, [*Go-*] *Shōrai mokuroku* 御請来目錄 [(Kūkai’s) Catalogue of Items Brought Back [to Japan]] (T. 2161.55), it looks like Enchin may have been the most attentive to the project of cataloguing the treasures he found in Tang China.<sup>37</sup>

The situation looks different if we pay close attention to Annen’s *Comprehensive Catalogue of the Shingon Esoteric Teachings*, and especially if we briefly examine the Shinpuku Temple edition. Compiled at roughly the same time as the eminent Japanese literatus Miyoshi no Kiyoyuki’s (847–918, 三善清行) *Enchin oshō den* 円珍和尚伝 [Biography of Preceptor or Upādhyāya Enchin] (hereafter *Biography of Enchin*, ca. 902) but well after Enchin’s diary, *Gyōrekishō* 行歷抄 [Travel Notes], Annen’s *Comprehensive Catalogue of the Shingon Esoteric Teachings* not surprisingly favors texts brought back to Japan by Ennin, whom he studied with before his ‘official’ teacher Henjō (816–890, 遍照). Like the Taishō edition, the Shinpuku Temple edition contains information attached to many texts listed in Annen’s catalogue which shows that the libraries of Shūei’s (809–884, 宗叡, in China 862–865) Engaku Temple

35 Keyworth, “Apocryphal Chinese Books in the Buddhist Canon at Matsuo Shintō Shrine;” George A. Keyworth, “Copying for the Kami: On the Manuscript Set of the Buddhist Canon held by Matsuno’o Shrine,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 44.2 (2017): 161–190.

36 On how late the distinction of a distinct Shingon tradition, let alone traditions tied to specific temples such as Daigo Temple or Ninna Temple (Jap. Ninna ji 仁和寺), and so forth is briefly discussed in Abé, *The Weaving of Mantra*, 424–426; Ryūichi Abé, “Scholasticism, Exegesis, and Ritual Practice: On Renovation in the History of Buddhist Writings in the Early Heian Period,” in *Heian Japan, Centers and Peripheries*, ed. Mikael S. Adolphson, Edward Kamens, and Stacie Matsumoto (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2007), 179–211.

37 Ennin’s diary is distinguished today because of Edwin O. Reischauer, *Ennin’s Diary: The Record of a Pilgrimage to China in Search of the Law* (New York: Ronald Press Co., 1955); Edwin O. Reischauer, *Ennin’s Travels in Tang China* (New York: Ronald Press Company, 1955).

TABLE 1.1 Enchin's Catalogues of Books in Chinese Monastic Libraries<sup>a</sup>

	Title	Length	Date	Source in <i>Dai Nihon Bukkyō zensho</i> /Taishō canon
1	<i>Kaigenji gūtoku kyōsho ki mokuroku</i> 開元寺求得經疏記目錄 [Catalogue of Scriptures and Commentaries Collected from Kaiyuan Monastery [Fuzhou]] (alt. <i>Kaigenji guhō mokuroku</i> 開元寺求法目錄 [Catalogue of Books Found at Kaiyuan Temple])	1 roll	Friday, 27 October, 853 (Dazhong 大中 7.9.21):	vol. 95, no. 863, 252 T. 2169
2	<i>Fūkushū Onshū Taishū gūtoku kyōritsuronsho ki gaishotō mokuroku</i> 福州溫州台州求得經律論疏記外書等目錄 [Catalogue of Sūtras, Abhidharma, Śāstras, and Commentaries from [Kaiyuan Temples] in Fuzhou, Wenzhou, and Taizhou] (alt. <i>Fūkushū Onshū Taishū guhō mokuroku</i> 福州溫州台州求法目錄 [Catalogue of Books Found in Fuzhou and Taizhou (Temples)])	1 roll	854 (Dazhong 8)	vol. 95, no. 865, 253–256 T. 2170
3	<i>Seiryūji guhō mokuroku</i> 青龍寺求法目錄 [Catalogue of Searching for Scriptures at Qinglong Monastery [Chang'an]]	1 roll	Wednesday, 4 December, 855 (Dazhong 9.10.21)	vol. 95, no. 865, 257–258 T. 2171
4	<i>Chishō daishi shōrai mokuroku</i> 智証大師請來目錄 [Catalogue of Books Enchin Brought Back to Japan]	1 roll	Wednesday, 29 June, 858 (Dazhong 12.5.15)	T. 2173
5	<i>Nihon biku Enchin nittō guhō mokuroku</i> 日本比丘圓珍入唐求法目錄 [Catalogue of Scriptures Found [in China] by the Japanese Bhikṣu Enchin]	1 roll	859 (Tenan 天安 3) <sup>b</sup>	vol. 95, no. 866, 259–264 T. 2172

a See also, Abe Yasurō 阿部泰郎, *Chūsei Nihon no shūkyō tekusuto taikai* 中世日本宗教テキスト体系 [The System of Medieval Japanese Religious Texts] (Nagoya: Nagoya daigaku shuppankai, 2013), 202.

b This text contains *Kokuseiji guhō mokuroku* 國清寺求法目錄 (Catalogue of Scriptures Found at Guoqing monastery [Mount Tiantai]), 1 roll, and has the date 857 (Dazhong 11).

(Jap. Engakuji 円覚寺, today's Mizuoyama dera 水尾山寺, not to be confused with the Zen temple in Kamakura) and Bonshaku Temple were checked, along with the *Zhenyuan xinding shijiao mulu* 貞元新定釋教目錄 [Newly Revised Catalogue of Buddhist Scriptures Made during the Zhenyuan-Era, T. 2157], comp. 799 or 800 by Yuanzhao (d.u., 圓照). Using the CBETA online edition with its many errors of T. 2176.55,<sup>38</sup> there are roughly thirty texts attributed to Saichō in the first roll with 18 in the second. For Kūkai, there are approximately 150 in roll 1 and 81 in roll 2. The tabulation for Ennin, Jōgyō (d. 867, 常暁, in China 838–839), Engyō (799–852, 円行, in China 838–839), Eun (798–869, 惠運, in China 842–847), and Shūei is as follows, respectively: 280 in roll 1, 189 in roll 2; 10 in roll 1, 23 in roll 2; 90 in roll 1, 39 in roll 2; 89 in roll 1 and 73 in roll 2; 83 in roll 1 and 15 in roll 2. Annen lists 78 texts from Enchin in roll one and 51 in roll two. The Taishō edition also lists 154 texts in roll one and 37 in roll two checked against the library of Bonshaku Temple; 206 in roll one and 50 in roll two were checked (many against both editions) with the library of Engaku Temple.

There are nine extant editions of the *Comprehensive Catalogue of the Shingon Esoteric Teachings*. The earliest dates to 965; the latest (T. 2176.55) is an Edo (1603–1868, 江戸) period reprint of a 10th century manuscript edition.<sup>39</sup> Despite the fact that Annen was a Tendai monk and it is often presumed that this catalogue favors Tendai monk-pilgrims and may reflect nascent sectarian tensions, these editions come from Shingon libraries, including Shinpuku Temple. This edition has a special colophon, which reflects not only how to read the notes about which texts Annen assigns to each traveler, but also how broad the scope of transmission was understood to be during the 10th century. As in the order I listed the number of texts assigned to each pilgrim above, Saichō is defined as Dengyō daishi from Mt. Hiei; Ennin and Enchin are listed in the same fashion. Kūkai is assigned to Mt. Kōya, Engyō to the Reigon Temple (Jap. Reigon ji 靈巖寺, in Yamashiro (山城), western Kyoto today), Eun to the Anshō Temple (Jap. Anshō ji 安祥寺), and Shūei, a.k.a. Engaku, is listed as a first rank official monk (Jap. *sōjō* 僧正). A scribe by the name of Kōkaku (fl. 12th c. 光覺)

38 <http://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw>.

39 Tomabechi Seiichi 苔米地誠一, "Shō ajari shingon mikkyō burui sōroku kaidai 諸阿闍梨真言密教部類惣録開題 [Guide to [the Shinpukuji Edition] of Annen's Comprehensive Catalogue of the Shingon Esoteric Teachings of the [Eight] Ācāryas]," in *Shinpukuji komokurokushū 2* 真福寺古目錄集二 [Guide to [the Shinpukuji Edition] of Annen's Comprehensive Catalogue of the Shingon Esoteric Teachings of the [Eight] Ācāryas], ed. Abe Yasurō 阿部泰朗 and Yamazaki Makoto 山崎誠 (Kyoto: Rinsen shoten, 2005), 608.

of the Jimyōbō (慈明房) checked this manuscript against two others (Engaku Temple and Bonshaku Temple);<sup>40</sup> the manuscript was copied on the 27th day of the 10th luni-solar month of 1126.<sup>41</sup> Then, in Sanskrit Siddham letters we find the syllables for *prakṣa dharma saṃgha ko* or *ka*. *Prakṣa* is a mistake for *prarakṣa*, which makes the phrase mean: “[copied] to protect the *dharma* and the *saṃgha*.”<sup>42</sup> Tomabechi Sei’ichi thinks the difficult to read letter must be *ko* because of the first character in Kōkaku’s name. But it could be *ka*, which is a syllable often written to refer to protector of the *dharma* monastics.<sup>43</sup>

What is clear however we read the Siddham letters is it must have been important for Kōkaku to have let readers know that there were eight Japanese monastics who brought Esoteric Buddhist ritual texts back to Japan with them during the 9th century. The world we now read about in most textbooks concerning the history of Esoteric Buddhism (Jap. *mikkyō*) in Japan with two putative founders, Kūkai and Saichō, if the latter is mentioned at all, was still far in the future when the Shinpuku Temple edition of *Comprehensive Catalogue of the Shingon Esoteric Teachings* was copied. It should be noted that the Nanatsu Temple Canon contains another edition of *Comprehensive Catalogue of the Shingon Esoteric Teachings*, copied on the seventh day of the 12th luni-solar month of 1178 by Ekaku (late 12th c., 榮覺) and checked or proofread by Eshun (late 12th c., 榮俊); there is a dedication or vow, which reads as follows: “presented for future worthies to together, at that time, attain the seed of Buddhahood.”<sup>44</sup>

Almost as if Ekaku or Eshun’s vow was realised, in the catalogue of *shōgyō* documents from the Katsuo Temple (Jap. Katsuo ji 勝尾寺) in Osaka kept at Shinpuku Temple, *Shōgyō mokuroku higashi Katsuojiyū mokuroku* 聖教目録東勝尾寺流目録 [Catalogue of Sacred Transmitted Documents from the Lineage of the East Katsuo Temple], we find another interesting colophon: diagrams listing the transmission lineages of four, not eight, of the Tang monk-pilgrims listed in *Comprehensive Catalogue of the Shingon Esoteric Teachings*. Here, Saichō comes first, followed by Kūkai, Ennin, and Enchin as follows:

40 以兩本比較了慈明房光覺。

41 大治元年年□十月二十七日書寫了。

42 Abe Yasurō and Yamazaki Makoto ed., *Shinpukuji komokurokushū* 2, 511, 605–605.

43 Tomabechi, “Shō ajari shingon mikkyō burui sōroku kaidai,” 206.

44 贈後賢□共期佛果. Nanatsudera issaikyō hozonkai 七寺一切經保存会, *Owari shiryō Nanatsudera issaikyō mokuroku* 尾張史料七寺一切經目録 [Catalogue of the Natsudera Scriptures] (Nagoya: Nanatsudera issaikyō hozonkai 七寺一切經保存会, 1968), 127.



*Saichō:*

[*Taizō(kai)*] Mahāvairocana (Jap. Dainichi Nyorai 大日如來)—Vajrapāṇi  
(Jap. Kongō shu 金剛手)—Dharmagupta (Jap. Daruma kikuta 達摩  
掬多)

Śubhakarasiṃha (637–735, Jap. Zenmui 善無畏)—Yixing (ca. 683–727,  
Jap. Ichigyō 一行)—Shunxiao (ca. 805, Jap. Jungyō 順曉)

Saichō

[*Kongō(kai)*] Mahāvairocana—Samantabhadra (Jap. Fuken 普賢)—  
Mañjuśrī (Jap. Manju shuri 曼殊室利)

Nagārjuna (Jap. Ryūmyō 龍猛)—Nagabodhi (Jap. Ryūchi 龍智)—  
Vajrabodhi (671–741, Jap. Kongōchi 金剛智)

Śubhakarasiṃha—Shunxiao—Saichō

*Kūkai:*

[*Taizō(kai)*] Mahāvairocana—Vajrapāṇ—Dharmagupta  
Śubhakarasiṃha—Xuancho (ca. 768?, Jap. Genchō 玄超)—Huiguo  
(746–806, Jap. Keika 惠果)

Kū—[空—]

[*Kongō(kai)*] Samantabhadra—Mañjuśrī—Nagārjuna

Nagabodhi—Vajrabodhi—Amoghavajra

Huiguo—Shunxiao—Kū

□ [様?] 別カ

Mahāvairocana—Vajra[sattva] (Jap. Kongō sata 金剛サタ)—Nagārjuna  
Nagabodhi—Vajrabodhi—Amoghavajra

Huiguo—Kū

*Ennin:*

[*Taizō(kai)*] Mahāvairocana—Vajrapāṇi—Dharmagupta

Śubhakarasiṃha—Xuancho—Huiguo

Yicao (9th c., Jap. Gisō 義操)—Yizhen (ca. 781–833,

Jap. Gishin 義真)—Ennin

[*Kongō(kai)*] Mahāvairocana—Samantabhadra—Mañjuśrī

Nagārjuna—Nagabodhi—Vajrabodhi

Amoghavajra—Huiguo—Huize (9th c., Jap. Esoku 惠則)

Yuanzheng (9th c., Jap. Gensei 元政)—Ennin

*Enchin:*

[*Taizō(kai)*] Mahāvairocana—Vajrapāṇi—Dharmagupta  
 Śubhakarasiṃha—Xuanchao—Huiguo  
 Yicao—Farun (9th c., Jap. Hōjun 法潤)—Faquan (fl. 800–870, Jap.  
 Hassen 法全)  
 Enchin  
 [*Kongō(kai)*] Mahāvairocana—Samantabhadra—Mañjuśrī  
 Nagārjuna—Nagabodhi—Vajrabodhi  
 Amoghavajra—Huiguo—Yicao  
 Faquan

The order seems to reflect historical chronology of these monastics' journeys to China. But otherwise we find a list of transmission that favors full transmission of these two lineages back to putative Indian patriarchs. By the 13th day of the second luni-solar month of 1355, when Yūe (born 1321, 宥惠) copied this catalogue and declared himself to be a disciple of the Diamond Buddha Mahāvairocana as *Kongō bussū* (金剛佛子), it appears that which Indian teachers and Chinese disciples Saichō (Shunxiao in Yuezhou (越州) on his way home), Kūkai (Huiguo), Ennin (Yicao, Yizhen, and Yuanzheng), and Ennin (Faquan) were understood to have received transmission from had become central to the transmission of Esoteric Buddhist lineages and very likely *shōgyō* documents to study the ritual manuals with the 'correct' lineages' teachers, three of whom were still understood to be Tendai, with Kūkai singled out.<sup>45</sup> How did these teachers in China come to receive such particular attention? And who was Faquan?

45 On these lineages, and Kūkai, see Abé, *The Weaving of Mantra*; Jinhua Chen, "The Construction of Early Tendai Esoteric Buddhism: The Japanese Provenance of Saichō's Transmission Documents and Three Esoteric Apocrypha Attributed to Śubhākarasiṃha," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 21.1 (1998): 21–76; Jinhua Chen, *Making and Remaking History: A Study of Tiantai Sectarian Historiography* (Tokyo: International Institute for Buddhist Studies of the International College for Advanced Buddhist Studies, 1999). For fuller detail about competing claims of transmission and these Chinese Esoteric Buddhist teachers, see Chen Jinhua, *Crossfire: Shingon-Tendai Strife as Seen in Two Twelfth-Century Polemics, with Special References to Their Background in Tang China* (Tokyo: International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 2010).

### 3 Kongō Temple Edition of Miyoshi no Kiyoyuki's Biography of Enchin on Enchin in China

As an historical document, the edition we have of Enchin's diary *Travel Notes* was kept at Ishiyama Temple (Jap. Ishiyama dera 石山寺) and was copied with some corrections made on the 17th day of the tenth luni-solar month of 1197 from a previous copy produced by Chikan (12th c., 智勸) in 1195 of a copy by one Raikaku (頼覚) in 1049 of the short diary that Enchin finished writing after he had returned to Japan on the 23rd day of the first luni-solar month of 859.<sup>46</sup> The edition we have in the *Dai Nihon Bukkyō zensho* 大日本佛教全書 [Complete Buddhist Works of Japan] has some commentary or notes added by Raikaku. What concerns me most from the *Travel Notes* is that it explains that Enchin received transmission of the teachings of the Diamond-realm and Womb-realm *maṇḍalas* at Qinglong Temple (Chin. Qinglong si 青龍寺) in Chang'an from Faquan (fl. 800–870, 法全), but it does not accord with what is recorded in *Biography of Enchin*. *Travel Notes* says that Enchin arrived in Chang'an on the 20th day of the fifth luni-solar month of 855 (July 7th) and met the Esoteric Dharma Master Faquan on the 28th day of the fifth luni-solar month. On the 15th day of the seventh luni-solar month (August 31st, 855). Faquan gave him a consecration ritual for the Womb *maṇḍala* at Qinglong Temple. Faquan then gave him the consecration ritual for the Diamond *maṇḍala* on the third day of the tenth luni-solar month (November 16th). Finally, on the fifth day of the 11th luni-solar month, Enchin was given a conferral of transmission consecration by Faquan. Enchin ends this section of the diary during the first month of Dazhong (大中) 10 (856). The next entry begins during the second lunar month of 858 with his return to Dazaifu (太宰府) in Japan.<sup>47</sup>

The biography of Enchin by Miyoshi no Kiyoyuki is a curious document with a revealing textual history of its own that lies beyond the scope of this paper. I hope it will suffice to say here, however, that it was written by a fascinating figure who was once a member of the Japanese equivalent of the famous Hanlin (翰林, Jap. Kanrin) Academy in China, and is tied to the curious figure of Sugawara no Michizane (845–903, 菅原道真) who was exiled and became Tenman Tenjin (天満天神).<sup>48</sup> I will add that the edition of *Biography of*

46 *Gyōrekishō Dai Nihon Bukkyō zensho* 572.72, 191b–c, 192a1–3.

47 *Gyōrekishō Dai Nihon Bukkyō zensho* 572.72, 190b–c, esp. c3–5, 17–19. With some disagreement because Chen consults additional, later sources from Japan, trans. in Chen, *Crossfire*, 138.

48 Robert Borgen, *Sugawara no Michizane and the Early Heian Court* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986); Francine Hérail, *La cour et l'administration du Japon à l'époque de Heian* (Genève: Droz, 2006).

*Enchin* in the *Complete Buddhist Works of Japan* is unreliable, though intriguing, because it contains large blocks of additional text, primarily concerned with portents by *kami* concerning key events in his life and oddly placed references to sectarian debates not mentioned in the manuscript I have consulted from Mt. Amano Kongō Temple. There are three other extant manuscript editions of the text: an edition kept at Ishiyama Temple dated to the 21st day of the fourth luni-solar month of 1108; a manuscript dated to the 25th day of the fourth luni-solar month of 1220 from the Manshuin (曼殊院) now at the Tokyo National Museum (no. B-1402 and reproduced in *Dai Nihon Bukkyō zensho* as discussed below); and one from the Kanchi'in (觀智院) of Tō Temple dated 1185. The Kongō Temple manuscript is a copy completed on the 11th day of the 12th luni-solar month of 1230 at the Rengeō'in Sanjūsangendō (蓮華王院三十三間堂) of an edition copied on the 18th day of the first luni-solar month of 1182 from an edition copied on the 27th day of the tenth luni-solar month of 1140 at the Shanain (舍那院) Nagahama (長島), Shiga prefecture (Jap. Shiga ken 滋賀県),<sup>49</sup>

In order to deepen our understanding of the history of the transmission of key texts in medieval East Asia and to provide further context about the sources that Chen Jinhua and I use to address the narrative of Enchin's voyage to Tang China, it is important to note that in his biography of Enchin in *Genkō shakusho* 元亨釋書 [Buddhist History of the Genkō Era [1321–1324]], Kokan Shiren (1278–1346, 虎関師錬) follows Kiyoyuki's biography conspicuously.<sup>50</sup>

Enchin's own diary records that he received Esoteric Buddhist transmission solely from Faquan and only in Chang'an. The narrative of lineage transmission between Faquan and Enchin in Chang'an is similar in the *Biography of Enchin*, but Kiyoyuki adds some key information that Enchin left out of the *Travel Notes*. Kiyoyuki records that the conferral of transmission consecration took place not on the fifth day of the 11th month, but instead on the fourth day and was followed by conferral of the title of *ācārya* (Chin. *asheli* 阿闍梨) after he received the *samaya* precepts (Chin. *sanmeiye jie*, Jap. *sanmaya kai*

49 Gotō Akio 後藤昭雄 et al. ed., *Amanosan Kongōji zenpon sōkan, Dai ichi ki Dai ichi kan Kangaku* 天野山金剛寺善本叢刊, 第一期第一卷漢学 [Collected Works from the Meritorious Books Kept at Amanosan Kongōji. Volume 1.1 Sino-Japanese [Language] Studies] (Tokyo: Bensei shuppan, 2017), 744–746.

50 On Kokan Shiren and the *Genkō shakusho*, see Carl Bielefeldt, "Kokan Shiren and the Sectarian Uses of History," in *The Origins of Japan's Medieval World: Courtiers, Clerics, Warriors, and Peasants in the Fourteenth Century*, ed. Jeffrey P. Mass (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); Bruce E. Carpenter, "Kokan Shiren and the Transformation of Familiar Things," *Tezukayama daigaku ronshū* 手塚山大学論集 [Report from Tezukayama University] 18 (1978), 183–198. For the biography of Enchin, see Kokan Shiren (1278–1346) and Fujita Takuji, *Kundoku Genkō shakusho*, 1, 69–76.

三昧耶戒) and performed a ceremony honoring the sages (patriarchs). Then Enchin is said to have proceeded to the monastery of Da Xingshan Temple (Chin. Da Xingshan si 大興善寺), where he bowed and made ritual offerings to the relics of Amoghavajra (705–774, Chin. Bukong Jin'gang 不空金剛, Jap. Fukū kongō) and met with Amoghavajra's third generation disciple, *śramaṇācārya* Huilun (d. 876, 惠輪). According to *Biography of Enchin*, Huilun transmitted to Enchin the secret meaning of the two division *maṇḍalas* and a new translation of his called the *Chinian jingfa* 持念經法 [Method for Reciting [Spells] from the Scriptures].<sup>51</sup>

In a recent article about this Zhihuilun (Jap. Chierin 智慧輪) and in his *Crossfire* book, Chen presents the narrative of the transmission from Zhihuilun to Enchin as a key component in his quest to recover lost traces of the Esoteric Buddhist masters from the post-An Lushan and Shi Siming rebellions, the rebellion of Huang Chao and the Huichang era suppression of the faith. Chen provides careful notes about the texts he read to conclude that Enchin must have met Zhihuilun. One of these is a letter that Enchin addressed to Zhihuilun on the 15th day of the seventh luni-solar month of 882 from Japan with a list of questions for his former teacher requesting additional books to be dispatched.<sup>52</sup> Other letters examined by Chen from Enchin to Zhihuilun address the portraits of the three celebrated esoteric masters Amoghavajra, Śubhakarasiṃha (in China 719–735, Chin. Shanwuwei 善無畏) and Vajrabodhi (662–732, Chin. Jin'gangzhi, 金剛智) that Enchin saw when he was in China and speak to the matter of which lineage Zhihuilun may or may not have been assigned to when Enchin was in China. Chen also makes a convincing case that the biography of Zhihuilun in Zanning's (919–1001, 贊寧) *Song gaoseng zhuan* 宋高僧傳 [Biographies of the Eminent Monks of the Song] (T. 2061.50, 722c) mistakenly suggests that he was an Indian monk with the name \*Prajñācakra, 'Wheel of Wisdom', transcribed into Chinese with the varying characters 般若斫迦 or 般若惹羯羅 or 般若斫羯羅, when his father was almost certainly Chinese—with the surname Ding (丁)—although his mother may have come from India or Central Asia.<sup>53</sup>

51 See lines 88–93 in Gotō Akio et al. ed., *Amanosan Kongōji zenpon sōkan Dai ichi ki Dai ichi kan Kangaku*, 652.

52 Jinhua Chen, "A Chinese Monk under a 'Barbarian' Mask? Zhihuilun (?–876) and Late Tang Esoteric Buddhism," *T'oung Pao* 99.1–3 (2013): 100–105, esp. 100, nos. 126–128; Chen Jinhua, *Crossfire*, 177–178.

53 Chen, "A Chinese Monk under a 'Barbarian' Mask?," 100–105, esp. 128–129. Kokan Shiren and Fujita Takuji, *Kundoku Genkō shakusho*, 1, 72.

If Chen is correct, and I suspect that he is, about the connection between Zhihuilun and Enchin, then I wonder why there is no mention of Zhihuilun in *Travel Notes* as we have the text today? There is another—possibly Indian or Central Asian—monk that Kiyoyuki's *Biography of Enchin* connects Enchin to, not one he encountered in the capital, but when he was in Fuzhou. The *Biography of Enchin* records that when Enchin first arrived in China in 853 and went to the Kaiyuan Temple in Lianjian country (連江縣) in Lingnan circuit (嶺南到), he met a monk by the name of Boredaluo (般若怛羅, Jap. Hannyatara) from the monastery of Nālandā in Magadha in Central India from whom he received several texts. The first is *Fanzi xiitan zhang* 梵字悉曇章 [Chapter of (How to Study) Sanskrit Siddham (Letters)] or *Bonji shittanshō*, followed by the Diamond and Womb *maṇḍalas*, the *Mahāvairocanasūtra*, and at least two other Esoteric Buddhist ritual manuals in Sanskrit (Chin. *fanqie*, Jap. *bonkyō* 梵箴, Skt. *pustaka* or *poṭhī*).<sup>54</sup> The encounter with Boredaluo is not mentioned in the *Travel Notes*, where far clearer dates are provided concerning when he arrived in China (on the 15th day of the eighth luni-solar month of 853) and how quickly he proceeded to Mt. Tiantai and the Guoqing Temple (Chin. Guoqing si 國清寺).<sup>55</sup>

Who was Boredaluo and is there any other evidence of an Indian monk by this name residing at a monastery in Fuzhou? Kūkai's *Catalogue of Items Brought Back (to Japan)* (T. 2161.55, 1063c24) records that he brought back a copy of the Guide to Studying Sanskrit Siddham Letters in one roll, as does the *Catalogue of Scriptures Found [in China] by the Japanese bhikṣu Enchin* (T. 2172.55, 1098b20).<sup>56</sup> Prajñā is an Indian Esoteric master well-known to have been a teacher to Kūkai when he was in Chang'an studying Esoteric Buddhism

54 On *fanqie*, see "Bonkyō" in *Hōbōgirin* 2: 120. See lines 63–68 in Gotō et al., *Amanosan Kongōji zenpon sōkan Dai ichi-ki Dai ichi-kan Kangaku*, 650. It seems likely that one of these texts is a ritual manual devoted to Mañjuśrī (here the name is given as Chin. Mansushili, Jap. Mansoshiri 曼素室利) and Saptakoṭibuddhamātr (Chin. Qijudi fomu, Jap. Shichikutei butsumo 七俱胝仏母) or Cundī (Chin. Zhunti, Jap. Juntei 準[准]提); see Kokan Shiren and Fujita Takuji, *Kundoku Genkō shakusho*, 71.

55 *Gyōrekishō, Dai Nihon Bukkyō zensho* 572.72, 188a–b.

56 The transmission of Siddham by this Indian monk, whose name is rendered as Boreduoluonantuo (Jap. Hannyataramananta 般若多羅難陀), and the possible transmission concerns with Kūkai and Enchin are addressed in Tendaishū Jimon-ha Goonki Jimukyoku 天台宗寺門派御遠忌事務局, *Chishō Daishi* 智證大師 [Great Master Chishō] (Shiga-ken Ōtsu-shi: Onjō ji, 1937), 84–89. On Kūkai's *Catalogue* and problems with 20th century Japanese sectarian accounts of Esoteric Buddhism, see Astley, "62. Esoteric Buddhism," 709, 716–718.

during the beginning of the 9th century.<sup>57</sup> It seems highly unlikely, however, that the same individual would have moved to Kaiyuan Temple in Fuzhou by the 850s, unless we consider that he may have been one of the representatives of the ‘Chang’an Buddhist traditions’ Benjamin Brose posits;<sup>58</sup> yet I highly doubt this is the same monk. Because Enchin completed the *Catalogue of Scriptures Found [in China] by the Japanese bhikṣu Enchin* after he had returned to Japan, it is possible that he included a copy of the text that Kūkai brought back and records in (Kūkai’s) *Catalogue of Items Brought Back (to Japan)*. It seems equally likely that Enchin acquired a copy of the Guide to Studying Sanskrit Siddhaṃ Letters when he arrived in Fuzhou, along with the Sanskrit texts alluded to in *Biography of Enchin*. Two Sanskrit manuscripts are recorded in the *Kaigenji gūtoku kyōsho ki mokuroku* 開元寺求得經疏記目錄 [Catalogue of Scriptures and Commentaries Collected from Kaiyuan Monastery [Fuzhou]] (T. 2169.55, 1092b15): (1) Sanskrit *mantra*(s) on a palm leaf manuscript from Nālandā in Central India<sup>59</sup> (2) and a Sanskrit text of the *Great Compassion dhāraṇī*<sup>60</sup> which is recorded as having been copied by a *brāhmaṇa tripiṭaka ācārya* named Liyemansuxidaluo (已上婆羅門三藏阿娑阿哩耶曼蘇悉怛羅捨授). Enchin records the same entry in *Fūkushū Onshū Taishū gūtoku kyōritsuronsho ki gaishotō mokuroku* 福州溫州台州求得經律論疏記外書等目錄 [Catalogue of Sūtras, Abhidharma, Śāstras, and Commentaries from [Kaiyuan Temples] in Fuzhou, Wenzhou, and Taizhou] (T. 2170.55, 1093b2). *Catalogue of Scriptures Found [in China] by the Japanese bhikṣu Enchin* is, moreover, the only one of Enchin’s extant catalogues which lists 22 Sanskrit texts that he brought back to Japan. Therefore, although it seems highly suspicious and improbable that Enchin may have met the same Prajñā that Kūkai did nearly fifty years earlier in Chang’an, it is probable that he found Sanskrit manuscripts in the Kaiyuan Temple in Fuzhou when he first arrived—and may have met a man from India who copied Buddhist texts for monastics. If Brose and others are correct that the effects of the Huichang era anti-Buddhist suppression were decreased far from the Tang capitals, then it seems reasonable to conclude that Indian monks or Brahmins who could write Sanskrit were active in the south as late as the mid-9th century.<sup>61</sup>

57 Abé, *The Weaving of Mantra*, 119–120.

58 Benjamin Brose, *Patrons and Patriarchs: Regional Rulers and Chan Monks during the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2015), 35–41.

59 中天竺大那蘭陀寺貝多葉梵字真言一夾.

60 梵字無礙大悲心陀羅尼一夾.

61 Brose, *Patrons and Patriarchs*, 31.

#### 4 Statues and Kami Associated with Enchin and the Tendai Tradition

In 2004, the curatorial staff at Kyoto Nation Museum launched a special exhibition called “The Sacred World of Shinto Art in Kyoto.” Chief among the objects on display was a ‘seated male deity’ (Jap. *danshin zazō* 男神座像) from Matsuno’o (alt. Matsuo) Shrine. The statue is 99.6 cm high, was apparently carved from a single block of Hinoki (檜) cypress wood, and art historians have reached consensus that it can be dated to the mid-9th century.<sup>62</sup> Details provided by the accompanying exhibit catalogue describe the statue as a Buddhist protector deity (Jap. *gohōjin* 護法神), and it is most likely an image of the male Ōyamakui no kami (大山咋神, alt. Ōyamagui), who was enshrined at Matsuno’o alongside his wife, Ichikishimahime no mikoto (市杵島姫命, alt. Okitsushima), no later than 866.<sup>63</sup> What makes this statue unique is its status as the oldest so-called ‘Shintō’ statue from Kyoto, and the fact that it is the primary—or larger—one in a triad of Shintō statues on display in a building called the Shinzōkan (神像館), on site at Matsuno’o Shrine in western Kyoto since 1975, when a major renovation of the shrine precincts was completed.

In a study published in 2011 of the ‘Shintō statues’ (Jap. *shin’e* or *mikage* 神影) of Matsuno’o Shrine that are on display within the Shinzōkan, Itō Shirō, an eminent art historian and current director of the Wakayama Prefectural Museum (Jap. Wakayama kenritsu hakubutsukan 和歌山県立博物館), agrees that the ‘seated male deity’ lent to Kyoto National Museum in 2004 is a statue of Ōyamakui. But he postulates that it may have been commissioned by Enchin before he departed for China in 853.<sup>64</sup> Or, perhaps, it is simply a statue of the revered true body (Jap. *mishōtai* 御正体) that was enshrined at Matsuno’o, following 8th century precedents in historical accounts that discuss offerings

62 Kyoto National Museum, *Kamigami no bi no sekai: Kyōto no shintō bijutsu* 神々の美の世界: 京都の神道美術 [Special Exhibition: The Sacred World of Shinto Art in Kyoto] (Kyoto: Sankei Shinbunsha, 2004), iv, 22. Itō Shirō 伊東史朗 ed., *Matsuno’o taisha no shin’ei* 松尾大社の神影 [Matsuno’o Taisha Shrine: The Spread of Shinto Art from Ancient Times] (Osaka: Matsuno’o Taisha, Fukamoto Publishers, 2011), 83 gives the height as 99.6 cm, whereas the 2004 catalogue lists the height as 97.3 cm.

63 On *gohōjin*, see “Chingo kokka” (鎮護國家) and esp. “Chinju dokkyō” (鎮守読経) in Sylvain Lévi et al., *Hōbōgirin*, IV: 325–328. Kyoto National Museum, *Kamigami no bi no sekai*, 210.

64 Itō, *Matsuno’o taisha no shin’ei*, 56–57, 84–85. Still perhaps the most comprehensive study of Onjō Temple and Enchin is Miyagi Nobumasa 宮城信雅 and Tendai-shū Jimon-ha Goonki Jimukyoku 天台宗寺門派御遠忌事務局, *Onjōji no kenkyū* 園城寺之研究 [A Study of Onjōji] (Ōtsu-shi, Shiga-ken: Urisabakijo hoshino shoten, 1931; repr., Kyoto: Dōhōsha shoten, 1978). A more readily available yet brief discussion of Enchin’s travels in China can be found in Yoritomi, *Nicchū o musunda bukk’yōsō*, 149–160.



being made to statues at shrine-temple complexes in the provinces, such as at Iwasahiko jingan Temple (Jap. Iwasahiko jingan ji 若狭比古神願寺) in Obama city (小浜市), Fukui prefecture (福井県), during the Yōrō period (717–724, 養老) or Tado jingū Temple (Jap. Tado jingū ji 多度神宮寺) in Kuwana city (桑名市), Mie prefecture (三重県), in 763. Both of Itō's hypotheses are tenable because Temple Gate Tendai Buddhist chronicles, contemporary diaries penned by eminent statesmen and scholars Fujiwara no Munetada (1062–1141, 藤原宗忠) and Minamoto no Morotoki (1077–1136, 源師時), and medieval historiographical records from the court and Matsuno'o Shrine confirm that Enchin—or his disciplines and associates who honored him—venerated Ōyamakui as the ancestral home of the same *kami* worshipped at the main shrine associated with Mt. Hiei: Hie—or Hiyoshi, as it is pronounced today—Shrine (Jap. Hiyoshi taisha 日吉大社), in Ōtsu city, Shiga prefecture.

I am not an Art Historian. So please forgive me for making a pronouncement about medieval Japanese guardian-cum-*kami* statues without the proper training to do so: If we compare the composition of the so-called 'Shintō' statues at Matsuno'o Shrine with perhaps the most famous guardian deity statue that is legendarily associated with Enchin, Shinra Myōjin (新羅明神), I am struck by how different these deities look. To begin with, the *kami* statues from Matsuno'o seem to resemble peaceful Buddhist deities—bodhisattvas or buddhas. Shinra Myōjin, on the other hand, seems idiosyncratically 'alien' and wild: the sort of deity who could ward off pestilence if, indeed, Shinra Myōjin is a manifestation in Japan as guardian deity of Mii Temple of the King of Mt. Song (Chin. Song shan 嵩山), Shaolin Temple (Chin. Shaolin si 少林寺), in China.<sup>65</sup> Shinra Myōjin's name suggests a Korean orientation.<sup>66</sup> Like Gozu Tennō (牛頭天王), he is also associated with Susano'o (素戔嗚), the indigenous *kami* of storms and seas. Shinra Myōjin is understood to have been brought to Japan from China by Enchin when he returned from his productive time in the Jiangnan (江南) region and at Qinglong Temple in Chang'an. Christine M.E. Guth, whose research closely follows Itō's scholarship, as I have done here, concludes that the famous image of Shinra Myōjin enshrined within the Shinra Zenshindō (新羅善神捨堂) of Mii Temple and is rarely on display probably dates from 1052. She examines several 11th century Temple-Gate tradition Tendai chronicles to show that Tendai monastics probably already associated Enchin with veneration of Shinra Myōjin as early as the

65 Bernard Faure, "From Bodhidharma to Daruma: The Hidden Life of a Zen Patriarch," *Japan Review* 23 (2011): 59–60.

66 Sujung Kim, *Shinra Myōjin and Buddhist Networks of the East Asian 'Mediterranean'* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2020), 15–31.

10th century.<sup>67</sup> In this section I examine several of these chronicles and come to a slightly different conclusion: it appears Enchin was definitely connected with worshipping several types and examples of *kami* at shrines within the precincts of Mii Temple—and Enryaku Temple—and at shrines in Kyoto and across Japan, including, but not necessarily limited to, Shinra Myōjin.

I will confine my discussion here of Enchin and veneration of *kami* statues at shrines to three Buddhist sources: (a) *Biography of Enchin*; (b) *Onjōji denki* 園城寺傳記 [Transmission Record of Onjōji], comp. 13th century; and (c) *Jimon denki horoku* 寺門傳記補錄 [Supplemental Record of the Transmission Record of the Temple Gate Branch].<sup>68</sup> Because there is ample evidence for connections between Matsuno'o *kami* shrine-temple complex and Mii Temple, and Enchin, in particular, from the 12th through the 16th centuries as discussed above, let me work chronologically backwards through these texts. Rolls three, four, and five of the *Supplemental Record of the Transmission Record of the Temple Gate Branch* present information about the tutelary shrines (Jap. *shibyō* 祠廟) associated with Mii Temple. It may surprise experts in the study of Chinese religion to learn that the primary ancestral temples in China (Chin. *cimiao* 祠廟) at Onjō Temple are devoted to the two protectors of the Buddhist *dharma*: the aforementioned Shinra Myōjin and Kishimojin (鬼子母神, Skt. Hārītī). Hārītī is venerated within the Gohō zenshindō (護法善神堂, Hall of the Meritorious Guardian Deities who Protect the Dharma) every year on the sixteenth day of the fourth lunar month.<sup>69</sup> It is in roll five, however, that we

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- 67 Christine M.E. Guth, "Mapping Sectarian Identity: Onjōji's Statue of Shinra Myōjin," *Anthropology and Aesthetics* 35 (1999): 112–118.
- 68 Anna Andreeva, "Saidaiji Monks and Esoteric Kami Worship at Ise and Miwa," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 33.2 (2006): 361 mentions the *Transmission Record of Onjōji* and some of the terms discussed here, as does Kim, *Shinra Myōjin and Buddhist Networks of the East Asian 'Mediterranean'*, 24–30. On the dating of Shikō's compilation, see Miyake Hitoshi 宮家準, "Shugendō no kyōten keisei to Tendaishū," 33. According to Umehara Takeshi 梅原猛, *Kyōto hakken 9: Hieizan to Honganji* 京都発見九比叡山と本願寺 [Discovering Kyoto 9: Hieizan and Hongan ji] (Tokyo: Shinchosha, 2007), 57–62, the *Transmission Record of Onjōji* covers the history of Mii dera from 662–1397 and *Jimon denki horoku* covers 888–1302. We know *Jimon denki horoku* was compiled ca. 1394–1428.
- 69 *Jimon denki horoku* 4, *Dai Nihon Bukkyō zensho* 787.86, 133a–134b provides a synopsis of Hārītī within various East Asian Buddhist scriptures; 134b–135b copies a short, probably apocryphal, scripture, *Foshuo guizimu jing* 仏説鬼子母經 (Jap. *Bussetsu kishimokyō*) [Book Spoken by the Buddha on Hārītī, T. 1262]; 135b–136a copies another likely apocryphon, the *Fohua guizimu yuan* 仏化鬼子母緣 (Jap. *Butsuke kishimo en*) [Avadāna Tale the Buddha Converting Hārītī], xzj 961.57, 105b15–106a13, which is available only in Northern Song Dynasty Tiantai master Zongxiao's 宗曉, *Shishi tonglan* 施食通覽 [Survey of Food-Bestowing Rituals]; 136a–137c reproduces Amoghavajra's translation of the ritual manual *Dayaocha nühuanximu bing'aizi chengjiufa* 大藥叉女歡喜母并愛

find ample evidence to support my earlier claim of a medieval religious system whereby monastics from the Jimon branch of the Tendai order organised and maintained a network of offerings to deities at prominent, so-called ‘Shintō’ shrines in Kyoto, which was, in turn, integrated into the ritual calendar of Onjō Temple (Mii Temple) and its sub-temples.<sup>70</sup>

Roll five of the *Supplemental Record of the Transmission Record of the Temple Gate Branch* is devoted to shrines to protective *kami* (Jap. *chinju shinshi* 鎮守神祠). Beginning with the three *kami* (red, white, and black deities) of Mio shrine (三尾神社), the landlord clan deity shrine established at Onjōji Temple before the shrine to Shinra Myōjin, we learn that there is an interesting connection with the Hata clan (Jap. *hata shi* 秦氏) and *kami* venerated by Mii Temple monastics. It appears that Hata no Kawakatsu (秦河勝), the Hata clan member to whom the founding of the Kōryū Temple (Jap. Kōryū ji 廣隆寺) is attributed, and his sons are also associated with the veneration of Mio myōjin (三尾明, bright or powerful *kami* of Mio shrine) as a powerful, wild bright *kami* (Jap. *Ōare myōjin* 大荒明神).<sup>71</sup> Next, we learn that there are eighteen tutelary deities of the monastic compound (Jap. *garanjin* 伽藍神, lit. gods of the *saṃghārāma*), conveyed in the apocryphal *Matou luocha foming jing* (Jap. *Batōrasetsu butsumyōkyō*) 馬頭羅刹仏名經 [Book of Buddha Names Recited by Horse-Head (Hayagrīva) Rākṣasa] (Z 1167, not included in the Taishō).<sup>72</sup>

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子成就法 (Jap. *Daikyushanyo kangimo byōaishi jōkuhō*) [Ritual to Achieve the Results [Sādhana] Yakṣiṇī Joyful Mother Loving All Her Children, T. 1260]; 137c–138a reproduces another ritual manual translated by Amoghavajra, *Helidimu zhenyanfa* [jing] 訶梨帝母真言法 [經] (Jap. *Kariteimo shingonhō* [kyō]) [Ritual of the Mantra for Hārītī], T. 1261. On these rituals from an informed perspective in English, see Hei Rui, “Hārītī: From Demon Mother to a Protective Deity in Buddhism—A History of an Indian Pre-Buddhist Goddess in Chinese Buddhist Art” (Macau: University of Macau, 2010), 8–17. Gozu Tennō can also be seen as a manifestation of Hārītī.

70 Kim, *Shinra Myōjin and Buddhist Networks of the East Asian ‘Mediterranean’*, 58–60.

71 *Jimon denki horoku* 5, *Dai Nihon Bukkyō zensho* 787.86, 130c–140a.

72 *Jimon denki horoku* 5, *Dai Nihon Bukkyō zensho* 787.86, 140a–b. The *Butsumyōkyō* has been studied by Kuo Liying (郭麗英) and received considerable attention when the Matsuno’o and Nanatsu dera scriptures were copied: this scripture is rolls 3509–3520 of the Matsuno’o scriptures. When the Nanatsu dera canon was rediscovered this scripture received considerable attention because a liturgy with this scripture remains an important practice within Shingon temples still today Liying Kuo, “Sur les apocryphes bouddhiques chinois,” *Bulletin de l’École française d’Extrême-Orient* 87.2 (2000): 677–705; Kuo Li-Ying, “La récitation des noms de buddha en Chine et au Japon,” in *Chūgoku senjutsu kyōten: shiryōhen* 中國撰述經典 資料篇 [Scriptures Compiled in China: Research Materials [16 roll *Butsumyōkyō* 佛名經]], ed. Magara Kazuto 真柄和人 et al. (Tokyo: Daitō shuppansha, 1995), 688; Toshinori et al., *The Manuscripts of Nanatsu-dera*; Whalen

Apparently when Shinra Myōjin was newly enshrined on site at Onjō Temple in 860 the Sannō Shrine (Jap. Sannō jinja 山王神社), as it was called in the 16th and 17th centuries when the *Supplemental Record of the Transmission Record of the Temple Gate Branch* was compiled, but was referred to as Hiei Shrine earlier (and today), was given a face lift. Ōyamakui is enshrined there. The *Supplemental Record of the Transmission Record of the Temple Gate Branch* reminds the [premodern] reader that Hiei Shrine was one of the twenty-two official shrines that received ‘oblations’ from the imperial lineage during the Heian (794–1185, 平安) period.<sup>73</sup> And then we learn that there were five separate sites in and around Mt. Hiei—including two different small palaces for the *kami* (Jap. *miya* 宮)—for veneration of Ōyamakui.<sup>74</sup>

Almost everything I have discussed in the *Supplemental Record of the Transmission Record of the Temple Gate Branch* thus far is not included in the 13th century *Transmission Record of Onjōji*. We do find a much shorter enumeration of the eighteen tutelary deities from the *Book of Buddha Names Recited by Horse-Head (Hayagrīva) Rākṣasa*, but nearly the entire lengthy discussion of Shinra myōjin, Mio myōjin, and the five distinct shrines to Ōyamakui is absent from this text. What is essentially the same in both chronicles is the discussion of the eight *myōjin* worshipped at prominent Shintō shrines, mentioned in *Procedures from the Engi Era. Transmission Record of Onjōji* also has a helpful diagram which maps a *maṇḍala* of the spatial—or cosmographical—relationship between the inner *garanjin* (shrines) and the outer, *kami* shrines.<sup>75</sup> Both texts essentially present the same list of eight *kami* shrine-temple complexes:

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Lai, “The *Chan-ch’a ching*: Religion and Magic in Medieval China,” in *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*, ed. Robert E. Buswell Jr. (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1990), 175–206.

73 *Jimon denki horoku* 5, *Dai Nihon Bukkyō zensho* 787.86, 140b–141b.

74 *Jimon denki horoku* 5, *Dai Nihon Bukkyō zensho* 787.86, 141b–141c.

75 *Onjōji denki* 2, *Dai Nihon Bukkyō zensho* 786.86, 61b; John Rosenfield and Fumiko E. Cranston, “The Bruno Petzold Collection of Buddhist and Shinto Scrolls,” in *Treasures of the Yen-ching: Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the Harvard-Yenching Library Exhibition Catalogue*, ed. Patrick Hanan (Cambridge: Harvard-Yenching Library of the Harvard College Library, 2003), 227–228 discusses a 19th century *maṇḍala* of Onjō ji, which features many of the deities discussed below. For alternate ways to conceptualise *kami* and the buddhas and bodhisattvas, see Fabio Rambelli, “Before the First Buddha: Medieval Japanese Cosmogony and the Quest for the Primeval Kami,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 64.2 (2009): 235–271.

TABLE 1.2 Eight Kami Shrines in the *Transmission Record of Onjōji* and the *Supplemental Record of the Transmission Record of the Temple Gate Branch*

	Shrine/Deity	Scripture in Transmission Record of Onjōji
1	Hachiman (八幡)	* <i>Vikurvaṇarājapariprcchā</i> (Chin. <i>Zizaiwang pusa jing</i> , Jap. <i>Jizaiōbosatsukyō</i> 自在王菩薩經) [Book of Questions to Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara], (T. 420.13)
2	Kamo	<i>Renwang boreboluomi jing</i> (Jap. <i>Ninnō hannya haramitsukyō</i> ) 仁王般若波羅蜜經 [Scripture on the Humane Kings] (T. 245.8, Z 21)
3	Matsuno'o	<i>Suvarṇaprabhāsottamasūtra</i> (Chin. <i>Jin'guangming zunshengwang jing</i> , Jap. <i>Konkōmyō saishō ōkyō</i> 金光明最勝王經) [Most Victorious King's Sūtra of Golden Light] (T. 665.16, Z 158)
4	Hieizan Sannō	<i>Saddharmapuṇḍarikasūtra</i> [Lotus Sūtra]
5	Kasuga 春日	<i>Vajracheddikāprajñāpāramitāsūtra</i> (Chin. <i>Jin'gang jing</i> /Jap. <i>Kongōkyō</i> 金剛經) [Diamond Sūtra]
6	Sumiyoshi 住吉	<i>Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra</i> (Chin. <i>Dabannihuan jing</i> , Jap. <i>Daihatsunaiongyō</i> 大般泥洹經) [Sūtra (of the Buddha's) Supreme Enlightenment], 6 rolls (T. 376.12, Z 137)
7	Shinra [Myōjin]	<i>Vimalakīrtinirdeśa</i> (Chin. <i>Weimojie jing</i> , Jap. <i>Yuimakitsukyō</i> 維摩詰經) [Teaching of Vimalakīrti] (T. 474–475.14, Z 150–151)
8	Iwakura 岩座 <sup>a</sup>	<i>Guanwuliangshou jing</i> 觀無量壽經 (Jap. <i>Kammuryōjubutsukyō</i> ) [(Amitāyus) Contemplation Sūtra] (T. 365.12, Z 223)

a With a slightly different character with the same reading, this almost certainly refers to a *jingū-ji* in the northern Iwakura (岩倉) part of northern Kyoto. I am grateful to James Robson for locating this site.

The *Transmission Record of Onjōji* provides little more than this list of shrines and the scriptures which are either recited on behalf of each shrine during ritual occasions, or, perhaps, the sort of exegetical expertise monastics might lecture about when they travel to these shrines to make offerings and perform rituals. The *Supplemental Record of the Transmission Record of the Temple Gate Branch*, on the other hand, provides the relevant historiographical data about each shrine and information about why there is a special connection to Mii Temple monastics.

It is difficult to imagine that any association between one of these *kami* shrine-temple complexes and Mii Temple could be more significant than the legendary connection between Enchin and the Ōyamakui statue of Matsuno'o Shrine. Not only does the *Supplemental Record of the Transmission Record of the Temple Gate Branch* contain the story of when Enchin visited Matsuno'o, which we know may have resulted in the commissioning of the larger Ōyamakui statue, but we also have Enchin's biography, which was evidently completed less than ten years after Enchin's death.<sup>76</sup> The substance of the story is as follows:

During the tenth month of 846, Enchin made a visit to Matsuno'o Shrine and made a vow that on the eighth day of the fifth and tenth lunar months, the head of Hiei Shrine would visit Matsuno'o and give lectures on the *Saddharmapuṇḍarikasūtra* [Lotus sūtra], the *Book of Buddha Names Recited by Horse-Head (Hayagrīva) rākṣasa*, and various other Mahāyāna sūtras. Because he remembered this vow throughout his life, he went [to Matsuno'o] and gave a lecture to commence the lecture series. They celebrate this occasion at Matsuno'o during the 4th and 11th months on the 1st *shin* [(申)] day.<sup>77</sup>

One of the copies of a document written by Enchin in 863 (Monday, 27 December, 863 (Jōgan 5.11.13)), *Enchin kō denpō kugen wo kō sōshōan* 円珍請伝法公驗奏状案 [Legal Travel Document Submitted to the Throne for Enchin who Seeks the Dharma], seems to contain further evidence that because he had visited Matsuno'o on (Saturday, 4 December, 840 (Jōgan 7.11.7)) and made

76 Itō, *Matsuno'o taisha no shin'ei*, 57. The full title of this biography is *Enryakuji zasu Enchin den* 延暦寺座主円珍傳 [Biography of the Abbot of Enryaku Temple, Enchin], accessed on August 10, 2019. [http://www.emuseum.jp/detail/100360/000/000?mode=detail&d\\_lang=ja&s\\_lang=ja&class=&title=&c\\_e=&region=&era=&century=&cptype=&owner=&pos=473&num=2](http://www.emuseum.jp/detail/100360/000/000?mode=detail&d_lang=ja&s_lang=ja&class=&title=&c_e=&region=&era=&century=&cptype=&owner=&pos=473&num=2). It suggests a date of 902; the manuscript copy dates to the 20th day of the fourth luni-solar month of 1220.

77 *Jimon denki horoku* 5, *Dai Nihon Bukkyō zensho* 787.86, 142a. The Sinitic characters read as follows: 智證大師實錄曰。承和十三年冬十月。和尚為上翊聖主下鎮率土。於松尾明神社發誓願云。願我每年五月八日十月八日。於比叡明神社頭講演法華佛名等大乘經。以為一生之事。自於彼社始修講事。當社祭祀每年四月上申。臨時祭十一月同日。 This portion of the text is reproduced in *Enchin den*, *Dai Nihon Bukkyō zensho* 568.72 and the manuscript preserved at the Tokyo National Museum no. B-1402. This manuscript was copied in its present form on the eighth day of the luni-solar month of 1437 [Eikyō 永享 9 *hinoto* 巳丁 *utsugi* 卯月.8]. Further research is required to address the variant editions of this section of *Enchin den*.

offerings to the deity enshrined at Hiei Shrine and had made a vow there, he was visited three times while in China by Ōyamakui.<sup>78</sup>

In their diaries written a little more than a century after Enchin had returned from China, apparently motivated to visit Matsuno'o Shrine and deliver lectures there because he had been visited by Ōyamakui while looking for books and Esoteric Buddhist teachings on the continent, both scholar-nobles Fujiwara Munetada (1062–1141, 藤原致忠) and Minamoto no Morotoki (1077–1138, 源師時), in *Chūyūki* 中右記 [Diary while Minister of the Right] and *Chōshūki* 長秋記 [Diary during a Lengthy Autumn], respectively, mention strange happenings connected to the statue “commissioned by Chishō daishi” at Matsuno'o Shrine.<sup>79</sup> Whether or not these eminent statesmen's musing can be viewed as proof that Enchin had had the statue of Ōyamakui commissioned upon his return from China and subsequent visit to follow through on his vow to lecture there is, of course, almost impossible to verify. On the one hand, the fact that the larger Ōyamakui statue is considerably older than other statues associated with Enchin (e.g., Shinra Myōjin and a possible image of Fudō Myōō (不動明王, Skt. Acalanātha)), coupled with the noticeably more sublime composition of the image, certainly seems to suggest the distinct possibility that we are looking at an image from an earlier stage in the development of Esoteric Buddhist-inspired Buddhist art in Japan. On the other hand, everything the Temple-Gate Tendai tradition has to say about what Enchin learned and obtained in China would indicate that the larger Ōyamakui image from Matsuno'o Shrine could not have been commissioned by an advocate or practitioner of Esoteric Buddhist rituals, which figure so significantly in the catalogues he is given credit for compiling in the monastic libraries of 9th century Tang China when his relative compatriot, Ennin, seems to have found this task quite challenging, only two decades earlier.

I discuss these statues from Matsuno'o and Hiei Shrine to show why the *shōgyō* documents of Mt. Amano Kongō Temple probably kept an edition of *Biography of Enchin*: Enchin was not only a key figure in the institutional and religious world of late Heian Japan because of the political religious power of Mii Temple and associated temples and shrines, like Matsuno'o and the other seven listed above, but he was also a Buddhist figure connected to the world of indigenous *kami*. If, as I suspect, Mt. Amano Kongō Temple also functioned as a shrine-temple complex in medieval Japan, then it stands to reason that like Kūkai, with texts attributed to him virtually filling the libraries of Shinpuku Temple and Kongō Temple, Enchin was a figure well worth reading about

78 *Enchin den, Dai Nihon Bukkyō zensho* 568.72, 58.

79 *Jimon denki horoku 5, Dai Nihon Bukkyō zensho* 787.86, 56–58.

for a variety of reasons that were probably vital to the monastics at even a Shingon establishment. The category of *shōgyō* documents with documents like Kiyoyuki's *Biography of Enchin* and Annen's *Comprehensive Catalogue of the Shingon Esoteric Teachings* may become a vital tool with which to think about and consider how we should approach manuscripts and other mostly Buddhist religious paraphernalia found in archaeological excavations across present-day Xinjiang (新疆) and into Afghanistan and Pakistan.<sup>80</sup>

## 5 Jōjin in the Capital Lending Commentaries by Ennin and Enchin, and the Buddhist Canon

During the second day of his stay in Hangzhou when he visited the Xingjiao Temple (Chin. Xingjiao si 興教寺) on the 29th day of the luni-solar month of 1072, Jōjin's *Record of a Pilgrimage to Mount Tiantai and Wutai* records that he met an eminent Chan master who was 74 years old by the name of Dagan (達觀). One might think that Jōjin met Dagan Tanying (985–1060, 達觀曇穎), author of the *Wujia zhuan* 五家傳 [Chronicles of the Five Houses].<sup>81</sup> Either other records of his life are incorrect or Jōjin could have written this monk's name down incorrectly. Or perhaps he saw some sort of tribute to him that day and made an honest mistake; Jōjin could not speak any vernacular Chinese. In any case, the rest of the entry records the lavish halls of the monastery,

80 Oskar von Hinüber's research on both the 7th century manuscript folios in Sanskrit on birch bark from Gilgit (Or. 11878B) and 8th or 9th century Khotanese manuscript fragments from Khādaliq (115 kilometres east of Khotan) of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarikasūtra* and Karashima Seiji's research overall testifies to the lived context of manuscripts. For a synopsis of the Central Asian *Saddharmapuṇḍarikasūtras* found to date, see Seishi Karashima, "Vehicle (*yāna*) and Wisdom (*jñāna*) in the Lotus Sutra—the Origin of the Notion of *yāna* in Mahāyāna Buddhism," *Annual Report of The International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhism at Soka University* 18 (2015): 167. Cf. Karashima and Wille, *Buddhist Manuscripts from Central Asia*; Noriyuki Kudo, "Gilgit *Saddharmapuṇḍarikasūtra* Manuscript in the British Library, Or.11878B–G," *Annual Report of The International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhism at Soka University* 18 (2015): 197–213. On the Khotanese *Saddharmapuṇḍarikasūtra*, see Oskar von Hinüber, "Three *Saddharmapuṇḍarikasūtra* Manuscripts from Khotan and Their Donors," *Annual Report of The International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhism at Soka University* 18 (2015): 215–234.

81 See Juefan Huihong's 覺範惠洪 (1071–1128) collected works, *Shimen wenzi chan* 石門文字禪 [Stone Gate's Literary Chan], 25; Kakumon Kantetsu 廓門貫徹 ed., *Chū Sekimon mojizen* 註石門文字禪 [Commentary to the *Shimen wenzichan*], vol. 5 (Kyoto: Rinsen shoten, 2000), 15, 651–652. There its title is *Ti wuzong lu* 題五宗錄 [On the Record of the Five Lineages].



including a hall dedicated to the five hundred Arhats, another dedicated to Hārīti (Chin. Guizimu tang 鬼子母堂), a statue of Sarasvatī that captured his attention, and listened (?) to a lecture about roll 6 of Zhanran's (711–782, 湛然) commentary to the *Lotus Sūtra: Fahua xuanyi shiqian* 法華玄義釋籤 [Explanation of the *Profound Meanings of the Lotus Sūtra*] (T. 1717.33).<sup>82</sup> Nearly a year later when he was in the capital of Bianjing staying at the Institute for Transmitting the *dharma* at Taiping Xingguo Temple on the 15th day of the fourth luni-solar month of 1073, an obscure Chan monk named Desong (d.u., 德嵩) gave him a copy of the *Damo Liuzu tan jing* 達摩六祖壇經 [Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch] (T. 2008.48).<sup>83</sup> Based on the fact that he brought Chōnen's (983–1016, 喬然) diary with him to China, the *Zaitō ki* 在唐記 [Diary in China] and perhaps his *Nissō gūhō junrei ki* 入宋求法巡礼記 [Record of a Pilgrimage to Song China in Search of the Dharma], and shared it with the translation team on his first day there, scholars have concluded that Jōjin sought to visit the newly translated texts from the Institute for Transmitting the *dharma* to acquire newly translated texts.<sup>84</sup>

82 *San Tendai Godaisan ki* 1 Xining 熙寧 5 (1072) 4.29; Fujiyoshi Masumi 藤善眞澄, *San Tendai Godaisanki ue* 參天台五臺山記上 [Record of Travels to Mt. Tiantai and Mt. Wutai, First Part] (Osaka: Kansai Daigaku shuppanbu, 2007), 65–70. I provide references to two critical editions of the *San Tendai Godaisan ki*; see below.

83 *San Tendai Godaisan ki* 8 1072.4.15; *San Tendai Godaisanki shita* 參天台五臺山記下 [Record of Travels to Mt. Tiantai and Mt. Wutai, Second Part] (Osaka: Kansai Daigaku shuppanbu, 2011), 451–451; Yanagida Seizan 柳田聖山, *Shoki zenshū shisho no kenkyū* 初期禪宗史書の研究 [Researches on the Historiographic Works of the Early Chan School] (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1967), chap. 3–4. On Xingguo Temple, see Alexander C. Soper, “Hsiang-Kuo-ssu, An Imperial Temple of Northern Sung,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 68 (1948): 19–43; Jinhua Chen, “Images, Legends, Politics, and the Origin of the Great Xiangguo Monastery in Kaifeng: A Case-study of the Formation and Transformation of Buddhist Sacred Sites in Medieval China,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 125.3 (2005): 353–378; Tansen Sen, *Buddhism, Diplomacy, and Trade: the Realignment of Sino-Indian Relations, 600–1400* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003), chap. 3; Fujiyoshi Masumi 藤善眞澄, “Sōchō yakukyō shimatsu kō 宋朝訳経始末攷 [Examination of the Beginning and Termination of Translation [Activities] during the Song Dynasty],” *Kansai daigaku Bungaku ronshū* 関西大学文学論集 [Report of the Kansai University Literature Department] 36.1 (1986): 399–428; Nakamura Kikunoshin 中村菊之進, “Sō Denpōin yakukyō sanzō Yuijō no denki oyobi nenpu 宋伝法院訳経三蔵惟淨の伝記及び年譜 [The Legend and Chronology of the Eminent Translator Weijing at the Song Institute for the Transmission of the Dharma],” *Bunka* 文化 [Culture] 41.1–2 (1977): 1–59; Takeuchi Kōzen 武内孝善, “Sōdai honyaku kyōten no tokushoku ni tsuite 宋代翻訳經典の特色について [On the Characteristics of the Song Dynasty Translations of Buddhist Books],” *Mikkyō bunka* 密教文化 [Esoteric Buddhist Culture] 113 (1975): 27–53.

84 *San Tendai Godaisan ki* 14th day of the tenth luni-solar month of 1072; Fujiyoshi Masumi, *San Tendai Godaisanki I*, 415, 439. On fragments of Chōnen's diary, including the fragments

Chōnen returned to Japan in 986 with a copy of the newly printed Kaibao-era Buddhist canon and an additional forty rolls of newly translated texts (for a total of 5425 rolls he brought back to Japan), including an apparently incomplete copy of the Chan lamp or flame history, *Jingde chuandeng lu* 景德傳燈錄 (Jap. *Keitoku dentō roku*) [Jingde-era Record of the Transmission of the Lamp [or Flame]] (T. 2076.51, ca. 1004).<sup>85</sup> The esteemed statesman Fujiwara no Michinaga (966–1028, 藤原道長) acquired this canon during the early 11th century, when he oversaw the construction of a lavish, private temple for his clan in Kyoto called Hōjō Temple (Jap. Hōjō ji 法成寺). We can only speculate whether or not the *Jingde-era Record of the Transmission of the Lamp* was kept at Hōjō Temple.

Because his father was a member of the Fujiwara clan (Jap. Fujiwara shi 藤原氏), most likely the son of Sanekata (d. 998, 実方), a distinguished man of letters in his own right, Jōjin must have been aware of Chōnen's copy of the Kaibao Canon at Hōjō Temple. His family background provides further perspective when we consider the entry in the *Record of a Pilgrimage to Mt. Tiantai and Mt. Wutai* for the 25th day of the tenth luni-solar month of 1072, just twelve days after he arrived in at the Institute for Transmitting the *dharma* on the grounds of Taiping Xingguo Temple. It took him 65 days to reach the capital from Guoqing Monastery on Mt. Tiantai. According to Jōjin's diary, two monks from India—Richeng (1017–1073, 日稱, Skt. either Sūryayaśas or Sūryakīrti?) and Tianjixiang (d.u., 天吉祥, Skt. Devaśrī?)—supervised a translation team of nineteen.<sup>86</sup> In the morning of the 25th day of the tenth

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found inside a statue of Śākyamuni Buddha he brought back to Japan and placed in Seiryō Temple (Jap. Seiryō ji 清涼寺) in Kyoto, see Gregory Henderson and Leon Hurvitz, "The Buddha of Seiryōji," *Artibus Asiae* 19 (1956): 5–55; Zhenping Wang, "Chōnen's Pilgrimage to China, 983–986," *Asia Major, Third Series* 7 (1994): 73, ns 26–27; Benjamin Brose, "Crossing Thousands of Li of Waves: The Return of China's Lost Tiantai Texts," *Journal of the International Association for Buddhist Studies* 29.1 (2006 (2008)): 47, n. 56; Teshima Takahiro 手島崇裕, "Nissō sō Chōnen no sekai kan ni tsuite 入宋僧齋然の世界観について [On the Historical Significance of the Japanese Monk Chōnen's World Views]," *Nichigo Nichibun gakkai kenkyū* 日語日文學研究 [Korean] *Japanese Journal of Language and Literature* 88 (2014): 225–244. See also the essays in: GBS Jikkō iinkai 実行委員会 ed., *Ronshū: Nissō kōryūki no Tōdaiji: Chōnen shōnin issennen daionki ni chinan de* 論集: 日宋交流期の東大寺—齋然上人一千年大遠忌にちなんで [Conference Volume: On the Role of Tōdai Temple in Cultural Exchange between Song China and Japan: On the Occasion of the 1000th Year Commemoration of the Priest Chōnen] (Nara, Kyoto: Kabushiki kaisha Hōzōkan, 2017).

85 Yoritomi Motohiro, *Nicchū o musunda bukkyōsō*, 420–425.

86 *San Tendai Godaisan ki* 4 for the 14th day of the tenth luni-solar day of 1072. The jobs at the Institute include masters of the *tripitaka* (Chin. *sanzang fashi* 三藏法師), see Antonino Forte, "The Relativity of the Concept of Orthodoxy in Chinese Buddhism:

luni-solar month, Sanskrit scholar Huizuo (fl. 11th c., 惠琢) sent Jōjin some soup and he was invited to have tea with scribe Dingzhao (fl. 11th c., 定照). During the afternoon, Jōjin and assistant translator Huixun (fl. 11th c., 惠詢), also known as Fancai sanzang (梵才三藏), master of the canon (Skt. *tripiṭaka*) who is talented with the Sanskrit script, and later joined by textual appraiser Zhipu (d.u., 智普, a.k.a. Wenhui dashi 文惠大師), looked at seven other books that Jōjin had brought from Japan. These include three commentaries by Enchin to the *Mahāvairocana-sūtra* (T. 848.18) (Jap. *Dainichikyō gishaku* 大日經義釈) and Vasubandhu's (ca. 4th–5th c.) commentary to the *Lotus Sūtras* (\**Saddharmapundarikasūtropadeśa*; Jap. *Hokke ronki* 法華論記) in 20 rolls, and a glossed commentary to Yijing's translation of the *Suvarṇabhāṣottamasūtra* in ten rolls (Jap. *Saishō'ōkyō monku* 最勝王經文句).<sup>87</sup> They also examined Ennin's commentaries to the *Vajrasekhara* (Jap. *Kongōchōkyō sho* 金剛頂經疏, T. 2223.61), and *Susiddhikara* (Jap. *Soshitchikyō sho* 蘇悉地經疏, T. 2227.61), *sūtras*, both in

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Chih-sheng's indictment of Shih-li and the Proscription of the *Dharma Mirror Sutra*," in *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*, ed. Robert E. Buswell Jr. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1990), 243. Then we have assistant translators (Chin. *tongyijing* 同譯經), Sanskrit scholars (Chin. *zhengfanxue* 正梵學), philological assistants (Chin. *zhengyi* 證義), textual appraisers (Chin. *zhengwen* 證文), textual composers (Chin. *zhuiwen* 綴文), proof-readers (Chin. *canyijing* 參譯經), editors (Chin. *panding* 判定), stylists (Chin. *runwen* 潤文), and scribes (Chin. *bishou* 筆受). See also the description of the process during the Tang for Yijing in Chen, "Another Look at Tang Zhongzong's (r. 684, 705–710) Preface to Yijing's (635–713) Translations: With a Special Reference to Its Date;" Chen, "Vinaya Works Translated by Yijing and Their Circulation: Manuscripts Excavated at Dunhuang and Central Asia;" cf. T. 2035.49, 398b7–19 for a canonical description of those involved in the translation process.

- 87 *Shō ajari shingon mikkyō burui sōroku* 諸阿闍梨真言密教部類惣録 [Comprehensive Catalogue of the Shingon Esoteric Teachings of the [eight] *ācāryas*] (T. 2176.55) lists eight separate editions of Yixing's (683–727, 一行) commentary to the *Mahāvairocana-sūtra* brought by each of the *Nittō hakke*; see Shimizu Akisumi 清水明澄, "Dainichikyō no chūshaku-sho no shoshigakuteki kenkyū 「大日經」の注釈書の書誌学的研究 [A Bibliographical Study of the Chinese Commentaries on the *Mahāvairocanaśbhisambo dhisūtra*]," *Mikkyō bunka* 密教文化 [Esoteric Buddhist Culture] 219 (2007): 25–35. On Enchin's commentary to Vasubandhu's commentary to the *Saddharmapundarikasūtra*, see Maegawa Ken'ichi 前川健一, "Enchin no Hokkeron-ki no in'yō bunken: Mishō bunken no kaimei o chūshin ni 円珍『法華論記』の引用文献: 未詳文献の解明を中心に [Identifying Some Citations in Enchin's *Hokkeron-ki*]," *Indogaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 印度学仏教学研究 *Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies* 3 (1995): 89–103; Fujii Kyōkō 藤井経公 and Ikebe Kōshō 池辺宏昭, "Seshin Hokkeron yakuchū 世親『法華論』訳注 [A Study of Vasubandhu's *Saddharmapundarikōpadeśa* (*Fahua lun*) with Translation and Notes]," *Hokkaidō Daigaku bungaku kenkyūka kiyō* 北海道大学文学研究科紀要 [Journal of the Hokkaido University Literature Studies Centre] 105, 108, 111 (2001–2003): 21–112, 111–195, 111–170. Enchin's glossed commentary to the *Saishō'ōkyō* is no longer extant.

seven rolls, and Genshin's (942–1017, 源信) *Ōjōyōshū* 往生要集 [Essentials of Rebirth in the Pure Land] (T. 2682.84).<sup>88</sup>

These commentaries written by Ennin and especially Enchin demonstrate why, following Kuroda Toshio, we refer to Esoteric Buddhism—and especially Tendai Esoteric Buddhism or Taimitsu as opposed to Shingon Esoteric Buddhism or Tōmitsu as in Tō Temple—as *Kenmitsu* Buddhism (Jap. *kenmitsu taisei* 顯密体制): Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhism.<sup>89</sup> Esoteric Buddhist masters who assumed the distinction of *ācāryas* were lineage holders who had received transmission through consecrations or initiations (Chin. *guanding*/Jap. *kanjō* 灌頂, Skt. *abhiṣeka*) to perform the rituals prescribed in manuals outlining performances in ritual spaces (Chin. *daochang*, Jap. *dōjō* 道場, Skt. *bodhimaṇḍa*) according to specific diagrams (Chin. *mantuluo*/Jap. *mandara* 曼荼羅, Skt. *maṇḍala*) and were concomitant experts in the study of Buddhist *sūtra* and commentarial treaties, and the contents and arrangement of the (Kaiyuan-era manuscript) Buddhist canon. Just as Heian-era Esoteric Buddhist teachers in Japan received transmission of the *maṇḍalas* of the two worlds (Jap. *ryōbu mandara* 兩部曼荼羅) or two divisions of the *garbhadhātu* (Chin. *taizang jie*/Jap. *taizōkai* 胎藏界) and *vajradhātu* (Chin. *jin'gang jie*/Jap. *kongōkai* 金剛界) or womb and diamond realms, even within the context of their study of exoteric Buddhist literature (Jap. *kengyō* 顯經 or Jap. 顯教), *ācāryas* viewed exoteric *sūtras* and teachings as advantageous ritual tools for the protection of the state and aristocratic clans (Jap. *Chingo kokka* 鎮護國家).<sup>90</sup> Clearly

88 Fujiyoshi Masumi, *San Tendai Godaisanki I*, 490, 492–493.

89 Toshio Kuroda, “The Development of the Kenmitsu System As Japan's Medieval Orthodoxy,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 23.3–4 (1996): 233–271.

90 On these two *maṇḍalas* in the Tōmitsu esoteric tradition, see Abé, *The Weaving of Mantra*. For philological context, see Rolf W. Giebel, *Two Esoteric Sutras: The Adamantine Pinnacle Sutra and The Susiddhikara Sutra* (Translated from the Chinese, Taishō Volume 18, Numbers 865, 893) (Berkeley: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2001); Rolf W. Giebel, “3. Taishō Volumes 18–21,” in *Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras in East Asia*, ed. Charles D. Orzech, Henrik H. Sørensen, and Richard K. Payne (Leiden: Brill, 2011). The full title of the *Vajrasēkharasūtra* is *Jin'gangding yiqie rulai zhen-shi dasheng xianzheng dajingwang jing* 金剛頂一切如來真實攝大乘現證大經王經 [\**Sarvatahāgattvasaṃgrā-hamahāyānābhisamayamahākāparāhasūtra*], attributed to Amoghavajra (705–774, Chin. Bukong/Jap. Fukū 不空). See also the translation by Vajrabodhi (662–732, Jin'gangzhi 金剛智), *Jin'gangding yujia zhonglüe chu niansong jing* 金剛頂瑜伽中略出念誦經 [Ritual Manual for Recitations from the Diamond Crown Yoga (Texts)] (Z 516, T. 866.18), and Rolf W. Giebel, trans., “The Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh shih-pa-hui chih-kuei: An Annotated Translation,” *Journal of Naritatan Institute for Buddhist Studies* 18.107–201 (1995): 107–201; Giebel, *Two Esoteric Sutras: The Adamantine Pinnacle Sutra and The Susiddhikara Sutra*; Giebel “3. Taishō Volumes 18–21.” The full title of the *Dari jing* is *Dapiluzhena chengfo shenbian jiachi jing* 大毘盧遮那成

based upon models of practice Japanese monks witnessed in Chang'an and Luoyang during the early Tang or even the Sui Dynasty, specific temples in Japan performed state protection rituals with special attention to ritualised readings—either chanting (Jap. *dokuju* 読誦) or revolve-reading (Jap. *tendoku* 転読)—of three scriptures: (1) Xuanzang's colossal translation of the *Da bore boluomiduo jing* 大般若波羅蜜多經 [*\*Mahāprajñāpāramitāsūtra*], i.e. the *Daihannyaharamittakyō* (Z 1, T. 220), (2) the *Suvarṇabhāsottamasūtra* (specifically Yijing's edition), and (3) the *Scripture on the Humane Kings* (Z 21 T. 245.8 and Z 22, T. 246.8): *Shin'yaku ninnōkyō* 新訳仁王經 [New Translation of the Scripture on the Humane Kings]<sup>91</sup>—usually on behalf of the *kami*

佛神變加持經 [*Mahāvairocanābhisambodhīkurvītaadhiṣṭhānasūtra*]; in trans., *The Vairocanābhisambodhi Sūtra: Translated from the Chinese (Taishō Volume 18, Number 848)* (Berkeley: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2005).

- 91 See “*Chingo kokka*” and “*Chinju*” in Lévi et al., *Hōbōgirin*, 322–327. The former entry explicitly points out that protection from or for *kijin* (鬼神, a blanket term in Chinese for ‘gods’) almost always involved *dhāraṇī*, and particularly from the *Ninnōkyō* (see T. 245.8, 829c29–830a4 (chap. 2) and 246.8, 834c25 (chap. 1) or *Konkōmyōkyō* (T. 663.16, 341b13–c3 (chap. 2); 664.16, 382c3–21 (chap. 5), and 665.16, 427c6–27 (chap. 6)). Not only does de Visser pay ample attention to matters of ‘state protection’ Buddhism (Jap. *Chingo kokka* 鎮護國家), but he provides the most thorough summary in English of the history of offerings of a complete manuscript Buddhist canon (Jap. *issaikyō* 一切經) in Japan from 651 to 1323; De Visser, *Ancient Buddhism in Japan*, 226, 605–615. Furthermore, de Visser provides the first clue in any European language that I know of about shrines where a complete copy of the manuscript Buddhist canon was offered or vowed to the *kami*, “From the beginning of the twelfth century the *Issaikyō* festivals were often held in Shintō sanctuaries (Hiyoshi, Kumano, Iwashimizu, Gion, Kamo)” (ibid., 611–612). His study also contains obliging references to how Enchin, see below, in particular, played an especially prominent role in promoting Tendai rituals—and orientated doctrines at debates and lectures—within the ritual system of Heian Japan.

On ritual readings of the *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsūtra*, see Sagai Tatsuru, *Shinbutsu shūgō no rekishi to girei kūkan*, 139–142; Abe Yasurō, *Chūsei Nihon no shūkyō tekusuto taikei*, 430–450 and 196–198. The precedent for ritual readings of this large compendium in Japan comes from a hagiographical biography of Xuanzang, *Da Cien sanzang fashi zhuan* 大慈恩三藏法師傳 [Biography of the Great Trepiṭaka Ci'en (Xuanzang)] 10 (T. 2053.50, 276b5–22), which says that a special lecture was delivered on this scripture and it was read at a ceremony on during the tenth luni-solar month of 663. Cf. Komine Michihiko 小峰未彌彦, Katsuzaki Yūgen 勝崎祐彦, and Watanabe Shōgo 渡辺章悟, *Hannyakyō taizen* 般若經大全 [Encyclopedia of *Prajñāpāramitā* Scriptures] (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 2015), 372–382. On the ritual of the manuscript Buddhist canon (Jap. *issaikyō-e* 一切經会), see Heather Blair, “Rites and Rule: Kiyomori at Itsukushima and Fukuhara,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 73.1 (2013): 6; Heather Blair, *Real and Imagined: The Peak of Gold in Heian Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2015), chap. 1.2 and 1.3. See also D. Max Moerman, *Localizing Paradise: Kumano Pilgrimage and the Religious Landscape of Premodern Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), chap. 4 cited in Blair, and D. Max Moerman, “The Archaeology of Anxiety: An Underground History of

(Jap. *shinzen dokyō* 神前読經) to avert natural disasters and calamities and protect the state and powerful clans.

We have scant sources with which to investigate the tools used and mechanisms by which Buddhist monastics performed state protection rituals that Japanese pilgrims such as Kūkai, Ennin, Enchin, Shūei and others reported they received from Esoteric Buddhist teachers in specific monasteries in Tang Chang'an and Luoyang, which explains Brose's Chang'an Buddhist Traditions. After the An Lushan, Shi Siming, and Huang Chao rebellions and the Huichang-era anti-Buddhist suppression, as Chen has expertly demonstrated in his *Crossfire: Shingon-Tendai Strife as Seen in Two Twelfth-century Polemics, with Special References to Their Background in Tang China*, how nearly our entire understanding of what Tang Esoteric Buddhism may have looked like comes from the perspective of the Tendai and Shingon Esoteric Buddhist traditions.

What Jōjin's diary has to tell us about the world of 11th century state protection and/or Esoteric Buddhism in the capital of Bianjing at the Institute for Transmitting the *dharma* is problematical to unpack. We know from his background in Japan and certain *Lotus Sūtra*-orientated rituals (Jap. *Hokkehō* 法華法) he mentions again and again beginning on the first day of his diary, as well as recitation of the *Budong zunzhou/Fudō sonju* 不動尊咒 [The Venerable Spell of Acalanātha], how he arrived in China with a highly developed understanding of Esoteric Buddhist discourse, practice, and knowledge of how these practices were integrated with the *Lotus Sūtra* in Temple Branch Exoteric-Esoteric Buddhist (Jap. *kenmitsu* 顕密) practice and study.<sup>92</sup> Just as he loaned out copies of Ennin's and Enchin's commentaries to *sūtras* and commentaries, on the twenty-sixth day of the first lunar month of 1073, he loaned out copies of four Tang translations of ritual texts he had brought with him from Japan. One of these was Amoghavajra's translation of the *Chengju Miaofa lianhua jingwang yuqie guanzhi yigui* [Jōju myōhō renekyō ō yuga kanchi giki] 成就妙法蓮華經王瑜伽觀智儀軌 [Manual to Achieve [Skt. *siddhi*] Visualisation and Knowledge

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Heian Religion," in *Heian Japan, Centers and Peripheries*, ed. Mikael S. Adolphson, Edward Kamens, and Stacie Matsumoto (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 245–271. On the *Scripture on the Humane Kings* (Chin. *Renwang jing*/Jap. *Ninnōkyō*) in China, see Charles D. Orzech, *Politics and Transcendent Wisdom: The Scripture for Humane Kings in the Creation of Chinese Buddhism* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998).

92 *San Tendai Godaisan ki* 1 for the 15th day of the third luni-solar month of 1072. Fujiyoshi Masumi, *San Tendai Godaisan ki* I, 3–13. Cf. Lucia Dolce, "Reconsidering the Taxonomy of the Esoteric," in *The Culture of Secrecy in Japanese Religion*, ed. Bernhard Scheid and Mark Teeuwen (London, New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2006), 130–171.

of the King of the *Lotus Sūtra* through Yoga] (T. 1000.19) with perhaps Ennin's commentary *Hokke shidai* 法華次第 [Ritual Procedures of the *Lotus Sūtra*] to it, and Enchin's commentary to the *Daihannyakyō kaidai* 大般若經開題 [Questions about the *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsūtra*] that Kūkai brought back to Japan and Enchin appended in one roll.<sup>93</sup> Jōjin also appears to have let Huixun borrow his copy of a *maṇḍala* diagram (Jap. *bonjizu mandara* 梵字圖曼荼羅).

Jōjin also found newly translated texts in China. At the Institute for Transmitting the *dharma* on the 28th day of the second luni-solar month 1073, for example, we learn that he was able to see a range of rare commentaries that are otherwise primarily catalogued in Ūich'on's (1055–1101, 義天) catalogue to the supplement to the First Koryō (918–1392, 高麗) printed canon (ca. 991–1101) called *Sinp'yōn chejong kyojang ch'ongnok* 新編諸宗總錄 [New Catalogue of the Teachings of All the Schools].<sup>94</sup> On the twenty-ninth day, he was shown a newly compiled primer for learning the origins of the Sanskrit alphabet and Sanskrit words called *Jingyou Tianzhu ziyuan* 景祐天竺字源 [Jingyou-era (1034–1038) Book on the Source of Indian [Writing]] and copied down in the *Record of a Pilgrimage to Mt. Tiantai and Mt. Wutai* two imperial prefaces written to commemorate the translation of it by Dharmapāla (963–1058, Chin. Fahu 法護) and Weijing (d. ca. 1051–1052, 惟淨). The scribe Dingzhao showed him more than 400 rolls of texts previously translated at the Institute, including \*Dharmabhadra's (d. 1000, Chin. Faxian 法賢) translation of the *Ratnaguṇasaṃcaya* (Chin. *Fomu baodezang bore boluomi jing* 佛母寶德藏般若波羅蜜經 [Perfection of Wisdom Treasured and Virtuous Storehouse of the Mother of All buddhas], T. 229.8) with imperials prefaces (written in Chinese).<sup>95</sup> The entry for the ninth day of the fourth luni-solar month of 1073 when he was still in the capital at the Institute explains that he was given a copy of newly translated Esoteric Buddhist text. He records the title as *Dajiaowang jing* 大教王經 [(perhaps the) *Māyājālamahātāntra* or *sūtra* of Regal Great Teachings] in thirty rolls, which means it could have been \*Dānapāla's (Chin.

93 *San Tendai Godaisan ki* 6 for the 27th day of the third luni-solar month of 1072. Fujiyoshi Masumi, *San Tendai Godaisan ki II*, 277–278.

94 *San Tendai Godaisan ki* for the 28th day of the second luni-solar month of 1073, *ibid.*, 280–283. On the *Sinp'yōn chejong kyojang ch'ongnok*, see Chikusa Masaaki 竺沙雅章, ed. *Sō-Gen Bukkyō bunkashi kenkyū* 宋元佛教文化史研究 [Studies in the Cultural History of Buddhism during the Song and Yuan dynasties] (Tokyo: Kifuko shoin, 2000), 69–70, 112–140, 271–292; Brose, “Crossing Thousands of *Li* of Waves: The Return of China's Lost Tiantai Texts,” 39–41; Richard D. McBride II, *Doctrine and Practice in Medieval Korean Buddhism: The Collected Works of Ūich'on*, ed. Robert E. Jr. Buswell (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2016), 4–5.

95 *San Tendai Godaisan ki* for the 29th day of the second luni-solar month of 1073. Fujiyoshi Masumi, *San Tendai Godaisan ki II*, 283–290.

Shihu, d. 1017, 施護) retranslation of the *Sarvatathāgatātattvasaṃgrahasūtra* (alt. *Vajraśekharasūtra*, Chin. *Yiqie rulai zhen shishe dasheng xianzheng sanmei dajiao wang jing* 一切如來真實攝大乘現證三昧大教王經 [Mahāyāna Sūtra of Regal Great Teachings about the Genuine, Evident, Verified Samādhi of All the Thus Come Ones], T. 882.18).<sup>96</sup>

I will restrict my discussion here of Jōjin's background knowledge of Esoteric Buddhism from Japan to the example of the 'copying the *Lotus Sūtra* according to the prescribed method' (Jap. *nyohōkyō* 如法經) and invoking the thirty *kami* (Jap. *sanjūbanjin* 三十番神) who protect the *Lotus Sūtra* (Jap. *Hokekyō shugo no kami* 法華經守護の神 or *shotenzenjin* 諸天善神 or *nyohōgyō zenjin* 如法經善神) during the 'end times' (Jap. *mappō* 末法).<sup>97</sup> In his *Nyohōgyō genshūsahō* 如法經現修作法 [Procedures for Presently Copying [the *Lotus*] *Sūtra* According to the Prescribed Method], comp. ca. 1236 (T. 2730.84), ritual *sūtra*-chanting expert (Jap. *shōmyō* 声明) Shūkai (d.u., 宗快) lists the invocation of the thirty *kami* starting with Amaterasu Ōmikami (天照大神), deity of Ise Shrine (Jap. Ise jingū 伊勢神宮), Mie prefecture, on the tenth lunar day, Atsuta Shrine (Jap. Atsuta jingū 熱田神宮) in Nagoya on the first day of the next lunar month, concluding with Kifune (貴船, of Kibune near Kyoto) on the 9th lunar day.<sup>98</sup> In a mountain branch Tendai Esoteric Buddhism manual in which "the core of cultic practice and thought on Mt. Hiei consisted primarily of Shintō-Buddhist combinations" compiled by ritual expert Kōshū (alt. Kōsō, 1276–1350, 光宗), *Keiranshūyōshū* 溪嵐拾葉集 [A Collection of Leaves Gathered in Stormy Streams], the thirty *kami* are similarly evoked as guardians of the *Lotus Sūtra* tied to a practice initiated by Ennin.<sup>99</sup> Enchin is the putative founder of the Tendai temple branch; Ennin is assigned the same role for the mountain branch of the Tendai tradition. But Kōshū offers a new twist about one of the shrine-temple complexes or multiplexes that seems to have been of particular significance for the Tendai tradition: Atsuta Shrine is not recorded as the shrine to 'the imperial sword' (Jap. *Kusanagi no tsurugi* 草薙劍 or *Yatsurugi* 八剱), the name of a *kami*, but is instead the site where Tang Emperor Xuanzong's (r. 713–755, 玄宗) favorite consort Yang Guifei

96 *San Tendai Godaisan ki* 6 for the ninth day of the third luni-solar month of 1072, *ibid.*, 439–440.

97 Lucia Dolce, "Hokke Shinto: kami in the Nichiren tradition," in *Buddhas and Kami in Japan: Honji Suijaku as a Combinatory Paradigm*, ed. Fabio Rambelli and Mark Teeuwen (London, New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 225–226.

98 T. 2730.84, 896c25–897a9.

99 Allan G. Grapard, "Keiranshūyōshū: A Different Perspective on Mt. Hiei in the Medieval Period," in *Re-visioning 'Kamakura' Buddhism*, ed. Richard Karl Payne (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998), 55.



(719–756, 楊貴妃)—depicted at Sennyū Temple (Jap. Sennyū ji 泉涌寺) in Kyoto as Yōhiki Kannon (楊貴妃觀音)—descended to as part of the cultivation of the *vajradhātu* or diamond realm *maṇḍala* from the *Vajrasāekharasūtra*.<sup>100</sup> Daiun Temple, where Jōjin was abbot before he left for China, played an important role in temple branch Tendai rituals to the *kami*. And the connection between devotion to local gods, Esoteric Buddhist rituals and the Tendai tradition runs not through pilgrims' experiences in the Tang capitals, but with Mt. Tiantai in Taizhou (台州) near Hangzhou, where the Mountain King tutelary deity is said to have been brought from to Mt. Hiei by Saichō—or more likely Enchin.<sup>101</sup>

## 6 Conclusion: Transmission along the Silk Road(s) in Japan in Practice

As I mentioned at the outset, apart from the so-called Library Cave where the Dunhuang cache of documents were discovered at the turn of the 20th century, we do not have libraries like Shinpuku Temple or Mt. Amano Kongō Temple in China—or anywhere else in East Asian for that matter. With the *Biography of Enchin, Comprehensive Catalogue of the Shingon Esoteric Teachings*, various travel diaries and catalogues, and *Record of a Pilgrimage to Mount Tiantai and Wutai*, we can reconstruct the means by which the transmission of Esoteric Buddhist rituals made their way from Tang (and Song) China to Japan and specifically to Matsuno'o, Hiei, and other shrines in the region. Colophons on scriptures from the Matsuno'o and Nanatsu Temple manuscript Buddhist canons reflect how lay people and monastics used these scriptures to achieve not only soteriological ends, but perhaps more significantly, to protect themselves from all manner of misfortune and calamity. And because “colophons containing more or less the same information can be found everywhere,” and the

100 *Keiranshūyōshū* 6, T. 2410.76, 518c26–519a16. On Yang Guifei and Sennyūji, see Hillary Eve Pedersen, “The Five Great Space Repositories Bodhisattvas: Lineage, Protection and Celestial Authority in Ninth-Century Japan,” (PhD diss., University of Kansas, 2010), 185.

On the Three Imperial Regalia and the sword, in particular, see below and Fabio Rambelli, “Texts, Talismans, and Jewels: the *Reikiki* and the Performativity of Sacred Texts in Medieval Japan,” in *Discourse and Ideology in Medieval Japanese Buddhism*, ed. Richard K. Payne and Taigen Daniel Leighton (Abingdon, New York: Routledge, 2006), 52–78. On *jingūji* and *miyadera*, see Sagai, *Shinbutsu shūgō no rekishi to girei kukan*, 105–110; Kornicki, *The Book in Japan*, 252–253. Cf. Keyworth, “Apocryphal Chinese Books in the Buddhist Canon at Matsuo Shintō Shrine,” 1–2.

101 Allan G. Grapard, “Linguistic Cubism: A Singularity of Pluralism in the Sannō Cult,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 14.2–3 (1987): 211–234.

word and concept “colophon” has existed since classical antiquity around the globe, colophons not only mark the “victorious achievement of the scribe,” but they also provide perhaps the only first-hand window we have into what the people actually did with particular books.<sup>102</sup> Or, in our case, with books and statues and texts to be read in as perfect Sanskrit as may have been possible in medieval Japan. The phonetic reading marks I briefly mentioned on rolls of the Yijing’s translation of the *Suvarṇabhāsottamasūtra* from Matsuno’o Shrine and from Dunhuang affirm as much. It seems to me that these colophons are not that far removed from the manuscript fragments that von Hinüber and Karashima studied on the other end of the Silk Road(s). Von Hinüber states:

[...] particularly in very rich and sometimes even voluminous colophons a lot of cultural knowledge is hidden. For, much of the common cultural background of scribes and donors at the period when the copy was prepared is also unintentionally preserved in these texts [...]. [C]olophons gradually gained importance as invaluable sources of information on cultural history otherwise lost.<sup>103</sup>

Von Hinüber has found what he calls “the beginning of a long tradition” of inserting a colophon to the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* in Sanskrit which says:

And the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* has come to an end, the discourse on the Dharma, the *Sūtrānta*, the great extensive one, the instruction of the bodhisattvas, [...] the secret of all buddhas, the mystery of all buddhas, the elucidation bringing the highest goal within reach. If a son of a good family falls into a pit of burning coals or lies down on a bed of razors, he should go to a place where this *sūtra* is.<sup>104</sup>

102 Hinüber, “On the Early History of Indic Buddhist Colophons,” 47.

103 Ibid., 57.

104 Ibid., 55–57. The Sanskrit of reads as follows: [...] *abhyānandam iti. samāptam ca saddharmapuṇḍarīkaṃ dharmaparyāyam sūtrāntaṃ mahāvaiṣṭyaṃ bodhisattvāvaḍam [...] sarvabuddharahasyaṃ sarvabuddhanigīṭhaṃ [...] paramārthanirhāranirdeśaṃ iti aṃḡārakaṣūṇ gāhitvā ākrāmya kṣurasamstaraṃ gantavyaṃ kulaputreṇa yatra sūtraṃ ida[m] bhavet.* An alternate translation of these verses is provided in von Hinüber, “The *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra*,” 36–41: “A son of a good family must go to where the *Sūtra* is (even) after having dived into pits (filled with) burning coals, having stepped upon scattered razors.” The first publication of this colophon was in Sylvain Lévi, “Note Sure Des Manuscrits Sanscrits Provenant De Bamiyan (Afghanistan), Et De Gilgit (Cachmere),” *Journal Asiatique* 220 (1932): 45.

Putting aside the risk of repeating something from a paper I delivered at a conference with Henrik Sørensen two years ago in Beijing, falling into a pit of burning coals or stretching out on a bed of razors seems to be a peculiarly Indic or perhaps even Central Asian fear, because I have yet to see such grisly—though perhaps tangible—concerns expressed in colophons to Buddhist manuscripts in Sinitic. But it goes without saying that the *Lotus Sūtra* is as associated with deliverance from unwelcome circumstances in East Asia as it apparently was in medieval India. Moreover, although the *Lotus Sūtra* probably deserves the title ‘King of *Sūtras*’ in medieval East Asia and certainly in 9th–10th century China and Heian Japan, where it is noticeably missing from the Matsuno’o Shrine canon, despite the fact that this canon owes its survival to a *Lotus Sūtra* orientated temple (Jap. Myōren ji 妙蓮寺 of the Hokkeshū 法華宗), a host of other scriptures—particularly those with propitious *dhāraṇī*—promise similar this worldly benefits. The aforementioned *Suvarṇabhāsottamasūtra* is one of these with special attention to goddesses, and Sarasvatī in particular. In several guises she was as well-known across the Indian subcontinent and among Iranian speaking peoples prior to the introduction of Islam as the goddess of composition, learning, music (she plays the *vīṇā*) and poetry, and she preaches on behalf of the Buddha and offers several of her own *dhāraṇī* to coincide with a ritual bath (reconstructed from Khotanese-Sanskrit).<sup>105</sup> In Emmerick’s translation Sarasvatī continues:

105 See R.E. Emmerick, *Sūtra of Golden Light: Being a Translation of the Suvarṇabhāsottamasūtra*, 3rd revised edition (London: Pali Text Society), 49. The Sanskrit here reads: *śame biśame svāhā / sagate bigaṭe svāhā / sukhatinate svāhā sāgarasambhūtāya svāhā / skandamātrāya svāhā nilakaṇṭhāya svāhā / aparājītabīryāya svāhā himabatasambhūtāya svāhā / animilabakrṭāya svāhā namo bhagabate brahmaṇe / namaḥ sarasvatyai debyai sidhyanta mantrapadā / taṃ brahmānumaryatu svāhā*. Catherine Ludvik, *Sarasvatī: Riverine Goddess of Knowledge; From the Manuscript-carrying Vīṇā-player to the Weapon-wielding Defender of the Dharma*, vol. 27 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 169–170.

T. 665.16, 435b23–c5 reads: 怛姪他□三謎□毘三謎□莎訶□索揭滯毘揭滯□莎訶□毘揭茶（亭耶反）伐底□莎訶娑揭囉□三步多也莎訶□塞建陀□摩多也莎訶□尼攞建佗也□莎訶□阿鉢囉市哆□毘嚩耶也□莎訶□呬摩槃哆□三步多也□莎訶□阿彌蜜攞 薄怛囉也□莎訶□南謨薄伽伐都□跋囉甜摩寫莎訶□南謨薩囉酸（蘇活）底□莫訶提鼻裔莎訶□悉旬觀漫（此云成就我某甲）曼怛囉鉢拖莎訶 怛喇觀怛姪哆□跋囉甜摩奴末觀□莎訶。

The Taishō editors provide an alternate Sanskrit reading:

*Tadyathā samme visamme svāhā, sugate vīgate svāhā. Vigata (蕃 pamgaci) vatisvāhā, Sāgarasambuddhāya svāhā, skandā mātāya svāhā, nilakaṇṭhāya svāhā, aparājita vīryāya svāhā, himavantāya svāhā, animilavāktāya svāhā, namo bhagavate Brah maṇi svāhā, namo Sarasvatī-mahā devye svāhā, siddhyantu māṃ mantrapāda svāhā dharata vacito Brahmānu manora (tha-vrto) svāhā.*

At the act of bathing, for the sake of the monk who preaches the Law [*dharmabhāṇaka*], for the sake of those who listen to the Law and to those who write it down, I myself will go there. Together with the multitude of gods, I will cause the removal of every disease in that village, city, district, or dwelling.<sup>106</sup>

The *brāhmaṇa* Kauṇḍinya then praises Sarasvatī, beseeching her to utter another *dhāraṇī* (following Emmerick):

May my insight be unobstructed. May my knowledge prosper in such textbooks, verses, magic books, doctrinal books, poems. So be it: *mahāprabhāve hili hili, mili mili*. May it go forth for me by the power of the blessed goddess Sarasvatī. *karate keyūre, keyūrebatī, hili mili, hili mili, hili hili*. I invoke the great goddess by the truth of the Buddha, by the truth of the Indra, by the truth of Varuṇa [...]<sup>107</sup>

106 Emmerick, *Sūtra of Golden Light: Being a Translation of the Suvarṇabhāsottamasūtra*, 27 and 49.

107 Ibid., 50, provides the Sanskrit as: *mure, cire, abaje, abajabati, hīṅgule, piṅgalabati, maṅgiṣe, marīci, samati, daśmatī, agrīmagrī, tara, citara, cabati, ciciri, śiri, miri, marīci, praṅye lokajyeṣṭhe lokaśreṣṭhe, lokapriye, siddhiprite, bhīnamukti śuci khari, apratihate, apratihatabuddhi, namuci namuci mahādebi pratigṛhṇa namastkāraṃ*. Cf. T. 665.16, 436a12–b7 reads: 怛姪他慕囉只囉阿伐帝(貞勵)阿伐吒伐底(丁里,下同)馨遇嗽名具嗽名具羅伐底騫具師末喇只三末底毘三末底惡近(入)喇莫近喇囉只怛囉者伐底質質哩室里蜜里末難地疊(去)末喇只八囉拏畢喇裔盧迦逝瑟跏(丑世反)盧迦失囉瑟趾盧迦畢喇裔悉馱跋喇帝毘麼目企(輕利反)輸只折喇阿鉢喇底喝帝阿鉢喇底喝哆勃地南母只南母只莫訶提鼻鉢喇底近(入)喇昏(火恨)拏(上)南摩塞迦囉我某甲勃地達哩奢呬勃地阿鉢喇底喝哆婆(上)跋靚市婆謎毘輪輸靚舍悉怛囉輸路迦曼怛囉畢得迦迦婢耶地數怛姪他莫訶鉢喇婆鼻呬里蜜里呬里蜜里毘折喇靚謎勃地我某甲勃地輸提薄伽伐點提毘焔薩羅酸(蘇活)點(丁焔[\*]反)羯囉(魯家)滯雞由囉雞由囉末底呬里蜜里呬里蜜里阿婆訶耶弭莫訶提鼻勃陀薩帝娜達摩薩帝娜僧伽薩帝娜因達囉薩帝娜跋嚩拏薩帝娜裔[蘆>盧]雞薩底婆地娜毘釤(引)薩帝娜薩底伐者泥娜阿婆訶耶弭莫訶提鼻呬里蜜里[呬]哩呬[呬]哩蜜[呬]哩毘折喇靚我某甲勃地南謨薄伽伐底(丁利[\*]反)莫訶提鼻薩羅酸底悉旬靚曼怛囉鉢陀彌莎訶。

The Taishō editors provide an alternate Sanskrit rendering:

*Tadyathā miri cyore avate avajevati hīṅgule miṅgule piṅgalevati ankhūṣa māriṅcye saṃmati viṣaṃmati(daśamati)agrati makhye taraci taracivati cīrsi cīri śirimiri manandhi damakhe māriṅcye praṅāpārye lokajyeṣṭhā loka śneṣṭhī lokāvīrye siddha parate bhīnamukhi śucicari apratihate apratihatabuddhi namuci(mahā)namuci mahādeveye prati-graha namaskāra mama buddhi darśabī(drāsiki) buddhi apratihata bhavatu sirahame viśuddha cito śāstraśloka-mantra-pīṭaka kapiyadiśo tadyathā mahāprabhava hili mili vicaratu vibuddhi mama buddhi (vi)-śuddhi bhagavatye deveyaṃ Sarasvatīm karati keyuramati*

Sarasvatī is not the only goddess who offers a *dhāraṇī* in the *Suvarṇa-prabhāsottama*; Śrī Mahādevī (Jap. *Kichijōten* 吉祥天) offers her own spell to provide treasures and spawn a bumper harvest.<sup>108</sup> Dṛḍhā, an earth goddess, also provides her spell,<sup>109</sup> which was also almost certainly particularly relevant to Hata clan members at Matsuno'o Shrine who followed the ritual procedures introduced by Enchin and later Jōjin's disciples. It is easy to imagine why a community whose primary focus was to venerate the *kami* of Matsuno'o, a mountain deity, Ōyama-gui, and a female *kami* 'goddess', Ichikishima, who protected the Kadono River (Jap. Kadonogawa 葛野川, today called Katsuragawa 桂川), might find spells to expel pollution via a ritual bath, boost the rice harvest, or to cure diseases caused by epidemics useful.

That female *kami* or goddesses played such a prominent role in this aspect of *kami* worship by means of Buddhist rituals may explain why Hata no Chikatō had another scripture vowed on the 19th day of the seventh luni-solar month of 1117, the *Dvādaśadaṇḍakanāmāṣṭaśatavimalīkaraṇāsūtra* (Z 623,

*hiri miri hiri miri abhaya me mahādevi buddha-satyena dharma-satyena saṅghasatyena Indrasatyena Varuṇasatyena yelokyasatyena te, sām satyena satyavacāniya abhaya me mahādevi hili mili hilimilivīcaratu mama buddhi no namo bhagavati mahādeve Sarasvatya siddhyantu mantra pada me svāhā.*

- 108 Emmerick, *Sūtra of Golden Light: Being a Translation of the Suvarṇabhāsottamasūtra*, 27, and 52–53, gives the Sanskrit as: *pratipūrṇapāre, samantadarśane, mahābīhāragate, samantabedanāgate, mahākāryapratiprāṇe, satvārthasamantānuprapure, āyānadharmatāmāhābhogīne, mahāmaitrīpasamhite, hitaiṣi, saṃgrihite, tesamarthānupālani*. Cf. T. 665.16, 439c2–12 reads: 南謨室唎莫訶天女□怛姪他□鉢唎脯啤拏折囉□三曼頰□達唎設泥(去聲, 下皆同爾)莫訶毘訶囉揭諦□三曼哆毘曇末泥□莫訶迦哩也□鉢唎底瑟佉鉢泥□薩婆頰□他娑彈泥□蘇鉢唎底啤囉 阿耶娜達摩多莫訶毘俱比諦 莫訶迷咄嚕 鄔波僧呬毘□莫訶頡唎使□蘇僧近(入聲)哩呬毘□三曼多頰他□阿奴波唎泥□莎訶。

The Taishō editors again provide an alternate Sanskrit:

*Namo śrī-mahādevī tadyathā paripūrṇa-care Samanta-darśanī mahāvīhāragare samanta pitamamati mahākārya pratīṣṭhapani sarvānṭhasamamtana(?)supratīpure ayanadharmata mahābhāgena mahāmaitrī upasamhete mahākṛṣṇa susaṃgrihite anupulana. svāhā.*

- 109 Emmerick, *Sūtra of Golden Light: Being a Translation of the Suvarṇabhāsottamasūtra*, 27, and 56–60. See also T 665.16, 440c21–441a8 (with introductory prose) provides the spell: 爾時, 堅牢地神白佛言: 「世尊! 我有心呪, 能利人天, 安樂一切, 若有男子女人及諸四眾, 欲得親見我真身者, 應當至心持此陀羅尼, 隨其所願, 皆悉遂心, 所謂資財珍寶伏藏, 及求神通, 長年妙藥并療眾病, 降伏怨敵, 制諸異論. 當於淨室安置道場, 洗浴身已, 著鮮潔衣, 踞草座上, 於有舍利尊像之前, 或有舍利制底之所, 燒香散花, 飲食供養. 於白月八日布灑星合, 即可誦此請召之呪: 怛姪他只哩只哩 主嚕主嚕□句嚕句嚕□拘柱拘柱 觀柱觀柱 縛訶(上)□縛訶□伐捨伐捨 莎訶.

T. 1253.21).<sup>110</sup> Karashima is “95.4” per cent certain that these Sanskrit folios can be dated to 679–770 and because of their script (“Gilgit-Bamiyan type I”), they probably hail from either the Gilgit region or Haḍḍa.<sup>111</sup> This rather short scripture in Sanskrit closely matched *Dvādaśaḍaṇḍakanāmāṣṭaśatavimalīkaraṇāsūtra*, and presents the Buddha in an assembly with Avalokiteśvara, Mahāsthāmprāpta, Sarvanīvarṇaviṣkaṃbhin bodhisattvas revealing how recitation of these hymns of praise (Skt. *stotra*) of the names of Śrī Mahādevī “in one’s mind, would prosper without any danger from robbers, demons, and others.”<sup>112</sup> Śrī Mahādevī then explains that, because she recited the names of the *tathāgatas*, she was able to generate sufficient merit to bring the six perfections (Skt. *pāramitā*) to fruition. After the last name, Dharmarājaśrī, there is a *dhāraṇī*, which the Buddha states the myriad benefits of performing. Not only is this another scripture from the list Hata no Chikatō had vowed and copied for Matsuno’o that explicitly celebrates Śrī Mahādevī and receiving benefits from reciting another *dhāraṇī*, but it also establishes another widespread practice associated with Hinduism that I think must have been especially appreciated by lay shrine priests: reciting the name of deities to generate merit or this-worldly benefits.<sup>113</sup> The recitation of *dhāraṇīs* to female and male *kami* and goddesses, bodhisattvas, and buddhas in Japan can be connected to the material and intellectual world of the medieval Silk Road(s). That culture is not necessarily one focused upon silk or fine textiles from Persia or India or even China. Instead, this was the transmission of Indic sounds, phonetics, rituals, and religion.

110 I am grateful to Rick McBride for sharing a copy of this journal. See Seishi Karashima, “Some Folios of the Tathāgataḡaṇājñānācintyaṇiṣayāvatāra and Dvādaśaḍaṇḍakanāmāṣṭaśatavimalīkaraṇā in the Kurita Collection,” *International Journal of Buddhist Thought & Culture* (Korea) 27.1 (2017): 13–17, 30–33.

111 *Ibid.*, 11–12.

112 *Ibid.*, 13–17, 30–33.

113 Keyworth, “Apocryphal Chinese Books in the Buddhist Canon at Matsuo Shintō Shrine.”

# Representations of a Series of Large Buddha Figures in the Buddhist Caves of Kuča: Reflections on Their Origin and Meaning

*Ines Konczak-Nagel*

## 1 Introduction

The ancient Kingdom of Kuča (ca. 3rd–8th c.) on the Northern Silk Road (in present-day Xinjiang 新疆, PR China) included more than ten Buddhist cave complexes.<sup>1</sup> The caves are characterised by recurring layouts and pictorial programmes. One of the major cave types is the ‘central pillar cave’ (fig. 2.1).<sup>2</sup> This cave type typically has a square, barrel-vaulted main chamber with a niche for a buddha figure in its back wall.<sup>3</sup> Two narrow corridors, one on either side of the niche, lead deeper into the mountain for the ritual circumambulation of the buddha figure. Both corridors are connected behind the niche by a rear corridor, which in some caves has the size of a full-fledged chamber. Due to this architectural arrangement, the back wall forms a square ‘pillar’ located in the rear part of the cave.

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- 1 For an overview of the ancient Buddhist sites in Kuča and their remains, see Xinjiang weiwu'er zizhiqu wenwuju 新疆维吾尔自治区文物局, ed., *Xinjiang weiwu'er zizhiqu disanci quanguo wenwu pucha chengguo jicheng: Xinjiang fojiao yizhi, shang xia* 新疆维吾尔自治区第三次全国文物普查成果集成: 新疆佛教遗址, 上, 下 [A Compendium of the Results of the Third National Survey of Cultural Relics in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region: Buddhist Sites in Xinjiang, 2 vols.] (Beijing: China Science Publishing & Media, 2015), vols. 1–2, 226–446.
  - 2 There are two other main cave types: residential caves that constituted living quarters for monks and simple square caves that were painted or unpainted, depending on whether they served ritual purposes or not. For schematic layouts of the main cave types, see Giuseppe Vignato, “Archaeological Survey in Kizil: Its Groups of Caves, Districts, Chronology and Buddhist Schools,” *East and West* 56.4 (2006): 359.
  - 3 The buddha figure in the niche of the back wall of the main chamber was sometimes removable in order to take it out on special occasions. The movable figures must have been made of wood, as images made of unfired clay would be too fragile to be easily transported. See Angela F. Howard and Giuseppe Vignato, *Archaeological and Visual Sources of Meditation in the Ancient Monasteries of Kuča* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2015), 66.

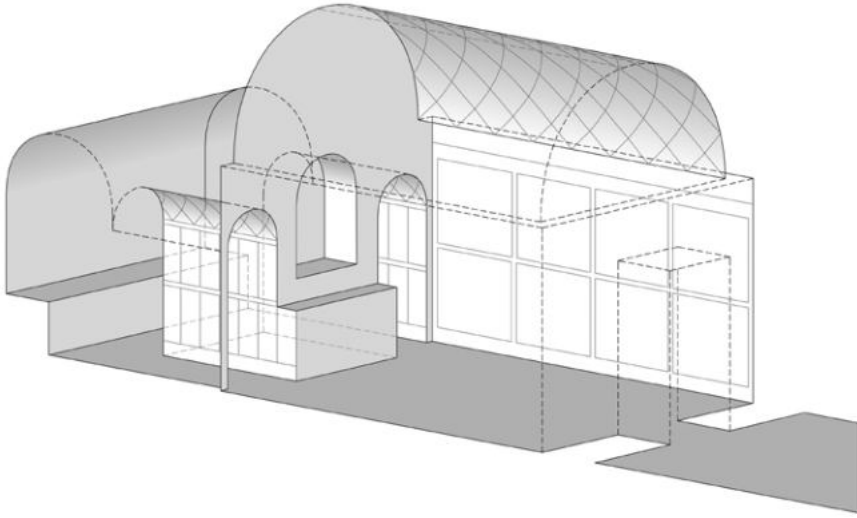


FIGURE 2.1 Axonometric drawing of a 'central pillar cave'  
BY DOMINIK OCZKOWSKI

The 'central pillar caves' generally feature a uniform pictorial programme. The side walls of the main chamber are decorated with scenes of the Buddha's sermons, while the barrel vault shows scenes of various Buddhist legends, mainly events from the Buddha's previous lives (Skt. *jātaka*) or the meritorious deeds of individuals. The rear part of the cave is decorated with representations of the Buddha's death and his entry into *parinirvāṇa*. The Buddha's *parinirvāṇa* itself is shown in the rear corridor or chamber. The wall paintings of the side corridors depict either scenes that occurred shortly before or after the Buddha's death—such as the Buddha's miraculous creation of a river that prevented the people of Vaiśālī from following the Buddha on his way to the place of his death, Kuśinagara,<sup>4</sup> the cremation of the Buddha's body and the distribution of the relics—or rows of *stūpas* that contain small reliquaries or buddha figures. The corridors sometimes also feature rows of donor figures in addition to the scenes and rows of *stūpas* mentioned above. This standard

4 The identification of this scene featuring a river as the Buddha's miraculous creation of a river is suggested by Fang Wang in her PhD dissertation in preparation, entitled *An Iconographic Research on the Buddha Legend Depicted in the Mural Sequence of the Treppenhöhle (Kizil Cave 110)* (PhD diss., Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich). Previously, Ernst Waldschmidt explained the scene as the crossing of the Ganges at Pāṭaliputra, see Albert von Le Coq and Ernst Waldschmidt, *Die buddhistische Spätantike in Mittelasien VI: Neue Bildwerke 2* (Berlin: Reimer, 1928), 78–79, pl. 13.





FIGURE 2.2 Kizil Cave 163, left corridor, outer wall  
DRAWING BY MONIKA ZIN

pictorial programme appears in 64 caves in Kuča.<sup>5</sup> In contrast, there are 13 caves in which the representation of the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa* is combined with depictions of multiple large standing buddhas rather than paintings related to the Buddha's death.<sup>6</sup> Kizil Cave 163 is an example of this (fig. 2.2).

Similar series of large standing buddha figures that occupy the entire height of the cave wall are also found in eight caves in Kuča that do not show the *parinirvāṇa*.<sup>7</sup> Typically, each of the buddhas in these series is accompanied by the figure of Vajrapāṇi or a deity represented in the upper part of the painting,

5 For a survey of all the caves in Kuča that are decorated with representations of the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*, see Monika Zin, *Representations of the Parinirvāṇa Story Cycle in Kucha* (New Delhi: Dev, Leipzig, 2020).

6 The 13 caves that include, besides the *parinirvāṇa* depiction, series of buddha figures occupying the entire height of the cave wall are Kizil Caves 69, 77 (sculpted buddha images, including at least one bodhisattva), 100, 104, 163, and 192; Kumtura Caves 23, 58, 61, and 65; and Simsim Caves 5, 40, and 48. The side corridors of Kizil Caves 47 and 48 are also decorated with series of standing buddha figures; they are later additions and rather small in size.

7 The eight caves that are decorated with sets of multiple large buddha figures and do not contain a *parinirvāṇa* depiction are Kizil Caves 123, 176, and 188; Simsim Caves 26 and 41; Kizilgaha Cave 45; Mazabaha Cave 8; and Taitai'er Cave 16.



FIGURE 2.3 Kumtura Cave 23, left corridor, inner wall  
DRAWING BY MONIKA ZIN

and by an adorer in the lower part of the painting. We seldom see the buddhas without any attending figures as for example, in Kumtura Cave 23 (Chin. Kumutula qianfodong 库木吐喇千佛洞) (figs. 2.3 and 2.4).<sup>8</sup> This paper focuses on these series of large buddha figures. I discuss potential sources for these representations and delineate their possible meaning.

## 2 Previous Interpretations of the Series of Large Buddha Figures in the Art of Kuča

Angela Howard provides an explanation for the presence of the series of buddha figures in the caves of Kuča.<sup>9</sup> Her analysis is based on the assumption that two of the buddhas depicted in Kızıl Cave 123 (*Höhle mit den ringtragenden Tauben*, Cave of Ring-bearing Doves)—both more than three metres tall, opposite each other on the side walls of the cave's main chamber, and endowed with mandorlas containing numerous small buddha figures—represent the Great Miracle of Śrāvastī (Skt. *mahāprātihārya*) in which the Buddha emanates

<sup>8</sup> Representations of series of buddhas without attending figures are found in Kumtura Cave 23, Sinsim Cave 5, Sinsim Cave 40, and Taitai'er Cave 16.

<sup>9</sup> Howard and Vignato, *Archaeological and Visual Sources*, 125–147.



FIGURE 2.4 Kumtura Cave 23, right corridor, inner wall  
DRAWING BY MONIKA ZIN

countless replicas of himself from his body (Skt. *buddhapiṇḍī*).<sup>10</sup> In addition to these main figures, there are 13 or 14 different buddha images, almost life-size, painted on the walls of the corridors and one on each side of the entrance of the cave.<sup>11</sup> Howard suggests that these additional figures are auxiliary buddhas who are extensions of the Great Miracle of Śrāvastī and cannot, therefore, be considered as independent iconographical units.<sup>12</sup> Based on these considerations, she interprets almost all sets of large buddha figures in the caves of the various monastic sites of Kuča as linked to the Great Miracle of Śrāvastī; thus, they have to be regarded as emanations of Buddha Śākyamuni.<sup>13</sup> However, the

10 Howard and Vignato, *Archaeological and Visual Sources*, 126–128. For a compilation of important works about the *mahāprātihārya*, see Dieter Schlingloff, “Das Mahāprātihārya in der zentralasiatischen Hinayāna-Kunst,” *Indologica Taurinensia* 22–23 (1997–1998): fn. 24; Howard and Vignato, *Archaeological and Visual Sources*, 125, n. 49.

11 The exact number of the buddha figures in the corridor can no longer be determined, as the rear part of the cave has been largely destroyed.

12 Howard and Vignato, *Archaeological and Visual Sources*, 129–130.

13 *Ibid.*, 130–136. The other caves with representations of series of large buddha figures Howard mentions as connected with the Great Miracle of Śrāvastī are in Kızıl Cave 100 (16 buddhas), Cave 163 (six buddhas), and Cave 176 (10 buddhas); Kumtura Cave 3 (six buddhas in the corridors and two flanking the entrance) and Cave 58 (six buddhas);

identification of the larger-than-life buddhas depicted in the main chamber of Kızıl Cave 123 as a representation of the Great Miracle of Śrāvastī is by no means as certain as it may seem. According to all literary sources, the miracle was performed by Buddha Śākyamuni in order to convert the six heretics, who, although they are the main characters of this story, are not depicted in these paintings. Instead, the attending figures seem to allude to other Buddhist stories. The main male figure next to the buddha on the left side wall holds an ornament<sup>14</sup> in his raised right hand, reminiscent of those he wears in his own coiffure, and is about to throw the ornament at the buddha as an offering. He appears to be a potter, as what could be a hut or a kiln with pottery is clearly visible behind him (fig. 2.5).<sup>15</sup>

On the opposite wall the main person at whom the buddha gazes is a Brahmin who is about to venerate the buddha with a handful of flowers taken from a tray held by a dark-skinned, dwarf-like figure on his left side (fig. 2.6).<sup>16</sup>

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Kızılghaha Cave 45 (12 buddhas); Simsim Cave 26 (11 extant buddhas in the whole cave), Cave 40 (nine buddhas), Cave 41, and 45 (four remaining buddhas); and Taitai'er Cave 16 (15 buddhas). There is only one cave which, according to Howard, contains a set of buddhas that is not connected with the Great Miracle of Śrāvastī, and that is Simsim Cave 48. In this cave, 16 buddhas decorate the side walls of the main chamber and the outer walls of the corridors, accompanied by smaller Tocharian donors. See Howard and Vignato *Archaeological and Visual Sources*, 131–132, fig. 130.

- 14 According to Albert Grünwedel, this ornament is a bouquet of flowers (Germ. "Blumenbüschel"), see Albert Grünwedel, *Altbuddhistische Kultstätten in Chinesisch-Turkistan: Bericht über archäologische Arbeiten von 1906 bis 1907 bei Kuča, Qarašahr und in der Oase Turfan* (Berlin: Reimer, 1912), 122.
- 15 Because of the potter venerating the buddha, Tianshu Zhu identifies this painting as a representation of the story of the potter Bṛhaddyuti, see Tianshu Zhu, *Emanated Buddhas in the Aureole of Buddhist Images from India, Central Asia and China* (New York: Cambria Press, 2019), 254–258. The legend deals with Buddha Śākyamuni who, in his previous birth as the potter Bṛhaddyuti, offered a bath to the buddha of that age, also named Śākyamuni, when that buddha was ill. However, the depiction differs significantly from the unambiguous iconography of the Bṛhaddyuti story in the Buddhist wall paintings of Kuča. Usually, the potter is shown in these paintings touching or washing one foot of the former Buddha Śākyamuni. For the depictions of the Bṛhaddyuti story in the Buddhist murals of Kuča and aa summary of the literary tradition, see Monika Zin, "Identification of Kizil Paintings II," *Indo-Asiatische Zeitschrift* 11 (2007): 46–51; see also, Ines Konczak, *Prañidhi-Darstellungen an der Nördlichen Seidenstraße: Das Bildmotiv der Prophezeiung der Buddhaschaft Śākyamunis in den Malereien Xinjiangs* (Ketsch: Mikroform, 2014), chap. 2.6.2 and 3.1.4.2.
- 16 Because of the Brahmin who is about to scatter flowers over the buddha, Patricia Eichenbaum Karetzky identifies the painting as a depiction of the narrative of Buddha Dipaṅkara, see Patricia Eichenbaum Karetzky, *Early Buddhist Narrative Art: Illustrations of the Life of the Buddha from Central Asia to China, Korea and Japan* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2000), 38. The legend describes how Buddha Śākyamuni, in his previous birth as a Brahmin youth, offered some flowers to the Buddha Dipaṅkara, which



FIGURE 2.5 Kizil Cave 123 (reconstruction), cella, left side wall

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As we can see, these paintings represent a story about a Brahmin on the right side wall and a story about a potter on the left side wall. Therefore, the numerous small buddha figures in the mandorla of both buddhas do not allude to the Śrāvastī Miracle, but rather to the Buddha's transcendent ability to multiply himself.<sup>17</sup>

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miraculously hovered in the air above Dīpaṃkara's head. Thereupon the Brahmin youth made a resolution (Skt. *prañidhāna*) to become a future buddha and received the prophecy (Skt. *vyākaraṇa*) from Buddha Dīpaṃkara that he would be Buddha Śākyamuni in the future. This identification, however, is not convincing. In the art of Kuča there was an unambiguous iconography for the Dīpaṃkara story that depicts the young Brahmin throwing seven—or occasionally, but rarely, five—flowers towards the Buddha Dīpaṃkara. The painting under discussion obviously differs from this conventional iconography. For a summary of the literary tradition of the Dīpaṃkara story and its depiction in the Buddhist murals of Kuča, see Konczak, *Prañidhi-Darstellungen*, chap. 2.6.4 and 3.1.4.4. Zhu also points out the iconographic differences between the painting from Kizil Cave 123 and Dīpaṃkara depictions, see Zhu, *Emanated Buddhas*, 253–254.

<sup>17</sup> According to the narrative literature, Buddha Śākyamuni demonstrated his transcendent ability to multiply himself in the Great Miracle of Śrāvastī after six heretics challenged the Buddha to a competition of miracles. The ability to multiply is one of the psychic states that a yogin experiences in the fourth stage of contemplation (Skt. *dhyāna*). Texts that mention



FIGURE 2.6 Kizil Cave 123 (reconstruction), cella, right side wall  
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Consequently, there is no need to interpret the series of buddha figures in the corridors (fig. 2.7) and on the front wall as associated with the Great Miracle of Śrāvastī. Instead, it seems natural to treat them as iconographically independent, especially as the other series of buddha figures are usually found in caves that do not contain depictions of buddhas emanating replicas of themselves;

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this multiplication ability as a trance experience are, for example, the *Dīghanikāya* and the *Saṅghabhedavastu* of the *Mūlasarvāstivādinaya*, see Dieter Schlingloff, *Die übermenschlichen Phänomene: Visuelle Meditation und Wundererscheinung in buddhistischer Literatur und Kunst. Ein religionsgeschichtlicher Versuch* (Düsseldorf: EKÖ-Haus der Japanischen Kultur e.v., Munich: Iudicum, 2015), 4, n. 9. The painters of Kuča occasionally depicted small buddha figures in the mandorla of the Buddha to emphasise that he had reached the fourth contemplation. For example, in the representation of the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa* on the outer wall of the rear corridor in Kizil Cave 47, several small buddha figures are lined up in the mandorla and in the nimbus of the *parinirvāṇa* Buddha to illustrate the meditative state that the Buddha passed through, according to the texts, before entering the *parinirvāṇa*. For pictures of the *parinirvāṇa* representation in Kizil Cave 47, see *Chūgoku sekkutsu: Kijiru sekkutsu* 中国石窟: 克孜尔石窟 [The Grotto Art of China: The Kizil Grottoes], Volume 1, comp. Shinkyō Uiguru jichiku bunbutsu kanri inkai 新疆ウイグル自治区文物管理委员会 and Haijō ken Kijiru senbutsudō bunbutsu hokanjo 拜城县基尔千仏洞文物保管所 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1983), pls. 148, 149.



FIGURE 2.7 Kizil Cave 123 (reconstruction), cella, view of the right corridor

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which means in these caves there are no images that can readily be identified as the Great Miracle of Śrāvastī.

Tianshu Zhu suggests another interpretation of the series of large buddha figures.<sup>18</sup> In her general study on images of standing buddhas in Kuča, Zhu considers all representations of standing buddhas, whether they are a single standing buddha within a narrative scene or buddhas standing in a series, so she does not treat the latter as a separate subject. Zhu reconstructs the development of representations of standing buddhas, according to which, in an earlier phase (4th/5th c.), these images were depicted as a minor subject in the corridors of the caves,<sup>19</sup> and later (in the second quarter of the 7th c.)

18 Tianshu Zhu, “The Influence from Khotan: The Standing Buddha Images in Kucha,” in *Interaction in the Himalayas and Central Asia: Processes of Transfer, Translation and Transformation in Art, Archaeology, Religion and Polity*, ed. Eva Allinger, et al. (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2017), 127–142.

19 Zhu, “The Influence from Khotan,” 128. Examples of standing buddhas as a “minor subject” in the rear part of the cave that are mentioned by Zhu include Kizil Caves 4, 27, 98, 219, and 224, in which episodes from the *parinirvāṇa* cycle decorate the side walls of the corridor and show the Buddha standing, as in the above-mentioned episode of the

became a main theme of the main chamber. Furthermore, she notes that, unlike the paintings of seated buddhas, “most of the standing buddha figures appear in non-narrative settings with several new elements,” and therefore, “the emphasis [...] shifts from recalling a specific event in the Buddha’s life, to venerating the Buddha.”<sup>20</sup> Zhu assumes that because the tradition of representing series of standing buddha figures is only known from Khotan on the Southern Silk Road, this pictorial motif travelled from Khotan to Kuča during the 7th and 8th centuries, when Khotan, Kuča, Karashar (Chin. Yanqi 焉耆), and Kašgar comprised the Four Western Garrisons (Chin. Anxi sizhen 安西四鎮) of the Tang Dynasty (618–907, 唐).<sup>21</sup> However, as we will see below, there are other sites where the tradition of representing a series of buddhas, either seated or standing, was common and developed at least since the 3rd century. The representations of series of large buddha images in Gandhāra, Haḍḍa, and Bāmiyān (that is, in the regions of Greater Gandhāra in present-day Pakistan and Afghanistan) in particular seem to have served as models for the depiction of this subject in Kuča.

### 3 Development of the Representation of Series of Buddha Figures in South Asia and Greater Gandhāra

One of the oldest inscribed series of buddha figures is from the *stūpa* of Kanaganahalli (Karnataka, South India) and presumably dates to the 2nd/3rd century. The set comprises eight sculptures of seated buddhas positioned in the circumambulatory passage (Skt. *pradakṣiṇapatha*), and each figure is identified by an inscription. The names given are Śākyamuni’s six predecessors, Vivasi (Vipaśyin), Sighi (Śikhin), Vesabhū (Viśvabhū), Kosa(m)ḍha (Krakucchaṇḍa), Konāgamuni (Kanakamuni), and Kassapa (Kāśyapa), as well as Sakamuni (Śākyamuni) himself and the future Buddha Ayito (Ajita, Maitreya).<sup>22</sup> The cult of at least one predecessor of Śākyamuni is very old, as

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Buddha’s miraculous creation of a river. Other examples show either series of buddhas (Kızıl Caves 104, 163, 176, and 192) or representations of the ‘Cosmological Buddha’ (Kızıl Cave 17). Both the series of buddhas and the ‘Cosmological Buddha’ are independent iconographic units, which are not directly related to the *parinirvāṇa* cycle. For a description of the representations of the ‘Cosmological Buddha’ in Kızıl Cave 17, see Howard and Vignato, *Archaeological and Visual Sources*, 139–140, figs. 141, 143.

20 Zhu, “The Influence from Khotan,” 128–129, 131.

21 *Ibid.*, 132–133.

22 The inscriptions recording the donation of the buddhas depicted at the *stūpa* of Kanaganahalli are published in Maiko Nakanishi and Oskar von Hinüber, “Kanaganahalli Inscriptions,” *Annual Report of the International Research Institute for Advanced*



a pillar inscription from Aśoka (r. ca. 268–232 BCE) states that the emperor enlarged the already existent *stūpa* dedicated to the Buddha of the past, Konākamana (Kanakamuni), to twice its original size.<sup>23</sup> As far back as the 2nd century BCE, the group, consisting of the six predecessors of Śākyamuni and Śākyamuni himself, was fully established; these seven buddhas are referred to in the texts of all Buddhist schools.<sup>24</sup> In the 2nd/3rd century, the set of seven buddha figures was depicted in relief in the art of Amarāvati,<sup>25</sup> Mathurā,<sup>26</sup> and, most frequently, Gandhāra.<sup>27</sup> There are, furthermore, examples of paintings of this group of buddhas in the Ajantā Caves, dating to the 5th century.<sup>28</sup>

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*Buddhology at Soka University* 17, Supplement (2014): 75–81. Earlier representations of the seven buddhas, Vipāśyin, Śikhin, Viśvabhū, Krakucchanda, Kanakamuni, Kāśyapa, and Śākyamuni, are known to us in symbolic form. They appear as empty thrones under particular trees on the railing of the *stūpa* in Bhārhut (2nd c. BCE) and as trees and occasionally *stūpas* on all four gates of *stūpa* I in Sāñcī (1st c. BCE). For a list of publications of the inscribed aniconic representations of the buddhas on the Bhārhut railing, see Monika Zin, *Ajanta: Handbuch der Malereien/Handbook of the Paintings 2. Devotionale und ornamentale Malereien* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003), 459, n. 11. For drawings of the representations, see Zin, *Ajanta*, 469, figs. 2a–e. For a summary of the aniconic representations of the seven buddhas on the gates of *stūpa* I in Sāñcī, see Zin, *Ajanta*, 459.

- 23 This pillar inscription of Aśoka was recovered in Niglivā in the Kapilavastu district. For the most important publications on this inscription, see Eugen Hultsch, *Inscriptions of Asoka* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum, 1, 1925), 165, and Harry Falk, *Aśokan Sites and Artefacts: A Source-Book with Bibliography*. (Mainz: Zabern, Monographien zur Indischen Archäologie, Kunst und Philologie, 18, 2006), 187–189.
- 24 Vincent Tournier, “Buddhas of the Past,” in *Brill’s Encyclopedia of Buddhism, Volume 2: Lives*, ed. Jonathan Silk et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 96. For a selection of texts from various Buddhist schools in which the six predecessors of Śākyamuni are mentioned, see Peter Skilling, “The Sambuddhe Verses and Later Theravādin Buddhology,” in *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 22, 1996, 157–158.
- 25 For references on depictions of the set of seven buddhas in aniconic and figural form in the art of Amarāvati, see Zin, *Ajanta*, 460, nos. 19, 20, fig. 3.
- 26 There are only two known reliefs depicting the set of seven buddhas from the art of Mathurā. For references, see Zin, *Ajanta*, 460, n. 21.
- 27 For references on depictions on the set of seven buddhas in the art of Gandhāra, see *ibid.*, 460, nos. 22–29.
- 28 In the Ajantā Caves, there are two paintings of a set of seven buddhas, one of which is located in the veranda of Cave 17, right above the entrance to the cave. The other one is located on the right side wall of the main chamber of Cave 22 and bears inscriptions with the names of the buddhas, see *ibid.*, 457–458, figs. 47.1, 47.2. Both sets of seven buddhas are completed by a representation of Bodhisattva Maitreya, who will become the next buddha. Depictions of the seven buddhas and Maitreya, who can either be represented as bodhisattva or buddha, are also known in the sculptural art of Ajantā, for example, from Cave VI, Cave VII, and Cave XXVI, see Zin, *Ajanta*, 461–462 and nos. 31, 32. Contemporaneous reliefs depicting the seven buddhas and Bodhisattva Maitreya are also

Of particular interest for our purpose are the series of buddhas from Gandhāra, as this region was, like the ancient Kingdom of Kuča, part of the Silk Road trading network. The numerous representations of the seven buddhas in the art of Gandhāra were frequently extended to include a depiction of the Bodhisattva Maitreya, the future Buddha, so that eight figures were depicted in total. Furthermore, the art of Gandhāra also features sets of buddhas in varying numbers ranging from three to 25.<sup>29</sup> These sets of buddhas are usually small and depicted on the outer walls of *stūpas*.<sup>30</sup> The buddhas differ in their hand gestures and sometimes also in the way the outer robe is worn, either covering both shoulders or leaving the right shoulder bare.<sup>31</sup> Obviously, there are variations among the buddha figures within a series, which gives them a certain degree of individuality.<sup>32</sup>

At the latest around the beginning of the 5th century, series of large stucco buddha figures were created in Gandhāra. One example is the remains of four

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found in the Buddhist caves on the Deccan Plateau, see Zin, *Ajanta*, 460–461, nos. 33, 34, fig. 1.

- 29 For a comprehensive compilation of various buddha series in the art of Gandhāra and present-day Afghanistan, see Marylin M. Rhie, *Early Buddhist Art of China and Central Asia, Volume III: The Western Ch'in in Kansu in the Sixteen Kingdoms Period and Inter-relationships with the Buddhist Art of Gandhāra* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), chap. 8. Sets of three seated buddhas are found, for example, at *stūpa* D5 in Jaulian (Taxila), see Rhie, *Early Buddhist Art in China*, vol. 3, 394, figs. 8.14a–b. The surviving inscriptions on three pedestals of the buddhas mention the name of the respective buddha (Kāśyapa, Śākyamuni) and indicate a depiction of the Buddhas of the Three Times, which are past, present, and future. Buddha Kāśyapa, in this context, represents the Buddha of the past; Buddha Śākyamuni represents the present; the third buddha may be Maitreya, who represents the future. A total of 25 buddhas may have been represented on the main *stūpa* of Jaulian (Taxila), see Rhie, *Early Buddhist Art in China*, vol. 3, 367, figs. 8.5a–j. Twenty-five buddhas would correspond with the buddha lineage provided in the Pali *Buddhavaṃsa*, where the list names 24 predecessors of Śākyamuni, see Rhie, *Early Buddhist Art in China*, vol. 3, 368. For secondary sources on the list of past buddhas in the *Buddhavaṃsa*, see Tourmier, “Buddhas of the Past,” 98.
- 30 According to Rhie, there are four prevalent types of sets of seated or standing buddhas: (1) three buddhas, possibly representing the Buddhas of the Three Times, which are past, present, and future, or the three predecessors of Śākyamuni in the present, fortunate aeon (Skt. *bhadrakalpa*), who are Krakucchanda, Kanakamuni, and Kāśyapa; (2) four buddhas, who probably are the four buddhas of the fortunate aeon, including Śākyamuni, and/or the buddhas of the four directions; (3) five buddhas, who are probably the five buddhas of the fortunate aeon, including the future Buddha Maitreya; (4) seven buddhas, who represent the well-known group (sometimes expanded to eight, including Maitreya as bodhisattva or buddha), see Rhie, *Early Buddhist Art in China*, vol. 3, 416.
- 31 See, for example, *ibid.*, figs. 8.16c, 8.17a, 8.22b, 8.23b.
- 32 See, for example, *ibid.*, figs. 8.16c, 8.17a, 8.22b, 8.23b.

colossal standing buddhas from a courtyard of Taḥt-i Bahā'ī.<sup>33</sup> The tradition of creating series of large stucco buddha sculptures culminated in the art of Haḍḍa. Colossal standing buddhas appear to have adorned the perimeter of a chapel in Tapa-e Top-e Kalān,<sup>34</sup> a corridor of Tapa Kalān,<sup>35</sup> and a gallery of Tapa-i Kafariha.<sup>36</sup> Finally, a series with a large number of life-size buddhas was found at *stūpa* A of Gar-naō, decorating the pedestal.<sup>37</sup> From this evidence in Haḍḍa, we can assume that from the 5th century onwards there was a tradition in Greater Gandhāra of depicting large buddha figures either in galleries or along the pedestal of a *stūpa* that could be viewed during worship by circumambulation. Unfortunately, only the lower parts of all these sculptures are preserved, so that virtually nothing can be said about their iconography.

There was also a tradition of depicting series of large buddha figures around a *stūpa*, as evidenced in Bāmiyān, which was an important stopover, especially from the middle of the 6th century, on the travel routes that connected India and China via the Hindu Kush. In the 'Eastern Monastery' of Bāmiyān a series of 16 large clay statues of standing buddhas were excavated; they were placed along the walls of the circumambulation path running around the *stūpa*.<sup>38</sup> Unfortunately, all that is left of most of the figures is their feet, and even the few that are preserved up to the knees do not show any traces of an individual iconography. However, it seems certain that the buddhas were not accompanied by smaller figures, because there was no room for them.

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- 33 The colossal buddhas were placed on the south wall of Court xx in Taḥt-i Bahā'ī. Rhie dates these figures as close to 400, see *ibid.*, 416, figs. 8.23e, f; Kurt Behrendt dates these colossal buddha figures slightly later to ca. 5th century, see Kurt Behrendt, *The Art of Gandhara in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2007), fig. 28.
- 34 The colossal standing buddhas were lined up around the perimeter of Chapel CHI in the large square *stūpa* court P1 of Tapa-e Top-e Kalān, one head of which was found. Rhie, *Early Buddhist Art in China*, vol. 3, 433.
- 35 Remnants of four life-size standing buddhas were found along the eastern wall of the corridor TK132 in Tapa Kalān. Jules Barthoux, *The Hadda Excavations, Volumes I & III: Complete Edition* (Bangkok: SDI Publications, 2001), 106–107.
- 36 At least six monumental standing buddhas were placed at the northern wall of Gallery K45 in Tapa-i Kafariha. *Ibid.*, 137–138, fig. 115, plan A. The monumental buddhas (with feet measuring 0.70 m) were standing on pedestals p, r, t, v, x', and y'.
- 37 Twelve life-size buddhas were lined up on the northern face of the square *stūpa* pedestal. Only the lower parts of these survive. Still more sculptures were placed along the other faces, on the sides of the projecting angles, and along the walls of the staircase leading to the pedestal. *Ibid.*, 197–198, figs. 180, 181.
- 38 Zemaryalai Tarzi, "Bamiyan 2006: The Fifth Excavation Campaign of Prof. Tarzi's Mission," *The Silk Road* 4.2 (2007): 15–17, figs. 9–13. Based on Tarzi's photographs and drawings, 16 large buddha figures stood on low benches on the walls of Gallery A9, which was the circumambulation path of *stūpa* no. 2.

In some caves at Bāmiyān, series of buddhas are represented in large format in wall paintings from the 7th century.<sup>39</sup> They decorate either the side walls of the main chamber of the cave, as in Cave 388, or the walls of the corridor, as in Cave 530. Their arrangement corresponds to that of the sculptures around the *stūpas* at Haḍḍa and Bāmiyān insofar as the series of buddhas could be seen during ritual circumambulation. The painted decoration in the caves of Bāmiyān could therefore be read as a translation of the sculptural programme of structural buildings into the interior of painted caves.

From the above, we are led to deduce that sets of multiple buddha images were a major element in the art of Greater Gandhāra from about 200 onwards, and were depicted in large format from about the beginning of the 5th c. As the sets of small sculptures often represent the buddhas of the past, including Buddha Śākyamuni, this was likely also the case with the sets of large buddha figures. The fact that often more than seven buddhas are depicted, such as the 16 buddhas in the Eastern Monastery of Bāmiyān, does not contradict the assumption that they represent buddhas of the past. The *Bahubuddhakasūtra*, for example—a text naming various buddhas of the past, beginning with Buddha Dīpaṃkara—appears in different versions that belong to various Buddhist schools, including the Mahāsāṅghikas, the Kāśyapīyas and the Mahīśāsakas, all of which coexisted in the region of Greater Gandhāra.<sup>40</sup> The early version of the *sūtra* features a lineage of 15–17 buddhas, beginning with Buddha Dīpaṃkara.<sup>41</sup> From around the 2nd century to the 4th/5th century, narratives about a multitude of former buddhas flourished, and the number of past buddhas increased. The *Bhaiṣajyavastu* of the *Mūlasarvāstivādinaya*, for example, enumerates 228,000 predecessors of Buddha Śākyamuni. However, even this list is not meant to be complete, because the entire lineage of buddhas is ultimately infinite.<sup>42</sup>

39 In Bamiyan Cave 388 on the east, west and north wall of the main chamber (Takayasu Higuchi ed., *Afghanisutan ni okeru Bukkyō sekkutsu jūin no bijutsu kōkogakuteki chōsa 1970–1978* バーミヤーン: アフガニスタンにおける仏教石窟寺院の美術考古学的調査, 1970–1978年. *Bāmiyān: Art and Archaeology Researches on the Buddhist Cave Temples in Afghanistan 1970–1978*. 4 vols. (Kyōto: Dōhōsha, 1983–84), vol. 1, pls. 71.1–3, 72.1–2, 73.1–4) and Cave 530 in the corridor (ibid., pls. 95.1, 95.3).

40 For secondary sources regarding versions of the *Bahubuddhakasūtra*, see Tournier, “Buddhas of the Past,” 98–99.

41 Tournier, “Buddhas of the Past,” 99.

42 Ibid., 102.

#### 4 Representations of Series of Large Buddha Figures in Khotan

In Khotan, on the Southern Silk Road in the Tarim Basin, there were also series of buddhas represented on the walls bordering the square area around a *stūpa*. Although much of Khotan art is lost, there is evidence that these were executed in both sculpture and painting. In 1901, when Aurel Stein excavated the *stūpa* of Rawak, northeast of Khotan, he reported that series of sculptures decorated the walls of the *stūpa* court.<sup>43</sup> The majority of these stucco statues attached to the walls—both on the outside and on the inside, facing the court—consisted of a number of groups of large-sized buddhas and bodhisattvas, with smaller representations of buddhas and bodhisattvas between them. While the small-sized figures are largely preserved in their entirety, only the lower bodies of the larger ones have survived. Due to a lack of characteristic features, the buddhas are unidentifiable. Stein distinguishes at least two different styles among the sculptures, which he dates to between the 3rd and 7th centuries.<sup>44</sup> In terms of their appearance, Stein describes the treatment of the drapery as almost the same as the standing buddha figures of Gandhāra.<sup>45</sup> Accordingly, the images from this region served as model for the Rawak statuary. However, the dating to the 3rd century seems too early in view of the fact that the figures are stylistically close to late Gandhāran art. This is one of the reasons why Yim Young-ae, who analysed the sculptures typologically and stylistically in detail, dates the earlier group to the mid-fourth to early 5th centuries and the latter group to the 5th century.<sup>46</sup> Gerd Gropp, who meticulously documented Emil Trinkler's field research in the Khotan oasis and studied his collection, dates the Rawak site even later, to the 6th century.<sup>47</sup>

43 Stein, M. Aurel, *Ancient Khotan: Detailed Report of Archaeological Explorations in Chinese Turkestan*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), I, 486, figs. 61, 62, 65–68; II, pls. XIIIb–XVIIIb, pl. XL (plan of the Rawak *stūpa* court). See also, Zhu, *Emanated Buddhas*, figs. 78, 79.

44 The dating is based on numerous finds of coins from the Eastern Han Dynasty (25–220, 漢); a currency that was in circulation until the beginning of the Tang Dynasty. *Ibid.*, 501. The dating that other scholars assign to the sculptures, ranges between the 3rd and 6th centuries. For an overview of different dates scholars propose for the Rawak sculptures, see Zhu, *Emanated Buddhas*, 349.

45 Stein, *Ancient Khotan*, I, 490.

46 Yim Young-ae 임영애, “Hotan Rawak sawŏnji sobulsang ui Yŏn’gu 호탄 (Khotan, 于闐) 라와 (Rawak) 寺院址 塑佛像의 研究 [A Research on the Clay Sculptures of Rawak Temple Site, Khotan],” *Misulshak Yŏn’gu 미술사학연구* 198 (1993): 23–58.

47 Gerd Gropp, *Archäologische Funde aus Khotan, Chinesisch-Ostturkestan: Die Trinkler-Sammlung im Übersee-Museum, Bremen* (Bremen: Röver, 1974), 44.

Painted representations of standing buddha images in Khotan are known to us from the murals of the Buddhist Temple No. 1 at Toplukdong, Domoko (Chin. Damagou 大瑪溝) township, which dates between 618 and 656, according to a C14 analysis.<sup>48</sup> As in the other Buddhist temple sites of Khotan, the upper part of the wall is not preserved and only the lower bodies of the buddha figures survive. The images are very similar and have no characteristic features by which they could be identified. Sometimes the buddhas are flanked by small nimbate figures that could represent bodhisattvas but are also unidentifiable.

In summary, the earliest surviving depictions of series of buddhas in Khotan are compositionally and stylistically oriented towards the art of Gandhāra and, as in their model, the individual buddhas are not identifiable. The practice of depicting series of buddhas persisted in Khotan art at least until the 7th century.

As mentioned above, Zhu believes that the standing buddha images from Khotan served as a model for the representation of this subject in Kuča, and that the motif travelled during the 7th and 8th centuries, when Khotan, Kuča, Karashar, and Kashgar comprised the Four Western Garrisons of the Tang Dynasty. However, although the dating of the Kuča murals is still controversial, all scholars generally agree that the Kızıl Cave paintings that include series of buddha figures occupying the entire height of the wall date before the conquest of Kuča by the Tang, meaning before the middle of the 7th century.<sup>49</sup> It is therefore unlikely that the motif of the series of standing buddhas reached Kuča at the time of the Four Western Garrisons from Khotan. Instead, the presence of the motif in Kuča in the 6th/7th century indicates that it came to Kuča earlier. In the art of both Kuča and Khotan, the source for this motif appears to have been Greater Gandhāra. Unlike in Khotan, however, accompanying figures which point to particular narratives were added to the standing buddhas in Kuča.

48 Two standing buddhas appear on each side wall, and one additional figure is located on the rear wall of Temple No. 1 at Toplukdong. Gropp, *Archäologische Funde aus Khotan*, fig. 77.

49 For an overview of the different dates of the Kızıl Caves, see Marianne Yaldiz, "Evaluation of the Chronology of the Murals in Kizil, Kucha Oasis," in *From Turfan to Ajanta: Festschrift for Dieter Schlingloff on the Occasion of his Eightieth Birthday*, ed. Eli Franco and Monika Zin (Bhairahawa: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2010), 1038–1041. The only cave in Kızıl with a representation of a series of nearly life-size, standing buddhas that is dated by Ernst Waldschmidt to after 650 is Kızıl Cave 123, see Albert von Le Coq and Ernst Waldschmidt, *Die buddhistische Spätantike in Mittelasien VII: Neue Bildwerke 3* (Berlin: Reimer, 1933), 29.

## 5 Representations of Series of Large Buddha Figures in Kuča

As mentioned above, in Kuča, the series of buddha images occupying the entire height of the cave wall most frequently appear in the corridors of the ‘central pillar caves’, surrounding the ‘pillar’ that contains a niche for a buddha figure. Thus, like the above-mentioned paintings in the Bāmiyān caves, the Buddha images were meant to be seen during ritual circumambulation and positioned accordingly—an arrangement already known from the earlier temples of Greater Gandhāra. Hence the source for the depiction of series of large Buddha figures in Kuča seems to have been the art of Greater Gandhāra, especially as the sites were connected through trade and, to a lesser extent, by pilgrimage. Kurt Behrendt offers one possible explanation for the transmission of late Gandhāran forms to Central Asia. Based on the diffusion of motifs specific to Gandhāran art,<sup>50</sup> he argues that Gandhāran Buddhist communities moved to other Buddhist centres after their patronage in the heartland of Gandhāra collapsed in the late 5th century.<sup>51</sup>

What makes the art of Kuča special is that the paintings of the individual buddhas in a series often provide more information than the sculptures and paintings from Greater Gandhāra, as the buddhas are not only differentiated by hand gestures and the way they wear their outer robe, but frequently have varying attending figures as well. In Kızıl Cave 163, for example, the attending figure of the first buddha painted on the outer wall of the left corridor indicates that a buddha of the past is depicted here. The buddha is accompanied by a Brahmin youth, who is about to scatter a bunch of flowers over the buddha

50 Kurt Behrendt, “Evidence for the Diffusion of Gandharan Forms after the Late 5th Century,” in *South Asian Archaeology and Art 2012, Volume 2: South Asian Religions and Visual Forms in Their Archaeological Context*, ed. Vincent Lefèvre, Aurore Didier, and Benjamin Mutin (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 407–416. The Gandhāran motifs Behrendt examines are the Fasting Buddha, Dīpaṅkara Buddha, and large scale *parinirvāṇa* images.

51 Shoshin Kuwayama proposes that the trade route at the western fringe of the Hindu Kush was abandoned as result of the occupation of parts of Tokharistan by the Western Turks (583–659, 西突厥) in the middle of the 6th century, which led to the economic isolation of Gandhāra, see Shoshin Kuwayama, “Pilgrimage Route Changes and the Decline of Gandhāra,” in *Gandhāran Buddhism: Archaeology, Art, Texts*, ed. Pia Brancaccio and Kurt Behrendt (Vancouver, Toronto: UBC Press, 2006), 125–126. From the Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang (600/602–664, 玄奘), who visited the region in the early 7th century, we know that the *stūpas* at Haḍḍa (Nagarahara) were already “deserted and in dilapidated condition” by this time and that the royal family of Gandhāra was extinct, see Rongxi Li, trans., *The Great Tang Dynasty Record of the Western Regions (Taishō Volume 51, Number 2087)* (Berkeley: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 1996), 55, 59.

with his raised right hand, and above the buddha there are eight blue flowers hovering in the air. Based on a comparison with other depictions of this kind, we can ascertain that this is Buddha Dīpaṃkara (fig. 2.8), even though eight flowers make an odd total, as, according to the texts, the Brahmin youth presents either five or seven flowers to the buddha.<sup>52</sup> In this painting the accompanying figure and the hovering flowers serve as iconographic elements to determine the identity of the depicted buddha.

Other representations of Buddha Dīpaṃkara that span the entire height of the cave wall are found in Kızıl Cave 69 (fig. 2.9) and Mazabaha Cave 8 (Chin. Mazhaboha shiku 玛扎伯哈石窟) (fig. 2.10). Remarkably, in all three caves, the number of buddhas in the series differs. While there are six buddhas represented in Kızıl Cave 163 on the outer walls of the left and right corridors, there are two in Kızıl Cave 69—one on each side wall of the main chamber of the cave—and twelve in Mazabaha Cave 8, on the outer walls of the corridors. In general, the number of buddhas corresponds to the available space on the walls and ranges between two and 22.<sup>53</sup>

Kızıl Cave 188 is a square cave that was decorated by at least twelve buddha figures occupying the entire height of its walls. Four buddha figures are depicted on the rear wall (fig. 2.11), and four buddhas appear to have been on each of the two side walls, of which only three on the left side wall (fig. 2.12) and two on the right side wall (fig. 2.13) are completely preserved. As the front wall of the cave collapsed, it is not possible to determine whether it was also

52 For a short summary of the Dīpaṃkara story, see above, fn. 16. In the art of Kuča, the Brahmin youth usually throws seven flowers in the direction of the Buddha Dīpaṃkara. There are only few exceptions in which the number of flowers is five; this number of flowers frequently occurs in the art of Gandhāra, see Konczak-Nagel, *Prañidhi-Darstellungen*, chap. 3.1.4.4.

53 In Kızıl Cave 69, there are two buddhas; in Kızıl Cave 77, there were at least six sculptural images (some of which might have been figures of bodhisattvas); in Kızıl Cave 100, there were 16 buddhas; in Kızıl Cave 163, there are six buddhas; in Kızıl Cave 192, there are probably six buddhas; in Kumtura Cave 23, there are six buddhas; in Kumtura Cave 38, there are eight buddhas; in Kumtura Cave 58, there are six buddhas; in Kumtura Cave 61, there are probably six buddhas; in Kumtura Cave 65, there are probably three buddhas; in Simsim Cave 5, there are probably seven buddhas; in Simsim Cave 40, there are nine buddhas; and in Simsim Cave 48, there are 16 buddhas. Also, in the eight caves in Kuča, which are not decorated with a representation of the *parinirvāṇa*, but with a series of buddhas, the number of buddhas varies. In Kızıl Cave 123 there are 15 or 16 buddhas; in Kızıl Cave 176, there are 10 buddhas; in Kızıl Cave 188, there are at least twelve buddhas; in Simsim Cave 26, there are 11 buddhas; in Simsim Cave 41, there are ten buddhas; in Kızılğaha Cave 45, there are possibly 22 buddhas; in Taitai'er Cave 16, there are 15 buddhas; and in Mazabaha Cave 8 there are eight buddhas.





FIGURE 2.8 Kızıl Cave 163, left corridor, outer wall, detail,  
 narrative on Buddha Dīpaṃkara  
 DRAWING BY MONIKA ZIN



FIGURE 2.9 Kizil Cave 69, cella, right side wall, detail, narrative on Buddha Dīpaṃkara  
DRAWING BY MONIKA ZIN

decorated with buddhas. At least two of the buddhas on the rear wall are identifiable based on their accompanying figures (fig. 2.11). The buddha on the left side of the rear wall is attended by a figure of Vajrapāṇi to the right of his head.

The buddha was also once accompanied by a Brahmin standing on one foot to the right of his lower body, but this figure was removed by the third German expedition in 1907 and is now housed in the Museum für asiatische Kunst,

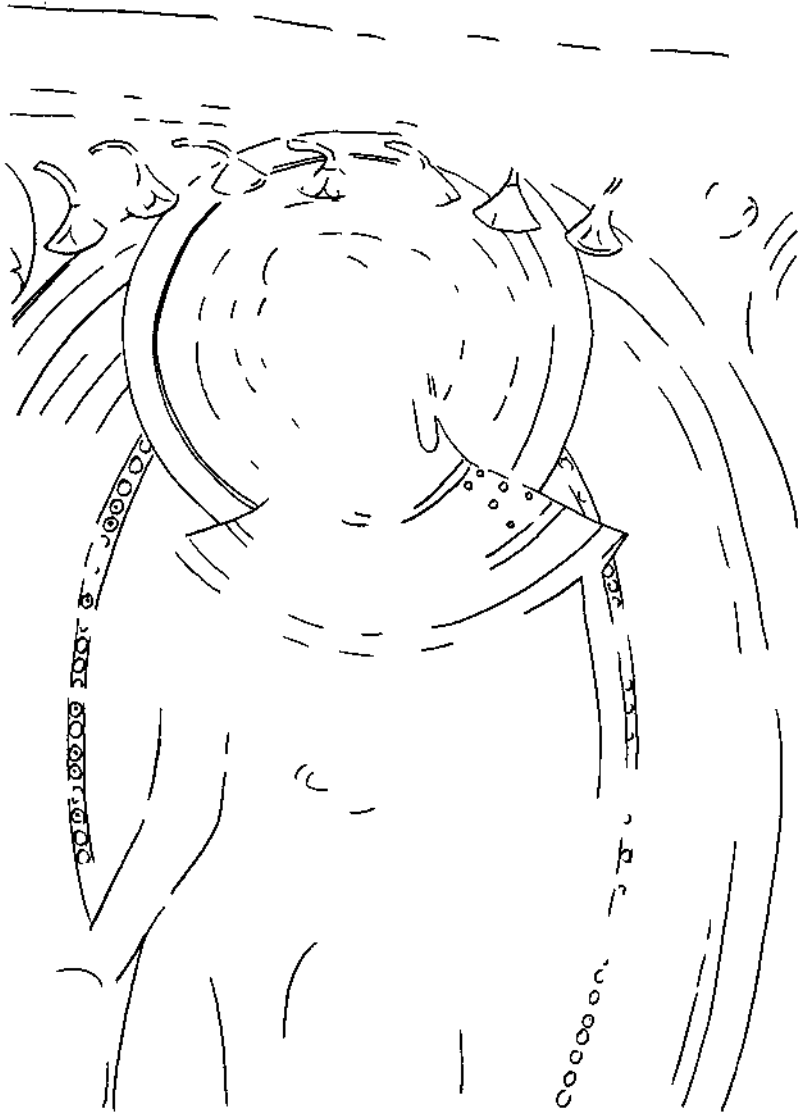


FIGURE 2.10 Mazabaha Cave 8, rear corridor, outer wall, detail, narrative on Buddha  
Dīpaṅkara  
DRAWING BY MONIKA ZIN



FIGURE 2.11 Kizil Cave 188, cella, rear wall  
RECONSTRUCTED DRAWING BY MONIKA ZIN



FIGURE 2.12 Kizil Cave 188, cella, left side wall  
RECONSTRUCTED DRAWING BY MONIKA ZIN



FIGURE 2.13 Kizil Cave 188, cella, right side wall  
RECONSTRUCTED DRAWING BY MONIKA ZIN

Berlin (no. III 9030).<sup>54</sup> The pictorial motif of the Brahmin standing on one foot was already identified by Ma Shichang.<sup>55</sup> The underlying narrative relates the

- 54 Zhao was able to digitally reconstruct the original appearance of the paintings of the rear wall (fig. 2.11) and the left side wall (fig. 2.12) of Kizil Cave 188, including all fragments that were removed by the third German expedition in 1907 and are now kept either in the Museum für Asiatische Kunst, Berlin, or in the State Hermitage, St. Petersburg, see Li Zhao 赵莉, et al., *Haiwai Kez'er shiku bihua fuyuan yingxiang ji* 海外克孜尔石窟壁画复原影像集 [Compendium of Photographic Restoration of the Kizil Grotto Murals Oversea] (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 2018), 101–105. The digital reconstruction of the painting of the right side wall (fig. 8.13), including the painting of the Brahmin (see below n. 55), was done by the author of the present paper and drawn by Monika Zin.
- 55 Ma Shichang 馬世長, “Kijiru sekkutsu chūshin chūkutsu no shushitsu kucchō to kōshitsu no hekiga” キジル石窟中心柱窟の主室窟頂と後室の壁画. Paintings on Main Chamber’s Barrel Vault and Wall of Back Corridor, in Square Columned Caves at the Kizil Grottoes,” in *Chūgoku sekkutsu: Kijiru sekkutsu* 中国石窟: 克孜尔石窟. *The Grotto Art*

story of Buddha Śākyamuni, who, in one of his previous lives, was a heretical sage and climbed the mountains gathering herbs. In the mountains, he sees Buddha Puṣya<sup>56</sup> seated in a jewel cave practising the ‘concentration on fire’. The heretical sage experiences great joy at this sight and venerates Buddha Puṣya by standing erect on one leg for seven days and seven nights, praising the buddha with a verse. At the end of this time period, he receives a prophecy from Buddha Puṣya informing him that he will become Buddha Śākyamuni in the future.<sup>57</sup> Based on this narrative, we can be sure that the former Buddha Puṣya is depicted here. The buddha to the right, attended by a nun whose eyes radiate green rays, has not been identified so far.<sup>58</sup> However, the accompanying figure of the next buddha of this series hints at a familiar pictorial motif that is also based on a narrative in which Buddha Śākyamuni meets a buddha in one of his previous lives. It is the story of the potter Bṛhaddyuti, who takes care of this former buddha, who also bears the name Śākyamuni, and bathes him while he is ill.<sup>59</sup> The former Buddha Śākyamuni thereupon prophesies that the potter will become a buddha in the future who will also be named Śākyamuni. The accompanying figure is shown bathing the feet of the buddha with water from a little vase held in the figure’s left hand. Another familiar pictorial motif appears on the right side wall of the same cave. Here, we see a buddha (the

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of China: *The Kizil Grottoes, Volume 2*, comp. Shinkyō Uiguru jichiku bunbutsu kanri inkai 新疆ウイグル自治区文物管理委員会 and Haijō ken Kijiru senbutsudō bunbutsu hokanjo 拜城县ギジル千仏洞文物保管所 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1984), 170–236, fig. 96. Ma mentions the Chinese translation of the *Avadānaśataka* (no. 97) *Zhuanji baiyuanjing* 撰集百緣經 (T. 200.4, 253c20–254a02) as a primary source for the story about the Brahmin standing on one foot. Other primary sources in Sanskrit and Chinese containing the legend are listed in Étienne Lamotte, *La traité de la grande vertu de sagesse de Nāgārjuna (Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra)*, Tome I: *Chapitres I–XV* (Louvain: Bureaux du muséeon, 1944), 252, n. 2.

- 56 The Buddha sometimes appears in other versions of the legend under the name Tiśya, see Lamotte, *La traité*, 253, n. 1.
- 57 Most versions of the story contain the prophecy of Śākyamuni’s future buddhahood; one exception is the \**Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa*, see Lamotte, *La traité*, 253. The story is also included in the verse section about the former *pranidhānas* of Buddha Śākyamuni in the Tibetan version of the *Bhaiṣajyavastu* of the *Mūlasarvāstīvādinaya* Q no. 1030 ‘*Dul ba ge* 257b6. There it is stated that in one of his former existences Śākyamuni venerated Buddha Puṣya in a jewel cave with a verse, however, the fact that he was standing on one leg for seven days and nights is not mentioned. I thank Gudrun Melzer for providing the information on the Tibetan source.
- 58 The painting of the nun with radiating eyes was brought to Berlin by the third German expedition in 1907 (no. IB 9027). Since 1945, it has been housed in the State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, no. ВДсэ 702.
- 59 For a short summary of the story about the potter Bṛhaddyuti and representations of this story in Kuča, see above fn. 15.

second from the left) represented holding an alms bowl in his left hand, and, on the viewer's left, a Brahmin standing with both hands raised, intending to present something to the buddha (fig. 2.13).<sup>60</sup> Unfortunately, the gift is no longer recognisable, because it was destroyed when the German expedition removed the painting of the Brahmin. Nevertheless, we can assume it was food offered by the Brahmin to the buddha, since this pictorial motif also appears in the series of large buddha figures in Kızıl Cave 163 (fig. 2.14). In this painting, a tray, probably containing fruit, is offered by the Brahmin to the buddha, who is holding an alms bowl in his left hand. However, I have not yet been able to establish which specific underlying story relates to this painting.<sup>61</sup>

In all the preceding examples from Kuča, the large buddha figures that are identifiable are buddhas of the past. Their identification is possible through the accompanying figure that alludes to a certain narrative. Other caves that contain representations of series of buddhas, including attending figures, are Kızıl Caves 100 and 192, and Simsim Caves 26 and 41 (Chin. Senmusaimu qianfodong 森木塞姆千佛洞). However, there are also a few representations of series of buddhas in which the individual buddhas are not narratively depicted. As in Greater Gandhāra, the buddhas are depicted either without an attending figure, as in Kumtura Cave 23 (figs. 2.3 and 2.4) and Simsim Cave 5, or accompanied by donors, who probably financed the decoration, as in Simsim Cave 48 and Taitai'er Cave 16 (Chin. Taitai'er shiku 台台爾石窟). In general, there seem to be more representations of buddhas from narratives in the series in Kuča than non-narrative ones. However, we should keep in mind that many of the paintings in other caves of Kuča were so badly damaged that it is impossible to determine whether the buddhas were once depicted with attending figures and thus, whether their depictions were based on any narratives or not.<sup>62</sup>

60 The painting of the Brahmin was brought to Berlin by the third German expedition in 1907 (no. 1B 9031). Since 1945, it has been housed in the State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, no. ВДсэ 863. The identification of this fragment as belonging to the painting of the right side wall was made by the author of the present paper.

61 One possible underlying story to this pictorial motif could be the story of Buddha Śākyamuni who, in a previous birth as a Brahmin, offered a delicious fruit to Buddha Aniruddha. A verse referring to this story is part of the verse section on the former *pranidhānas* of Buddha Śākyamuni in the *Bhaiṣajyavastu* of the *Mūlasarvastivādinaya*, see for example in its Tibetan version Q no. 1030, 'Dul ba ge 256a6. I thank Gudrun Melzer for providing the information on the Tibetan source.

62 Grünwedel, for example, mentions eight buddha figures depicted in the corridor of Kumtura Cave 58, of which at least two were provided with attending figures. However, the paintings were already so badly damaged when Grünwedel visited the cave that he could not give an accurate description of their details. See Grünwedel, *Altbuddhistische Kultstätten*, 34.

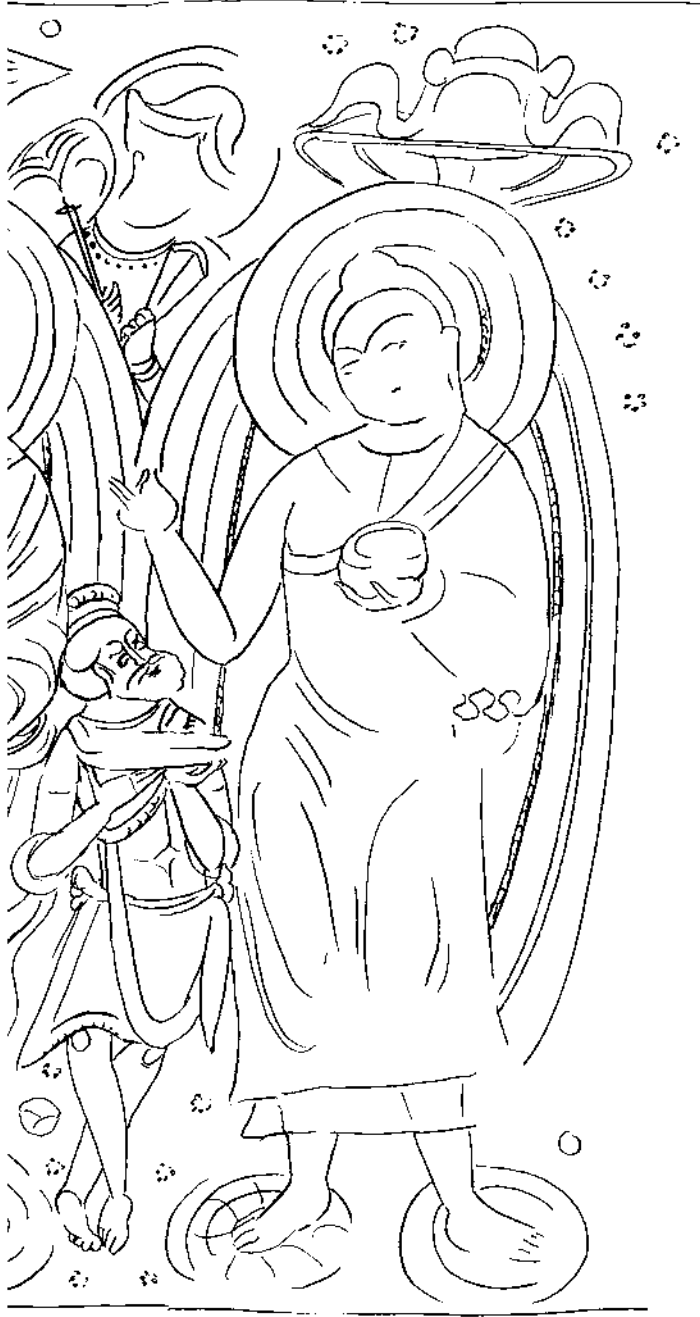


FIGURE 2.14 Kizil Cave 163, left corridor, outer wall, detail, narrative on a Brahmin offering food (?) to the Buddha  
DRAWING BY MONIKA ZIN



## 6 Conclusion

Among the representations of series of buddhas in Kuča, several are depicted in a narrative context. Although we cannot determine all of the stories underlying the narrative buddha images, the paintings that are identifiable appear to depict the buddhas of the past. The practice of representing buddhas of the past was most likely adopted from the art of Greater Gandhāra. This is clear from how the series of buddhas found in both regions were arranged to make sure that they were visible during ritual circumambulation. There are also stylistic similarities between the buddha sculptures from Haḍḍa and the painted buddha figures in the caves of Kuča. According to Jules Barthoux, the drapery of the buddhas' robes in Gar-naō, *stūpa* A, was made of a thin layer of stucco and thus revealed the shape of the body.<sup>63</sup> This characteristic feature of a robe that clings to the body and reveals the body shape is also depicted in large-scale buddha sculptures from Khotan and in the paintings of large buddha figures in the caves of Kuča. This again indicates that the representation of large-sized buddhas in the art of both Kuča and Khotan was adopted from Greater Gandhāra. The motif was perhaps adopted in Kuča when the Turks ruled over the western Tarim Basin, where Kuča was located, as well as over parts of present-day Afghanistan and northern India (560–657).<sup>64</sup>

The art of Gandhāra, the forerunner of the art of Greater Gandhāra, already featured numerous representations of the pictorial motif of the seven buddhas of the past, in which the individual buddhas could often only be distinguished by their different gestures, poses, or ways of wearing their outer robe. An exception is an incompletely preserved relief of the seven buddhas, in which each buddha is accompanied by a figure of Vajrapāṇi next to their head and by at least one smaller worshipping figure (fig. 2.15).<sup>65</sup> This feature of accompanying figures rarely appears in the large series of buddhas in Greater Gandhāran art. However, in the art of Kuča, the accompanying figures became an important

63 Barthoux, *The Hadda Excavations*, 198.

64 After the Turks established their First Khaganate in about 560, they divided their new empire into a western and eastern khaganate in 583. The Western Turks then controlled Zungharia, the Ferghana Valley, the western Tarim Basin, and parts of Afghanistan and northern India. In 657, the Tang Dynasty took control of the Western Turk Empire. For the history and territory of the Turk Khaganates, see James Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads. A History of Xinjiang* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 31–35, 376.

65 The relief is housed in the Lahore Museum, nos. 2306, 2058, and 2059, and is illustrated in Alfred Foucher, *L'art Gréco-Bouddhique du Gandhāra: Étude sur les origines de l'influence classique dans l'art Bouddhique de l'Inde et de l'Extrême-Orient. Tome I* (Paris: Leroux, 1905), fig. 136; Ingholt, Harald, *Gandhāran Art in Pakistan* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1957), fig. 224.



FIGURE 2.15 Relief. Sikri, Gandhāra, dated 2nd/3rd century. Lahore Museum, nos. 2306, 2058, 2059  
DRAWING BY MONIKA ZIN

element in series of large buddhas. They allude to a certain narrative by which the respective buddha can be identified. One of the reasons for depicting the buddhas in a narrative context may have been the preference for narrative representations in Kuča, like those found in the majority of the decorated caves.

The representations of buddhas in a series identified so far may depict prophecies about Buddha Śākyamuni made by a buddha of the past, known in the secondary literature as *praṇidhi* paintings. The existence of small-scale *praṇidhi* paintings in Kuča has already been proven, as they sometimes bear Tocharian inscriptions by which they could be identified.<sup>66</sup> The Kučean paintings of large buddhas of the past that reference narratives, may represent a

66 Incribed small-scale *praṇidhi* paintings, of which only a few inscriptions are still legible, are depicted in several registers on the walls of Kumtura Cave 34, see Georges-Jean Pinault, “Une nouvelle inscription koutchéenne de Qumtura: Légende de scènes bouddhiques de Praṇidhi,” *Bulletin d'études indiennes* 11–12 (1993–1994): 171–220; Hirotoshi Ogihara 荻原裕敏, “Tuhuoluoyu wenxian suo jian fuming xilie—yi chutu fodian yu Kumutula kuqunqudi 34 ku bang ti wei li 吐火罗语文献所见佛名系列—以出土佛典与库木吐喇窟群区第 34 窟榜题为例. Lists of Former Buddhas in Tocharian Texts: A Comparative Study of Unearthed Manuscripts and Captions in Kumtura Cave No. 34,” *Xiyu wenshi* 西域文史. *Literature and History of the Western Regions* 9 (2015): 33–49.

further development and be regarded as direct predecessors of the famous Uyghur large-scale *prañidhi* paintings of the Turfan region.<sup>67</sup>

In some of the series of buddhas represented in Kuča, the buddhas are depicted either with donors, as in Simsim Cave 48 and Taitai'er Cave 16, or completely without accompanying figures, as in Kuntura Cave 23 and Simsim Cave 5. As these buddhas are generally placed in exactly the same position in the cave as the series of narrative buddhas, that is, in the circumambulatory path, we can assume that the artists of Kuča also painted buddhas of the past here. It is quite possible that these series of non-narrative buddhas were created at a later time, when the depiction of buddhas was more important than their identification.

Finally, in order to develop an understanding of why the buddhas of the past were included in the pictorial programme of the caves, it seems reasonable to suppose that they had the same function as the texts. The *Bahubuddhakasūtra*, for example, was used in meditative practice as well as in more secular matters.<sup>68</sup> As the names of buddhas were deemed to have magical power, chanting them could protect the speaker against calamity. Furthermore, the repetition of the names of buddhas was believed to produce a beneficial state of mind and favourable *karma*. This meant that while the worshipper circumambulated the 'pillar' of the cave containing the niche with the central buddha figure, they could recite the names of the depicted buddhas of the past, often identifiable by their attending figure, and thus accumulate merit and create protection.<sup>69</sup> Another reason for the representation of buddhas, whether they belong to the past or the future, is the emphasis on the infinity of the *dharma*. The visual presence of the buddhas indicates that the *dharma* has lasted from time immemorial and will continue to exist in the future. These two reasons are not mutually exclusive, but rather complementary.

67 This statement has already been presented in Konczak, *Prañidhi-Darstellungen*, chap. 3.1.6, and in Mori, Michiyo 森美智代, "Kiji sekkutsu no 'ryubutsu no retsuzo' to seiganzu ni tsuite 亀茲石窟の「立仏の列像」と誓願図について [On Depictions of 'Rows of Standing Buddhas' and *prañidhi* Scenes in the Kızıl Grottoes]," *Bukkyō geijutsu* 佛教藝術 *Ars Buddhica* 340 (2015): 9–35.

68 Richard Salomon, *The Buddhist Literature of Ancient Gandhāra: An Introduction with Selected Translations* (Somerville: Wisdom Publications, 2018), 270.

69 For the practical application of the *Bahubuddhakasūtra* and similar texts, as well as their visual counterparts in series of buddhas, see, *ibid.*, 270–271.

# Buddhist Painting in the South of the Tarim Basin: A Chronological Conundrum

*Ciro Lo Muzio*

## 1 Introduction

Apart from Aurel Stein's publications of the results of the field activities he carried out in the early 20th century,<sup>1</sup> which still represent a mandatory starting point of any research on ancient Khotan, the most valuable contributions to the study of Khotanese painting remain Joanna Williams's long article devoted to this topic<sup>2</sup>—for the author's insight and praiseworthy effort to analyse the artistic phenomenon against its religious background—and the chapters dedicated to wall painting in Gerd Gropp's monograph<sup>3</sup>—for the accurate and balanced presentation of the materials recovered in the Khotan oasis by Emil Trinkler in 1928. In the last two decades, new discoveries—at Dandān-öliq and in the Domoko (Chin. Damagou 大瑪溝) area, in particular in the Toplukdong sites—contributed fresh material to the study of Khotanese painting, but the reports usually offer little more than a description of the findings;<sup>4</sup> in some

- 1 Sir Aurel Stein, *Ancient Khotan: Detailed Report of Archaeological Explorations in Chinese Turkestan*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907); Sir Aurel Stein, *Serindia: Detailed Report of Explorations in Central Asia and Westernmost China*, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921); Sir Aurel Stein, *Innermost Asia: Detailed Report of Explorations in Central Asia, Kan-Su, and Eastern Īrān*, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928).
- 2 Joanna Williams, "The Iconography of Khotanese Painting," *East and West* 23 (1973): 109–154.
- 3 Gerd Gropp, *Archäologische Funde aus Khotan, Chinesisch-Ostturkestan: Die Trinkler-Sammlung im Übersee-Museum Bremen* (Bremen: Verlag Friedrich Röver, 1974), 71–200.
- 4 See Christoph Baumer, "Sogdian or Indian Iconography and Religious Influences in Dandan-Uiliq: The Murals of Buddhist Temple D 13," in *The Art of Central Asia and the Indian Subcontinent*, ed. Anupa Pande (New Delhi: Aryan Book International, 2009), 170–184, with references to previous publications on his fieldwork; for the Sino-Japanese diggings at Dandān-öliq, see Zhongguo Xinjiang wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 中国新疆文物考古研究所 and Riben Fojiao daxue Niya yizhi xueshu yanjiu jigou 日本佛教大学尼雅遗址学术研究机构 ed., *Dandan wulike yizhi—Zhong Ri gongtong kaocha yanjiu baogao 丹丹乌里克遗址—中日共同考察研究报告 [The Ruins of Dandān-öliq: Report of the Sino-Japanese Joint Expedition]* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe 2009); Matsumoto Nobuyuki ed., *Treasures of the Silk Road: Recent Discovery from Xinjiang and Shaanxi* (Tokyo: Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai, 2005); Yuzhong Zhang, Tao Qu, and Guorui Liu, "A Newly Discovered Buddhist Temple and

cases, both the descriptions and the attempts at interpretation of the subjects represented are unsatisfying.<sup>5</sup>

Along with the material found *in situ* through organised diggings, part of what we know of Khotanese painting consists of fragments of murals acquired by local smugglers, who, in order to get the maximum profit from their business, had the wall paintings (as well as clay sculptures and decorated wooden architecture) from ancient sites of the oasis cut into fragments to be sold separately, often to different individuals. Fragments of murals reportedly from Balawaste, Khadalik, Dandān-öiliq, and other sites ended up in a number of private collections and, eventually, museums.<sup>6</sup> Needless to say, in these cases the loss of information is much greater than that caused by the archaeological methods Stein employed, as well as those of other explorers then working in the Tarim Basin, which were surely inadequate if compared to the modern standard. Attempts have been made to restore parts of the original compositions by piecing together the available fragments, with good results,<sup>7</sup> but much work still waits to be done to make the most of these *disiecta membra*.

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Wall Paintings at Dandan-Uiliq in Xinjiang," *Journal of Inner Asian Art and Archaeology* 3 (2008): 157–170. For the Chinese diggings in the Domoko area, see *Silu fanxiang: Xinjiang Hetian Damagou fojiao yizhi chutu bihua yishu* 丝路梵相：新疆和田达玛沟佛教遗址出土壁画艺术 *Buddhist Vestiges Along the Silk Road: Mural Art from the Damago Site, Hotan, Xinjiang*, comp. Shanghai bowuguan 上海博物馆 (Shanghai: Shanghai Museum, 2014). On Toplukdong painting, see also Erika Forte, "On a Wall Painting from Toplukdong Site no. 1 in Domoko: New Evidence of Vaiśravaṇa in Khotan?," in *Changing Forms and Cultural Identity: Religious and Secular Iconographies*, ed. Deborah Klimburg-Salter and Linda Lojda, vol. 1, *South Asian Archaeology and Art: Papers from the 20th Conference of the European Association for South Asian Archaeology and Art Held in Vienna from 4th to 9th of July 2010* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 215–224.

- 5 See Baumer, "Sogdian or Indian Iconography and Religious Influences in Dandan Uiliq". For a discussion of the paintings found by Baumer, see Ciro Lo Muzio, "Skanda and the Mothers in Khotanese Buddhist Painting," in *Interaction in the Himalayas and Central Asia: Processes of Transfer, Translation and Transformation in Art, Archaeology, Religion and Polity*, ed. Eva Allinger, Frantz Grenet, Christian Jahoda, Maria-Katharina Lang, and Anne Vergati (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2017), 71–89; Ciro Lo Muzio, "Brahmanical Deities in Foreign Lands: The Fate of Skanda in Buddhist Central Asia," *Buddhist Road Paper* 6.1, Special Issue: *Central Asian Networks. Rethinking the Interplay of Religions, Art and Politics Across the Tarim Basin (5th–10th c.)*, ed. Erika Forte (2019): 8–43.
- 6 For a discussion of the vicissitudes of Khotanese antiquities, see Daniel Waugh and Ursula Sims-Williams, "The Old Curiosity Shop in Khotan," *The Silk Road* 8 (2010): 69–96.
- 7 See, for example, Gropp, *Archäologische Funde aus Khotan*, figs. 43 a–d, 46 a–d, 48 a–c, 50 a–c, 51 a–c, 52 a–c, 53 a–f, 54 a–c, 56 b; Corinne Debaine-Francfort and Idriss Abdouessul, *Kériya, mémoires d'un fleuve. Archéologie et civilisation des oasis du Takla Makan* (Paris: Éditions Findakly, 2001), 116–117.

A reappraisal of Khotanese painting appears much desirable if we consider the amount of research carried out, during the last decades, in the fields of Buddhist archaeology and art history in the Tarim Basin, Western Central Asia, Gandhāra, and China, and the valuable results it produced. As the methodological basis of most of the Khotanese archaeological record is weak or nearly nonexistent, any new attempt of investigation of Khotanese murals is still bound to be largely based on art historical analysis; all the more reason to refine it as much as possible.

A major concern should be a correct evaluation of diversity in style, iconography, and technical quality, which is so often explained in terms of chronological diversity, whereas it may attest to diverse choices and degrees of technical skill of local workshops. In this regard, I think it appropriate to recall Williams's keen remark that a now lost painting from Khadalik includes, and so connects, "[...] a variety of types of images which are usually preserved only in fragments",<sup>8</sup> several of which denote discreet stylistic traits. That is, different subjects or figures may require different styles or, at least, stylistic marks, in one and the same composition: a true challenge to any analysis based on the assumption that iconography and style dwell in two separate realms.

Another matter that warrants caution is the (mis)use of elements of the Classical (Greco-Roman) iconographic or ornamental repertoire as chronological clues in art historical analysis, a sensitive issue in the exegesis of pictorial arts in the Indo-Iranian borderland as well as in Central Asia as a whole.

Furthermore, possibly based on its specific religious background—namely, a stronger Mahāyāna orientation, which affected its thematic choices—Khotanese pictorial arts are generally viewed and analysed as a phenomenon *per se*, essentially unrelated to other major artistic centres in the Tarim Basin. A more careful investigation of the artistic relationship between Khotan and Kuča, first and foremost, may lead to rewarding results, and highlight, at least in part of their otherwise distinct repertoires (and doctrinal orientations), a common ground based on similar iconographic and stylistic choices.

Last but not least, and closely related to all of the *desiderata* listed above, a much-needed improvement is the definition of a more consistent and reliable chronological frame, which is the specific issue to which these notes are devoted.

8 Williams, "The Iconography of Khotanese Painting," 110, fig. 45.

## 2 Chronology of Khotanese Painting

The chronology of Khotanese painting is largely based on a few elementary, however sensible, assumptions formulated by Stein. According to Stein's reconstruction, Khotanese painting is essentially late, covering a time span of approximately three centuries, from the 6th to the 8th centuries, with a greater concentration of the extant evidence in the 8th century.<sup>9</sup> The most objective data for this chronological span concern its very end, that is, the eighteen Chinese documents found in a few ruined building at Dandān-öiliq (D v, D VII and D VIII), five of which date to 781–789.<sup>10</sup> The latest date (789) serves as a *terminus ante quem* for the northern sector of the site. The execution of the mural paintings preserved in those ruins, as Stein suggests, cannot be earlier than the beginning of the same century. Based on an undeniable iconographic and stylistic consistency with the murals, the painted wooden panels from Dandān-öiliq and other sites of the Khotan oasis (to which we may add the findings from Endere, further east in the Southern Tarim Basin) reasonably belong to the same time span.<sup>11</sup> Also, the architectural and pictorial evidence allows us to associate to Dandān-öiliq the wall paintings from Khadalik, Balawaste, and Domoko, which plausibly date from the 8th century as well.

As for the Farhad Beg Yailaki murals, the absence of Tang (618–907, 唐) coins at the site led Stein to prefer a date in the 6th century or earlier,<sup>12</sup> which seems like an arbitrary inference. Tang coins were not found at Endere either,<sup>13</sup> and were it not for a Chinese inscription scratched on a wall (bearing the date 719),<sup>14</sup> Stein would have probably dated the late phase of Endere to the 6th century or earlier. Therefore, Williams's proposal to assign the Farhad Beg Yailaki paintings to a little earlier than those from Dandān-öiliq and related sites, to the late 7th century, based on stylistic criteria, sounds more reasonable.

9 The question is effectively summarised in Williams, "The Iconography of Khotanese Painting," 109–112.

10 Stein, *Ancient Khotan*, 266–277, 525–533.

11 Williams, "The Iconography of Khotanese Painting," 110. Roderick Whitfield proposes dating the Khotanese wooden panels to the 6th century, but not the ones from Endere, which he dates to the 7th–8th centuries, thus dissociating them from the wall paintings, which sounds a false note: murals and votive panels clearly belong to the same period, whatever that period is. Roderick Whitfield, *The Art of Central Asia: The Stein Collection in the British Museum, 3. Textiles, Sculpture and Other Arts* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1985), 314–317, 311, pls. 57, 66–72.

12 Stein, *Serindia*, chap. 31, section 2.

13 On Endere, see Stein, *Ancient Khotan*, chap. 12.

14 Stein, *Ancient Khotan*, pl. 10, 43off.

As is clear, even from this sketchy overview, the chronology of Khotanese painting is not yet definitely settled and there seems to be no material shedding light on the formative stages of pictorial arts in the oasis. If we rely on the bulk of the material Stein unearthed, no evidence of murals dating from a period earlier than the beginning of the time span mentioned above (6th c., according to Stein; late 7th c., according to Williams) seems to be available. Whatever the oscillations of the absolute chronology, depending on the view held by each scholar, there seems to be general agreement on the fact that Khotanese painting represents a coherent *corpus* dating from a relatively late period, i.e. 7th (or 6th) to 8th centuries. This is why, the wall paintings unearthed at Karadong, a site on the Keriya River, on the north-eastern outskirts of the Khotan oasis (190 km north of Yutian, 于阗), sound like a lone voice, if we accept the chronology established by the excavators, the 3rd century.<sup>15</sup> However fragmentary, the Karadong murals are one of the major discoveries made in the Tarim Basin during the last few decades, but I think there is room for reconsidering its chronology.<sup>16</sup>

### 3 Karadong Murals

Karadong was first visited by Sven Hedin (1896), then by Stein (1901 and 1906),<sup>17</sup> who carried out limited excavations, as he deemed it a site of little interest. Karadong was more extensively explored in the 1990s by a Franco-Chinese team led by Corinne Debaine-Francfort and Abduressul Idris. The investigations mainly focused on the ruins of some houses and of two Buddhist temples, named Shrine A and Shrine B, from where all the fragments of painted murals have been recovered. Shrine A was excavated in 1993, and Shrine B,

15 Henri-Paul Francfort and Corinne Debaine-Francfort, "Oasis irriguée et art bouddhique ancien à Karadong: premiers résultats de l'expédition franco-chinoise de la Keriya, Xinjiang, République Populaire de Chine," *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belle-Lettres* 137.4 (1993): 929; Corinne Debaine-Francfort, Abduressul Idris, and Wang Binghua, "Agriculture irriguée et art bouddhique ancien au cœur du Takla Makan (Karadong, Xinjiang, II<sup>e</sup>–IV<sup>e</sup> siècles)," *Arts Asiatiques* 49 (1994): 34–52; Debaine-Francfort and Idris, *Kériya*, 82–113.

16 On this occasion, I will make no more than a cursory mention of the mural fragments, portraying haloed *amorini* supporting a garland, reportedly found in the Domoko area, see Shanghai bowuguan, *Silu fanxiang*, 118–127. The fragments have not been properly described and analyzed yet; a date in the 3rd century is inferred from the assumption that their direct source cannot be other than Gandharan art. These fragments require adequate analysis.

17 Stein, *Ancient Khotan*, 443–452.



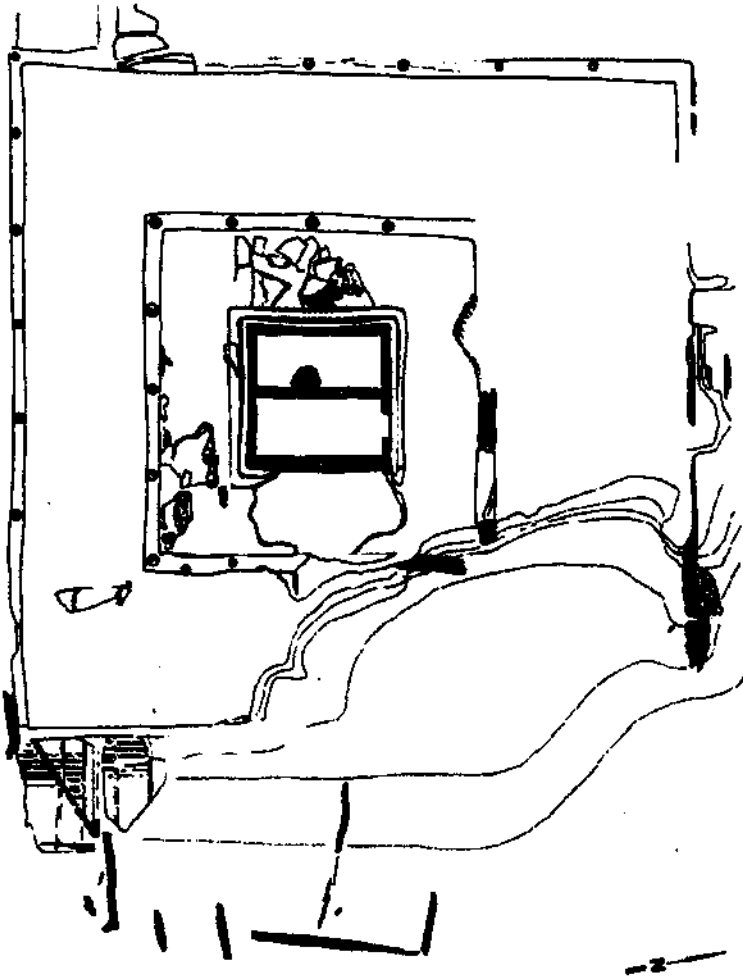


FIGURE 3.1 Plan of Shrine A. Karadong  
 DEBAINE-FRANCFORT AND IDRIS, *KÉRIYA*, 83, FIG. 2

one year later. In the first two reports on the Keriya Basin diggings,<sup>18</sup> only the first building is described and commented upon; information and pictures of Shrine B are provided in the catalogue *Kériya, mémoires d'un fleuve* (2001). Both temples reproduce an architectural layout recorded in many sites in the south of the Tarim Basin: a central cella surrounded by one (B) or two (A) corridors for circumambulation (fig. 3.1).

18 Francfort, Debaine-Francfort, "Oasis irriguée et art bouddhique ancien à Karadong;" Debaine-Francfort, Idriiss, and Wang, "Agriculture irriguée et art bouddhique ancien," fn. 11.

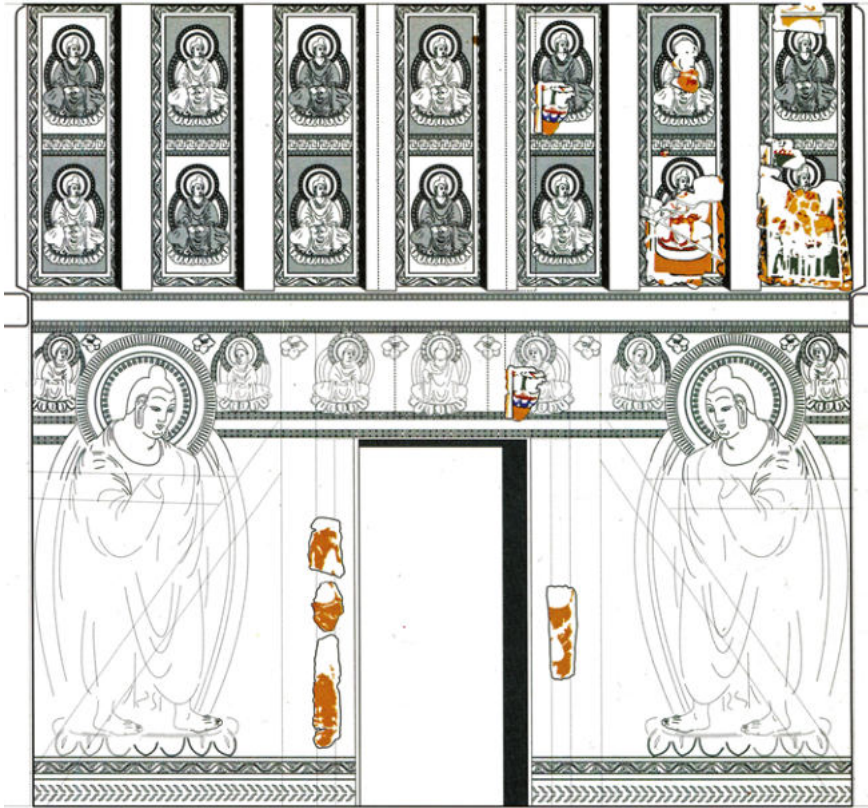


FIGURE 3.2 Shrine B, reconstruction of the iconographic programme on the eastern wall.  
Karadong

DEBAINE-FRANCFORT, *KÉRIYA*, 89, FIG. 15

Shrine A has yielded a larger number of mural fragments, but Shrine B offers better conditions for making a credible reconstruction of the iconographic programme. The accuracy and expertise shown by the team in the hard task of handling and restoring parts of the original painted compositions is worthy of praise. According to the reconstruction proposed for Shrine B (fig. 3.2), the walls were subdivided into three registers: in the lower register there was an ornamental band; in the middle or main register (ca. 1.20 m high) there were large images of buddhas, each figure standing on a lotus flower (the lateral ones in three-quarter view and the central one in frontal view) with a pair of smaller images of seated buddhas above them, on both sides of the standing figures (fig. 3.3); in the upper register there was a row of rectangular upright panels framed by a vegetal scroll and subdivided into two halves by a horizontal band with a meander (or Greek fretwork), each panel contained a buddha seated on a lotus pedestal (fig. 3.4).



FIGURE 3.3 Shrine B, northern wall, middle register. Karadong  
XINJIANG INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY, URUMQI, AFTER  
DEBAINE-FRANCFORT AND IDRIS, *KÉRIYA*, 100

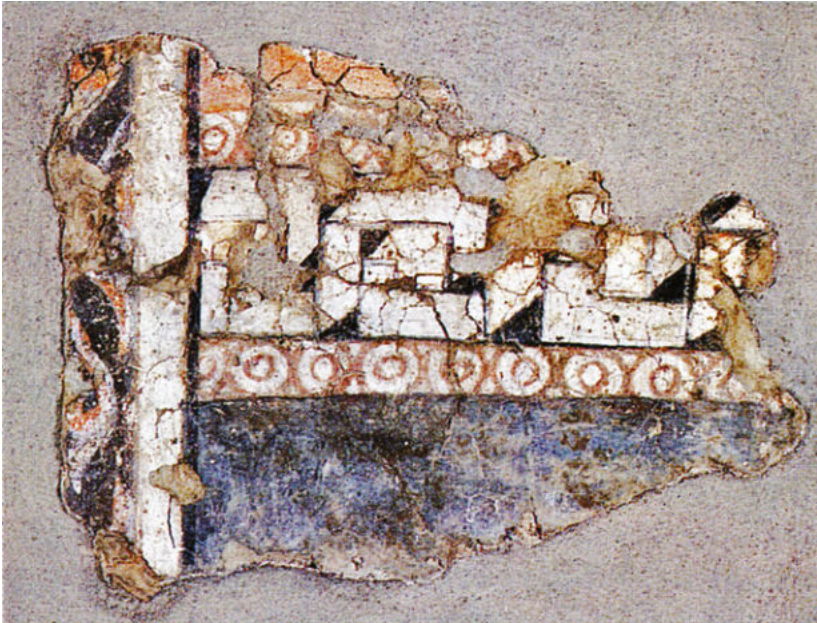


FIGURE 3.4 Shrine B, upper register, meander. Karadong  
XINJIANG INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY, URUMQI, AFTER  
DEBAINE-FRANCFORT AND IDRIS, *KÉRIYA*, FIG. 104



FIGURE 3.5 Shrine A, drawing of the painting preserved on the northern and western wall. Karadong  
FRANCFORT, DEBAINE-FRANCFORT, IDRIS AND WANG, "AGRICULTURE IRRIGUÉE," FIG. 24

The iconographic programme in Shrine A might not have been very different from the one just described. Patches of paintings still preserved in the lower part of two walls (west and south, fig. 3.5) show the feet of buddhas standing on lotus flowers, in three quarter view, alternately facing to the right and to the left, on a dark floor sprinkled with tiny flowers. In the drawing provided in the first publication (but this detail is apparently unrecorded in the description), part of a small figure of a kneeling worshipper in caftan and trousers can be seen on the left of the first buddha (from the left), on the western wall.<sup>19</sup> From the fragments recovered among the debris, several smaller images of buddhas seated on lotus pedestals with ornamental motifs could be recomposed. The buddhas, depicted on a white background filled with white (lotus blossoms?) and dark flowers,<sup>20</sup> were set in panels framed by vegetal scrolls and separated by horizontal ornamental bands (undulating or zigzag ribbons) (fig. 3.6). One is led to suppose that, just as in Shrine B, in this temple the main (middle) register of the walls was occupied by a series of standing buddhas, whereas the upper register was reserved for rows of small seated buddhas, a well-known scheme conventionally referred to as 'Thousand Buddhas'.

Therefore, the paintings in both temples were most likely based on similar iconographic schemes. Although, as it has been rightly remarked, a difference in workmanship is noticeable, since the figures and ornamental motifs in Shrine B are more accurate and less 'geometric' than those in Shrine A.

As a complete and detailed description of the murals unearthed in both temples is available in the publications mentioned above, I will focus instead on some of their most peculiar features, especially on those which I deem

19 Debaine-Francfort, Idriss, and Wang "Agriculture irrigué et art bouddhique ancien," 44–45, figs. 23, 24.

20 According to the authors, these are *pipal* leaves, although they themselves admit, "On ne connaît pour l'instant pas d'équivalent aux feuilles de *pipal* peintes en noir sur le fond blanc, car en général, c'est l'arbre tout entier qui est représenté." Debaine-Francfort and Idriss, *Kériya*, 93.



FIGURE 3.6  
 Shrine A, western wall, seated buddhas  
 from the upper register. Karadong  
 XINJIANG INSTITUTE OF  
 ARCHAEOLOGY, URUMQI, AFTER  
 DEBAINE-FRANCFORT AND IDRISSE,  
*KÉRIYA*, 93

particularly meaningful for a reconsideration of the chronology established by the authors of the excavations, the 3rd century.

As the latest publication of the finds cursorily states, the date of Karadong paintings is based on a radiocarbon test,<sup>21</sup> but no details are given about the sample(s) employed for the analysis; we may wonder whether it was taken from the wooden structure of a wall (as it has been elsewhere in Xinjiang sites, with misleading results) or from the mortar layers of the painting, which usually contain organic elements.

In fact, an early date (2nd–4th c.) was already assumed in the first publications about the Sino-French activities on the Keriya Basin (Karadong being considered contemporary with Miran), well before the C14 analysis was carried out.<sup>22</sup> The reasons such an early date is proposed mainly rest on iconographic and stylistic arguments (all proposed again in the 2001 catalogue), which, in my opinion, deserve scrutiny, rather than on the finding of *wuzhu* (五銖) coins,<sup>23</sup> typical Han Dynasty (206 BCE–9; 25–220, 漢) emissions, which, as the authors admit, remained in use in these regions for centuries.

I will start with the depictions of the buddhas in Shrine A, in particular, the seated buddhas presumably belonging to the upper register (fig. 3.6), which surely represent the most peculiar trait of the Karadong murals. What strikes most is the stylised outline of their heads, the disproportionally large necks crossed by two or more skin folds, and the straight elongated earlobes. The hair is arranged in small curls. The eyebrows are very elongated, as are the half-closed eyes. We also notice a small straight nose with a white brush stroke highlighting the nasal ridge, and a small mouth and chin.

A further stylistic feature to take notice of is, in my opinion, that the buddha heads—always in three-quarter view, facing either direction—look asymmetrical, in that the receding part of the face appears unnaturally contracted compared with the part closer to the viewer. In other words, we detect the same

21 Debaine-Francfort and Idriss, *Kériya*, 82: “Datés par le radiocarbone de la ire moitié du III<sup>e</sup> siècle.”

22 An early date for the Karadong murals was accepted by Marylin M. Rhie, who first deemed the late 4th century the most plausible hypothesis (Marylin M. Rhie, *Early Buddhist Art of China and Central Asia. Volume One: Later Han, Three Kingdoms and Western Chin in China and Bactria to Shan-shan in Central Asia* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 1999), 318–321, 378, 390–391, 426), whereas in a later publication, she repeatedly refers to the Karadong painting as a firm chronological landmark, preferring this time the 2nd to 4th centuries, in her analysis of Binglingsi (炳灵寺) Buddhist sculpture (Marylin M. Rhie, *Early Buddhist Art of China and Central Asia. Volume Three: The Western Ch'in in Kansu in the Sixteen Kingdom Period and Inter-relationships with the Buddhist Art of Gandhāra* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2010), 60–62, 122, 123, 125, 146, 148, 253, 368, 369).

23 Debaine-Francfort and Idriss, *Kériya*, 82: “Datés par le radiocarbone de la ire moitié du III<sup>e</sup> siècle,” 76–77.

convention Mario Bussagli highlighted long ago in Kuča painting (6th–7th c.), which he rightly related to the principle known as *kṣayavṛddhī* (Skt. *kṣaya*, diminishing, *vṛddhī*, increasing)<sup>24</sup> in ancient Indian texts on painting.<sup>25</sup> As a matter of fact, the simplified geometric rendering of the head and neck outlines (almost round face, conical neck crossed by skinfold), associated with very sloping shoulders, substantially matches a scheme widespread in the Kızıllı painting (fig. 3.7), with the difference that at Karadong, some elements of this structure—the necks, in particular—are emphasised, a feature possibly due to the specific idiosyncrasy of a local workshop.

The seated buddhas from the upper register are portrayed either in *dhyānamudrā* or with the right hand jutting out from the cloak at chest level, while the arm is concealed by the cloth (fig. 3.6). In other words, the buddhas are shown in the ‘Lateran Sophocles’ posture, which is sporadically attested in Gandhāran art (either stone or stucco sculpture) and, as Debaine-Francfort remarks, is recorded in the funerary art of Palmyra and in the Eastern Mediterranean (that is, in the 1st centuries).<sup>26</sup> Along with this evidence, which represents the ultimate source of the iconographic element under examination, one should not forget to mention the depiction of buddhas in the posture of the ‘Lateran Sophocles’ on a painted wooden post from Balawaste (Khotan oasis, 8th c.)<sup>27</sup> (fig. 3.8).

As is typical of Thousand Buddha compositions, the colour of the dress—along with the head orientation and the gesture—is one of the few elements of variety in an otherwise monotonous row of seated buddhas. In one case (fragment from Shrine B, fig. 3.9), the brown cloth is decorated with rosettes made of seven white dots. A stripe of cotton textile with identical ornamentation was found at Karadong (fig. 3.10),<sup>28</sup> and a very similar pattern is also seen in two fragments of a mural from Balawaste, each preserving the lower part of a *lokapāla* (fig. 3.11).<sup>29</sup>

24 Mario Bussagli, *Central Asian Painting. From Afghanistan to Sinkiang* (Geneva: Skira, 1979), 31–32.

25 Isabella Nardi, *The Theory of Citrasūtras in Indian Painting: A Critical Re-Evaluation of their Uses and Interpretations* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 88–89.

26 Debaine-Francfort and Idriss, *Kériya*, 93.

27 Gropp, *Archäologische Funde aus Khotan*, 65–68, in particular 68 [inv. A.8.2.3], fig. 24.

28 Sophie Desrosiers and Corinne Debaine-Francfort, “On Textile Fragments Found at Karadong, a 3rd to early 4th Century Oasis in the Taklamakan Desert (Xinjiang, China),” *Textile Society of America Symposium Proceedings* 958 (2016): 73–74, fig. 7.

29 Gropp, *Archäologische Funde aus Khotan*, 107–109, figs. 40–41.



FIGURE 3.7 Mural from the third last cave in the Small Gorge. Kizil MUSEUM FÜR ASIATISCHE KUNST, BERLIN, AFTER ALBERT VON LE COQ, *DIE BUDDHISTISCHE SPÄTANTIKE IN MITTELASIEN*, VOL. 4. *ATLAS ZU DEN WANDMALEREIEN* (BERLIN: VERLAG DIETRICH REIMER/ERNST VOHSEN, 1924), TAF. 11



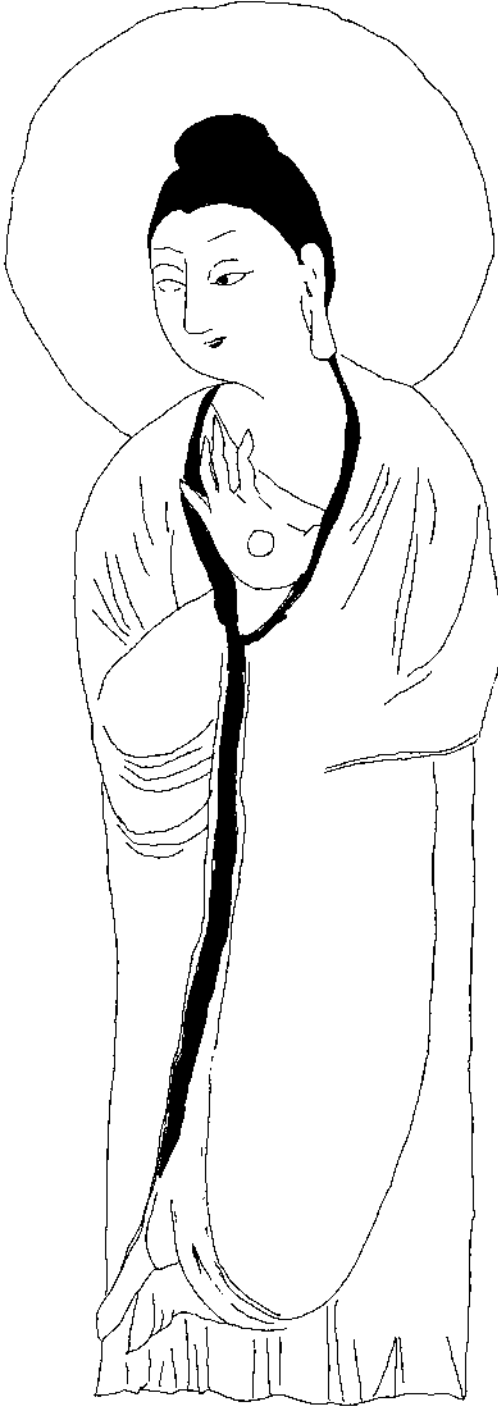


FIGURE 3.8  
 Drawing of a painted wooden post.  
 Balawaste  
 METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF  
 ART, NEW YORK, AUTHOR'S  
 DRAWING AFTER WILLIAMS, *THE  
 ICONOGRAPHY OF KHOTANESE  
 PAINTING*, FIG. 25

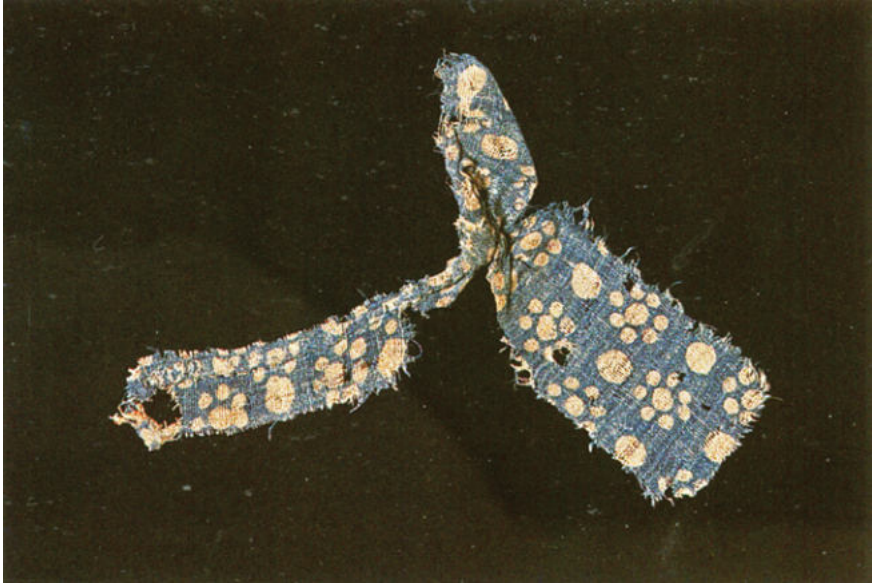


FIGURE 3.9 Fragment of cotton textile. Karadong  
XINJIANG INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY, URUMQI, AFTER  
DEBAINE-FRANCFORT AND IDRIS, *KÉRIYA*, 80, CAT. 22

The excavators rightly remark that in the Karadong murals, the Indian imprint is much stronger than the Gandhāran one,<sup>30</sup> but they are no more specific than this about what elements of iconography and/or style denote an Indian influence. If we look for possible South Asian artistic sources, keeping in mind the date to which the authors assign the Karadong paintings (3rd c.), we find ourselves in the artistic scenario of the Kushan period. If we leave out Gandhāra, then Mathurā, the other major artistic centre in Northern India, offers no better alternative, since we hardly see in the Mathurā sculpture of the Kushan period any plausible parallel, either in iconography (to begin with the buddha image) or in style. This is not to deny any Indian influence at Karadong, where it is, on the contrary, as patent as anywhere else in the Tarim Basin, in different degrees and modes. The problem lies in the chronological mismatch, in that, apart from the cases in which a strong Gandhāran inspiration is evident (e.g.

30 “[...] le style des peintures de Karadong paraît très indianisé, et l’on y relève, bien moins que dans l’art du Gandhāra, le mélange de motifs empruntés à l’Inde ancienne et d’éléments de décor hérités de l’Occident (bandeaux de separation entre deux registres notamment).” Debaine-Francfort, Idriss, and Wang, “Agriculture irriguée et art bouddhique ancien,” 48.



FIGURE 3.10 Shrine B, fragment of mural from the west wall. Karadong  
XINJIANG INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY, URUMQI, AFTER  
DEBAINE-FRANCFORT AND IDRIS, *KÉRIYA*, 103, CAT. 35

Miran), the major Indian component detectable in the painting and sculpture of the Tarim Basin ultimately bears a Gupta period stylistic imprint (early 4th to 6th c.): the rendering of the physiognomic traits of the seated buddhas in Shrine A, with their arched eyebrows, long, half-closed eyes, and head gently tilted to the side, is reminiscent of many buddha images in the Ajanta paintings (late 5th c.).

Let us now consider a few ornamental motifs, beginning with the meander (Shrine B) (fig. 3.4), for which Debaine-Francfort mentions only Western parallels dating from the 3rd century or earlier.<sup>31</sup> The meander, however, is also witnessed in South Asian and Central Asian Buddhist painting, from the 5th

31 Debaine-Francfort and Idriss, *Kériya*, 104 (cat. no. 38).



FIGURE 3.11 Detail of the ceiling of Cave 2, Ajanta (India)  
© MANFRED SOMMER

to the 7th–8th centuries.<sup>32</sup> In different variants (including the tridimensional one we see at Karadong), the meander appears in the paintings of Ajanta (late 5th c., fig. 3.11)<sup>33</sup> and Bāgh (Cave 4, 6th or 7th c., fig. 3.12),<sup>34</sup> and in the terracotta plaques from Harwan (Kashmir, 5th c.).<sup>35</sup> Rather than taking it as a sign of continuity with the Romano-Hellenistic repertoire of the 1st century that was embedded in the Kushan arts, Maurizio Taddei links the later spread of the meander in Indian art during the 4th to 6th centuries to its re-introduction—along with other Classical motifs (or of ‘new ways of employing them’)—from the Near East, possibly through maritime routes.<sup>36</sup>

A direct or, more probably, an indirect influence from Indian Buddhist art of the Gupta period and cognate traditions may explain the presence of the

32 On the spread of the meander in India, see Maurizio Taddei, “Greek Fretwork in India: A Significant Presence,” in *South Asian Archaeology 1995*, ed. Raymond and Bridget Allchin (Cambridge, New Delhi: Ancient India and Iran Trust, Oxford and IBH Pub, 1997), 563–571.

33 Benoy Behl, *The Ajanta Caves: Ancient Paintings of Buddhist India* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2005), 110–111 (Cave 1), 138 (Cave 2).

34 Sir John Marshall, et al., *The Bāgh Caves in the Gwalior State* (London: The India Society, 1927), pl. 17.

35 Ram Chandra Kak, *Ancient Monuments of Kashmir* (London: The India Society, 1933), pls. XXVIII 13, 15, XLII 46.

36 Taddei, “Greek Fretwork in India,” 569.



FIGURE 3.12 Drawing of a meander, mural painting. Bāgh (India)  
MARSHALL ET AL., *THE BAGH CAVES*, PL. 17

meander in the Tarim Basin, where it is not only recorded at Karadong: it also occurs in a fragment of mural from Balawaste, as ornament in the halo of a bodhisattva;<sup>37</sup> in an ornamental band in a painting at Endere (shrine in building E.ii, fig. 3.13),<sup>38</sup> 7th–early 8th century; and finally, in the Kuča oasis, in the painted decoration of Cave 167 ceiling (*Laternendecke*) (fig. 3.14),<sup>39</sup> and in a well-known ‘2nd style’ mural at Kızıl (Cave 224) depicting the story of Ajataśatru (early 7th c.?), in which a meander decorates one of the jars in the left part of the scene (the jar behind the one in which Ajataśatru sits in despair).<sup>40</sup> It seems clear that the meander is not good evidence for supporting a date for the Karadong murals in the 3rd century, as it fits much better in a late Khotanese context.

The same is true for the ribbons separating the panels with seated buddhas in Shrine A. The undulating tridimensional ribbon, in particular, is surely a pattern of Western origin; but nothing compels us to trace its source to the Greco-Roman repertoire of the 1st century, as the motif enjoys long-lasting popularity. In a particularly fine execution, it appears in the mosaics of the

37 Gropp, *Archäologische Funde aus Khotan*, 152, figs. 55d–e, pl. 10.

38 Stein, *Ancient Khotan*, pl. 10.

39 Xinjiang Weiwuer zizhiqu wenwu guanli weiyuanhui 新疆维吾尔自治区文物管理委员会, Baicheng xian Kezier qianfodong wenwu baoguansuo 拜城县克孜尔千佛洞文物保管所编, and Beijing daxue kaoguxi 北京大学考古系, *Kezier shiku* 克孜尔石窟 [The Kizil Grottoes], vol. 2 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1989), fig. 178.

40 Albert Grünwedel, *Alt-Kutscha* (Berlin: Otto Elsner Verlagsgesellschaft M.B.H., 1920), Taf. 42, 43.



FIGURE 3.13 Mural painting in the Buddhist shrine in E.ii. Endere  
STEIN, *ANCIENT KHOTAN*, PL. 10



FIGURE 3.14 Painted ceiling with meander decoration in Cave 167, Kızıl (Kuča oasis)  
© IKUKO NAKAGAWARA



FIGURE 3.15 Mosaic in the Great Palace of Constantinople  
 MOSAIC MUSEUM, ISTANBUL © DOSSEMAN  
 Note: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Istanbul\\_Mosaic\\_Museum\\_dec\\_2016\\_1527\\_Panorama.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Istanbul_Mosaic_Museum_dec_2016_1527_Panorama.jpg), accessed January 16, 2021.

Great Palace of Constantinople<sup>41</sup> (dating from the mid-6th or early 7th c.<sup>42</sup>) (fig. 3.15), but it also occurs, in the same *trompe-l'œil* rendering as at Karadong, in the paintings of the Red Hall in the Varakhsha Palace, in Sogdiana (early decades of the 8th c.).<sup>43</sup>

#### 4 Conclusion

Apart from the individual iconographic elements and ornamental motifs I discussed so far, which nonetheless provide significant chronological clues, it is the very iconographic programme, as it has been reconstructed in Karadong Shrine B and that we can reasonably attribute to Shrine A as well, which should encourage us to associate Karadong with the late Khotanese artistic and ritual horizon. In other words, the Karadong findings confirm the pictorial repertoire

41 Gerard Brett, "The Mosaic of the Great Palace in Constantinople," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 5 (1942): pls. 7a, 8b, 11a.

42 Ken R. Dark, "Roman Architecture in the Great Palace of the Byzantine Emperors at Constantinople During the Sixth to Ninth Centuries," *Byzantion* 77 (2007): 90ff.

43 Vasilij A. Šiškin, *Varachša* (Moskow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk, 1963).

we are accustomed to labelling as 'Mahayanic', in which the primacy belongs to large buddha images (either standing or seated on lotus flowers), Thousand Buddha compositions, bodhisattvas, assemblies that include minor deities, and worship scenes, with no or scarce interest in narratives. Large standing buddha images (most often only their feet surviving) that rest on lotus blossoms against a dark floor dotted with tiny flowers, are a rather familiar picture in the ruined temples of Dandān-öiliq and other sites in the Khotan oasis; the same can be said about the many replicas of the Thousand Buddha scheme that cover the whole surface of the wall or are restricted to the upper part.

After all, the Sino-French archaeologists themselves admit, on the one hand, that the sources inspiring the Karadong murals are definitely different from those of the (supposed coeval) paintings of Miran, acknowledging, furthermore, the analogies between the Karadong murals and later Khotanese wall painting.<sup>44</sup> Yet, they prefer an earlier date because of specific iconographic features (e.g. the 'Lateran Sophocles' attitude) and Classical ornamental motifs (mainly the meander); but these, as I demonstrate, are unsuitable for proving an early date.

Among the results of this research, I would also highlight the hints of an artistic connection between Khotan and Kuča, a largely unexplored topic; whether it should be explained with the activity of itinerant artists or with the circulation of sketch albums or other media, this is surely an issue deserving further investigation.

Summing up, the evidence discussed so far casts doubt on the chronology proposed for the Karadong paintings, suggesting, instead, a *terminus post quem* in approximately the 6th century. With its idiosyncratic style and elements of formal affinity with the art of Kuča, Karadong may represent an early stage in the flourishing of Khotanese painting, with which, however, it definitely shares the iconographic orientation.

44 Debaine-Francfort and Idriss, *Kériya*, 90.



# ‘Khotanese Themes’ in Dunhuang: Visual and Ideological Transfer in the 9th–11th Centuries

Erika Forte

## 1 Introduction

In Cave 98 at Mogao, an imposing life-size figure of the Khotanese King Viśa’ Sambhava (r. 912–962/966, Chin. Li Shengtian 李聖天) dominates the southern stretch of the eastern wall—the one facing the central altar—of the main chamber. He is richly dressed in Chinese-style clothes and wears a high, elaborate crown. A large cartouche identifies him as ‘Great Sage, Great Radiant Son of Heaven, of the Great Dynasty of the Great Jewel Kingdom of Khotan, being the owner of the cave.’<sup>1</sup> His queen is next to him, also identified with an inscription, ‘Celestial Empress Lady Cao, [spouse of] the Great Righteous, Great Radiant, fully entitled by celestial edict, Immensely Pious Emperor of the Great Dynasty of the Great Kingdom of Khotan.’<sup>2</sup> Behind the two royals, a number of attendants and other unidentified figures are represented in smaller scale and fill the rest of the space (fig. 4.1).

Cave 98 was built after 918 to celebrate the official recognition of Cao Yijin (r. 914–935, 曹義金) as the military commissioner of the re-established Guiyijun (851–1036?, 歸義軍, Return-to-Allegiance Army) rule in Dunhuang (敦煌).<sup>3</sup> The queen of Khotan was a daughter of Cao Yijin. As part of his policy

1 大朝大寶于闐國大聖大明天子即是窟主。

2 大朝大于闐國大政大明天冊全封至孝皇帝天皇后曹. *Dunhuang Mogaoku* 敦煌莫高窟. *The Mogao Grottos of Dunhuang*, comp. Dunhuang wenwu yanjiusuo 敦煌文物研究所 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1982), vol. 5, 208; *Dunhuang Mogaoku gongyanganren tiji* 敦煌莫高窟供养人題記 [Donor Inscriptions from the Mogao Caves at Dunhuang], comp. Dunhuang yanjiuyuan 敦煌研究院 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1986), 32.

3 Xinjiang Rong, *Eighteen Lectures on Dunhuang* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2013), 44–46. The date of the construction of the cave is between 923 and 925 in *Dunhuang Mogaoku*, vol. 5, 206. Although the inscription states that Viśa’ Sambhava is the owner of the cave, his portrait and the inscription seem to have been added later, in 940 (*Dunhuang Mogaoku*, vol. 5, 208). Historically, the name Great Jewel Kingdom of Khotan (Chin. *Dabao Yutianguo* 大寶于闐國) that appears in the inscription, or simply Great Jewel Kingdom (Chin. *Dabaoguo* 大寶國), was only in use between 938 and 982. See Zhang Guangda 張廣達 and Rong Xinjiang 榮新江, “Les noms du royaume de Khotan: les noms d’ère et la lignée royale de la



FIGURE 4.1 Portrait of Visā' Sambhava and of his wife, Lady Cao. East wall of Mogao Cave 98, Dunhuang, ca. 940. *Mogaoku*, vol. 5, 13

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of establishing fruitful connections with neighboring kingdoms, Cao Yijin secured alliances with the Ganzhou (甘州) Uyghurs and the Kingdom of Khotan through marriage.<sup>4</sup> On the northern part of the eastern wall of Cave 98, the daughter of the Uyghur *kaghan*, who became the spouse of Cao Yijin, is represented, while Cao Yijin himself and his sons appear on the southern wall of the entrance corridor.<sup>5</sup>

The portrait of the Khotanese royal couple is not the only element in this cave that shows a connection with Khotan. A large tableau of Mt. Gośīrṣa in Khotan, also known as Mt. Gośīṅga, dominates the corridor ceiling. On the slopes of the corridor ceiling, the Khotanese Eight Protectors and Auspicious Statues are depicted in rows. In short, Cave 98 represents the epitome of what we refer to here as 'Khotanese themes' in the caves of Dunhuang.

## 2 Background of the Khotanese Themes

### 2.1 *Auspicious Statues*

Auspicious Statues<sup>6</sup> are statues that originated at different holy places of the Buddhist world that were venerated for their special miraculous powers. Their auspiciousness derives from the fact that they were said to have been carved from the true appearance (Chin. *zhengrong* 真容) of the buddhas or

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fin des Tang au début des Song," in *Contributions aux études de Touen-houang III*, ed. Michel Soymié (Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1984), 29–30.

4 Rong Xinjiang 荣新江 and Zhu Lishuang 朱丽双, *Yutian yu Dunhuang* 于阗与敦煌 [Khotan and Dunhuang] (Lanzhou: Gansu jiaoyu chubanshe, 2013), 153–181. See also Lilla Russell-Smith, *Uyghur Patronage in Dunhuang: Regional Art Centres on the Northern Silk Road in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 19–30, 58–68.

5 *Dunhuang Mogaoku*, vol. 5, fig. 12.

6 The term *ruixiang* is also rendered as "famous images", "auspicious images" (Alexander C. Soper, "Representations of Famous Images at Tun-Huang," *Artibus Asiae* 27.4 (1964/1965): 349–364; Roderick Whitfield, "Ruixiang at Dunhuang," in *Function and Meaning in Buddhist Art: Proceedings of a Seminar Held at Leiden University, 21–24 October 1991*, ed. Karel R. van Kooij and Henny van der Veere (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1995), 149–156), "miraculous images" (Claudia Wenzel, "The Image of the Buddha: Buddha Icons and Aniconic Traditions in India and China," *Transcultural Studies* 1 (2011): 263–305), and "miraculous statues" (Michel Soymié, "Quelques représentations de statues miraculeuses dans les grottes de Touen-houang," in *Contributions aux études de Touen-houang III*, ed. Michel Soymié (Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1984), 77–102). I use the term Auspicious Statues, following Christoph Anderl (Christoph Anderl, "Linking Khotan and Dūnhuáng: Buddhist Narratives in Text and Image," *Entangled Religions* 5 (2018): 250–311) and the idea suggested by Soymié, and also by Whitfield ("Ruixiang at Dunhuang," 149), that the *ruixiang* paintings depict the statues of the deities and not the deities *per se*.

bodhisattvas they represent. In other words, Auspicious Statues fully embody the represented deity.<sup>7</sup>

The backgrounds of Auspicious Statues are found in the narratives about Buddhist sacred sites that circulated in Central and East Asia, and were diffused, in large part, through the travelogues of Chinese pilgrims returning from India, particularly in the stories about miraculous statues recounted by Xuanzang (600/602–664, 玄奘). The practice of bringing back images from the holy land of the Buddha to use as models for image production in China<sup>8</sup> likely also played a role in spreading a true appearance images cult.

In Dunhuang, Auspicious Statues are depicted on wall paintings dating from the late 8th/9th to the 10th centuries<sup>9</sup> and on silk banners—the sole

7 Veneration of Auspicious Statues occurred in China around the 6th century, reaching its peak around the 7th–8th centuries. See Wenzel, “The Buddha Image,” 277–282. A famous case is that of the ‘Udāyana Buddha,’ the very first image of Buddha Śākyamuni commissioned by King Udāyana of Kauśāmbī. The statue was carved from sandalwood by artisans, while they looked at the real, still alive, Buddha. In the process of the localization of Buddhism, narratives about the Udāyana statue changed; the statue is said to have moved to different places and to have eventually settled in China. On the Udāyana Buddha, see Alexander C. Soper, “Literary Evidence for Early Buddhist Art in China,” *Artibus Asiae Supplementum* 19 (1959): 1–296; Hida Romi 肥田路美, “Shotō jidai ni okeru Udenō zō: Genjō no Shakazō shōrai to sono juyō no isshō 初唐時代における優填王像: 玄奘の釈迦像請来とその受容の一相 [The Udāyana Buddha Image in the Early Tang Period: An Aspect of Xuanzang’s Collection of Buddha Images and its Reception],” *Bijutsushi 美術史* [Art History] 4 (1986): 81–94; Martha L. Carter, *The Mystery of the Udayana Buddha* (Napoli: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1990); Amy McNair, “Sandalwood Auspicious Image,” in *Latter Days of the Law: Images of Chinese Buddhism, 850–1850*, ed. Marsha Weidner (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1994), 221–225. On the topic of images performing miracles and their role in a religious context see Richard H. Davis, ed., *Images, Miracles, and Authority in Asian Religious Traditions* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998); Jan Assman and A.I. Baumgarten, ed. *Representation in Religion. Studies in Honor of Moshe Barasch* (Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 2001).

8 Soper, “Famous Images,” 351; Whitfield, “Ruixiang at Dunhuang,” 149.

9 Zhang Guangda 張廣達 and Rong Xinjiang 榮新江, “Dunhuang ‘Ruixiangji,’ ruixiangtu ji qi fanyingde Yutian 敦煌‘瑞象記’瑞象圖及其反映的于闐. The ‘Records of Famous Images,’ the Painting of Famous Images from Dunhuang and Khotan as Reflected in them,” in *Yutian shi congkao (zengding ben) 于闐史叢考 (增訂本)*. *Collected Inquiries on the History of Khotan. New Edition* (Beijing: Zhongguo Renmin Daxue chubanshe, 2008), 167, 179–181 (the article was first published in *Dunhuang Tulufan wenxian yanjiu wenji 敦煌吐魯番文獻研究文集* [Essays on Texts Concerning Dunhuang and Turfan] (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1986), 69–147). The theme seems to also persist in the beginning of the 11th century, during the Tangut Empire’s (ca. 1038–1227, in Chinese sources known as Xixia 西夏) dominion over Dunhuang (ca. 1036–ca. 1225), as evidenced by the presence of an Auspicious Statue image depicted on the ceiling of the entrance corridor of Mogao Cave 313, a cave built during the Sui Dynasty period (581–618, 隋) and re-decorated during the Tangut period. *Dunhuang Mogaoku*, vol. 5, 90.

surviving example of which is the one from the Cave Library recovered by Aurel Stein, now split between the collections of the British Museum and the National Museum New Delhi (fig. 4.2).<sup>10</sup> Many of these depictions have captions that, when legible, identify the individual statues and their related narratives. Moreover, the content of the captions are echoed, in different ways, in four Chinese manuscripts found in Dunhuang, composed between the end of the 9th century and the 10th century known as *Ruixiangji* 瑞像記 [Records on the Auspicious Statues], which basically consist of inventories of famous images from sacred places located in India, Central Asia, and China.<sup>11</sup>

The topic of Auspicious Statues has received intermittent scholarly attention since the 1960s.<sup>12</sup> Already in 1965, in his analysis of the silk banner from

- 10 The banner is known by the inventory number Ch.xxii.0023 given by Aurel Stein. See M. Aurel Stein, *Serindia. Detailed Report of Explorations in Central Asia and Western-most China* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921), vol. 2, 1024–1026 and plate LXX (left half); Arthur Waley, *A Catalogue of Paintings Recovered from Tun-Huang by Sir Aurel Stein* (London: Trustees of the British Museum and of the Government of India, 1931), 84, 95, 268–271. For studies of the banner, see Benjamin Rowland, “Indian Images in Chinese Sculpture,” *Artibus Asiae* 10.1 (1947): 5–20; Soper, “Famous Images”; Whitfield, “Ruixiang at Dunhuang”; Hida Romi 肥田路美, “Tonkō zōkyōdō shōrai ‘Kenpon saiki butsubo-satsu zuzōshū’ no shohoteki kōsatsu. New Delhi kokuritsu hakubutsukan shōzō danpen no ikutsukano zuzō wo chūshin ni 敦煌藏經洞将来‘絹本西域仏菩薩図像集’の初歩的考察—ニューデリー国立博物館所蔵断片のいくつかの図像を中心に. On the Silk Scroll of the Famous Buddhist Images from Dunhuang’s Grotto 17. Focusing on the Fragments of National Museum, New Delhi,” *Waseda daigaku daigakuin bungaku kenkyūka kiyō* 早稲田大学大学院文学研究科紀要 *Bulletin of the Graduate Division of Literature of Waseda University* 60.3 (2015): 31–51. For a digital reconstruction of the painting, see International Dunhuang Project Database, “British Museum: 1919,0101,0.51. Famous Images of the Buddha [digital reconstruction 2009]”, [idp.bl.uk/database/large.a4d?recnum=84541&imageRecnum=65526](http://idp.bl.uk/database/large.a4d?recnum=84541&imageRecnum=65526) (accessed February 14, 2020).
- 11 Mss. P. 3352 (P. 3353 in Soymié, “Quelques représentations de statues miraculeuses,” and Whitfield, “Ruixiang at Dunhuang,” 149), S. 5659, S. 2113 (composed after 896), and P. 3033. The contents of the manuscripts are, in fact, derived from the captions in the caves. For a study of these manuscripts and of the captions, see Zhang and Rong, “Dunhuang ruixiangji”. Soymié (“Quelques représentations de statues miraculeuses,”) studied the text of ms. P. 3353 (3352) and compared it to the captions from Mogao Cave 231.
- 12 In addition to the references listed in the previous footnotes, see Ono Katsutoshi 小野勝年, “Tonkō no Shaka zuizōzu 敦煌の釈迦瑞像図 [Auspicious Statue of Śākyamuni at Dunhuang],” *Ryūkoku shidan* 龍谷史壇 *The Journal of History of Ryūkoku University* 63 (1970): 28–61; Sun Xiushen 孙修身, “Mogaoku de fojiao shiji gushi hua 莫高窟的佛教史迹故事画 [Depictions of Buddhist Ancient Sites and Stories at Mogao],” in *Dunhuang Mogaoku*, vol. 4, 204–213; Hida Romi 肥田路美, “Tōdai ni okeru Buddagaya kongōza shin’yō zō no ryūko ni tsuite 唐代における仏陀伽耶金剛座真容像の流行について [On the Spread of the True Countenance Image on the Diamond Throne at Bodhi Gaya During the Tang Period],” *Ronsō bukkyō bijutsushi* 論叢仏教美術史 [Collection of Papers on Buddhist Art History] 4 (1986): 156–186; Hida Romi 肥田路美, “Ryōshū Banka ken zuizō no setsuwa to zōkei 涼州番禾県瑞像の説話と造形 [The Narrative and the



FIGURE 4.2 Silk banner with depictions of Auspicious Statues. Dunhuang, 9th–10th c. Ch.xxii.0023, British Museum and National Museum New Delhi  
DIGITAL COMPOSITION PROVIDED BY THE INTERNATIONAL DUNHUANG PROJECT (IDP). IDP.BL.UK/DATABASE/LARGE.A4D?RECNUM=84541&IMAGERECNUM=65526 © IDP

Dunhuang discovered by Stein, Alexander Soper noticed that a number of Auspicious Statues had a strong connection with Khotan, and pointed to the narrative backgrounds found in Tibetan texts and Chinese pilgrims' accounts.<sup>13</sup> Khotan's importance as the place where many of these statues were located was highlighted again in the 1980s by Michel Soymié and by the Chinese scholars Zhang Guangda (張廣達), Rong Xinjiang (榮新江), and Sun Xiushen (孫修身).<sup>14</sup> Recently, the theme of Khotanese Auspicious Statues in Dunhuang has been revived, mainly through publications by Zhang Xiaogang (張小剛), Chen Suyu (陳粟裕), Hida Romi (肥田路美), and Rong Xingjiang in collaboration with Zhu Lishuang (朱麗雙).<sup>15</sup>

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Making of the Auspicious Statue of the Fanhe District of Liangzhou,” *Bukkyō geijutsu* 佛教藝術 *Ars Buddhica* 11 (1994): 33–54.

- 13 Soper, “Famous Images,” 353–353. Soper clarifies the link between the images represented in the silk banner—which, until then, were believed to be drawn copies of actual Indian images seen by the pilgrims in India and brought back to China to serve as models for Chinese artisans—and those appearing in the Dunhuang caves. He also notices that the captions of the images on the banner are similar, if not identical, to the Auspicious Statues' inscriptions in the caves at Dunhuang, for which he had documentation from the notes Paul Pelliot took.
- 14 Soymié, “Statues miraculeuses,” 102; Zhang and Rong, “Dunhuang ruixiangji”; Sun Xiushen 孫修身, “Dunhuang fojiao yishu he gudai Yutian 敦煌佛教藝術和古代于闐 [Buddhist Art at Dunhuang and Ancient Khotan],” *Xinjiang shehui kexue* 新疆社会科学 *Social Sciences in Xinjiang* 1 (1986): 52–59.
- 15 An overview with some new insights is given in Rong and Zhu, *Yutian yu Dunhuang*, 243–270. Zhang Xiaogang's study revolves around iconographic issues in Dunhuang's representations (Zhang Xiaogang 張小剛, *Dunhuang fojiao gantonghua yanjiu* 敦煌佛教感通畫研究 [Research on Buddhist Miracle Paintings in Dunhuang] (Shenzhen: Gansu jiaoyu chubanshe, 2015)). Chen Suyu studies the Auspicious Statues that appear in the caves built during Tibetan rule over Dunhuang and also analyses Khotanese elements seen in Dunhuang caves paintings (Chen Suyu 陳粟裕, *Cong Yutian dao Dunhuang: Yi Tang Song shiqi tuxiang de dongchuan wei zhongxin* 从于闐到敦煌：以唐宋时期图像的东传为中心. *From Khotan to Dunhuang: Based on the Images Spread [sic] to the East During Tang and Song Dynasties* (Beijing: Fangzhi chubanshe, 2014), 89–254). Hida Romi traces Khotanese and Gandharan iconographic elements found in the images of the Stein silk banner (Hida Romi 肥田路美, “Tonkō shōrai kenpon zuizōzu ni kakareta Gandāra, Kōtan yurai no butsumōzu 敦煌将来絹本瑞像図に描かれたガンダーラ、コータン由来の仏像 [Gandharan and Khotanese Origins of the Images in the Silk Banner with Auspicious Statues from Dunhuang],” in *Ajia bukkyō bijutsu ronshū: Chūō Ajia I—Gandāra kara tōzai Torukisutan* アジア仏教美術論集：中央アジア I：ガンダーラ～東西トルキスタン [Collection of Papers on Buddhist Art: Central Asia (I). From Gandhāra to East Turkistan], ed. Miyaji Akira 宮治昭 (Tokyo: Chūō kōron bijutsu shuppan, 2017), 499–522). Christoph Anderl also brings up the theme of Khotanese Auspicious Statues, focusing on the narratives (Anderl, “Linking Khotan and Dunhuang”).

According to most recent surveys, the number of Auspicious Statues is around forty.<sup>16</sup> Their appearance as a group has been registered in at least twenty-eight caves at Mogao and one at Yulin (tab. 4.1). Among the Auspicious Statues listed in the texts and captions, at least fifteen are clearly connected with Khotan and its Buddhist mythology: this accounts for more than one third of the number of Auspicious Statues. Table 4.2 is a list of Auspicious Statues identified as located in Khotan, according to the names provided by the inscriptions in the caves and the *Records on the Auspicious Statues*.<sup>17</sup>

Paintings of Auspicious Statues are found in two places, either on the slopes of the ceiling of the cave's main niche—typically the one facing the entrance and above the altar—or on the slopes of the ceiling of the entrance corridor. Further, there is some evidence that Auspicious Statues were depicted on a whole wall, together with other Khotanese themes and Buddhist legends, as in Mogao Caves 76 and 220, and Yulin Cave 33.<sup>18</sup> According to Zhang Xiaogang, images positioned in the main niche's ceiling are found mostly in caves that were (re)decorated in the first half of the 9th century, while the instances of the corridor-ceiling position date from the second half of the 9th century

16 Zhang Guangda and Rong Xinjiang speak of around thirty statues (Zhang and Rong, "Dunhuang ruixiangji," 193). In Zhang Xiaogang's study, I counted some forty statues (Zhang Xiaogang, *Dunhuang gantonghua*, 7–71, 126–170, 212–246).

17 It must be stressed here that the final assessment of the identity of some of the images and the number of caves where these images appear is still in progress. Zhang and Rong counted 29 caves with depictions of Auspicious Statues (Zhang and Rong, *Yutianshi congkao*, 178–181, 216–223). They include: Mogao Cave 5; Mogao Cave 144, with a painting of Vaiśravaṇa and Śāriputra draining the lake; Mogao Cave 313, with a single image of the Gośrīṣa Auspicious Statue from the Tangut period; Mogao Cave 345; and Mogao Cave 453. The presence of Auspicious Statues in Mogao Caves 76 and 453 is documented by inscriptions. Zhang Xiaogang excludes Mogao Caves 5, 144, 313, 345, and 453, and adds the evidence of Cave 33 at Yulin (Zhang, *Dunhuang gantonghua*, 327, Table 2)—this brings his count to 24 caves with representations of Auspicious Statues at Mogao and one cave at Yulin. I tend to interpret the representation of the single Auspicious Statue in Mogao Cave 313 as a different case and count the depiction of Vaiśravaṇa and Śāriputra in Mogao Cave 144 among the depictions of the founding legend of Khotan. A factor to keep in mind is that, due to the state of conservation of the caves, especially the entrance corridors, paintings are often not clearly visible. The ongoing restoration work at Mogao and Yulin caves in the last decades revealed paintings that were previously unnoticed, and most likely, the number of caves known to display Khotanese auspicious statues will increase.

18 The paintings in Cave 220 at Mogao are only visible from old documentation recorded by Paul Pelliot. See Qiang Ning, "Diplomatic Icons: Social and Political Meanings of Khotanese Images in Dunhuang Cave 220," *Oriental Art* 44.4 (1998/1999): 2–15. For the evidence of Mogao Cave 76, see Zhang, *Dunhuang gantonghua*, 325–324. In Yulin Cave 33, the painting is still fully visible. See *Anxi Yulin ku* 安西榆林窟. *The Yulinku Grottoes*, comp. Dunhuang yanjiuyuan 敦煌研究院 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1997), fig. 75.



TABLE 4.1 Presence of Khotanese themes at Mogao and Yulin Caves (comp. E. Forte)

Cave n.	Auspicious Statues	Mount Gošīrṣa	Founding Legend	Eight Protectors	Period
MG 5	○ Ca	–	–	–	3/4
MG 9	○ Ca	○ Cb	○ Cb	○ Ca	3
MG 25	○ Ca	○ Cb	?	○ Ca	4
MG 39	○ Ca	○ Cb	○ Cb	○ Ca	4a
MG 45	○ Ca	○ Cb	○ Cb	○ Ca	4a
MG 53	○ A	–	○ A	–	2, 4a
MG 72	○ B	–	–	–	3/4a
MG 76	○ B	○ B	–	–	4
MG 85	○ Ca	?	?	–	3
MG 98	○ Ca	○ Cb	?	○ Ca	4a
MG 100	○ Ca	–	–	○ Ca	4a
MG 108	○ Ca	○ Cb	–	○ Ca	4a
MG 126	○ Ca	○ Cb	–	○ Ca	4a
MG 144	–	–	○	–	2
MG 146	○ Ca	○ Cb	○ Cb	○ Ca	4a
MG 220	○ B	○ B	○ B	?	4
MG 231	○ A	–	○ A	–	2
MG 236	○ A	–	○ A	–	2
MG 237	○ A	–	○ A	–	2
MG 313	○ Cb	–	–	–	5
MG 334	○ Ca	○ Cb	○ Cb	○ Ca	4a
MG 340	○ Ca	○ Cb	○ Cb	○ Ca	3
MG 342	○ Ca	○ Cb	○ Cb	○ Ca	4b
MG 345	○ Cb	○ Cb	○ Cb	–	1, 2
MG 397	○ Ca	○ Cb	○ Cb	○ Ca	4a
MG 401	○ Ca	○ Cb	○ Cb	○ Ca	4a
MG 449	○ A	○	–	–	2, 4b
MG 453	○ A	–	–	–	?
MG 454	○ Ca	○ Cb	○ Cb	○ Ca	4
YL 32	–	○ B	○ B	?	4
YL 33	○ B	○ B	○ B	?	4

Notes: **Place:** MG = Mogao Caves; YL = Yulin Caves.

**Presence:** ○ = present; – = absent; ? = unknown/no data.

**Position:** A = main room, slopes of the main niche ceiling; B = main room, on one of the four walls; C = entrance corridor; Ca = slopes of the ceiling; Cb = corridor ceiling.

**Chronology:** 1 = 8th c.; 2 = Tibetan rule on Dunhuang, ca. 786–ca. 848; 3 = Zhang 張 family rule Guiyijun, ca. 848–910/914; 4 = Cao 曹 family rule Guiyijun, 914–1036; 4a = first part 914–976; 4b = second part: 976–1036; 5 = Tangut rule on Dunhuang, 1036–ca. 1225.



FIGURE 4.3 Auspicious Statues and the founding legend of Khotan. Western niche ceiling (detail) of Mogao Cave 237, Dunhuang, ca. late 8th–mid 9th c. *MOGAOKU*, VOL. 4, 108 (DETAIL) © DUNHUANG ACADEMY

through the end of the 10th century. The third type of location, on the wall, does not appear before the second half of the 10th century.<sup>19</sup>

When they appear on the ceiling of the cave's main niche, Khotanese Auspicious Statues are grouped with other Auspicious Statues located in India or China (fig. 4.3). Khotanese Auspicious Statues painted on the corridor ceilings are depicted with the array of Eight Protectors of Khotan (see below), and a similar scheme is followed in the caves where they are represented on one wall. It seems safe to conclude that starting from the second half of the 9th century and throughout the 10th century, Khotanese Auspicious Statues gained a major protective function.

A topos of Khotanese Auspicious Statues is that they moved from their place of origin to Khotan through the air (Chin. *tengkong* 騰空, literally: rising high into the air). The statues' origins were usually in well-known sacred places in India that were the stages for key episodes in the Buddha's life: Śrāvastī, Gṛdhrakūṭa (Vulture Peak), Kauśāmbī, and Rājagṛha. Other statues came from Kashmir, from oases of the Tarim Basin, and from China. For their new

<sup>19</sup> Zhang, *Dunhuang gantonghua*, 304–329.

TABLE 4.2 Auspicious Statues residing in Khotan (comp. E. Forte)

Khotanese Auspicious Statues	Short name in Chin.	MS P. 3033	MS P. 3352 (3353)	MS S. 5659	MS S. 2113	Captions MG 231
a The statue of the Buddha that flew from the Kingdom of Kausāmbī to reside in the Kingdom of Khotan [in Pimo (PHEMA)]	媯摩城瑞像	此像從媯賞彌國飛往于闐東媯摩城，今見在，殊靈瑞 (ll. 8-9)	媯賞彌國佛來住于闐國 (l. 9)	媯賞彌國佛來住于闐國 (l. 9)	此像從媯賞彌國飛往于闐東媯摩城，今見在，殊靈瑞。下，其像承雲 (r. ll. 11-12)	于闐媯摩城中瑞像
b The true appearance of the Buddha Śākyamuni that came from Rājagṛha through the air to reside at the Haiyan Monastery in Khotan	海眼寺釋迦牟尼佛真容	-	釋迦牟尼佛真容從王舍城騰空而來在于闐國海眼寺住 (ll. 5-6)	釋迦牟尼佛真容白檀身從〔摩揭陀〕國王舍城騰空而來在于闐國海眼寺住。其像手把袈裟。 (r. ll. 16-17)	于闐海眼寺釋迦牟尼真容像	于闐海眼寺釋迦牟尼真容從王舍城騰空住海眼寺
c The statue of the Buddha Śākyamuni in white sandalwood that came from China through the air to reside in Kancheng (Kaṃḍva) in Khotan	坎城釋迦牟尼佛真容瑞像	-	-	-	釋迦牟尼佛真容白檀香為身，從漢國騰空而來在于闐坎城住。下，其像手把袈裟 (r. ll. 18-19)	于闐坎城瑞像
d The Buddha Krakucchanda that came from Śrāvastī to reside in Gucheng (Giūma)	固城結迦宋(拘留宋)佛	-	-	-	結迦宋佛亦從舍衛國來在固城住。其像手捻袈裟 (r. l. 21)	-
e The Buddha Vipaśyin that came from Śrāvastī through the air to reside in the Kingdom of Khotan [in Gucheng (Giūma)]	毗婆尸(微波施)瑞像	-	毗婆尸佛從舍衛國騰空而來在于闐國住 (l. 5)	毗婆尸佛〔從〕舍衛國騰空而來在于闐國住，有人欽仰，不可思議 (ll. 1-2)	微波施佛從舍衛國騰空而來在于闐國住，城人欽敬，不可思議。其下像側 (r. ll. 32-34)	微波施佛從舍衛國騰空于(固)城住

TABLE 4.2 Auspicious Statues residing in Khotan (comp. E. Forte)

Khotanese Auspicious Statues	Short name in Chin.	MS P. 3033	MS P. 3352 (3353)	MS S. 5659	MS S. 2113	Captions MG 231
f The Buddha Kāśyapa that came from Śrāvastī through the air to reside in the Kingdom of Khotan [in Gucheng (Gūma)]	迦葉佛瑞像	-	迦葉佛從舍衛勝空而來在于闐國住 (ll. 7-8)	迦葉佛從舍衛國騰空而來在于闐國住，國人虔敬，無不遂願 (ll. 10-11)	迦葉佛亦從舍衛國騰空而來住于闐國，人皆虔敬，不可思議。其像亦把袈裟 (r. ll. 36-37)	迦葉佛從舍衛 [勝空]於固城住瑞像
g The Buddha Śākyamuni that came from Śrāvastī through the air to reside in Gucheng (Gūma)	固城釋迦牟尼佛瑞像	-	-	-	釋迦牟尼佛從舍衛國騰空於固城住 (r. l. 20)	-
j The Buddha Kanakamuni that came from Śrāvastī through the air to reside in Gucheng (Gūma)	固城伽你迦牟尼佛瑞像	-	-	-	釋迦牟尼亦從舍衛國騰空而來在于闐固城住。手把袈裟 (r. ll. 31-32)	-
k The Auspicious Statue of the Buddha washed in the Jade River	于闐玉河浴佛瑞像	-	-	-	伽你迦牟尼佛從舍衛國騰空而來在固城住。其像手捻袈裟 (r. ll. 38-39)	-
l The Auspicious Statue of the Stone Buddha [of Khotan]	石佛瑞像	-	石佛瑞像記 (l. 7)	石佛瑞像記 (l. 11)	于闐玉河浴佛瑞像，身丈餘，杖錫持鉢，盡形而立。其像赤體立 (r. ll. 22-23)	于闐國石瑞像

TABLE 4.2 Auspicious Statues residing in Khotan (comp. E. Forte)

	Khotanese Auspicious Statues	Short name in Chin.	MS P. 3033	MS P. 3352 (3353)	MS S. 5659	MS S. 2113	Captions MG 231
m	The Buddha Śākyamuni who came from the Mount Gṛdhrakūṭa (Vulture Peak) to the Mount Gośīrṣa to expound the Dharma	釋迦牟尼從靈鷲山至牛頭山說法	–	–	–	釋迦牟尼佛從靈鷲山向牛頭山說法來 (r. ll. 1–2)	此牛頭山像從者山履空而來
n	The Buddha Śākyamuni residing at the Mount Gośīrṣa (? same as ‘Śākyamuni who came from the Mount Gṛdhrakūṭa (Vulture Peak) to the Mount Gośīrṣa’?)	牛頭山釋迦牟尼佛瑞像	–	–	本師釋迦牟尼佛令住牛頭山 (ll. 13–14)	–	–
o	The bodhisattva Akāśagarbha residing at the Sajayexian (Sakāyagīra) monastery [on the West Jade River]	薩迦耶憊(薩迦那倦)寺虛空藏菩薩瑞像	–	–	虛空藏菩薩(於西玉河薩迦耶憊寺住) (ll. 2–3)	虛空藏菩薩如來於薩迦耶憊寺住 (r. l. 55)	虛空藏菩薩於西玉河薩迦那倦寺住瑞像
p	The Buddha statue of Bojayi (Bhagya) city	于闐勃伽夷城瑞像	–	–	–	虛空藏菩薩於西玉河薩迦耶憊寺住 (r. ll. 56–57)	–
q	The Auspicious Statue of the Old City	古城(故城)瑞像	–	–	–	[...]其像便住于闐勃伽夷城 (v. ll. 1–3)	于闐古城瑞像

residences, they chose those places in Khotan that were considered the most holy and were connected with narratives of the establishment and diffusion of Buddhism in Khotan. Most of these places were located around the capital of the kingdom.<sup>20</sup> A whole group of Auspicious Statues of the buddhas of the past (Vipaśyin, Krakucchaṃḍa, Kanakamuni, Kāśyapa) gathered, for example, together with the statue of Śākyamuni, at Mount Gośīrṣa (see below). Others settled in spots around the Jade Rivers (Chin. Yuhe 玉河), the Yurungkash and the Karakash,<sup>21</sup> thereby framing the ancient capital's territory (map 4.1).

Another cluster of holy places where the Auspicious Statues took up residence is the area north of Domoko (Chin. Damagou 大瑪溝) and Chira (Chin. Cele 策勒), in the eastern part of the oasis (map 4.1). These include the famous statue of the Buddha at Pimo (娑摩)<sup>22</sup> described by both Song Yun (fl. 6th c., 宋雲)<sup>23</sup> and Xuanzang. According to Xuanzang's narrative, it was a colossal buddha in sandalwood that was none other than the famous statue commissioned by King Udāyana of Kauśāmbī—the very first image of the Buddha Śākyamuni, modelled after life.<sup>24</sup> The statue flew from Kauśāmbī to Khotan

20 This has been identified as the site of Yotkan, about 20 km west of the modern Khotan City. See M. Aurel Stein, *Ancient Khotan. Detailed Report of Archaeological Explorations in Chinese Turkestan* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), 190.

21 The Karakash River was also known in ancient sources as the Western Jade River (Chin. Xi Yuhe 西玉河), while the Yurungkash was called the Eastern Jade River (Chin. Dong Yuhe 東玉河) (Rong and Zhu, *Yutian yu Dunhuang*, 251–252). On the location of the Jade Rivers, see also Xinjiang Rong, "Reality or Tale? Marco Polo's Description of Khotan," *Journal of Asian History* 49.1–2 (2015): 165, n. 122.

22 Pimo (or Hanmo 捍麼) is the name of both a region and an ancient city located near the Keriya River, about 170 km east of the modern city of Khotan (Rong and Zhu, *Yutian yu Dunhuang*, 256). The name appears in Khotanese documents as Phema or Bhīma, and as Phye ma in Tibetan. Marco Polo passed through the city, naming it Pein. Its original location should correspond to the site of Uzun-tati (Stein, *Ancient Khotan*, 454–457, 462–463). Kancheng (坎城, Kh. Kaṃḍva, Tib. Kham sheng or Kam sheng), a prefecture (Chin. zhen 鎮) during the Tang rule over Khotan and an administrative division under the Tibetan dominion, was also part of the region of Pimo (Zhu Lishuang 朱丽双, "Tangdai Yutian de jimi zhou yu dili quhua yangjiu 唐代于阗的羈縻州与地理区划研究. A Preliminary Survey of Administrative Divisions of Tang-ruled Khotan," *Zhongguoshi yanjiu 中国史研究 Journal of Chinese Historical Studies* 2 (2012): 78–80). On Phema and Kancheng see also Rong, "Reality or Tale?," 168–172.

23 Song Yun travelled with the monk Huisheng (fl. 6th c., 慧生 or also 惠生) and arrived in Khotan in 519 (Edouard Chavannes, "Voyage de Song Yun dans l'Udyāna et le Gandhāra," *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême Orient* 3.3 (1903): 379–441). Xuanzang stopped by Khotan in 644, on his way back to China from India.

24 Chavannes, "Voyage de Song Yun," 392–393; *Da Tang Xiyuji 大唐西域記* [Great Tang Records of the Western regions], T. 51.2087, 945b (English translation: Rongxi Li, *The Great Tang Dynasty Record of the Western Regions* (Berkeley, California: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 1996), 386–387); *Da Tang Da Ciensi sanzang fashi*

after the *nirvāṇa* of the Buddha and never moved again. Pimo became an important center of pilgrimage, especially for Chinese Buddhists. Song Yun observes the presence of many canopies and banners donated by pilgrims and bearing inscriptions in Chinese, with dates and era names going back to the Northern Wei Dynasty (386–535, 北魏) and the Later Qin Dynasty (384–417, 後秦).<sup>25</sup> It is no surprise that the region of Pimo became known as one of the holiest places in Khotan, especially considering the development of the Udāyana image cult in East Asia.

## 2.2 Mt. Gośīrṣa

Mt. Gośīrṣa was, perhaps, one of the most sacred places in ancient Khotan. It recurs in many of the narratives preserved in ancient sources, in Tibetan and Chinese. The name Gośīrṣa in Sanskrit means ox head. It is rendered into Chinese as *niutou* (牛頭) and into Tibetan as *glang mgo*. Another name is Gośīrṅga, (ox horn, Chin. *niujiao* 牛角, Tib. *glang ru*).<sup>26</sup> The earliest mention of the name Mount Ox-head in Chinese Buddhist literature dates back to the beginning of the 5th century, but it is only from the mid-6th century on that the place became clearly associated with Khotan.<sup>27</sup>

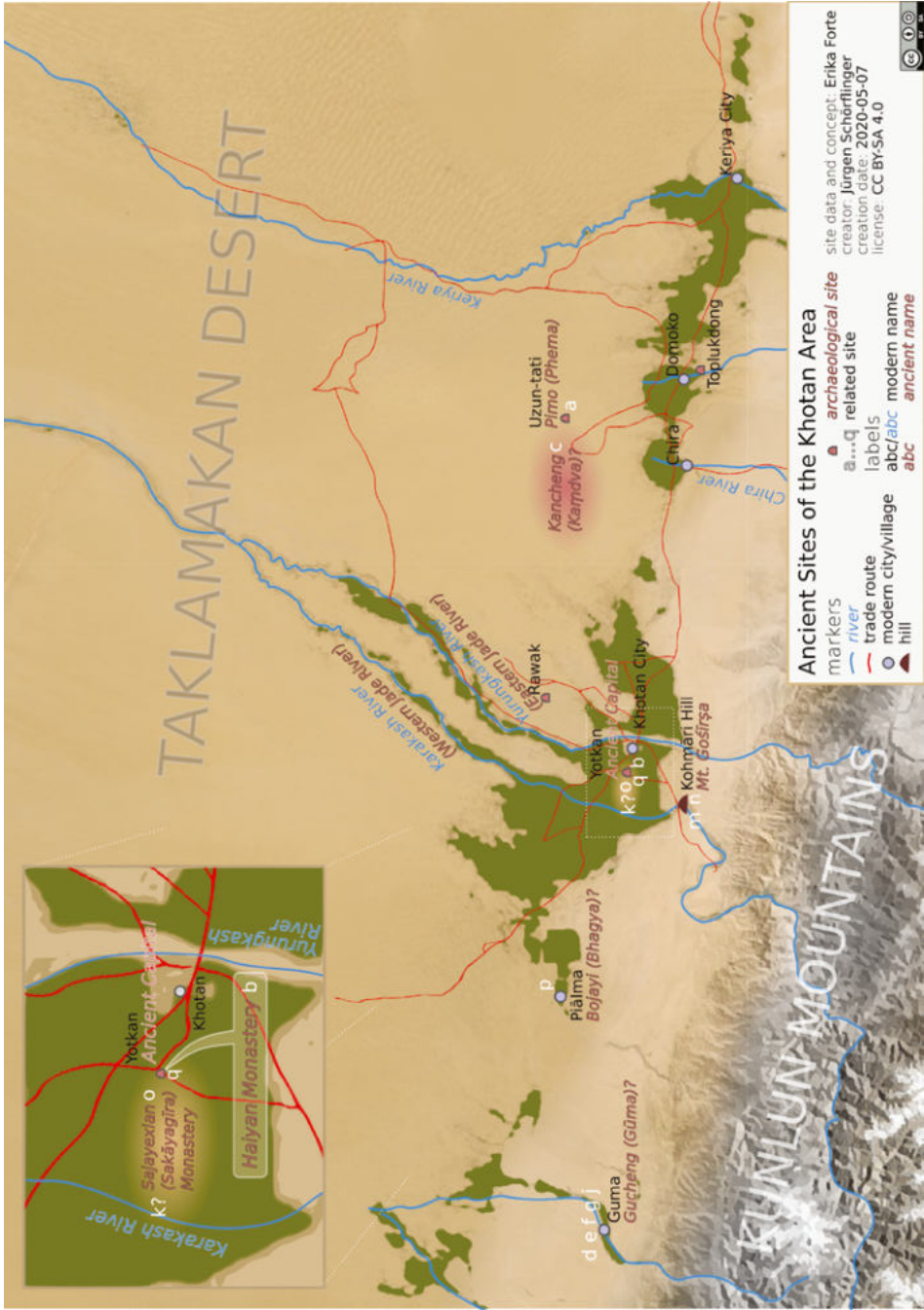
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*zhuan* 大唐大慈恩寺三藏法師傳 [Biography of the Tripiṭaka Master of the Great Cī'en Monastery of the Great Tang], T. 50.2053, 252a (English translation: Rongxi Li, *A Biography of the Tripiṭaka Master of the Great Cī'en Monastery of the Great Tang Dynasty* (Berkeley, California: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 1995) 169–170). On the Udāyana statue narratives, see Soper, "Literary Evidence," 259–265.

25 Chavannes, "Voyage de Song Yun," 393.

26 On the different names of this locality, see Frederick W. Thomas, *Tibetan Literary Texts and Documents Concerning Chinese Turkestan. Part I: Literary Texts* (London: The Royal Asiatic Society, 1935), vol. 1, 5–6. Regarding the identity between Gośīrṅga and Gośīrṣa, see M. Sylvain Lévi, "Notes chinoises sur l'Inde: IV. Le pays de Kharoṣṭra et l'écriture kharoṣṭrī," *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient* 4.3 (juillet-septembre 1904): 555–556. The name Ox-head (Chin. *Niutou* 牛頭) recurs more frequently in Chinese sources from the 9th century on, whereas the name Ox-horn (Chin. *Niujiao* 牛角) appears in earlier sources (Rong and Zhu, *Yutian yu Dunhuang*, 246). Other names in Tibetan include *Gau to shan* or 'Ge'u ton shan. See Zhu Lishuang 朱麗雙, "Youguan Yutian de zangwen wenxian: fanyi yu yanjiu 有關於闐的藏文文獻：翻譯與研究. Tibetan Texts Concerning Khotan: Translations and Annotations," (Post-Doctoral diss., Peking University, 2011), 136–137.

27 The earliest occurrence of the name is found in the Chinese *Avatamsakasūtra* (Chin. *Huayanjing* 華嚴經) (T. 278.9, 590a) translated by Buddhahadra (358–429, Chin. Fotuobatuoluo 佛陀跋陀羅). The clear statement that the mountain is located in Khotan is in the *Sūryagarbha* section (Chin. *Rizangfen* 日藏分) of the *Mahāsaṃnipatasūtra* (Chin. *Dajijing* 大集經) (T. 397.13, 294b), translated by Narendrayāśa ca. 566. See M. Sylvain Lévi, "Notes chinoises sur l'Inde V. Quelques documents sur le bouddhisme indien dans l'Asie



MAP 4.1 Places of residence of Auspicious Statues in ancient Khotan. Letters a–q refer to Table 4.2



A Tibetan text preserved in the Kangyur (Tib. *bka' gyur*), the *Ri glang ru lung bstan pa* [Prophecy of Gośīrṅga, also known as *Gośīrṅgavyākaraṇa*] (composed probably before the mid-9th century<sup>28</sup>), is entirely dedicated to the narration of events that took place on Mt. Gośīrṣa.<sup>29</sup> This is the site where the Buddha Śākyamuni came to dwell for a while and predicted that the Buddhist Kingdom of Khotan would come into existence one hundred years after his *nirvāṇa*. At this location, the Buddha expounded the *dharma* to an assembly of deities and then sat in meditation before going back to India. The text states that a monastery, the Gomasālagandha, and an image of the Buddha stand in the very spot of these events. The mountain was populated by other important monasteries, and buddhas of the past and bodhisattvas also dwelled here, in addition to a number of Auspicious Statues (see tab. 4.2).<sup>30</sup> In particular, Mt. Gośīrṣa was also known as the abode of the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, which made it a kind of Khotanese counterpart of Mt. Wutai (Chin. Wutai shan 五臺山).<sup>31</sup>

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centrale (première partie),” *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient* 5:3–4 (juillet-décembre 1905): 257–258.

- 28 Zhu Lishuang 朱丽双, “*Yutianguo shouji de chengli niandai yanjiu* “于阗国授记”的成立年代研究 [A Study on the Composition Date of the *Li yul lung bstan pa*],” *Xiyu wenshi* 西域文史 *Literature and History of the Western Regions* 9 (2014): 112.
- 29 An English translation is in Thomas, *Tibetan Literary Texts*, vol. 1, 3–38. According to a recent assessment, the text was probably composed around the first half of the 9th century and is a translation from an original in Khotanese (Rong Xinjiang and Zhu Lishuang, “The Eight Great Protectors of Khotan Reconsidered: From Khotan to Dunhuang,” *BuddhistRoad Paper* 6.1. *Special Issue: Ancient Central Asian Networks. Rethinking the Interplay of Religions, Art and Politics across the Tarim Basin (5th–10th C.)*, ed. Erika Forte (2019): 51.
- 30 Thomas, *Tibetan Literary Texts*, vol. 1, 11–17. The story is also found in other Tibetan texts. See *Li yul lung bstan pa* [Prophecy of the Li Country] (English translation of the passage in Ronald Eric Emmerick, *Tibetan Texts Concerning Khotan* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 2–5); *Li yul chos kyi lo rgyus* [Religious Annals of the Li Country] (P. T. 960), translation of the passage in Thomas, *Tibetan Literary Texts*, 305.
- 31 On the connection between Mt. Wutai, the Mañjuśrī cult, and Khotan, see Rong Xinjiang 荣新江, “Cong Dunhuang de Wutaishan huihua he wenxian kan Wudai Song chu Zhongyuan yu Hexi Yutian jian de wenhua jiaowang 从敦煌的五台山绘画和文献看五代宋初中原与河西于阗间的文化交往 [Cultural Exchanges between China, Hexi, and Khotan During Five Dynasties and Early Song Dynasty Periods, as Seen in the Representations of Mount Wutai and in Documents from Dunhuang],” *Wenbo* 文博 [Culture and Museum] 4 (1987): 68–75; Imre Hamar, “Khotan and Mount Wutai: The Significance of Central Asian Actors in the Making of the Mountain Cult,” in *The Transnational Cult of Mount Wutai. Historical and Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Susan Andrews, Jinhua Chen, and Kuan Guang (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 350–364; Imre Hamar, “The Mañjuśrī Cult in Khotan,” *Studies in Chinese Religions* 5:3/4 (2019): 343–352. This connection seems to be reflected, at the iconographic level, in the so-called New Mañjuśrī Type (Chin. *xinyang Wenshu* 新样文殊) image that appears, for example, in Cave 220, where

The site of Mt. Gośīrṣa is associated with Kohmāri Hill, 26 km southwest of the modern-day Khotan City, on the eastern bank of the Karakash River, in the vicinity of the site of Yotkan, the ancient capital of the kingdom (map 4.1).<sup>32</sup> The name ox head or ox horn hints at the shape of the mountain; it has two summits separated by a valley, and thus it resembles the head of a cow. Xuanzang describes both the mountain and its sanctuaries, which are also mentioned in later Tibetan texts.<sup>33</sup> The hill retains its sacred aura even today, as it is the place of two Muslim sanctuaries, albeit with no archaeological traces left from the Buddhist temples visited by Xuanzang.<sup>34</sup>

Depictions of Mt. Gośīrṣa are present in Dunhuang as both the identifier of a number of Khotanese Auspicious Statues—those of the past buddhas who gathered there—and the main subject of large tableaux.

Mt. Gośīrṣa tableaux are found in at least twenty caves at Mogao and two at Yulin (tab. 4.1). With the exceptions of Caves 76 and 220 at Mogao and Cave 33 at Yulin—where the depictions of Mt. Gośīrṣa are displayed on one wall of the main chamber<sup>35</sup>—Mt. Gośīrṣa tableaux are located on the ceiling of the entrance corridor. The first appearance of this theme could date to the 8th century,<sup>36</sup> but the majority of the extant evidence falls into a period stretching from the first half of the 9th century (namely, in the period of Tibetan rule over Dunhuang) to the first quarter of the 11th century (until the end of the Guiyijun period).

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the king of Khotan is represented as the groom of Mañjuśrī's lion. See Rong Xinjiang 荣新江, "Xinyang Wenshu xiang de laili 新样文殊像的来历 [On the Origin of the 'New Mañjuśrī Type' Image]," in *Guiyijun shi yanjiu* 归义军史研究 [Studies on the History of the Guiyijun] (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 1996), 252–256; Chen Suyu 陈粟裕, "Xinyang Wenshu zhong de Yutian wang xingxiang yanjiu 新样文殊中的于阗王形象研究. Khotan King in the Figures of Mañjuśrī," in *Cong Yutian dao Dunhuang*, 215–233; Sha Wutian 沙武田 published different articles around the theme of the 'New Mañjuśrī Type', especially on the painters' sketches found in Dunhuang. For an overview, see Sha Wutian 沙武田, *Dunhuang huagao yanjiu* 敦煌画稿研究 [Studies on the Painter's Sketches from Dunhuang] (Beijing: Zhongyang bianyi chubanshe, 2006), 155–172.

32 Fernand Grenard and Jules-Léon Dutreuil de Rhins, *Mission scientifique dans la haute Asie, sous la direction de J.L. Dutreuil de Rhins, 1890–1895*, vol. 3 (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1898), 142–144; Stein, *Ancient Khotan*, 185–190.

33 *Da Tang Xiyuji* 大唐西域记. T. 2987.51, 943c (English translation in Li, *The Great Tang Dynasty Record of the Western Regions*, 378).

34 Stein, *Ancient Khotan*, 185–190.

35 In Yulin Cave 32, Mt. Gośīrṣa is embedded in the scene of *Samantabhadra's* assembly, on the east wall, while in Yulin Cave 33, Mt. Gośīrṣa occupies the center of the composition, covering the entire south wall. See *Anxi Yulinku*, Figs. 73, 75.

36 According to Zhang Xiaogang, the earliest extant depiction is from Mogao Cave 345, which he dates to the 8th century (Zhang, *Dunhuang gantonghua*, 199–200).

The arrangement and proportions of the Mt. Gośīrṣa tableaux follow a similar scheme (fig. 4.4). The mountain is the largest element at the center of the composition and is rendered literally, in the shape of a cow head. A staircase leads from the bottom of the mountain, through the mouth of the cow, and to the top of its head, where a large image of a buddha sits in *dhyānāsana* on a lotus and performs the gesture of *vitarkamudrā*. In some depictions, the buddha is inside a pavilion—could this be the Gomasālagandha Monastery?—as in Mogao Caves 25, 342, and 454, and in Yulin Cave 33. An additional standing buddha is depicted in the space immediately over the mountain. While the sitting buddha represents Śākyamuni, when he stayed for seven days on the mountain, the standing image likely represents the Auspicious Statue of Śākyamuni, when it arrived through the air from Vulture Peak.<sup>37</sup> Smaller figures of monks, *devarājas*, guardian deities, bodhisattvas, and other buddhas are depicted in the vicinity of the mountain; this is the audience to which the Buddha expounds the *dharma*, as described in textual accounts. The number of figures and the way they are displayed within the composition vary in the extant examples.<sup>38</sup>

The rest of the space around the mountain in the tableau is occupied by visual narratives related to sacred places in India, Central Asia, and China. Among them, the founding legend of Khotan (see next paragraph) is depicted in the upper left corner, on the margin of the composition (fig. 4.4). This arrangement seems to be constant across Mt. Gośīrṣa tableaux located on the entrance corridor ceiling.

### 2.3 *The Founding of Khotan*

The legend of the founding of Khotan is recorded in various Chinese and Tibetan sources. It is basically composed of two main narratives, with some variations. One part tells of the prophecy spoken by the Buddha Śākyamuni on Mt. Gośīrṣa. At that time, the territory of Khotan was covered by a lake. The Buddha predicts that the Kingdom of Khotan will arise on this very place. To ease the process, he calls his disciple Śāriputra and the god Vaiśravaṇa, and

37 This explanation is put forward by Zhang Xiaogang 张小刚, “Dunhuang suojian Yutian Niutou shang shengji ji ruixiang 敦煌所见于阗牛头山圣迹瑞像. The Sainly Appearance of Ox-Headed Mount in Khotan and the Auspicious Image of Buddha Reflected in Dunhuang Grottoes,” *Dunhuang yanjiu* 敦煌研究 [Dunhuang research] 110.4 (2008): 6–11, 115.

38 For a typological study of Mount Gośīrṣa depictions in Dunhuang, see Sun Xiushen 孙修身, *Fojiao dongchuan gushihua juan* 佛教东传故事画卷 [Buddhist Narrative Paintings on the Transmission of Buddhism to the East] (Shanghai: Renmin chubanshe, 2000), 83–100; Zhang, *Dunhuang qiantonghua*, 207–208.



FIGURE 4.4 Mount Goṣīrṣa tableau, with Auspicious Statues and Eight Protectors. Corridor ceiling of Mogao Cave 9, late 9th c.

*DUNHUANG GANTONGHUA*, 314, 5-3-10 © DUNHUANG ACADEMY

orders them to dry the lake. The second part of the legend narrates how the Dynasty of Khotan came into existence, with Vaiśravaṇa playing the role of granting an heir to the first king and establishing a continuous royal lineage.<sup>39</sup>

Depictions of the founding legend of Khotan in Dunhuang relate to the prophecy only: Vaiśravaṇa and Śāriputra are depicted in the act of draining the lake (figs. 4.3 and 4.4). On the lake, small buddhas sit on floating lotuses. A building in the shape of a castle or fortress stands in the back. The scene is identified by an inscription. The one from Mogao Cave 237 says, “Kingdom of Khotan: the moment when Śāriputra and the celestial king Vaiśravaṇa pierce the lake” (Chin. *Yutianguo Shelifu Bishamen tianwang juehai shi* 于闐國舍利弗毗沙門天王決海時). Similar text appears in other inscriptions and in the *Records on the Auspicious Statues*.<sup>40</sup>

Depictions of the founding of Khotan mainly appear in two forms: as individually framed pictures decorating the ceiling slopes of the large buddha niche in the main chamber of the caves, in a line with other individually framed depictions of Auspicious Statues (fig. 4.3) or embedded in large Mt. Gośīrṣa tableaux (fig. 4.4). The latter case is the most recurrent and seems to be the standard in caves that were built or decorated during the Guiyijun period. One exception to this scheme is found in Yulin Cave 32, where the scene with Vaiśravaṇa and Śāriputra is included in the tableau of Samantabhadra’s assembly, occupying the eastern wall of the main room.<sup>41</sup>

The combination of the two scenes—the Buddha on Mt. Gośīrṣa and the founding of Khotan—into one pictorial space is meaningful, as it rather faithfully reflects the narratives contained in the Tibetan texts *Li yul lung bstan pa* [Prophecy of the Li Country] and *Li yul chos kyi lo rgyus* [Religious Annals of the Li Country] (P. T. 960).

39 For a synopsis, see Stein, *Ancient Khotan*, 156–166. For a comparative study on the foundation legends of Khotan, see Gen’ichi Yamazaki, “The Legend of the Foundation of Khotan,” *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko* 48 (1990): 55–80; Max Deeg, *Miscellanea Nepalicae: Early Chinese Reports on Nepal; The Foundation Legend of Nepal in Its Trans-Himalayan Context* (Lumbini: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2016), 119–133.

40 See the texts transcribed in Zhang and Rong, *Yutian shi congkao*, 169–178.

41 *Anxi Yulinku*, fig. 73. Here, the scene is placed at the upper-right corner of the tableau. The tableau of Samantabhadra faces the one with Mañjuśrī, which is on the adjacent wall of the cave. On these paintings and their connection with Khotan, see Chen Suyu 陈粟裕, “Wutai shan yu Niutou shan: Yulin 32 ku ‘Wenshu, Puxian bing shicong tu’ yu pusa zhuti de daolun 五台山与牛头山: 榆林 32 窟‘文殊、普贤并侍从图’与菩萨住地的讨论 [Mt. Wutai and Mt. Ox-head: A Discussion of the ‘Painting of Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra with Attendants’ in Yulin Cave 32],” *Meishu yanjiu* 美术研究 *Art Research* 3 (2013): 24–41.

Then the Lord (*bhagavant*) Śākyamuni, having filled with his rays (*raśmi*) the Li country that had become a lake, from those rays there arose in the water three hundred and sixty-three lotuses. On the several lotuses appeared several lamps (*pradīpa*). Those rays, coming together, circling three times toward the right above the water, will sink into the midst of the water. Then the Lord (*bhagavant*) ordered Ārya Śāriputra and Vaiśravaṇa: ‘Do break up this lake (*saras*) that resembles the colour of ink at the mountain called Māṃsa-varṇa-parvata (flesh-coloured mountain).’ So he ordered. And the lake was broken up by the end of Ārya Śāriputra’s mendicant’s staff and by Vaiśravaṇa’s spear-point (*kunta-palaka*). And the Lord (*bhagavant*) for the sake of working the purpose (*artha*) of the beings (*sattva*) remained there a week on the Gośirṣa hill, at a place where there is now a small *stūpa*, inside a shrine to the left of where stands a great image (*pratimā*) [...].

Then the Lord (*bhagavant*) said to Ānanda: ‘The lake being broken up by the end of Śāriputra’s mendicant’s staff and by Vaiśravaṇa’s spear-point (*kunta-palaka*), on the lake’s subsequently drying up, after my *nirvāṇa*, this country called the Li country will exist. In the place where the rays circled three times, afterwards, in a circle, the fortress of Hu-then, the great city of Līa-ldan, will be built. In the place where the rays sank into the midst of the water, taking control over (*adhiṣṭhāna*) and guarding the country, an image of the Buddha of Rājagrāma, made with my controlling that bodily defilement should not sink into the sandal, will come through the air (*ākāśa*) from the country of India and remain. In the places where rose the lotuses and the lamps (*pradīpa*) on the water, afterwards three hundred and sixty-three *vihāras*, inhabited by monks and nuns practising the Mahāyāna, will be built by kings and other faithful donors (*dānapati*).<sup>42</sup>

#### 2.4 *The Eight Protectors*

In 1942, Harold Bailey published a selection of texts in Khotanese to “illustrate the religion of Khotan”, where he noticed the recurrence of “a definite group of eight” deities, “*devas*, *nāga*, and *devīs*”, and noted that “the group is found in Khotan, Tibetan, and Chinese” texts.<sup>43</sup> The group is also referred to in Khotanese by the collective name of Eight Protectors (Kh. *haṣṭā parvālā*). These are deities that have been specifically nominated by the Buddha Śākyamuni to protect Khotan and ensure Khotanese sovereignty (tab. 4.3).

42 Emmerick, *Tibetan Texts*, 11, 13. “Li country” is Khotan.

43 Harold W. Bailey, “Hvatanica IV,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 4 (1942): 912.

TABLE 4.3 The Eight Protectors of Khotan (comp. E. Forte, adapted from "Eight Protectors," tab. 1)

Sanskrit	Khotanese	Chinese
Aparājita	Aparājai[ja]tta (P. 2893) Aparājai jasta	Nansheng tianzi 難勝天子 ( <i>Candragarbhasūtra</i> ) Apoluozhiduo shen 阿婆羅質多神 (S. 2113, P. 3352, S. 5659, MG 126, MG 454) Nansheng tianshen 難勝天神
Sanjaya	Samñī (P. 2893)	Sanzhi yecha dajiang 散脂夜叉大將 ( <i>Candragarbhasūtra</i> )
Sañjaya, Saṃjñāya	Samññāyaś, Saṃjayaś, Saṃjñāyasva	Shayemoli Shen 莎耶摩利神 (S. 2113)
Gaganasvara	Gaganasvarā (P. 2893)	Guyangjue/Guyianjiao da yecha 殺羊脚 大夜叉 ( <i>Candragarbhasūtra</i> ) Jiajianashali shen 迦迦那莎利神 (S. 2113)
Svarṇamāla, Svarṇamāla	Svarṇamāla (P. 2893)	Jinhuaman yecha 金華鬘夜叉 ( <i>Candragarbhasūtra</i> ) Shanamoli shen 莎那末利神 (S. 2113, MG 126)
Grahavadatta	Grrahavadatti (P. 2893)	Reshe longwang 熱舍龍王 ( <i>Candragarbhasūtra</i> )
Gṛhāvātaptā	Graha' vidatta, Grrahavadatta, Grahavada nātām re, Grrahadatta	Mohejialuo shen 摩訶迦羅神 (S. 2113, MG 108)
Aṃkuśa, Aṅkuśavati	Aṃgūśa' (P. 2893) Aṃkuśa, Agūśa'	Anajinshou tiannü 阿那緊首天女 ( <i>Candragarbhasūtra</i> ) Ayushe tiannü 阿隅闍天女 (S. 2113, MG 146)
Sthānava[tī]	Sthānāvā (P. 2893) Sthāṇava, Sthānāva	Tanansheli tiannü 他難闍梨天女 ( <i>Candragarbhasūtra</i> ) Xitana tiannü 悉他那天女 (S. 2113, MG 98, MG 126, MG 146) Gongtuona tiannü 恭陀那天女 (S. 5659)
Vaiśravaṇa	Vrīśamaṃ (P. 2893) Vrīśamā, Vrīśama, Vvraīśama	Pishamen wangshen 毘沙門王神 ( <i>Candragarbhasūtra</i> ) Pishamen tianwang shen 毗沙門天 王神 (S. 2113, MG 45, MG 146) Pishamen tianwang 毗沙門天王 (MG 108)

In their study of the *Records on the Auspicious Statues*, Zhang Guangda and Rong Xinjiang highlight the occurrence of the names of the Eight Protectors of Khotan. In particular, in document S. 2113, they are listed one after another, and each name is followed by the formula “[...] protects the Kingdom of Khotan” (Chin. *hu Yutian guo* 護于闐國).<sup>44</sup> In 2010, following a hint in the study by Sun Xiushen,<sup>45</sup> Rong Xinjiang and Zhu Lishuang collected further material on the Eight Protectors of Khotan and drew attention to the fact that in Dunhuang the deities are depicted as a group in several caves. Their research stimulated Chinese academic interest in the theme of the Eight Protectors of Khotan in Dunhuang. Now, we have a significantly richer set of data on this theme in Dunhuang and its textual background.<sup>46</sup>

The cult of the Eight Protectors probably emerged at the end of the 6th century. The oldest extant textual evidence containing a list of the Eight Protectors of Khotan is the Chinese *Candragarbhasūtra* (Chin. *Yuezangjing* 月藏經) (T. 397.13, 374–380), translated by Narendrayaśas (517–589, Chin. Naliantiyeshe 那連提耶舍) in the second half of the 6th century. Later, their names appear as a group in the Tibetan texts *Prophecy of Gośrīga*, *Prophecy of the Li Country*, and *Religious Annals of the Li Country* (ca. 9th century); in the Chinese manuscript S. 2113 (completed after 896); and in the Khotanese manuscript P. 2893<sup>47</sup> (10th century). Besides being part of a systematic list, the Eight Protectors’ names are found in other texts in Khotanese, especially the *Suvarṇaprabhāsottamasūtra* [*Sūtra* of Golden Light], a scripture that was

44 S. 2113 recto, lines 48–52. See Zhang and Rong, “Dunhuang ruixiangji,” 175, 207–216, in particular 209, table 3.

45 Sun, *Fojiao dongchuan gushihua juan*.

46 Rong Xinjiang 荣新江 and Zhu Lishuang 朱丽双, “Tuwen huzheng: Yutian ba da shouhushen xin tan 图文互证：于闐八大守护神新探 [Mutual Evidence of Image and Text: New Investigation on the Eight Guardians of Khotan],” in *Dunhuang wenxian, kaogu, yishu zonghe yanjiu. Jinian Xiang Da xiansheng danchen 110 zhounian guoji xueshu yantaohui lunwenji* 敦煌文献, 考古, 艺术综合研究. 纪念向达先生诞辰 110 周年国际学术研讨会论文集 [Comprehensive Studies on Texts, Archeology, and Art of Dunhuang: Essays Presented at the International Conference in Memory of Prof. Xiang Da on the 110th Anniversary of His Birthday], ed. Fan Jinshi 樊锦诗, Rong Xinjiang 荣新江, and Lin Shetian 林世田 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2011), 190–218. For a recent article published in English that includes an overview of previous studies on the Eight Protectors of Khotan, see Rong and Zhu, “The Eight Great Protectors.”

47 Mauro Maggi, “A Khotanese Medical Text on Poultices: Manuscripts P 2893 and 101 Khot S9,” in *Traditional South Asian Medicine*, ed. Rahul Peter Das (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 2008), 77–85.



particularly popular in Khotan, which puts specific emphasis on the divine protection of the state.<sup>48</sup>

At present, we know that at least fifteen caves at Mogao and one at Yulin contain depictions of the Eight Protectors that belong to the period between the end of the 9th century and the last quarter of the 10th century (tab. 4.1).<sup>49</sup> Representations of the Eight Protectors of Khotan at the Mogao Caves follow a rather standardized scheme in terms of placement (position within the caves), style, and iconography. The Eight Protectors are consistently depicted as a group and are typically displayed paratactically on the slopes of the ceiling in the entrance corridor, four on each side, above the donors, who are usually depicted on the walls of the corridor. The ensemble is often completed with images of Auspicious Statues, including the Khotanese ones (fig. 4.4).

Each deity is depicted within a frame, often identified by captions in Chinese. The style and iconography of the deities are rather consistent in terms of attributes and stance. In some cases, it is possible that stencils or sketch models (Chin. *huagao* 畫稿) were used.<sup>50</sup> The sequence in which they are depicted appears to reflect the order in which they are listed in the different texts.<sup>51</sup> However, this is not always the case; at times, major or minor popularity of individual deities within the group may have led to slight deviations from the order given by the texts. Toward the end of the period when this imagery was produced, the position and iconography of the deities became increasingly less accurate, which might reflect a decline in the cult of the Eight Protectors.<sup>52</sup> Thus, at this stage, their display in the caves' entrances remained a purely conventional decorative element.

48 Prods Oktor Skjærvø, *This Most Excellent Shine of Gold, King of Kings of Sutras: The Khotanese Suvarṇabhāṣottamasūtra* (Cambridge: Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilization, Harvard University, 2004); Lokesh Chandra, "Suvarṇa-Bhasottama and the Security of Khotan," in *Buddhism: Art and Values; A Collection of Research Papers and Keynote Addresses on the Evolution of Buddhist Art and Thought across the Lands of Asia*, ed. Lokesh Chandra (New Delhi: Aditya Prakashan, 2007), 175–185.

49 The latest survey is by Chen Suyu (Chen, *Cong Yutian dao Dunhuang*, 129–131, table 7–1). The earliest appearance seems to be in Mogao Cave 9, built in ca. 892 (Rong and Zhu, "The Eight Protectors", 79).

50 Rong and Zhu, "The Eight Protectors," 63–64.

51 Rong and Zhu, "Tuwen huzheng." See the tables provided in Rong and Zhu, "The Eight Protectors," 77–78, tables 4.1, 4.2.

52 *Ibid.*, 80–81.



FIGURE 4.5 Detail of Fig. 4.4a

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### 3 Evidence from Khotan

The silk banner of the Auspicious Statues that Aurel Stein discovered includes an image that was, from the very beginning of the study of the banner, unmistakably connected with actual sculptures brought to light by Stein himself at



FIGURE 4.6 Relief sculpture of a standing Buddha. Inner wall of Rawak *stūpa* court, Khotan, 6th–8th c.

STEIN PHOTO 5/3(19), IDP.BL.UK/DATABASE/LARGE.A4D?RECNUM=54375&IMAGERECNUM=92020 © LIBRARY OF THE HUNGARIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

the site of Rawak in Khotan (figs. 4.2 and 4.5–4.6).<sup>53</sup> Both the Rawak sculptures and the image on the banner show a standing buddha whose body halo is filled with small buddha figures.

At first, scholars interpreted the banner's contents as drawings derived from sculptures worshipped at various sacred sites in India.<sup>54</sup> Later, Alexander Soper noticed that in the captions of the images, in addition to the well-known Indian places, “[...] there is an interesting sprinkling of Chinese holy sites closer to hand in the Kansu area [...]”, and “[...] a third region, Khotan, was of still greater importance [...]” as the source of such images. For the image resembling the sculptures at Rawak, Soper suggests “[...] this icon was intended to represent one of the several specifically Khotanese buddhas named in the texts.” Soper goes as far as suggesting that this particular image was actually intended as a reproduction of the Buddha of Pimo, described in the records of Song Yun and Xuanzang.<sup>55</sup>

53 Stein, *Ancient Khotan*, 488–499, Figs. 61, 63, 64, 69.

54 Rowland, “Indian Images in Chinese Sculpture.”

55 Soper, “Famous Images”, 352, 361–362. The first suggestion that this image represents a Khotanese type is found in Rowland.

Hida Romi reanalysed the iconography of some of the images in the banner. The similarities between the image of the standing buddha with the halo filled with small buddhas and the statues from Rawak seem irrefutable, although the hypothesis that this depiction might represent the Pimo statue, in light of subsequent research on the Auspicious Statues, should be dismissed. Hida identifies the way the small buddhas are depicted as a distinctive feature of Khotanese iconography. Khotanese features are seen in another statue depicted in the banner of a buddha seated with pendent legs on a square throne. Further, Hida presents iconographical and textual evidence that one more image on the banner could have originated in the Khotan area.<sup>56</sup>

While the Khotanese origin of many of the Auspicious Statues is by now a fact, it nevertheless remains difficult—if not impossible—to attribute any of these images to known sculptural or painted remains from Khotan, aside from the case of the Rawak sculptures. This is not surprising, at least not more than the apparent absence of clear evidence of figurative representations of Khotanese themes in the Khotan area.

Joanna Williams suggests tentatively that some buddha images on wooden panels found in Khotan represent Auspicious Statues. However, she concludes that “[...] the assumption that these (= the paintings from Khotan) are in fact representations of ‘famous images’ is somewhat tenuous.” Williams points out that the imagery, as it appears in Dunhuang, finds no real parallels in the Khotanese paintings. This might be due, among other factors, to the chronological gap between the two productions.<sup>57</sup> The Auspicious Statues paintings appear in Dunhuang in the 9th century, while the chronology of Khotanese paintings suggested by Williams, “[...] belonged primarily to the 8th century AD, and no new material has appeared to change this estimate.”<sup>58</sup>

So far, this remains the scenario: a substantial lack of evidence of local Khotanese artistic production of the themes found in Dunhuang and in the texts. A few local legends—preserved in the Tibetan and Chinese sources—have been identified as the subjects of some paintings.<sup>59</sup> However, the founding legend is absent; the famous Mt. Gośīrṣa is not represented either, and the

56 See the figures indicated as “Q”, “F”, and “G” in the fragment from the National Museum, New Delhi, in Hida, “Tonkō shōrai kenpon,” 499–522.

57 Joanna Williams, “The Iconography of Khotanese Paintings,” *East and West* 23.1/2 (1973): 127–129, figs. 23–26.

58 Williams, “Khotanese Paintings,” 109.

59 Erika Forte, “Images of Patronage in Khotan,” in *Buddhism in Central Asia I. Patronage, Legitimation, Sacred Space, and Pilgrimage*, ed. Carmen Meinert and Henrik Sørensen (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2020), 40–60.

Eight Protectors as a group seems to be a subject that is equally ignored by the Khotanese painters.<sup>60</sup>

It is indeed likely that this state of affairs may change, because new material has appeared in the last decade. Newly discovered mural paintings from the site of Toplukdong (Chin. Tuopulukedun 托普鲁克墩) near Domoko reveal a closeness to the Khotanese themes of Dunhuang that has not been noticed so far in other extant material.

60 To my knowledge, there is only an epigraphic evidence which mentions a group of eight deities—an inscription in Khotanese found on the temple CD4 at Dandān-öliq. The inscription reads: “The donor [(Skr. *dānapati*)] Budai has commissioned these eight *devas* to be painted, wishing for their blessing” (my translation from the Chinese provided by Wen Xin 文欣 and Duan Qing 段晴). See Wen Xin 文欣, and Duan Qing 段晴, “Dandan wulike fosi bihua shang de yutianwen tiji kaoshi 丹丹乌里克佛寺壁画上的于阗文题记考释 [Philological Analysis of the Khotanese Inscription on the Mural of the Buddhist Temple in Dandān-öliq],” in *Dandan wulike yizhi. Zhong-Ri gongtong kaocha yanjiu baogao* 丹丹乌里克遗址. 中日共同考察研究报告. *Dandan Oilik Site. Report of the Sino-Japanese Joint Expedition*, ed. Zhongguo Xinjiang wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 中国新疆文物考古研究所 Xinjiang Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology China and Riben Fojiao daxue Niya yizhi xueshu yanjiu jigou 日本佛教大学尼雅遗址学术研究机构 The Academic Research Organization for the Niya Ruins of Bukkyo University Japan (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2009), 261–265, pl. 40. The inscription appears by a figure with a halo riding a horse and holding a shallow bowl, above which flies a black bird—a theme that often appears in Khotanese painting and is still not completely understood; see Williams, “Khotanese Paintings,” 150–152; Marcus Mode, “Sogdian Gods in Exile: Some Iconographic Evidence from Khotan in the Light of Recently Excavated Material from Sogdiana,” *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 2 (1991/1992): 179–214; Matteo Compareti, “The ‘Eight Divinities’ in Khotanese Paintings: Local Deities or Sogdian Importation?” in *Proceedings of the Eighth European Conference of Iranian Studies (State Hermitage Museum and Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, St Petersburg, 14–19 September 2015). Volume I: Studies on Pre-Islamic Iran and on Historical Linguistics*, ed. Pavel B. Lurje (Saint Petersburg: The State Hermitage Publishers, 2019), 123–127. Unfortunately, the rest of the painting did not survive, therefore we have no clue on whether the eight *devas* referred to by the inscription were painted on another, now lost, section of the mural, or if the divine rider was part of such a group. I question the assumption put forward by Wen and Duan that the inscription refers to the rider, who originally would have been accompanied by seven other mounted deities (Wen and Duan, “Dandan wulike fosi bihua,” 263). In fact, in other pictorial evidence from Khotan, the number of the haloed riders appears to vary, ranging from one to several (Compareti, “The ‘Eight Divinities,’” 126–127). As fragmentary as the mural is, the question this evidence raises is whether by calling them *hašte gyastä* (eight *devas*) the donor Budai intended to have the *haštä parvālā* (Eight Protectors) of Khotan represented in the painting he commissioned, or if he referred to a different group of eight deities. Wen and Duan do not connect the *hašte gyastä*, “eight *devas*” of the inscription to the *haštä parvālā* of the Khotanese texts. Compareti considers instead the possible identity of the eight deities of the painting from the Sogdian and Iranian perspectives.



FIGURE 4.7 Mural with a standing Buddha. Inner west wall of Toplukdong site n. 1, Domoko, Khotan, 7th–8th c.

LINE DRAWING BY E. FORTE

On the inner walls of site no. 1 of Toplukdong, there is an image of a standing buddha with a large halo filled with smaller buddhas, very much recalling the image of the silk banner (fig. 4.7). Two other murals from the same structure appear to display two (?) of the Eight Protectors (fig. 4.8).<sup>61</sup>

61 Erika Forte, "On a Wall Painting from Toplukdong Site No. 1 in Domoko: New Evidence of Vaiśravaṇa in Khotan?" in *Changing Forms and Cultural Identity: Religious and Secular Iconographies. Papers from the 20th Conference of the European Association for South Asian Archaeology and Art Held in Vienna from 4th to 9th of July 2010, Vol. 1, South Asian Archaeology and Art*, ed. Deborah Klimburg-Salter and Linda Lojda (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 215–224; Erika Forte, "Khotan chiku Domoko hakken Toplukdong 1-gō butsuji to Gomati-dera densetsu コータン地区ドモコ発見トブルクトン1號佛寺と瞿摩帝寺傳説.

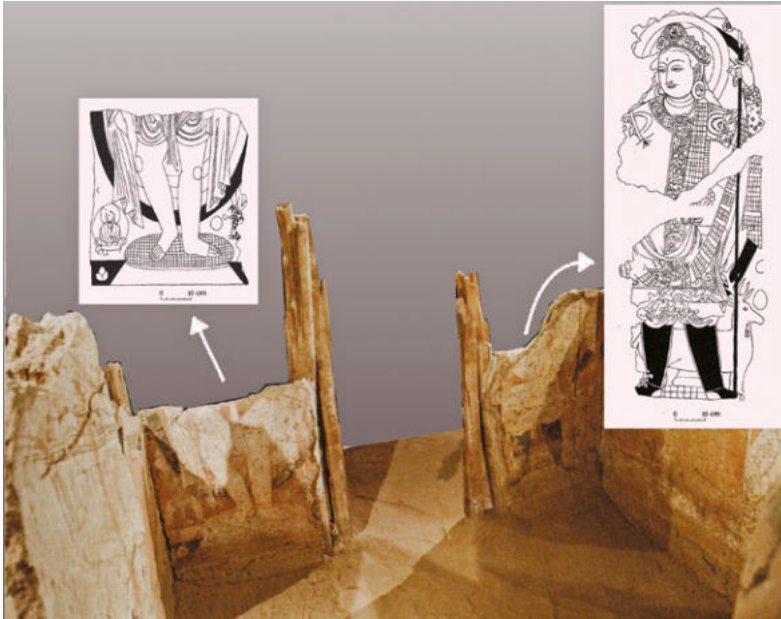


FIGURE 4.8 Murals with two protector deities. Inner south wall of Toplukdong site n. 1, Domoko, Khotan (*in situ*), 7th–8th c.

MODIFIED AFTER *DOMOKO*, 6 © DOMOKO MUSEUM

A group of fragments recovered from the larger structure at site no. 3 of Toplukdong shows a series of deities encircled by large oval haloes and floating in the air (fig. 4.9). They wear caftans with short sleeves over loose trousers tucked into high boots (male deities) or over long skirts in a light material (female deities). The deities have fierce expressions, with animal-like teeth. Their attributes are barely distinguishable, with some exceptions. There is no doubt that some kind of protector deities are depicted as a group here, although important elements are lacking to prove with certainty that these fragments represent the Eight Protectors. Ascertaining the exact identity of the individual figures (with one or two exceptions) needs further study. Their iconography does not tally with that of the Eight Protectors at Mogao, and the

Toplukdong Temple No. 1 in Domoko (Khotan) and the Legend of Gomati Monastery," in *Takata Tokio kyōju taishoku kinen tōhōgaku kenkyū ronshū* 高田時雄教授退職記念東方學研究論集. *East Asian Studies. Festschrift in Honor of the Retirement of Professor Takata Tokio*, ed. Tōhōgaku kenkyū ronshū kankōkai 東方學研究論集刊行會 [East Asian Studies Editorial Committee] (Kyoto: Rinsen Book Co., 2014), 210–227.



FIGURE 4.9 Mural fragment with protector deities, 62 × 83 cm. Recovered from Toplukdong site n. 3, Domoko, Khotan, 7th–8th c.  
*BUDDHIST VESTIGES*, 111 © DOMOKO MUSEUM

original number of the deities within the composition is unknown, due to the state of the remains.<sup>62</sup>

#### 4 Conclusions

In summing up, Khotanese themes in Dunhuang are seen in caves at Mogao and Yulin that were built or redecorated in the 9th and 10th centuries. The earliest representations belong to the last quarter of the 9th century, which basically falls into the period of the Tibetan presence in Dunhuang (ca. 786–848). The bulk of the depictions are found in caves from the Guiyijun period,

62 The paintings from Toplukdong were exhibited in Shanghai in 2014. See the exhibition catalogue, Chen Xiejun 陈燮君 and Chen Kelun 陈克伦, ed., *Silu fanxiang. Xinjiang Hetian Damagou fojiao yizhi chutu bihua yishu 丝路梵相. 新疆和田达玛沟遗址出土壁画艺术. Buddhist Vestiges Along the Silk Road. Mural Art from the Damago Site, Hotan, Xinjiang* (Shanghai: Shanghai Museum and Shanghai shuhua Publishing House, 2014).

A description and preliminary study of these painting are among the topics of a forthcoming article: Erika Forte, “The Eight Great Protectors Reunited? Patterns of Patronage and Legitimation in Khotan” (paper presented at the 24th Conference of the European Association for South Asian Archaeology and Art in Naples, Italy, July 2018).



especially those that were sponsored during the rule of the Cao family (914–1036, 曹). In those caves in particular, a common pattern recurs: the Khotanese themes are concentrated in the entrance corridor; the Mt. Gośirṣa tableau, with the foundation of Khotan, occupies the space of the ceiling; the Eight Protectors and the Khotanese Auspicious Statues are depicted in rows on the two slopes of the corridor ceiling; life-sized donors are depicted on the walls of the corridor—these mostly represent ruling people of the Guiyijun, especially members of the Cao family and members of the Khotanese royal family.

This situation clearly reflects close connections between Dunhuang and the Kingdom of Khotan, strengthened and secured through marriage alliances, which led to the formation of a semi-permanent Khotanese (aristocratic) community in Dunhuang.<sup>63</sup> The diffusion of Khotanese themes was fostered by such a community, which had the means to sponsor the decoration—or even the construction—of caves and monasteries in Dunhuang, with the support of the kindred Cao rulers. This provides a possible explanation for why the appearance of Khotanese themes is not always combined with Khotanese donors' portraits.

The establishment of a close alliance between Khotan and Dunhuang appears to be something of a natural consequence derived from the political situation in eastern Central Asia in the 9th and 10th centuries. The instability created by continuous conflict nurtured the diffusion of end-of-the-*dharma* (Chin. *mofa* 末法) beliefs, which echoed in the texts that circulated (and probably matured) in Khotan, such as the *Religious Annals of the Li Country*, the *Li yul gyi dgra bcom pas lung bstan pa* [Prophecy of the Arhat from the Li Country], the *Sūryagarbhasūtra*, and the *Candragarbhasūtra*.<sup>64</sup> It is, in fact, in these texts, among others, that the literary background of the Khotanese themes is found. The earliest mention of Buddha Śākyamuni at the Mt. Gośirṣa of Khotan appears in the second half of the 6th century in the Chinese *Sūryagarbhasūtra*. However, it is only later that the story of the prophecy became prominent, probably from the 7th or 8th century on and in association with the narratives that constituted the basis for the Khotanese themes in Dunhuang.

Khotanese legends are not found in the extant literature in Khotanese; rather, they are echoed in Chinese pilgrims' accounts and in the Tibetan texts. Xuanzang reports the legends of Khotan at length, and many of the legends find

63 Rong, *Eighteen lectures*, 327–328.

64 Rong and Zhu, *Yutian yu Dunhuang*, 268–269. On the likely Central Asian (if not Khotanese) origin of the *Sūryagarbhasūtra* and *Candragarbhasūtra*, see Lévi, “Notes chinoises sur l’Inde V.”

a parallel in the Tibetan texts and are recognisable in some of the Auspicious Statues' narratives synthesised in the captions in the paintings at Mogao.

As Max Deeg underlines, the foundation legend Xuanzang reports does not include the story of draining the lake. It could be that the story was added at a later time, or at least after Xuanzang's stay in Khotan.<sup>65</sup> On the other hand, the drainage story appears in the Tibetan texts, the compilation of which likely occurred in the course of the 9th century, when Khotan and other territories of the Tarim Basin (and the region of Dunhuang) were under the control of the Tibetan Empire (Tib. Bod chen po, ca. 7th c. to 842).<sup>66</sup> Depictions of the founding of Khotan in Dunhuang are rather similar to the narratives preserved in the Tibetan texts (for example, in Mogao Caves 231 and 237, typically ascribed to the Tibetan period),<sup>67</sup> and seem to have been directly inspired by them.

On the whole, it is safe to assume that the narratives that constituted the basis of the Khotanese themes in Dunhuang acquired special popularity around the 8th or 9th century and found their way to a visual expression at the caves in Mogao. One may wonder about the agency of the Tibetans in this process—a question that I have to leave open for the time being.

The Khotanese themes in Dunhuang received a boost during the Guiyijun period in the 10th century, because of the direct connection between Khotan and the Guiyijun rulers, as explained above. Liberated from Tibetan dominion and left in peace by a considerably weakened Chinese presence in the Tarim area, Khotan regained its role in the political scene as an independent kingdom. A document from Dunhuang in 901 registers an official embassy from Khotan to the Guiyijun headquarters in Shazhou (沙州), and many others followed in the course of the 10th century, until the Buddhist Kingdom of Khotan disintegrated under the conquering pressure of the Kharakhanids in 1006.<sup>68</sup>

Rong Xinjiang points out another factor in the centrality of Khotan in Dunhuang imagery: with Islamic expansion, Dunhuang and Khotan remained the last strongholds of Buddhism in eastern Central Asia. This is clearly reflected in the words of the *Prophecy of the Arhat from the Li Country*:

65 The 7th or 8th century seems to be a plausible *terminus post quem* for the circulation of the drainage of the lake story. See Max Deeg, *Miscellanea Nepalicae*, 115, 141.

66 The Tibetans had occupied Khotan earlier in the 7th century, ca. 670 to 692, in a situation of continuous fighting with the Chinese Tang Empire (618–907, 唐). The Tibetans regained control of Khotan around 791, which lasted until 842. Dunhuang was under Tibetan control roughly in the same years (662–692 and 786–848).

67 Zhang Xiaogang, *Dunhuang gangtonghua*, 305–306.

68 Rong and Zhu, *Yutian yu Dunhuang*, 109–149. The official date set for the end of the Kingdom of Khotan is 1006. See Hiroshi Kumamoto, "Khotan. History in the Pre-Islamic Period," *Encyclopedia Iranica Online*, last modified April 20, 2009, accessed February 14, 2020. <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/khotan-i-pre-islamic-history>.

[...] after the *nirvāṇa* of the Buddha Śākya-muni the image(s?) of the religion and the *stūpas* will last two thousand years and then perish [...]. 'An-se and Śu-ling, being disturbed by many enemies, not followers of the religion, will be for the most part wasted with fire and havoc, and will become desolate. The Saṃghas of the monasteries thereof will come mostly into the Li country. The monasteries, *stūpas* and so forth, of the Li country are protected by five hundred Bodhi-sattvas [...]. The monastery Hgehu-to-śan, having been trodden by the feet of one thousand and five Buddhas of the Good Aeon, will be a continuously and enduring mansion. Through the excellence and compassionate blessing of the Āryas the *stūpas* of the Li country and the practice of the Good Religion will flourish beyond those of other countries and will long endure.<sup>69</sup>

The Khotanese imagery at Dunhuang speaks of the need for communicating the legitimacy of the kingdom highlighting its prestige as both a political and a religious stronghold.

All things considered, the scenario in Dunhuang is rather linear. It is more puzzling to combine this scenario with the material from Khotan. The difficulty originates, basically, from the lack of clear evidence and from the chronological gaps between the appearance of the Khotanese themes in Dunhuang and the uncertain chronology of the Khotanese sites. The establishment of a firmer chronology of the Buddhist material culture in Khotan is an open issue, which likely will remain unsolvable without a systematic comparative, multidisciplinary, and cross-cultural effort. The revival of research on Khotanese themes in Dunhuang, together with new material brought to light in Khotan, opens up a path of interpretation that remained relatively unnoticed. The murals from Toplukdong in Domoko provide, in my view, the missing link between the cultural *milieu* at the origin of a specific ideology and imagery, and its visual manifestation at Dunhuang. It represents, most of all, a chance and a challenge to rethink old material from a new perspective.

69 Rong and Zhu, *Yütian yu Dunhuang*, 268–269. The passage in English of the *Prophecy of the Arhat of the Li Country* is quoted from Thomas, *Tibetan Literary Texts*, 78–79. “Hgehutosan” corresponds to Mt. Gośirṣa.

# The ‘Sogdian Deities’ Twenty Years on: A Reconsideration of a Small Painting from Dunhuang

*Lilla Russell-Smith*

## 1 Introduction

Since 1996, when I first started working on Uyghur patronage in Dunhuang (敦煌), I have often encountered unusual iconography, images that could not be easily explained by standard written sources. I published some in 2005 in my book.<sup>1</sup> Since I became curator of the Turfan Collection in the Museum

1 ‘Uyghur’ style in this article refers to the art of the Xizhou Uyghurs from the Turfan area, a style variations of which were also used in Ganzhou (甘州) and Shazhou (沙州, traditional name for Dunhuang) by the Uyghur rulers and donors. There was regular contact between the rulers of Dunhuang and the rulers of central China, but Shazhou in the 10th century was *de facto* independent, and its rulers had to fight and negotiate with the rulers of the surrounding regions in order to preserve their power. The Cao (曹) clan ruled Dunhuang, and although, as Rong Xinjiang argues, they themselves may have had a Sogdian origin, the art they commissioned was distinctly a local style. For the Cao family see Rong Xinjiang 荣新江, “Dunhuang Guiyijun Cao shi tongzhizhe wei Sute houyi shuo 敦煌归义军曹氏统治者为粟特后裔说 [Theory that the Cao Family from Dunhuang has a Sogdian Origin],” *Lishi yanjiu* 历史研究 [Historical Research] 1 (2001): 65–72. In my book, I investigate the possible role of Ganzhou Uyghur donors. The Ganzhou Uyghurs became very important after the fall of the Uyghur Empire in 841. Firstly, they had a strategically important position, with their centre near today’s Zhangye (张掖). Only one route leads from Dunhuang to central China, between the mountains in the Hexi Corridor (Chin. Hexi zoulang 河西走廊), so from the second half of the 9th century, the Ganzhou Uyghurs could cut this route off, which caused trading caravans to have to make a huge detour to the north. As Dunhuang could not defeat the Ganzhou Uyghurs, from the beginning of the 10th century, mutual marriage links were established. The most important was Cao Yijin’s (r. 914–935, 曹议金) main wife, who was Uyghur, and in turn became the mother of subsequent rulers, who also took Ganzhou Uyghur wives. The main branch of the Uyghurs settled around Turfan and are known as the Xizhou Uyghurs. They acknowledged that the Ganzhou Uyghur ruling family was descended from the Yaglagar line, the rulers of the Uyghur Empire. See also Jens Wilkens, “Buddhism in the West Uyghur Kingdom and Beyond,” in *Transfer of Buddhism across Central Asian Networks (7th to 13th Centuries)*, ed. Carmen Meinert (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 243. In caves, such as Dunhuang Cave 98, we also see that the Ganzhou Uyghur women’s clothing resembled the Xizhou Uyghur fashions of the time. In commissioning portable paintings on silk and paper, the Ganzhou Uyghur wives likely played an important role. For more definitions and

für Asiatische Kunst in Berlin in 2007, it has struck me more than once how frequently the interpretations are divided along areas of expertise and geographic lines. This is due to repeating earlier research without further investigation, and also specialists are far too often simply not aware of research results, due in part to language difficulties and the complexity of the topics. Often, at least some knowledge of the *Bildersprache* and main textual sources of several religions is necessary, in most cases, Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Manichaeism, and Christianity. Carrying out my daily work at the museum and receiving information on various aspects of research, sometimes I have the feeling that I stand between various parallel lines, all of which I can observe, but which will never meet on the horizon.

In this article,<sup>2</sup> I reconsider the reasons why the so-called Sogdian deities became so well-known in Dunhuang studies, Silk Road studies, and Zoroastrian studies and present a new interpretation that supports my original view that this small painting, P. 4518 (24) (figs. 5.1a–b) was made for a specifically Uyghur donor who was most probably Buddhist.<sup>3</sup>

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background, see Lilla Russell-Smith, *Uyghur Patronage in Dunhuang: Regional Art Centres on the Northern Silk Road in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), especially 59–76.

- 2 I would like to thank all participants at the Workshop in Bochum in September 2019 for their valuable comments. Special thanks are due to Christiane Reck for all her suggestions, and also especially to Antonio Panaino for his suggestions and for developing the arguments presented here further in his new article: Antonio Panaino, “About the Debated Iconology of Two Beautiful Maidens from Dunhuang,” in *Dunhuang and Cultural Contact along the Silk Road*, ed. Imre Galambos (Budapest: ELTE, 2022), forthcoming. My chapter in the same volume will also explore further aspects that could not be presented here, Lilla Russell-Smith, “Gods, Goddesses, Demons, Demonesses—Transmissions, Transformations and Ambiguities in Artefacts from Eastern Silk Road Regional Art Centres and Beyond,” in *Dunhuang and Cultural Contact Along the Silk Road*, ed. Imre Galambos (Budapest: ELTE, 2022), forthcoming. I would also like to thank the anonymous reviewer for the valuable comments.
- 3 I first considered this in Lilla Russell-Smith, “Wives and Patrons: Uyghur Political and Artistic Influence in Tenth-Century Dunhuang,” *Acta Orientalia Hungaricae* 56 (2003): 414 (Chinese translation: Lilla Russell-Smith (Bi Lilan 毕丽兰), “Qishi yu gongyangren: Huihu zai Dunhuang 10 shiji shiqide zhengzhi he yishu yinxiang 妻室与供养人: 回鹘在敦煌 10 世纪时期的政治和艺术影响,” *Nei Menggu yishuxueyuan xuebao* 内蒙古艺术学院学报 [Journal of Inner Mongolia Arts University] 16.2 (2019): 75); See also Russell-Smith, *Uyghur Patronage*, 6, 99–104, 111 and pl. 2.



FIGURE 5.1A Two female deities, ink and colours on paper, recto. 30.5 × 37.8 cm. Dunhuang, 10th c., P. 4518 (24), BnF

## 2 Description

Besides the unmistakably Buddhist content, painting P. 4518 (24) may also show Manichaean features, as Uyghur Buddhist art in the early period frequently did, as I demonstrate below.

It has always been my conviction that the complex problems we face in the research of Buddhist art from Dunhuang, Turfan, Kuča, Khotan, and other important sites on the Silk Roads can only be solved through teamwork.<sup>4</sup> We

<sup>4</sup> I established the Circle of Inner Asian Art together with three other PhD candidates at SOAS, University of London, in 1995 organising lectures across disciplines, and publishing a Newsletter (1995–2005) as well as hosting a website, one of the first in the field (starting in



FIGURE 5.1B Two female deities, ink and colours on paper, verso. 30.5 × 37.8 cm. Dunhuang, 10th c., P. 4518 (24), BnF

may never have a definite answer, but it is important to consider new research and new discoveries in research on Buddhist art from Dunhuang. This small-scale painting is today in the collection of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (fig. 5.1a–b).<sup>5</sup> I refer to it as P. 4518 (24) in this article. Found in Cave 17 in Dunhuang by Paul Pelliot, it is a painting in ink with colouring in light orange red on a single sheet of paper; the *verso* is blank.

1998) for this very reason. *The Journal of Inner Asian Art and Archaeology* (JIAAA) grew out of this, I co-edited the journal 2006–2016. (This in turn has now been replaced by a book series published by Brepols *Inner and Central Asian Art and Archaeology* or IAAA).

5 Accessed May 21, 2020. Public domain identifier: [ark:/12148/bt1b8300094w](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:5:1-63864-p0094-w).

This is how I describe it in my book:

Two seated females are shown holding various attributes: the one on the left holds a foliated cup and a tray upon which sits a dog. The female on the right is seated on a wolf: she has four arms, the upper two supporting the sun and moon disks, and the lower two holding a scorpion and a snake.<sup>6</sup>

### 3 Interpretations So Far

Jao Tsong-yi was the first to publish this small painting in 1978 in his book on monochrome art from Dunhuang,<sup>7</sup> but it only attracted attention in 1988 after Jiang Boqin suggested at a conference in Beijing that the sketch was Zoroastrian and depicted Nana.<sup>8</sup> Its fame grew after it was selected for the ground-breaking *Sérinde* exhibition in Paris, held 1995–1996, where I first saw it.<sup>9</sup> The catalogue of the exhibition presented a new interpretation: whilst identifying the female

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- 6 Russell-Smith, *Uygur Patronage*, 6. I return to the iconography, and especially to the identification of the animal on which the figure on the right sits, in the second part of this article.
- 7 Jao Tsong-yi (with Pierre Ryckmans and Paul Demiéville), *Peintures monochromes de Dunhuang (Dunhuang baihua): manuscrits reproduits en facsimilé, d'après les originaux inédits conservés à la Bibliothèque nationale de Paris* (Paris: École française d'Extrême-Orient, 1978).
- 8 Jiang Boqin 姜伯勤. "Dunhuang baihua zhongde sute shenqi 敦煌白画中的粟特神祇 [Sogdian Deities in a Drawing from Dunhuang]," in *Dunhuang tulufanxue yanjiu lunwenji 敦煌吐鲁番学研究论文集*, ed. Zhongguo dunhuang tulufanxuehui 中国敦煌吐鲁番学会 (Shanghai: Hanyu dacidian chubanshe, 1990), 296–309. For Nana, see Shervin Farridnejad, *Die Sprache der Bilder: Eine Studie zur ikonographischen Exegese der anthropomorphen Götterbilder im Zoroastrismus* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2018), 268–269. This goddess, originally from the ancient Babylonian Uruk, merged with other female deities.
- 9 "*Sérinde, Terre de Bouddha. Dix siècles d'art sur la Route de la Soie*," Galeries nationales du Grand Palais, Paris 24 October 1995–19 February 1996. Catalogue: Jacques Giès and Monique Cohen ed., *Sérinde, Terre de Bouddha. Dix siècles d'art sur la Route de la Soie* (Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1995). As Helen Wang demonstrated in her recent talks, this major exhibition was a result of the important UNESCO Project (1988–1996 and 2002). Another project was started in 2011. Helen Wang gave the conference paper at the China National Silk Museum, Hangzhou (Curators Forum for the exhibition *Life along the Silk Road*, 22–23 June 2019. mins. 12:00–13:15), accessed May 13, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uC4GzjoxHbk&t=8s>. There was also a discussion at the British Museum workshop *Stein Collection and the Silk Roads*, February 21, 2020. About the project, see UNESCO digital library *The Integral Study of the Silk Roads: Roads of Dialogue (1988–1997)*, accessed May 13, 2020. <http://www.silkroads.org.cn/article-1472-1.html>.



deity on the left as the good Daēnā Frantz Grenet described the female on the right as the negative counterpart of the other deity, a kind of demonic version, a bad Dēn.<sup>10</sup> In January 1996 during the conference associated with the exhibition, Zhang Guangda presented a paper confirming Grenet's identification, arguing in more detail for a Zoroastrian meaning, and connecting the image to the Sogdians resident in Dunhuang. According to him, on the left we see a positive Daēna/Dēn<sup>11</sup> and on the right a negative Dēn or Druj. Druj is a very negative demonic aspect, who is connected to the bad deeds of the deceased in eschatology.<sup>12</sup> The headdresses of both female figures were not discussed at the conference; they were referred to as Sogdian deities and have remained known as such ever since.<sup>13</sup>

10 Giès and Cohen, *Sérinde*, cat. nos. 225, 293–294.

11 About Daēnā/Dēn, see Azarpay, Guitty "Imagery of the Sogdian Dēn," in *Maître pour l'éternité: Florilège offert à Philippe Gignoux pour son 80e anniversaire*, ed. Rika Gysele and Christelle Jullien (Paris: Association pour l'avancement des études iraniennes, 2011), 55–56 and <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/den>, accessed May 1, 2020.

12 "Druj is the reference point for the fabricated words of the bad divinities (31.1, 53.6). In the eschatological sphere the refuge for the souls of the dead depends upon their merits: either the 'residence' (*dam-*) of Ahura Mazdā or that of Druj (46.11, 49.11, 51.11: *drījō dāmānē*). It should be noted that *druj-*, like all words expressing negative concepts, is not attested in the *Yasna Haptaṅhāiti*." Jean Kellens, "Druj-," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online version, 1996, last updated 2011. <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/druj>, accessed May 1, 2020.

13 I was present at the discussion. Zhang mentioned the unusual headdress in the published version, but he only concludes that it is not Chinese. Zhang Guangda, "Une représentation iconographique de la Daēnā et de la Daēva? Quelques pistes de réflexion sur les religions venues d'Asie centrale en Chine," in *La Sérinde, terre d'échanges: art, religion, commerce du I<sup>er</sup> au X<sup>e</sup> siècle: actes du colloque international, (Galeries nationales du Grand Palais, 13–15 février 1996)*, ed. Monique Cohen, Jean-Pierre Drège, and Jacques Giès (Paris: la Documentation française, 2000), 191–202. The BnF database entry refers to the headdresses. See Archives et manuscrits, "Pelliot Chinois 4518," accessed May 18, 2020. <https://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc1207883/ca000034>. The Wikipedia entry, quoting my research, also refers to the headdresses. See Wikipedia, "Sogdian Daēnās," accessed May 18, 2020. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sogdian\\_Deities](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sogdian_Deities). Although Rong Xinjiang argues that the ruling Cao clan may have a Sogdian origin, Uyghurs and Sogdians in Dunhuang are by no means identical and interchangeable. Rong, "Dunhuang Guiyijun Cao." Sentences like "[...] her retinue that includes Sogdian Cao family princesses, shown in Uighur tailored coats with wide lapels [...]" show that Azarpay uses these as interchangeable terms, which is an oversimplification. Furthermore, Dunhuang Cave 409 dates to the 11th century. It used to be considered Tangut, but it is now considered to date to the time when Shazhou was under Xizhou Uyghur rule, because both the male and female donors wear Uyghur dress. Azarpay, "Imagery of the Sogdian Dēn," 73; cf. my detailed argument about these donors in Russell-Smith, *Uyghur Patronage*, 69–75.

Only while preparing for this paper did I realise how iconic this image has become—especially in China. There is even a Wikipedia entry in several languages under the heading “Sogdian Daēnas” (also known as Sogdian deities, Chin. *Sute shengqi baihua* 粟特神祇白畫).<sup>14</sup> My research is listed there, as I only discovered in preparation for this paper. In early 1996 on my return to London from the *Sérinde* exhibition in Paris, I quickly recognised the hairstyle and headdress as typically Uyghur. This subsequently, and within a short time, led me to the realisation that Uyghur donors played a very important part in 10th-century Dunhuang, which became my PhD research topic from then on.<sup>15</sup>

After the painting became famous, due to its exposure in the *Sérinde* exhibition and accompanying catalogue, and subsequently in the exhibition in Tokyo,<sup>16</sup> more publications considered the elusive meaning of this simple but intriguing painting. Almost all authors argue that this sketch is Zoroastrian and, therefore, important proof for the existence of a Sogdian Zoroastrian community in 10th-century Dunhuang.

In China, its identification as an important example of Zoroastrian art is now universally accepted. Jiang returned to this topic once again in 2004, and saw his identification confirmed through research outside of China.<sup>17</sup> Jiang concludes his study by quoting an article by Guitty Azarpay, who identified a figure on a silver bowl as Daēna. This female is surrounded by animals, and Azarpay identified one of these accompanying animals as a dog.<sup>18</sup> Jiang's article appeared in an important handbook on Zoroastrian art, and so his interpretation is now repeated with certainty by everyone in China. But there is a problem with using this methodology when there is not sufficient evidence: for iconographical and iconological research, we need reliable textual sources and good comparative material, both of which are lacking in this case. Many of the older text passages Jiang cites are from the Avesta. The bowl that Jiang uses as his evidence has since turned out to be a (partial) fake. Since this fact

14 “Sogdian Daēnās,” accessed May 18, 2020. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sogdian\\_Deities](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sogdian_Deities).

15 Russell-Smith, *Uyghur Patronage*, 6, 99–104.

16 *Shiruku Rōdo daibitsuden* シルクロード大美術展. *Grand Exhibition of Silkroad Buddhist Art*, comp. Tōkyō Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan 東京国立博物館 (Tōkyō: Yomiuri Shinbunsha, 1996), cat. nos. 180, 162.

17 Jiang Boqin 姜伯勤, *Zhongguo xianjiao yishushi yanjiu* 中国祆教艺术史研究. *A History of Chinese Zoroastrian Art* (Beijing: Shenghua dushu xingzheng sanzhen shudian, 2004), 237–270. Jiang disagreed, however, with the identification by other authors in Tokyo of the animal as a wolf (rather than a dog) and returned to the idea of a dog because of its importance to the Daēna/Dēn interpretation.

18 Jiang, *Zhongguo xianjiao*, 13–14; Guitty Azarpay, “The Allegory of Dēn in Persian Art,” *Artibus Asiae* 38.1 (1976): 37–48.

can only be found as a side reference in a more recent article by Azarpay, most Chinese scholars may not be aware of this correction.<sup>19</sup>

In this more recent article, Azarpay introduces the idea of a syncretic Manichaeo-Zoroastrian belief among the Sogdians in China, for which her most important proof is Étienne de la Vaissière's theory that on the funerary bed of Wirkak, one can see Manichaeo elements and an image of Mani. However, this has since been rejected by Zsuzsanna Gulácsi and Jason BeDuhn, who see no evidence that the Sogdian donors of the funerary bed were Manichaeo, or that Manichaeo iconography could be identified on it. They point to the importance of considering the entire context of all available evidence and warn against investigating details separately.<sup>20</sup> In December 2019, de la Vaissière in turn published a new article listing evidence reaffirming his original view.<sup>21</sup> No doubt a counter article by Gulácsi and BeDuhn will be published in due course, restating their view. This ongoing friendly but firm scholarly debate demonstrates the complexity of the topic, and we cannot expect easy answers.

Why is it necessary to reassess the evidence now? Firstly, having summarised all known identifications, we can see that there is no consensus at all on the meaning of these female figures, even among scholars arguing for a Zoroastrian background.

Secondly, few authors mention the close parallels to several examples found in securely Buddhist context from the Turfan area. These examples are listed in table 5.1. I will return to these points later. Two similar female deities in two separate Buddhist cave temples in Bezeklik were documented by Albert Grünwedel about one hundred years ago. As these figures are now almost completely destroyed, they are only known from these drawings kept in the Museum für Asiatische Kunst in Berlin, but they had been published

19 Azarpay, "Imagery of the Sogdian Dēn," 56–57 and fn. 11.

20 Étienne de la Vaissière, "Mani en Chine au VIe siècle," *Journal Asiatique* 293.1 (2005): 357–378; Étienne de la Vaissière, "Wirkak: Manichaeo, Zoroastrian, Khurrami? On Bilingualism and Syncretism in Sogdian Funerary Art," *Nairiku Ajia gengo no kenkyū* 内陸アジア言語の研究 [Studies on the Inner Asian Languages] 30 (2015): 95–112; Zsuzsanna Gulácsi and Jason BeDuhn, "The Religion of Wirkak and Wiyusi: The Zoroastrian Iconographical Program on a Sogdian Sarcophagus from Sixth-Century Xi'an," *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 26 (2016 [2012]): 1–32.

21 Étienne de la Vaissière, "The Faith of Wirkak the *Dēnāwar*, or Manichaeism as Seen from a Zoroastrian Point of View," *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 29 (2015–2019): 69–78. I would like to thank Nicholas Sims-Williams for drawing my attention to this article.

by Grünwedel. Even so these important parallels were only referred to by Bhattacharya-Haesner and Hintze, apart from myself.<sup>22</sup>

#### 4 Format and Clothing

A full description of the painting's format is given in the Bibliothèque nationale's database.<sup>23</sup> I say more about the significance of this small, portable format later.

Let us first consider the clothing. The headdresses and hairstyles are the most prominent and unusual features of this painting. I gave a detailed description of the female deities' appearance in an article comparing them to examples from Dunhuang and Turfan.<sup>24</sup> The clothing is not remarkable and is known from other examples from that area.<sup>25</sup>

It is important to note that both figures are female.<sup>26</sup> Not only their rosy cheeks, but also the clothing of the deity on the left prove this. Even though

22 Albert Grünwedel, *Altbuddhistische Kultstätten in Chinesisch-Turkistan. Bericht über archäologische Arbeiten von 1906 bis 1907 bei Kuča, Qarašahr und in der Oase Turfan* (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1912), figs. 516 and 531. Independently of myself, but at the same time, Chhaya Bhattacharya-Haesner, who was already working on her important catalogue of Central Asian temple banners in the collection of the then Museum für Indische Kunst in Berlin in the mid-nineties, also recognised the Uyghur headdress of these female figures and talked about them for the first time at the ICANAS Conference in Budapest in 1997, where I also presented a paper including P. 4518 (24). See Simone-Christiane Raschmann, "IDP Symposium: Dunhuang and Turfan" in *IDP News* 8–9, British Library London Summer–Winter 1997. Available online [http://idp.bl.uk/archives/news08\\_09/idpnews\\_08\\_09.a4d](http://idp.bl.uk/archives/news08_09/idpnews_08_09.a4d), accessed July 7, 2020. Chhaya Bhattacharya-Haesner, *Central Asian Temple Banners in the Turfan Collection of the Museum für Indische Kunst, Berlin* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 2003), 35–38; Almut Hintze quoted my research in: "A Zoroastrian Vision," in *The Zoroastrian Flame: Exploring Religion, History and Tradition*, ed. Alan Williams, Sarah Stewart, and Almut Hintze (London: Tauris 2016), 77–96.

23 <https://archivesetmanuscripts.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc1207883/ca000034>, accessed May 21, 2020.

24 Russell-Smith, "Wives and Patrons", 410–413.

25 Even though several authors considered this, the belt of the figure on the right does not seem to play an important role. It is not likely that the *kusti*, a leather belt used by Zoroastrians to the present day, would be shown here. See also Azarpay, "Imagery of the Sogdian Dēn," 69–70.

26 The anonymous reviewer draws attention to the possibility of syncretism and the possibility for sex-change for deities transmitted from Iran. The reviewer suggests: "They could be Nana and Tištrya/Nabu dressed as a woman and not two goddesses." Although in general the study of syncretism and sex-change in deities is important for future research, at

bodhisattva-like, it is comparable to clothing worn by female deities from the Turfan area, such as *ḍākinīs*.<sup>27</sup> The water-drop-shaped headdresses both females are wearing are very important, as I already argued in detail: without a doubt these are Uyghur headdresses.<sup>28</sup> As I wrote in my book, “The headdress shown here, a flat water-drop shape, was worn by high-ranking Uyghur women.”<sup>29</sup>

I am convinced that in Dunhuang Cave 98 and in other instances the headdresses are not interchangeable and were deliberately chosen markers to indicate identity. As I describe in my book, depicting a certain type of clothing in art was then—as it is today—a useful tool for political statements and propaganda. In this case, the use of the Uyghur headdresses for both female figures is a very central feature and clearly emphasises a connection with the Uyghurs.<sup>30</sup> On the left is a typical, simplified depiction of a seat supported by lotus petals, such pedestals are well known in the Buddhist art of Dunhuang. This is already hinting at a Buddhist context as already stated in my book.<sup>31</sup>

Most discussions concern the attributes the deities are holding. Because the scorpion or bug and the snake that the seated female on the right holds have been interpreted by all as negative attributes, scholars have struggled to identify the female deity on the right, as her beauty and youth contrast with

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present we do not have sufficient evidence to understand the specific circumstances for transmission in Eastern Central Asia. The connections to astrology and to Tištrya will be discussed below.

- 27 Similarities to *ḍākinīs* were investigated by Bhattacharya-Haesner. Azarpay compared the clothing to a Manichaean example and a Buddhist painting from the Turfan area. Bhattacharya-Haesner, *Central Asian Temple Banners*, 36–37; Azarpay considered images from the Turfan area as stylistic comparison, including or two figures in a Manichaean context (III 4614, *ibid.*, fig. 30). Azarpay, “Imagery of the Sogdian Dēn,” 70, 72–73. Gulácsi considers that III 4614 shows female figures. Zsuzsanna Gulácsi, *Manichaean Art in Berlin Collections* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), 144, cat. no. 65. See fig. 5.29 in this article.
- 28 Russell-Smith, “Wives and Patrons,” 404–406.
- 29 Russell-Smith, *Uyghur Patronage*, 6 and fig. 1.
- 30 Azarpay refers to the Uyghur headdresses. Zhang describes them as a strange shape, like a bulb, and writes that they are not Chinese. Jiang also mentions the headdresses, but he does not attempt to identify which community the donor may have belonged to and uses Tangut, Uyghur, and Dunhuang as interchangeable terms for the late headdress. We see above in fn. 13 that Azarpay also considers Sogdian and Uyghur as interchangeable terms in this context in Dunhuang.
- 31 Russell-Smith, *Uyghur Patronage*, 99–104. Chiara Silvi Antonini also independently recognised this in her important critical article. Chiara Silvi Antonini, “Breve Nota su un Manoscritto Pelliot da Dunhuang,” *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 78.3–4 (2005): 495. She does, however, wonder whether the figure on the left could be male. I would like to thank Antonio Panaino for drawing my attention to this article recently.



FIGURE 5.2 (left) P. 4518 (24) detail of Fig 5.1a



FIGURE 5.3 (right) Earthenware figurine of a dog, China, Tang Dynasty, 7th–8th c.  
OBJ. NO. FE.155–1974  
© VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM

a negative meaning. On the other hand, most authors agree that the figure on the left shows the Good Daēnā.

There is not even consensus among authors on what animal the female figure on the right is sitting on. Is it a wolf? Is it a dog? Most authors identify it as a dog. But let us consider the figure on the left: she holds an animal on a tray that can with certainty be identified as a dog. In fact, that animal looks like the Central Asian representation of a dog known from wall paintings that is identifiable as a Saluki (or Saluqi) breed.<sup>32</sup> Why then would the artist choose two such contrasting representations if the two are meant to be the same animal, and one is depicted as a specific breed? Therefore, I am convinced that the animal on the right has a different meaning and is not an ordinary dog. We will return to this question later in the article.

The identification of the two figures as the Good and Bad Daēnā/Dēn seems hard to accept, because the female on the right does not look like an ugly old woman. There is an excellent summary of the significance of Daēnā in the latest study by Kianoosh Rezanian:

32 For images of Saluki dogs, see, e.g., Sir Terence Clark, "Hunting Hounds along the Silk Road—Which Way Did They Go?," *The Silk Road* 4.2 (2006/2007): fig. 4, accessed July 7, 2020. <https://edspace.american.edu/silkroadjournal/volume-4-no-2-winter-2006-7/>.

A significant example of the eschatological reinterpretation of ritual transcendence can be read in V. 19, in which the destiny of the breath-soul after death is represented. At dawn following the third night after death, the breath-soul is led to the bridge of mason. This soul and the consciousness of the deceased are asked about their contribution to the world during their material existence. Afterwards, Daēnā appears with her dogs. She throws the breath-soul of the deceitful one into the darkness and lets the breath-souls of the orderly man traverse the bridge of mason [...] Furthermore, the vision-soul of the dead person seems to advance [...] in the form of—to quote the Avestan passage HN 2.9—‘a maiden, beautiful, bright, with white arms, strong, well-shaped, well grown, tall, with high (standing) breasts, with a body from song, noble, from a brilliant lineage, fifteen years old in look, in form much more beautiful than the most beautiful creatures.’ Verse 11 of this text develops the relation of the OAv. *daēnā*- with the Zoroastrian ethic triad to their identification. The represented Daēnā to the breath-soul is his/her own thought, word, and deed.<sup>33</sup>

The greatest difficulty with identifying the figure on the right as the Bad Daēnā is her beauty: she is shown as a young female with rosy cheeks. The Bad Daēnā is imagined as an ugly old hag, reflecting the bad deeds of the person who just died. The identification of the figures as the Good and Bad Daēnā/Dēn from Zoroastrianism is also difficult to prove, as no comparable illustrations exist.<sup>34</sup> Azarpay rejects Grenet and Zhang’s identification and says the identification of “[...] ‘bad Dēn’ as opposed to the Zoroastrian ‘good Dēn’ on the left is unsupported by textual sources.”<sup>35</sup> She then identifies the female deity on the right as Nana. Michael Shenkar lists P. 4518 (24) in his important study of Zoroastrian iconography without detailed explanation or references to previous research. He indicates that the figure on the right could be either Daēnā/Dēn or Nana.<sup>36</sup>

33 Kianoosh Rezaia, “‘Religion’ in Late Antique Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism: Developing a Term in Counterpoint,” *Entangled Religions* 11.2 (2020): paragraph 19, accessed May 18, 2020. <https://er.ceres.rub.de/index.php/ER/article/view/8556/8125>. In fn. 28 in this quote, Rezaia also refers to the depiction under consideration here, among others, but without going into detail. He also explains the meaning of *dēn* as “religion”. See also Azarpay, “Imagery of the Sogdian Dēn,” 55–56.

34 *Shervin Farridnejad, Die Sprache der Bilder*. This is a most extensive study with no comparable depictions of Daēnā. Farridnejad does not include representations from China, because much is still debatable.

35 Azarpay, “Imagery of the Sogdian Dēn,” 75.

36 Michael Shenkar, *Intangible Spirits and Graven Images: The Iconography of Deities in the Pre-Islamic Iranian World* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 96, 127.

The identification as Nana is also problematic because the main evidence in support of that argument is the sun and the moon held up in the two upper arms of the female figure. However, none of the other details match representations or descriptions of Nana. Practically all known female deities identified as Nana seem to be seated on a lion, which is actually how Madhuvanti Ghose identifies Nana in a Hindu context.<sup>37</sup> Very few representations of Nana are known without a lion and none with a wolf, a scorpion, and a snake as attributes. Azarpay argues that the Zoroastrians in Dunhuang changed the animal associated with Nana because the lion was too closely associated with Buddhism. This seems a very unlikely reason to me. She also says that the negative attributes (including the wolf) show that Nana is shown here as a goddess who can control the creatures abhorrent to Zoroastrians.<sup>38</sup>

Almut Hintze does not agree with this. She points out that the negative attributes are not compatible with a benevolent deity such as Nana. She has put forward yet another explanation:

Just as the two forces, the creative and the destructive, are presented as 'twins' in an earlier stanza of the same hymn, *Yasna* 30.3, so also the two Daēnās here appear to be mirror-images of one another. However, just like the two antagonistic forces, in reality they are fundamentally different, incompatible with one another and mutually exclusive. The fact that the Daēnās are shown as a pair is explainable within the framework of Zoroastrian dualism. Looking at the Sogdian drawing from an Avestan point of view, the feature of four arms could be an iconographic marker which the Dunhuang Zoroastrians employed to represent a non-Avestan deity of a religion of Indian origin where *devá* means god. The figure on the right would then represent what the Avesta calls the *daēnā daēuuaiiasnanqm*, 'the Belief of those who worship *daēvas*', in the form of a four-armed goddess, a *devī*. The figure on the left, by contrast, personifies the *daēnā māzdaiiasni*, 'the Belief of a person who worships *Mazdā*' and represents the *daēnā* as the *yazata* to whom the 24th day of the Zoroastrian month is dedicated.<sup>39</sup>

37 Madhuvanti Ghose, "Nana: The 'Original' Goddess on the Lion," *Journal of Inner Asian Art and Archaeology* 1 (2006): 97–112. Nana herself is a composite deity with links to other goddesses from Iran, Egypt, and Mesopotamia, which makes the identification as Nana even more complex.

38 Azarpay, "Imagery of the Sogdian Dēn," 75.

39 Hintze, "A Zoroastrian Vision," 92.





FIGURE 5.4A Heavenly Kings (*lokapālas*), pigments on ramie, recto. Toyok  
 OBJ. NR. III 7305 © MUSEUM FÜR ASIATISCHE KUNST, STAATLICHE  
 MUSEEN ZU BERLIN/JÜRGEN LIEPE



FIGURE 5.4B Heavenly Kings (*lokapālas*), pigments on ramie, verso. Toyok  
 OBJ. NR. III 7305 © MUSEUM FÜR ASIATISCHE KUNST, STAATLICHE  
 MUSEEN ZU BERLIN/JÜRGEN LIEPE

This seems to be a very text-based attribution to me, one that assumes high-levels of literacy in the *Avesta* and other Zoroastrian sources in a community where Zoroastrianism did not play a central role. None of the representations securely identified as Daēnā so far contrast a positive Daēnā with a negative counterpart.

Almut Hintze draws attention to the difference in depicting the eyes of the two figures. However, the different eyes cannot have such a drastically different meaning as indicating good and evil and clear mind, as Hintze suggests, since there is a banner painting with two almost identical *lokapālas* on both sides in the Berlin collection: the eyes are depicted in similar contrasting ways, but evidently neither refers to a negative meaning (on one side we see bulging eyes in this case, which is of course to frighten off negative forces) (fig. 5.4a–b).<sup>40</sup>

We can thus conclude that traditional iconographical research comparing the two females to texts and other works of art, for example, from Iranian Zoroastrian sources and Sogdian art, has not brought conclusive evidence and is not convincing. So let us examine the painting with fresh eyes once more.

## 5 Similar Examples from the Turfan Area

Female deities with comparable iconography from the Turfan area have been published by me in some detail and, simultaneously and independently, they were also examined by Bhattacharya-Haesner. Later Almut Hintze cited my research, still these examples are seldom mentioned in China. One reason for this may be that P. 4518 (24) is usually studied only in the context of only Dunhuang art.<sup>41</sup> The comparative examples from the Turfan area published in my book are listed in table 5.1. Since then, I have become aware of

<sup>40</sup> Hintze, “A Zoroastrian Vision,” 84. See Russell-Smith, *Uyghur Patronage*, 103 for further examples from Dunhuang. In Samra Azarnouche and Olivia Ramble, “La Vision zoroastrienne, les yeux dans les yeux. Commentaire sur la Dēn selon Dēnkard III.225,” *Revue de l’histoire des religions* 237.3 (2020): 369–371, Olivia Ramble also describes P. 4518 (24) and considers the links to Dēn and the possibility that the open eyes of the deity on the left symbolise Zoroastrian “vision.” She repeats Hintze’s arguments with regards to this painting and has the same philological approach with an emphasis on Passage 225 of the Dēnkard III, commented for the first time. I would like to thank the anonymous reviewer for drawing my attention to this new publication, which was published after I submitted this article.

<sup>41</sup> Chen Aifeng (陈爱峰) from the Turfan Research Academy intends to address this. I would like to thank him for sending me the first part of his article in preparation. The Chinese translation of my article was only published last year, Russell-Smith (Bi Lilan 毕丽兰), “Qishi yu gongyangren.”

and have examined two further examples of comparable iconography (2 and 6 in table 5.1): one is from in Yarkhoto Cave 4, where identical female deities with snakes appearing behind them in a clouds are depicted on both sides of the entrance to a rear cella, and an interesting example in the newly discovered Toyok Cave 66.<sup>42</sup> Although Toyok Cave 66 is closed to visitors, in 2017 our museum team (three conservators and myself) received special permission to study the wall paintings in that cave temple, together with Chinese colleagues.<sup>43</sup> We assume that this small cave was commissioned for a wealthy and high-ranking person because of the depiction of the donors wearing elegant Uyghur clothing and the amount of gold used.

In Toyok Cave 66, a female with a wolf appears yet again on one side of a door (fig. 5.5), like in the case of the Bezeklik caves listed in my book and in table 5.1. Her animal is quite clearly a grey wolf, and in this case, is shown lying down behind her. Unfortunately, the upper part of the painting has been destroyed, so we cannot see whether the female figure once held the sun and the moon there too. In her hands still visible, she holds a tray of flaming jewels, or *cintāmaṇi*, emphasising a full transformation to a Buddhist context. In this case, on the other side of the door, for the first time, we see the remains not of another female deity (identified as heavenly maiden or *tiannü* (天女) in the report), as in the other instances, but the lower half of a *lokapāla* (fig. 5.6).

In table 5.1, I list examples of other figures that share iconographic features of the deity on the right of P. 4518 (24).<sup>44</sup> As this deity appears in all these instances as one half of a pair, I also list whether she is seemingly duplicated or whether another deity is paired with her.

Many authors investigated the so-called 'Sogdian deities' only within the context of the Dunhuang corpus, unaware of the similarities to representations in the Turfan area. This table demonstrates how closely integrated P. 4518

42 I published Yarkhoto Cave 4 in Lilla Russell-Smith, "Traces of a Goddess: Deciphering the Remains of Buddhist Art in Xinjiang," in *Elegante Zusammenkunft im Gelehrtengarten: Studien zur ostasatischen Kunst zu Ehren von Jeong-hee Kalisch, Elegant Gathering in a Scholar's Garden: Studies in East Asian Art in Honour of Jeong-hee Lee-Kalisch*, ed. Annegret Bergmann, et al. (Weimar: Verlag und Datenbank für Geisteswissenschaften (VDG)), 2015, 30–36. I publish Toyok Cave 66 here for the first time.

43 I would like to thank Xia Lidong (夏立栋) from the Institute of Archaeology at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), Beijing for sending high-resolution images of Toyok Cave 66 immediately after publication of the archaeological report in May 2019, and I would also like to thank Chen Aifeng (Turfan Research Academy) for drawing my attention to this example in 2016.

44 The list is not exhaustive. III 7243, a painting found in Hasar Shahri, will be discussed in a future article.



FIGURES 5.5–6 Heavenly Maiden (left) and Heavenly King (right), wall paintings in Toyok Cave 66

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(24) is with the female deities that have comparable iconography from the Turfan area.

Considering the damaged condition of most of the remains of Uyghur art, it is really surprising how many examples have survived of this female deity in the Turfan area. We can conclude that there are elements that are constant in her appearance: in particular she always appears elegantly dressed like a lady, and, if her head is preserved, she always has a typical Uyghur hairstyle and usually has a halo. Her accompanying animal (if the lower part is preserved) is a wolf or a fierce dog (more about this later). She holds fruits or flaming jewels, except in P. 4518 (24), and she always appears with an accompanying figure, who has changing attributes but is almost always also female (with the exception of Toyok). Apart from the portable examples (P. 4518 (24) and the banner painting from Kočo), the others are all wall paintings from securely Buddhist contexts, where the female deity is always positioned in a very important position: at the entrance to the cave temple or to an inner sanctum (as in Yarkhoto). This emphasises her central role and also that she is different from all known Buddhist deities depicted in a similar position (as, for example, the Heavenly King in Toyok).

The female deity associated with the fierce dog or wolf and snake(s) must have been recognisable to the donors and worshippers in Buddhist settings in the Turfan region, regardless of whether she was paired with another deity or duplicated, as appears to be the case in Bezeklik and Yarkhoto. In contrast to the text-based interpretations listed above, in my opinion, there was no need-to-know scriptural sources to be able to identify these popular images that were so well-known in the Turfan area, and by extension, in Dunhuang. We know what an important role Uyghurs played in 10th-century Dunhuang.<sup>45</sup> This female deity must have originated in a non-Buddhist context. But was this context Zoroastrian?

## 6 Astral Considerations

I referred to the problem of the negative attributes held by the figure on the right: a scorpion or bug-like animal and a snake. The wolf can also have negative connotations.<sup>46</sup>

45 Russell-Smith, *Uyghur Patronage*, 59–76, with further references to historical research listed in the bibliography.

46 Although steppe cultures, including the Tujue (突厥, ancient Turkic groups), had legends describing that their people originated from the wolf, and therefore the wolf's meaning

However, there is one positive context for similar attributes that has not been explored in detail by any author so far: considering that the deity holds the sun and the moon, the above-mentioned animal attributes could also have an astral aspect: the astrological signs Scorpio and Cancer are shown in a very similar way around the 10th century in tombs (e.g., Khitan tombs).<sup>47</sup> The same type of image usually appearing in circles, is also depicted in this way in Tangut paintings and prints that show Tejaprabhā (figs. 5.7–5.8). Famously, these astral images in circles crossed over into Japanese esoteric Buddhist art, where rituals involving stars became very important in some traditions.<sup>48</sup> Viewing this comparative material I developed a hypothesis according to which the female deity on the right of P. 4518 (24) is linked to Buddhist astral rituals. In her hands she holds not only the Sun and Moon, but also Cancer and snake: a zodiacal sign and a frequent astral symbol. In the second part of this article, I list the reasons for this hypothesis.

In Bezeklik Cave 18, I identified a representation of Tejaprabhā accompanied by deities representing the planets and the Chinese zodiac (fig. 5.9).<sup>49</sup> Unfortunately, this wall painting was destroyed during the bombings of the Second World War.

While preparing for this paper, I noticed that in one of the scenes below the main representation of Tejaprabhā and his assembly, we see the small figure of a Brahmin pointing to circles linked with lines in the sky—these can clearly be interpreted as the stars, shown according to the Chinese tradition, such as in the famous Dunhuang star map (fig. 5.10).

We see a small figure floating on a cloud, whose rebirth is about to be foretold based on the positions of the stars. This detail could be a clue for the

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could be positive, in Buddhist contexts, the wolf often has a negative meaning. This was the case for the Uyghurs too, as discussed at the workshop in Bochum. More on this in Russell-Smith, "Gods, Goddesses, Demons, Demonesses."

47 Tansen Sen, "Astronomical Tomb Paintings from Xuanhua: Mandalas?," *Ars Orientalis* 29 (1999): 29–54, especially figs. 2–5, 12.

48 Michelle McCoy, "Astral Visuality in the Chinese and Inner Asian Cult of Tejaprabhā Buddha, ca. 900–1300 AD," (PhD diss., UC Berkeley, 2017), accessed May 18, 2020. <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3db7f5td>. Tejaprabhā assembly, excavated at Karakhoto, Inner Mongolia, now State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, accessed May 21, 2020. <http://hermitagemuseum.org>.

49 Lilla Russell-Smith, "Stars and Planets in Chinese and Central Asian Buddhist Art from the Ninth to the Fifteenth Centuries," *Culture and Cosmos* 10.1–2 (2006): 99–124, accessed May 18, 2020. <http://www.cultureandcosmos.org/issues/vol10.php>. The wall painting was published in Albert von Le Coq, *Die Buddhistische Spätantike in Mittelasien*. Vol. 4 (Berlin: Verlag Dietrich Reimer/Ernst Vohsen, 1934), pl. 22. For an enlargeable picture, see <http://dsr.nii.ac.jp/toyobunko/viewer/index.html?pages=LFB-2/V-4&pos=22&lang=en>, accessed May 18, 2020.





FIGURES 5.7–8 Tejaprabhā assembly, ink and colours on silk, 67 × 104 cm. Karakhoto, ca. 12th c. and detail  
X2424 © STATE HERMITAGE, ST. PETERSBURG



FIGURE 5.9 Tejaprabhā assembly from Bezeklik Cave 18, wall painting destroyed in World War II

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importance of astrologers and possibly the astrologers who cast horoscopes in determining rebirth in Uyghur art and culture.

One of the best examples of the female figures under discussion in this article is in the entrance of Bezeklik Cave 18. She once looked strikingly similar to the female deity on the right in P. 4518 (24) (fig. 5.11).<sup>50</sup>

Today, only her shoes and a part of the wolf or dog's head are left, due to exposure to strong sunlight and erosion by the wind and sand that blew into the open caves before doors were fitted in the 1980s. But Albert Grünwedel could still sketch this figure in the early 20th century. There was a caption next to her, and although the characters are illegible, it does not seem to say Nana.

50 A drawing of the female deity in Bezeklik Cave 18 (in Grünwedel's numbering Anlage 8) was published in Albert Grünwedel, *Altbuddhistische Kultstätten in Chinesisch-Turkistan. Bericht über archäologische Arbeiten von 1906 bis 1907 bei Kuča, Qarašahr und in der Oase Turfan* (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1912), fig. 531.



FIGURE 5.10 Detail from the scene under the Tejabrabhā assembly from Bezeklik Cave 18, wall painting destroyed in World War II

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As we see above, both female deities have a similar headdress and hairstyle, with a straight hairline; they both have four arms, with the upper two holding up the sun and the moon; they have similar clothing, and a wolf or a fierce dog appears behind both of them. The differences are that in the Dunhuang painting, the female deity is shown sitting on the wolf or dog, and her lower two hands are holding animals, including a snake, whilst in Bezeklik the snake appears behind the deity in a cloud, and the dog or wolf also simply stands behind her. There are other examples of similar female deities in Bezeklik Cave 16. There too, these images appeared on the two sides of the entrance to the cave temple. In this case, several fragments of the image of a female with raised arms and an Uyghur hairstyle were found: presumably originally she too held the sun and the moon (fig. 5.13). Another example showed a female deity with a wolf behind her. Only the lower part of this female wearing trousers



FIGURE 5.11 Drawing of a female deity in Bezeklik Cave 18 (in Grünwedel's numbering, Anlage 8)  
GRÜNWEDEL, ALTBUDDHISTISCHE KULTSTÄTTEN, FIG. 531



FIGURE 5.12 Detail of Fig. 5.1, female deity on the right



FIGURE 5.13 Drawing of a female deity in Bezeklik Cave 16  
GRÜNWEDEL, *ALTBUDDHISTISCHE KULTSTÄTTEN*, FIG. 517



FIGURE 5.14 Drawing of a female deity in Bezeklik Cave 16  
GRÜNWEDEL, *ALTBUDDHISTISCHE KULTSTÄTTEN*, FIG. 516

and fashionable shoes typical for an Uyghur woman, was preserved when Grünwedel sketched it, so there is no way to tell whether she too was multi-armed. In view of the other examples however, it is very likely that it was a mirror image of the female opposite with hands held up and with a fashionable Uyghur hairstyle (fig. 5.14).<sup>51</sup>

There are close similarities to Tangut art and iconography in Bezeklik Caves 16 and 18.<sup>52</sup> However, to my knowledge, there are no deities similar to the female figures shown in P. 4518 (24) from Karakhoto, which is further proof

51 Grünwedel, *Altbuddhistische Kultstätten*: 243, figs. 516–517.

52 In a recent article, Kōichi Kitsudō also draws attention to the extreme similarity between the hell scenes from this cave temple (today in Berlin) and a Tangut manuscript. Kitsudō Kōichi 橘堂晃一 and Arakawa Shintarō 荒川慎太郎, “Kanjin jippōkai-zu’ wo meguru shinkenkyū-Seika to Uiguru no jirei wo chūshin ni 「観心十法界図」をめぐり新研究-西夏とウイグルの事例を中心に [New Research on the Guanxin Shifajietu (Illustration of the Ten Realms of Mind Contemplation). The Case of the Xixia and the Uyghur Kingdoms],” *Kokka* 國華 [A Monthly Journal of Oriental Art] 1477 (2018): 5–20.

that these female figures had important meaning specifically for the Uyghurs and not for others, like the Chinese, Tibetans, Tanguts, or even the Sogdians.

In addition to proving the importance of astral images for the Uyghurs, this indirect evidence from Bezeklik Cave 18 strengthens my hypothesis that P 4518 (24) may have been used in a Buddhist star-related ritual.<sup>53</sup>

## 7 Paper: Material for Astrology

Let us consider the format again: a single sheet of paper. P. 4518 (24) is of a small, portable format, so it could have been carried easily from elsewhere. I find it quite surprising how little attention other authors pay to this possibility. I consider this in my book and conclude that the style of the painting is consistent with that of 10th-century Dunhuang, and, therefore, it is likely that it was made there.<sup>54</sup> However, in my opinion, the possibility that it was brought to Dunhuang from elsewhere, for example by Uyghurs from the Turfan area, cannot be excluded completely.

In my opinion, the format of this small painting on paper is not unique, unlike Jiang's suggestion. The painting was first published in a book on monochrome painting from Dunhuang by Jao, as we have seen. Sarah Fraser and others have published many paintings on paper, some of which are preparatory sketches for bigger compositions. Others—especially in this small format—are very much in the same tradition as *maṇḍalas* and horoscopes that were probably made for personal worship and ritual. *Dhāraṇī* talismans were also popular in the 10th century in Dunhuang, some with direct links to astral deities.<sup>55</sup>

In the Museum für Asiatische Kunst, there is also an astrological scroll from the Turfan area that was created by sticking sheets of paper together (fig. 5.15). In this case too, washes of light paint were added to the monochrome painting. Frantz Grenet and Georges-Jean Pinault were the first to realise the astrological

53 Further research will have to be conducted with regards to this question.

54 Russell-Smith, *Uygur Patronage*, 103. Also, Russell-Smith, "Wives and Patrons," 414.

55 For the importance of paper for images used in ritual, see Russell-Smith, *Uygur Patronage*, 136–138. Compare for example, Mercury and Ketu from the British Museum Collection: [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A\\_1919-0101-0-170](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A_1919-0101-0-170), accessed May 18, 2020. Although I recognised the iconography of Mercury, I used the title given in the British Museum database, identifying the lady based on the inscription as the "Pole Star". This was corrected by Jeffrey Theodore Kotyk, "Buddhist Astrology and Astral Magic in the Tang Dynasty" (PhD diss., Leiden University, 2017), 207, accessed May 18, 2020. <https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/handle/1887/54858>.



FIGURE 5.15 Astrological scroll (Detail), ink and colour washes on paper. Turfan region  
 OBJ. NO. III 520 © MUSEUM FÜR ASIATISCHE KUNST, STAATLICHE  
 MUSEEN ZU BERLIN/BIRGIT SCHMIDT

meaning of this scroll.<sup>56</sup> The Chinese text on the other (*verso*) side allows for the reconstruction of the correct order of the sheets, and so the relatively small missing areas can be reconstructed with some precision.<sup>57</sup> According to Grenet, it may be a document to explain astrological symbols. The Tocharian inscriptions leave no doubt as to the identification of the astrological topic: representations of the zodiac and decans (although not each figure has been identified).

- 56 Inv. No. III 520. Frantz Grenet and Georges-Jean Pinault, "Contacts des traditions astrologiques de l'Inde et de l'Iran d'après une peinture des collections de Turfan," *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 141 (1997): 1003–1063, accessed May 18, 2020. [https://www.persee.fr/doc/crai\\_0065-0536\\_1997\\_num\\_141\\_4\\_15801](https://www.persee.fr/doc/crai_0065-0536_1997_num_141_4_15801); see also Frantz Grenet, "The Circulation of Astrological Lore and Its Political Use between the Roman East, Sasanian Iran, Central Asia, India, and the Türks," in *Empires and Exchanges in Eurasian Late Antiquity: Rome, China, Iran, and the Steppe, ca. 250–750*, ed. Nicola Di Cosmo and Michael Maas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 235–252, accessed 18 May 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316146040.019>.
- 57 Valérie Lavoix, "L'Anthologie des belles-lettres," in *La fabrique du lisible—La mise en texte des manuscrits de la Chine ancienne et médiévale*, ed. Jean-Pierre Drège and Costantino Moretti (Paris: Collège de France—Institut des Hautes Etudes chinoises, 2014), 196–200.

Interestingly, a scorpion identified by an inscription as *vršcika*, the zodiacal sign Scorpio, is shown together with a figure holding a snake. This can be identified as one of the decans under the sign of the Scorpio the decan is shown as a figure holding snakes in the Palazzo Schifanoia in Ferrara, proving how enduring this iconography was across a vast geographical area.<sup>58</sup>

Some of the figures depicted wear Indian style *dhotīs* and others more local costumes—the same interesting mixture of local and Indian-style clothing we observe in P. 4518 (24). The similar material, similar painting technique, unusual mixture of clothing within one scene, and unusual attributes link these two paintings.

Seeing these similarities let us investigate further whether P. 4518 (24) could have an astrological meaning?

Grenet briefly raised this possibility, but did not explore it further, which is surprising, especially since he published the astrological scroll at around the same time as researching P. 4518 (24). Grenet and Zhang refer to a loop that is also clearly visible in the newly available photo in the Europeana database.<sup>59</sup> This leads them to consider that this painting may have been used in Zoroastrian processions.<sup>60</sup> I find it unlikely that this small painting was used in actual processions, considering how fragile paper is and since we know that other materials for making banners were available. But the loop may have served for hanging the sketch in ritual use.

Undoubtedly, P. 4518 (24) shows Iranian features and *Formensprache*. But there is another, much more logical way for these characteristics to be present in a small painting that we can associate with Uyghurs in 10th century Dunhuang. This is the role of Manichaeism.

## 8 Possible Role of Manichaeism

The links to Manichaeism have not been sufficiently explored. Manichaeism was present in Dunhuang and, of course, played a major role in Turfan,

58 For links between the decans as depicted in Egypt and in Ferrara, and Aby Warburg's interest in these, see Marco Bertozzi, "Aby Warburg a Palazzo Schifanoia: Cent Anni Dopo," *Schifanoia* 42–43 (2012): 169–185.

59 [http://www.europeana.eu/portal/en/record/9200365/BibliographicResource\\_1000055720803.html#rp=2](http://www.europeana.eu/portal/en/record/9200365/BibliographicResource_1000055720803.html#rp=2), accessed July 8, 2020.

60 Frantz Grenet and Zhang Guangda, "The Last Refuge of the Sogdian Religion: Dunhuang in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries," *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 10 (1996): 181.



especially for the Uyghur ruling class, whose official religion it remained until the late 10th century.<sup>61</sup>

The most important point is, of course, that Manichaeism incorporated many important ideas from Zoroastrianism, including the idea of Daēnā/Dēn.<sup>62</sup> As Christiane Reck points out:

Mani deliberately designed his religion to be syncretic. He wanted his system to incorporate all earlier systems and to be their completion and conclusion. At the same time, he wanted it to be comprehensible to the believers of other religions, and therefore he used their images to illustrate his own concepts. In this, he reached back not only to Judeo-Christianity, in which he grew up, but also to Buddhism and Zoroastrianism. The dualistic approach, cosmogonic ideas, and adoption of the names of Zoroastrian gods, alongside the translation of those names into Syriac-Aramaic, contributed to the Iranian face of Central Asian Manichaeism. In addition, eschatological details are borrowed from the Zoroastrian milieu, such as the Manichaean idea that after the death of the righteous person, the liberated soul encounters his own deeds in the form of a virgin, who accompanies him during his further ascent.<sup>63</sup>

Reck introduces the Sogdian deities painting from Dunhuang in this article and, after some consideration, accepts Grenet's identification of it as Zoroastrian, although not without expressing some doubt, as the attributes are so unusual. She also does not consider the identity of the female figure on the

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61 For this, see Yukiyo Kasai, "Uyghur Legitimation and the Role of Buddhism," in *Buddhism in Central Asia I—Patronage, Legitimation, Sacred Space, and Pilgrimage*, ed. Carmen Meinert and Henrik H. Sørensen (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 69–73.

62 Jason BeDuhn argues that Zoroastrians had to define their religion in the 3rd century, due to challenges from other religions, including Manichaeism, so Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism evolved in a similar way in this period. Jason BeDuhn, "The Co-formation of the Manichaean and Zoroastrian Religions in Third-Century Iran," *Entangled Religions* 11.2 (2020), accessed May 18, 2020. <https://er.ceres.rub.de/index.php/ER/article/view/8414/7832>. I am grateful to Antonio Panaino and Christiane Reck, who emphasised the importance of this new open access volume for my research. This important article was published too late to be considered in detail here.

63 Translated from Christiane Reck, "Die Beschreibung der Daēnā in einem soghdischen manichäischen Text," in *Religious Themes and Texts in Pre-Islamic Iran and Central Asia: Studies in Honour of Professor Gherardo Gnoli on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday on 6th December 2002*, ed. Carlo G. Cereti, et al. (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2003), 332.

right, and simply accepts that she is Nana seated on a wolf, as the focus of her article is the Manichaean Daēnā, so she only considers the figure on the left in detail. As Reck also accepts the Zoroastrian identification for the female deity on the right of P. 4518 (24), I did not pay sufficient attention to this important source when writing my book and simply listed this article as one of the available views.<sup>64</sup> Now, reconsidering the evidence presented by Reck, I think that her article is very important for understanding the background of this painting.

In this article, Reck publishes a fragment from the Ōtani collection, which lists attributes for Daēnā not known so far from Zoroastrian sources, but reminds us of the female deity on the left of P. 4518 (24).

The description of the Daēnā could be enhanced by adding the small fragment from the Ōtani collection. She is described as a wonderful and divine maiden, a virgin, and this corresponds to the image described in the Zoroastrian texts about Daēnā: as a beautiful virgin. While the *Haδōxt* describes her beauty in more detail, here, her attributes are listed: everlasting fruits (?) *myyty* or *mryty*, the drink (*cš'nt*), and a wreath of flowers around the head. The word for drink *cš'nt* can be read without a doubt.<sup>65</sup>

As Reck points out, the lobed Sasanian type bowl in the right hand of the female on the left of P. 4518 (24) may contain a drink, maybe an elixir of life.<sup>66</sup> Because of the mention of eternal fruits, I would like to draw attention again to the banner from Kočo (previously in Berlin and now in the Yale University Art Gallery) (table 5.1 and figs. 5.16–17).<sup>67</sup> It shows a similar deity with four arms who holds the sun and the moon in her two upper arms and fruits on a tray in her two lower arms. Fruits play a central role in Manichaeism, because they are believed to contain light particles or *nous*. On the other side of the banner, there is another female deity with just two arms, who also holds fruits.<sup>68</sup>

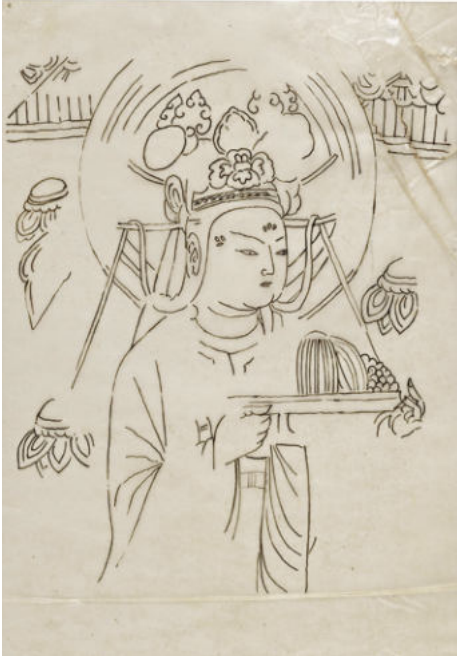
64 I also did not consider this interpretation in detail for the conference paper given at the workshop, but it was briefly mentioned by Peter Zieme in the discussion after my paper.

65 Translated from Reck, "Die Beschreibung der Daēnā," 332.

66 Ibid., 332–333.

67 The banner is currently in the collection of the Yale University Art Gallery (Obj. No. 1937.5576) available online <https://artgallery.yale.edu/collections/objects/58860>, accessed May 22, 2020.

68 There are examples of female deities holding a tray of fruits from Buddhist contexts in Uyghur art: the presence of fruit in those instances indicates a close link between Uyghur Buddhist art and Manichaeism around the 10th century. This will be discussed in a future article.



FIGURES 5.16–17 Drawing of female deities after the two sides of a banner painting from Kočo  
DRAWING BY GRÜNWEDEL (TA 6660 AND TA 6659). © MUSEUM FÜR ASIATISCHE  
KUNST, STAATLICHE MUSEEN ZU BERLIN/JÜRGEN LIEPE

The two female deities fill the main area of the banner. The top of the banner has not survived. Nonetheless, the pronounced use of two large female figures not linked to standard Buddhist iconography makes it likely that this banner was made in the period when Uyghur rulers still supported Manichaeism and may document a transitional phase in early Uyghur Buddhist art. However, there are no specific stylistic details and motifs like the ones Gulácsi listed for identifying Manichaean art, which also makes a Buddhist context likely.<sup>69</sup> It is important to emphasise that this period was a time of interaction. Manichaeism in the Turfan area was increasingly influenced by Buddhist ideas in this late phase.<sup>70</sup>

69 Zsuzsanna Gulácsi, *Medieval Manichaean Book Art: A Codicological Study of Iranian and Turkic Illuminated Book Fragments from 8th–11th Century East Central Asia* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), especially 24–38. See also Zsuzsanna Gulácsi, *Mani's Pictures: The Didactic Images of the Manichaeans from Sasanian Mesopotamia to Uyghur Central Asia and Tang-Ming China* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 209–210. A more detailed discussion of this question is planned in a future article.

70 Reck, “Die Beschreibung der Daēnā,” 324.

## 9 Astrology and Manichaeism

In view of the important new research being published on Manichaean art, following the sensational discoveries of the Song (960–1279, 宋) and Yuan (1279–1368, 元) paintings, which are now in Japanese collections, we are starting to have a much better idea of what Manichaean cosmology was like as a system and how it was shown in visual representations.<sup>71</sup> The role of the sun and the moon was central for Manichaean cosmology—and this can clearly be seen in the so-called ‘Cosmology Painting’, a unique Chinese Manichaean painting, probably dating to the 13th–14th centuries, discovered in Japan.<sup>72</sup> Astrology played an important part in Manichaeism. By the time of Augustine (late 4th–early 5th c.), the Manichaeans developed a considerable reputation, or even notoriety, as astrologers, according to Samuel N.C. Lieu.<sup>73</sup> In the Cosmology Painting, the zodiac (containing demonic representations) is directly above the snakes that symbolise eternal transmigration.<sup>74</sup> Interestingly, this is known from texts:

According to the same manuscript (Henning, 1948, p. 315), below the ten Firmaments were fashioned a rolling wheel and the Zodiac (in Sogdian: Man. *ʿ(n)xrwzn*/Buddh. *ʿnyrwzn*; see Gharib, 2004, pp. 40, 47, 82). Within the Zodiac the demons of Darkness were fettered; here we find also a reference to the negative role of the planets and of the twelve Zodiacal constellations.<sup>75</sup>

This is the basic difficulty: the planets and the zodiac acquired a negative, demonic aspect in Iran, which may be a reason why the astral possibility for P. 4518 (24) was not explored further by other authors. As Antonio Panaino writes:

71 For a discussion of the newly identified paintings, see Gulácsi, *Mani's Pictures*, 244–258.

72 *Ibid.*, 438–484.

73 Samuel N.C. Lieu, *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China: A Historical Survey* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985 (1999 reprint)), 141.

74 For a diagram (with no discussion of the zodiac), see Gulácsi, *Mani's Pictures*, 439. The zodiac is shown in the circle in the center of the lowest firmament of the sky, directly above the atmosphere with the snakes. There, Scorpio is painted in red, for some reason, as the only one of the zodiac signs. Gábor Kósa drew attention to the depiction of the zodiac in this painting in a paper given at the Max Planck Institute in 2018. The paper remains unpublished, but an abstract is available. Accessed May 20, 2020. [https://www.mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de/sites/default/files/201804/abstracts\\_workshop\\_17.pdf](https://www.mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de/sites/default/files/201804/abstracts_workshop_17.pdf).

75 Antonio Panaino, “Zodiac,” *Encyclopædia Iranica* (online), published July 20, 2009, accessed May 20, 2020. <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/zodiac>.

[...] the Manichaeans demonized not only the planets, but also stars and constellations; only the two Luminaries, the Sun and the Moon, were exempted, although this radical process of demonization of the astral beings shows some contradictions. One, and among the most relevant ones, is exactly that of Sadwēs. It is probable that, particularly in the Parthian Manichaean framework, the positive role of Satauaaēsa was separated from that of a proper star, and that his association with Anāhīd determined his equation with the Maiden of Light whose astral function is in any case evident, although, in the Manichaean context, it was no longer properly that of a star as such.<sup>76</sup>

Sadwēs or Satauaaēsa became associated with the Light Maiden, although not in her role as the seducer in the creation myth, as Panaino argues. A connection to the Light Maiden was already recognised by Mary Boyce, when referring to a Parthian Manichaean text from Berlin (M 741).

From the little that is said in the Avesta of Satavaēsa it is clear that this star was honoured as a divinity and regarded as the helper of Tištrya in the bringing of rain to earth [...] The Maiden of Light, in her turn, was a supporting divinity, an evocation not of Zarwān himself, but of the Third Messenger. She was, moreover, the rain-goddess in the Manichaean pantheon [...] [in the *Kephalaia*] it is said that the ‘form of the Maiden of Light’ evokes rain and hail, frost and snow, thunder and lightning from the demon-inhabited clouds.<sup>77</sup>

This recalls the image from Yarkhoto where, behind the female deity’s halo, snake heads appear in swirling clouds (figs. 5,18–19).

Emphasising her role as ‘rain goddess’ the Light Maiden (or the Virgin of the Light) in the Dunhuang Hymn Scroll (9th c.) is referred to as Lightning or Lightning Flash (Chin. Dianming 電明 or Dianguangming 電光明) and Lightning Flash Buddha (Chin. Dianguangfo 電光佛) in Chinese.<sup>78</sup> Swirling

76 Antonio Panaino, “Sadwēs, Anāhīd and the Manichaean Maiden of Light,” in *Der östliche Manichäismus—Gattungs- und Werksgeschichte. Vorträge des Göttinger Symposiums vom 4.–5. März 2010*, ed. Zekine Özertural and Jens Wilkens (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2011), 125–126.

77 Mary Boyce, “Sadwēs and Pēsūs,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 13,4 (1951): 909.

78 Email communication with Gábor Kósa, May 21, 2020. I am extremely grateful to Gábor Kósa for sending me his unpublished article, “The Figure of the Virgin of Light in the New Chinese Manichaica,” just before I submitted this article. Kósa also lists the other



FIGURES 5.18–19 Female deities, wall paintings. Yarkhoto Cave 4  
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FIGURES 5.20–21 Rāhu and Ketu. (Detail of figure 5.7)

clouds and snakes can refer to this association with rain and lightning. At the same time snakes can also be a reference to the demonic nature of the depicted figure, similar to representations of Rāhu and Ketu (symbolising the solar and lunar eclipses) in Tangut art (fig. 5.7 and details in figs. 5.20–21).

As we have seen above, a snake also appears in a cloud behind the female deity from the entrance of Bezeklik Cave 18. This deity had a caption with three Chinese characters in it when Grünwedel copied the wall painting more than one hundred years ago. Today, only part of the wolf can be seen on the wall, even though Grünwedel left the wall painting *in situ*. Due to the bad preservation of the wall painting, the characters were probably already hard to see, and Grünwedel could not read Chinese. The top was damaged, according to Grünwedel's drawing. Grünwedel could be quite reliable when copying Chinese characters, if the iconography could be identified, as in the case of the *nakṣatras* in Sengim. But in this case, without any context, it was difficult for Grünwedel to guess what the worn characters may have referred to (fig. 5.11).<sup>79</sup>

In the Cosmological Painting, which was, of course, influenced by the Buddhist iconography of the Song Dynasty, we see a multi-armed depiction of the Light Maiden. The circular motifs she holds are actually small faces, which, according to Gábor Kósa, symbolise the liberated light particles (because they

known names for the Light Maiden: Syriac: btūlat nūhrā; Coptic: tparcenos Mpouaine; Latin: Virgo lucis; Greek: παρθένος τοῦ φωτός; Middle Persian and Parthian: knygrwšn or qnyg; Sogdian: qnygrwšn; and Uyghur: yašin t(ä)ηri kny rwsn t(ä)ηri.

79 For the *nakṣatra* illustrations, see Albert Grünwedel, *Bericht über archäologische Arbeiten in Idikutschari und Umgebung im Winter 1902–1903* (Munich: Verlag der Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1906), pls. 24–27.

have halos and cloud-like tails).<sup>80</sup> It is possible that the popular female Uyghur deity we examine here also incorporates aspects of the Light Maiden in a new Buddhist context and that the female deity on the right of P. 4518 (24) also refers to an astral aspect of the Light Maiden.<sup>81</sup> The most important example universally accepted as depicting the Light Maiden is an embroidery in the collection of the Museum für Asiatische Kunst (III 6251) (fig. 5.22).

Here the Light Maiden is accompanied by two *electae* (Manichaean female clergy or nuns, who dedicate their lives to liberating the trapped Light in the world, for example, through rituals and eating fruits, which were believed to contain light particles.) Gulácsi identifies further possible representations of the Light Maiden.<sup>82</sup> She writes:

The primary function of the Light Maiden concerns the early stages of personal salvation. She appears to the righteous elect and catechumen at the start of their afterlife with the task of ferrying their souls to the Realm of Light.<sup>83</sup>

This means that the Light Maiden has similarities with Daēnā, and as a major female deity in the Manichaean pantheon, the Light Maiden would be a suitable partner to accompany the Manichaean Daēnā, but so far, no representations showing both of them together are known. More research is needed in this area.<sup>84</sup>

## 10 Sirius the Dog Star or Heavenly Wolf

Considering these clues and that the symbols in the hands of the female on the right P. 4518 (24) may have an astral aspect, we must once again return to the identity of the animal that the female on the right is seated on. It is different

80 Gábor Kósa, "The Iconographical Affiliation and the Religious Message of the Judgment Scene in the Chinese Cosmology Painting," in *San yi jiao yanjiu—Lin Wushu jiaoshou guxi jinian wenji* 三夷教研究—林悟殊教授古稀纪念文集 [Research on the Three Foreign Religions—Papers in Honour of Prof. Lin Wushu on His 70th Birthday], ed. Zhang Xiaogui 张小贵, Wang Yuanyuan 王媛媛, and Yin Xiaoping 殷小平 (Lanzhou: Lanzhou daxue chubanshe, 2014), 142–144.

81 The star Sadwēs was associated with the Light Maiden as we see above in fn. 74.

82 Gulácsi, *Mani's Pictures*, 317 and 400–405.

83 *Ibid.*, 400–401.

84 Gulácsi writes that a comprehensive study on the Light Maiden has yet to be written. *Ibid.*, 400. See also Panaino, "Two Beautiful Maidens," on the astral aspects of the Light Maiden.





FIGURE 5.22 The Light Maiden accompanied by two *electae*, embroidery, found in Kocho, Ruin K, 9th–10th c.

OBJ. NR. III 6251 © MUSEUM FÜR ASIATISCHE KUNST, STAATLICHE MUSEEN ZU BERLIN/JÜRGEN LIEPE



FIGURE 5.23 Astrological scroll (Detail), ink and colour washes on paper. Turfan region  
OBJ. NR. III 520 © MUSEUM FÜR ASIATISCHE KUNST, STAATLICHE  
MUSEEN ZU BERLIN/BIRGIT SCHMIDT

from the dog seated on the tray in the hand of the deity on the left. The way this more ferocious animal is shown is unusual: not only is the female deity riding on it, but also the animal is looking back at her, thereby establishing an important link between the two of them.

This strongly reminds me of the way the dog looks up to one of the deities on the astrological scroll from the Turfan area (fig. 5.23), and in that case, it is clearly a dog of the same type as the one that sits on the tray of the deity on the left in P. 4518 (24). This is, unfortunately, one of the scenes that Grenet and Pinault could not identify with certainty, and in his latest article, Grenet puts a question mark below it.<sup>85</sup>

Previously, Grenet tentatively identified the figure with *Tištrya*, who is Sirius in Iran.<sup>86</sup> We see above that the star *Sadwēs* was originally also linked

85 Grenet, "The Circulation of Astrological Lore," fig. 16.8.

86 Antonio Panaino, *Tištrya, Part II, The Iranian Myth of the Star Sirius* (Rome: Instituto Italiano per il medio ed estremo oriente, 1995). Panaino, "Two Beautiful Maidens," will expand on *Tištrya*. Further aspects of *Tištrya* have been discussed in Matteo Compareti, *The Elusive Persian Phoenix. Simurgh and Pseudo-Simurgh in Iranian Arts* (Persiani: Bologna, 2021), 106–107: "In ancient Mesopotamian religion, the patron of scribes Nabu formed a divine couple with Nana and continued to be represented with his wife in

to Tištrya-Sirius. Sirius is one of the most visible stars in the sky, and as such, it may have been important to the nomadic Turks, who did not name many stars and constellations.<sup>87</sup> The traditional name may have been *ak aygur*, which means White Stallion.

The animal that the female deity on the right of P. 4518 (24) is sitting on, in fact, most probably symbolises Sirius, the dog star, referred to as heavenly wolf (Chin. *tianlang* 天狼) in Chinese. Therefore, the fierce character and blending of dog and wolf may be quite deliberate. In China, this star was not considered part of a constellation, as in Europe, “Lang (Wolf) is equivalent to the brilliant Sirius, the Dog Star. Whereas Sirius is a member of the constellation Canis Major, however, Lang was regarded as an isolated star.”<sup>88</sup>

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Central Asian arts [...] Sogdian artists superimposed the image of local Tish (the Avestan rain god Tishtrya) to Nabu and transformed his stylus (a symbol of the scribes) into an arrow while the mushhushshu became similar to a dog that was another symbol of Tish [...] For some unclear reason, Tishtrya/Tish has been depicted as Greek Artemis on second century Kushan coins and, possibly, his feminine attire continued to persist in Sogdian and Chorasmian art until the Islamization of Central Asia. Feminine Tish and Nana appeared also in a ninth-tenth century paper icon from Dunhuang at present in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (Pelliot Chinois 4518.24) where, however, the canine mushhushshu was omitted.” Multiple processes of assimilation and syncretism of this kind are possible, but as the similarities and differences between Western and Eastern Iran and Eastern Central Asia could not be discussed in detail by Compareti, more detailed research will be needed. A painting in the collection of the Museum für Asiatische Kunst (Inv. Nr. III 7243 and discussed in Chhaya Bhattacharya-Haesner, *Central Asian Temple Banners in the Turfan Collection of the Museum für Indische Kunst, Berlin* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 2003), 35–38 and 124–126), was part of my discussion in an earlier version of this article, but as it displays different iconography, as also mentioned by Compareti in his footnote 532 on p. 22, it would have been difficult to discuss it briefly in this context and will consider it at a future opportunity. I am grateful that the anonymous reviewer drew my attention to these important references. For a new important discussion of Tištrya and his links to Sirius see Antonio Panaino, *Old Iranian Cosmography: Debates and Perspectives* (Milan: Mimesis Edizioni, 2019), 29–32. I would like to thank the author for sending me this publication.

- 87 Imre Gyarmati, “Die Gestirnnamen des Zodiakus in den türkischen Sprachen,” *Acta Orientalia Hungaricae* 40.1 (1986): 54. I would like to thank Peter Zieme for sending me this article. See also Gerard Clauson, *An Etymological Dictionary of Pre-Thirteenth-Century Turkish* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 47. I would like to thank Simone-Christiane Raschmann for this additional reference.
- 88 Francis R. Stephenson, “Chinese and Korean Star Maps and Catalogs. History of Cartography,” in *The History of Cartography, vol. 2—Cartography in the Traditional East and Southeast Asian Societies*, ed. John Brian Harley and David Woodward (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 528.

## 11 Isis-Sothis and Sirius

Interestingly, there is a female deity in Rome in the 2nd–3rd centuries and in Hellenistic Egypt known from coins and small portable objects, shown riding on a rather fierce dog representing Sirius, who looks at her very much like in P. 4518 (24), the painting under consideration here. This is Sothis, a form of Isis: Originally linked to the time in the summer when the Nile brought the long-awaited floods to the land of Egypt. As Silvia Prell writes:

Isis can also be equated with Sothis (Sirius). After a period when the dog star is not visible for about 70 days, it rises in the morning, appearing together with the sun on the horizon, between, between the 17th and 19th of July. The rise of Sothis took place from around 4500 BCE to Roman times, around the beginning of the flood period. [...] A connection between Isis and Sothis is securely proven since the pyramid texts [...]. Because of the connection to Sothis / Sirius, from the 1st Century CE, Isis is also depicted accompanied by a dog on lamps and coins.<sup>89</sup>

On a plate found in Cyprus belonging to this group, Isis-Sothis is seated on a large dog, the “symbol of the dog star Sirius” (fig. 5.24).<sup>90</sup>

The zodiac appears around the edge of another steatite dish, held today in the Getty Museum (fig. 5.25). Here, Isis-Sothis is also seated on a dog, and according to the database, she holds a torch and a cornucopia.<sup>91</sup> Isis-Sothis is, however, most often shown with a musical instrument called the *sistrum*, which was used in the Isis cult, and with a cornucopia in her other hand.

89 Translated from Silvia Prell, “Der Nil, seine Überschwemmung und sein Kult in Ägypten,” *Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur* 38 (2009): 226. See also Merkelbach, Reinhold, *Isis regina—Zeus Sarapis. Die griechisch-ägyptische Religion nach den Quellen dargestellt* (Stuttgart, Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1995), 110–111, figs. 112–113.

90 According to the description in the database, “The figures in relief represent the goddess Isis-Sothis sitting astride a large dog, symbol of the dog star Sirius. Similar votive dishes are found in Egypt, but this is the only example known from Cyprus. Other contemporary stone dishes carved with deities were produced in ancient Gandhāra (modern Pakistan).” Available on the MMA database, Asc No. 74.51.5027/<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/243907?searchField=All&sortBy=Relevance&ft=74.51.5027&offset=0&rpp=20&pos=1>, accessed July 9, 2020.

91 <https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/10592/unknown-maker-cup-with-zodiacal-signs-romano-egyptian-about-ad-150/?dz=0.4368,0.4734,1.92>, accessed May 16, 2020.



FIGURE 5.24 Steatite dish from Kourion, Cyprus, ca. 1st c. BCE–1st c. Egypt, Ptolemaic or Roman period  
METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, ASC NO. 74.51.5027 PUBLIC DOMAIN CC0

It is interesting that plates like this one may have triggered the manufacturing of similar plates in Gandhāra, which is a clue that transmission to Central Asia was possible.<sup>92</sup> As we know, coins are even more suitable for transferring iconographical motifs. On Roman medallions, we can observe both the *sistrum* and the cornucopia. One of these is, today, in the British Museum, and also shows a female seated on a fierce dog symbolising Sirius looking at her (fig. 5.27).<sup>93</sup>

92 Endreffy, Kata, “Gods on the Lotus Flower: Two Stone Dishes with Relief Decoration from Graeco-Roman Egypt,” *Bulletin du Musée Hongrois des Beaux-Arts* 119 (2014): 46.

93 According to the database entry, “Copper alloy medallion. Isis Sothis seated sideways on a dog (Sirius?), running right, holding sistrum in right hand and sceptre in left hand. (reverse) Bust of Faustina II, draped, right, her hair plaited in a bun. (Production date 145–161),” [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C\\_1872-0709-399](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C_1872-0709-399).



FIGURE 5.25 Romano-Egyptian steatite cup with zodiacal signs, dated ca. 150  
OBJECT NUMBER: 83.AA.327, J. PAUL GETTY MUSEUM, DIGITAL IMAGE  
COURTESY OF THE GETTY'S OPEN CONTENT PROGRAM



FIGURE 5.26  
Romano-Egyptian steatite cup with zodiacal signs,  
dated ca. 150. Detail of fig. 5.25  
OBJECT NUMBER: 83.AA.327, J. PAUL GETTY MUSEUM,  
DIGITAL IMAGE COURTESY OF THE GETTY'S OPEN  
CONTENT PROGRAM



FIGURE 5.27 Roman medallion with Isis-Sothis seated on Sirius  
OA 1872,0709.399 © TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM

There are two ways this motif could have influenced iconography as far away as the northern Silk Road. Since small objects can be transported, it is possible that actual examples were brought to the Turfan region or Dunhuang, perhaps from Gandhāra. We can imagine how easily the *sistrum*, which was not known in this area, could be misunderstood as a zodiacal sign, perhaps Cancer, and the cornucopia as a snake, especially as both were already linked in astrological depictions, as we see above. This way, only the sun and moon had to be added in the upper hands to emphasise the astral meaning and to comply with the way deities were frequently shown in Central Asia (especially in Khotan).<sup>94</sup>

Perhaps the time in the year that this deity was associated with could also be a clue to identifying the attribute that the female deity holds in her right hand in P. 4518 (24):

In Greco-Roman times, the sacred date—the beginning of the flood of the Nile—was represented by images of Isis riding on a dog [...]. The ancient Egyptians set this as their New Year's Day, the 19th of July, according to our calendar.<sup>95</sup>

As the animal has no tail, it resembles the zodiacal sign of Cancer more (although occasionally the Scorpio sign is also shown without a tail). The Sun enters Cancer on June 20, and that is the beginning of the summer solstice, which was regarded in several religions in the Hellenistic era as a

94 Links to Khotan will be explored in Russell-Smith, “Gods, Goddesses, Demons, Demonesses.”

95 Translated from Merkelbach, *Isis regina*, 110–111.

very important point in the year, when movement between worlds became possible.<sup>96</sup> In the new cultural context an association with rebirth would be possible. Perhaps this important summer period (June 20–July 22) remained associated with a female deity, originally Isis-Sothis, whose attributes lost their original meaning and were replaced with similar ones that made sense: with Cancer, also associated with this time period in the summer and the snake, one of the most important attributes of some forms of Isis in the Hellenistic period.

The second way of possible transmission is that the astral meaning was familiar to Manichaeans in Egypt in the 3rd century when Isis-Sothis was still well known there. Recent publications on Medinet Madi and the small but excellent exhibition in Dublin on Māni (*The Mystery of Mani, Rediscover the Manichaean Religion through the Words of Its Followers*) make it abundantly clear how close the connections between the Coptic Christian and Coptic Manichaean communities were.<sup>97</sup> It is also known that Egyptian ideas of astrology, such as the decans, influenced the development of iconography, spreading in all directions, as we see in the case of the astrological scroll, this tradition was also known in the Turfan area.<sup>98</sup> Furthermore, Isis was still well-known in the 6th century in Egypt, as Christian Coptic talismanic *ostraca* prove, according to a very recent study.<sup>99</sup> It is clear that these interconnecting links need further research.

In the cultural milieu of the Manichaean Uyghurs on the northern Silk Road, a depiction of Sothis linked to the stars could be adapted to local beliefs.

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- 96 For example, in Mithraism, Robert Hannah cites Porphyry (234–305), a Neoplatonic philosopher who also writes about the cult of Mithras. He describes Capricorn and Cancer as two gates, “[...] Plato called them openings [as of a cave] [...] the gate through which souls descend is Cancer, but they ascend through Capricorn. [...]” (Porphyry, *de Antro*, 22–23). [...] [A]ccording to Porphyry, in Mithraic belief, the midsummer solstice was regarded as the point of entry for souls from heaven into this world and represented *genesis*. Here the sun was in Cancer in June and at its most northerly, and suited for descent into this world. At the midwinter solstice, on the other hand, there lay the point of re-entry to heaven, which was called *apogenesis*, the return from *genesis*. The sun was in Capricorn in December at its most southerly and suited to ascent into the upper world. [...] But this reference to Mithraism is just a particular instance of a general belief, that the solstitial points represent gateways for entry into this world and exit from it.” Robert Hannah, “From Here to the Hereafter: *Genesis* and *Apogenesis* in Ancient Philosophy and Architecture,” *Insights* (University of Durham, E-Journal) 6 (2013): 5–6, accessed July 10, 2020. <https://www.dur.ac.uk/ias/insights/volume6/article4/>.
- 97 See the webpage, which includes a link to a virtual tour, accessed May 16, 2020. <https://chesterbeatty.ie/exhibitions/the-mystery-of-mani/>.
- 98 The decan with the snake linked to Scorpio is depicted in Turfan and also in renaissance painting in the Palazzo Schifanoia in Ferrara, as we see above in fn. 59.
- 99 Lincoln Blumell and Korshi Dosoo, “Horus, Isis, and the Dark-Eyed Beauty. A Series of Magical Ostraca in the Brigham Young University Collection,” *Archiv für Papyrusforschung* 64 (2018): 199–259.



The links between the female deity in the Dunhuang painting and Isis-Sothis is a hypothesis that I first investigated over twenty years ago. Then I discarded the idea, as it seemed impossible to prove the connection from 1st–3rd-century Rome and Egypt to 10th-century Dunhuang and Turfan. New research becoming available now makes it easier to look for further evidence.<sup>100</sup> Tentatively, I would now identify the figure on the left of P. 4518 (24) as the Manichaean Daēnā, holding a bowl, possibly containing the elixir of life, and a small dog on a tray. On her right, we see an astral deity holding the Sun and the Moon in her upper hands. Aspects of Isis-Sothis seated on Sirius are possibly merging here with aspects of the Light Maiden, who was connected to Sadwēs and so to Tištrya (also Sirius). The pronounced role of the Light Maiden, accompanied by female attendants, may have contributed to the continuing popularity of this female deity, who almost always appears together with another female.<sup>101</sup>

The Sun is connected to the zodiac: it is, therefore, fitting that the female deity on the right of P. 4518 (24) holds the sign that most probably depicts the zodiacal sign for Cancer. On the side of the Moon, the snake might represent the lunar *nakṣatra āśleṣā* (Chin. *liu* 柳, Skt. *āśleṣā*), which was linked to Cancer.<sup>102</sup> This connection was well-known in the Turfan area too.<sup>103</sup> We see evidence for this in the arrangements of the wall paintings in Sengim Cave 6, also from the Turfan area. We recently prepared a preliminary reconstruction of the now mostly destroyed wall paintings of this cave temple.<sup>104</sup>

100 I discussed this idea briefly around 1996, during my PhD at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, with Madhuvanti Ghose (then a fellow PhD candidate, since 2007 to the present the Alsdorf Associate Curator of Indian, Southeast Asian, Himalayan, and Islamic Art at the Art Institute of Chicago), who first drew my attention to Isis-Sothis, and with Professor A.D.H. Bivar, who urged me to prove the missing links.

101 These aspects will be explored further in Russell-Smith “Gods, Goddesses, Demons, Demonesses” and Panaino, “Two Beautiful Maidens.”

102 This could even refer to a specific time in the year, like in horoscopes. The research of texts that can be identified as horoscopes in Dunhuang is a completely new area of research. Participants in a workshop at the Max Planck Institute in Berlin in July 2019, described these as typically also written on paper and linked to the most important donors, such as the Cao family. Examples were also discussed during the opening workshop [https://www.mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de/sites/default/files/2019-06/for\\_admin\\_flyer.pdf](https://www.mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de/sites/default/files/2019-06/for_admin_flyer.pdf) and the closing workshop on July 31, 2019.

103 I would like to thank Bill Mak for some of this information, which he conveyed by email after I presented an earlier version of this paper at Cambridge in February 2020, at Imre Galambos’s invitation. At that time, we discussed Scorpio. He writes, “The scorpion and the snake may represent the Ascendent sign (Skt. *vr̥ścika* being lagna) and the lunar *nakṣatra* (being the natal lodge) of someone, respectively. This would correspond to the Sun (being solar, connected to zodiac signs) and the Moon (being lunar, connected to the *nakṣatras*).”

104 Copies by Grünwedel show *nakṣatras* with star formations and names in Chinese and Uyghur, where they were still legible. Grünwedel subsequently identified each *nakṣatra*

## 12 Conclusion

Checking all literature available to me in preparation for this article, several issues became clear: there is no consensus to date about the meaning of P. 4518 (24), not even among those who argue for a Zoroastrian background. We also saw that the beautiful and young appearance and elegant clothes of the female deity on the right makes a negative interpretation problematic. Equally problematic is the identification as Nana, based on the negative attributes she holds and since she is not seated on a lion. It is also important that most authors investigated P. 4518 (24) only in a Dunhuang context, and even if they acknowledge links to the Turfan area, the very closely related examples from Bezeklik are rarely mentioned. The examples from Yarkhoto and from Toyok are added here, for the first time in a systematic study.

It is important to emphasise again that, although this iconographic type seems very popular in the Turfan area, as the many examples found in the rather badly preserved caves prove (tab. 5.1), there are no other examples known from Dunhuang, even though the wall paintings in the Dunhuang Caves and paintings on silk from Dunhuang are far better preserved than almost everything known from the Turfan area. Because of this, we can conclude that the deity is associated with the Uyghurs. At the same time, of course, Dunhuang in the 10th century was ruled by the Cao family, who may have had a Sogdian origin and intermarried with Uyghur and Khotanese princesses. The many layers of cultural interaction we observe can be supported with historical sources.<sup>105</sup> Multiple identities for the elite in Dunhuang was probably the norm rather than the exception, and P. 4518 (24) is an example of this, forcing us to think across the embedded categories of standard religious iconography. Multiple identities, however, did not mean that belonging to groups was meaningless or interchangeable.<sup>106</sup> With the help of clothing, preferred identities could be emphasised: this small painting was made for somebody for

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in Chinese and in Sanskrit. Grünwedel, *Bericht*, pls. 24–27. I would like to thank Caren Dreyer for researching the cave and preparing the reconstruction. See Lilla Russell-Smith, “Reconstruction of the Naksatra Cave Temple (Turfan, Sengim): Indian Astrology on the Silk Road,” in *Connecting the Art, Literature, and Religion in South and Central Asia: Festschrift für Monika Zin (60. Geburtstag)*, ed. Ines Konczak-Nagel, Satomi Hiyama, and Astrid Klein (New Delhi: Dev Publishers, 2022).

105 Russell-Smith, *Uyghur Patronage*, 58–68.

106 We know from historical sources that wives could dress in Chinese or Uyghur attire, and that this had great significance to them. For example, the Tang Chinese Imperial Princess Taihe (fl. 9th c., 太和) was sent to marry a ruler of the Uyghurs at the time of the Uyghur Empire in 822. She was expected to remove her Tang clothing and put on ‘barbarian clothes,’ “She removed what she had previously been wearing and put on the clothes of a khatun, a single-coloured robe and a large mantle, both crimson, and a golden decorated



FIGURES 5.28–29 (Detail of figure 5.1) Fragment of a Manichaean scroll, ink and colour washes on paper. Kočo  
 OBJ. NR. III 4614 © STAATLICHE MUSEEN ZU BERLIN, MUSEUM FÜR ASIATISCHE KUNST/JÜRGEN LIEPE

whom it was important that an elegant lady—as appropriate for an important Uyghur goddess—was wearing a specifically Uyghur headdress, as opposed to a Chinese, Khotanese, or even a local hybrid Dunhuang one. It is important to notice these details in our research, to understand the exact position of a donor in the local hierarchy, and compare the evidence provided by the clothing to written sources, if possible.<sup>107</sup>

In 10th-century Dunhuang, P. 4518 (24) may have been commissioned by a Buddhist Uyghur donor who was still very much influenced by Manichaean

head-dress, pointed in front and straight behind" (*Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書 [Old Book of the Tang Dynasty] 195, 12a). See Russell-Smith, *Uyghur Patronage*, 37–38.

<sup>107</sup> Further research is needed here. See also Russell-Smith, "Gods, Goddesses, Demons, Demonesses."

thought. It is less likely, but also possible, that he or she was a Manichaean Uyghur who was already deeply influenced by Buddhist ideas of rebirth. The clothing of the female deity on the left is similar to the clothing of the two figures in a Manichaean monochrome painting in the Berlin Collection. The bodies especially, with armour-like decoration under the breast line and on the arms, is comparable (fig. 5.29).

Alternatively, in view of the paintings on paper from the Turfan area, the possibility that P. 4518 (24) was made in Turfan and then brought to Dunhuang cannot be completely excluded. In any case, if our reasoning is right, the small painting is further proof of a thriving Uyghur community in Dunhuang, one with links to Manichaeism and Buddhism. Most importantly P. 4518 (24) cannot simply be taken as proof for the existence of a Sogdian Zoroastrian community in Dunhuang in the 10th century.

Although the figure on the left of P. 4518 (24) may be the Manichaean Daēnā, it does not match with the exact descriptions known so far. The female on the right also cannot be identified with certainty as either the Light Maiden or a specific astral deity like Isis-Sothis, but the astral meaning is worth exploring, since none of the other theories explain the otherwise-negative aspects of the attributes in the hands of a young female with rosy cheeks, elegant dress, and a halo behind her head.<sup>108</sup> Cancer, as a zodiacal sign, is linked with the Sun; the snake, as a lunar lodge, is linked with the Moon; the dog, looking up to the female figure, probably symbolises Sirius, the dog star. These are our clues. If we accept that these attributes are astral symbols, then they are positive rather than negative and helpful when used in ritual or worship. It is also worth considering that astral images often did not have a clear association with any religion. Therefore, it is imaginable that a popular deity with astral symbolism could be incorporated as a guardian of Buddhist spaces in Bezeklik, like other popular deities. By the time this deity was depicted in Toyok, she probably completely lost its original meaning but kept the animal attribute—depicted as a grey wolf. In Buddhist art, there are many examples of incorporating local deities in a guardian function.

I have raised more questions than I can solve here. Ideally, a document that confirms my tentative interpretation might be identified from Dunhuang or the Turfan area. However, it is also possible that no such written sources exist. In any case, it is good to exercise caution when the evidence is not conclusive and revisit identifications that have become embedded, and it is a good idea to work in teams across scholarly traditions, as syncretic art presents so many possibilities.

<sup>108</sup> This is further investigated in Panaino, "Two Beautiful Maidens."

## Appendix

TABLE 5.1 Deities with similar iconography from the Turfan area and Dunhuang





Female deity under investigation (left)	Attributes	Female deity under investigation (right)
<p>1</p> 	<p>Halo</p> <p>Uyghur water-drop-shaped headdress</p> <p>Uyghur hairstyle</p> <p>Elegant robes, typical of a high-ranking lady</p> <p>Upper two hands holding a sun and a moon</p> <p>Lower two hands holding fruits</p>	 <p>Verso side, cf. fig. 5.17 above</p>
<p>2</p>  <p>Yarkhoto Cave 4, cf. fig. 5.18 above</p>	<p>Halo</p> <p>Uyghur hairstyle</p> <p>Snakes in a cloud</p> <p>Only two hands visible and remaining, those hold fruits</p> <p>Elegant robes, typical of a high-ranking lady</p>	 <p>Yarkhoto Cave 4 Opposite, cf. fig. 5.19 above</p>

TABLE 5.1 Deities with similar iconography from the Turfan area and Dunhuang (*cont.*)





Female deity under investigation (left)	Attributes	Female deity under investigation (right)
3	<p>Left: Uyghur hairstyle</p> <p>Four hands, in upper two hands probably holding sun and moon.</p> <p>Right: Only lower part was visible 100 years ago, today only the shoes survive</p>	
<p>Bezeklik Cave 16 After Grünwedel, cf. fig. 5.13 above</p>	<p>Wolf or fierce dog behind a female deity</p> <p>Elegant robes, typical of a high-ranking lady</p>	<p>Bezeklik Cave 16 opposite After Grünwedel, cf. fig. 5.14 above</p>
4	<p>Halo</p> <p>Uyghur waterdrop shaped headdress</p> <p>Uyghur hairstyle</p> <p>Elegant robes typical of a high-ranking lady</p> <p>Sun and moon in upper two hands</p> <p>Lower two hands Cancer and snake</p> <p>Seated on a wolf or fierce dog, possibly Sirius</p>	 <p>Female deity, ink and colours on paper, recto, P. 4518 (24) right side. Detail of fig. 5.1a</p>

TABLE 5.1 Deities with similar iconography from the Turfan area and Dunhuang (*cont.*)

Female deity under investigation (left)	Attributes	Female deity under investigation (right)		
5		<p>Uyghur waterdrop shaped headdress</p> <p>Uyghur hairstyle</p> <p>Elegant robes, typical of a high-ranking lady</p> <p>Upper two hands holding a sun and a moon</p> <p>Lower two hands holding flaming jewels (<i>cintāmaṇi</i>)</p> <p>Snake in clouds</p> <p>Wolf or fierce dog behind deity</p>	<p>A similar female figure (now lost), according to Grünwedel</p>	
<p>Female deity Bezeklik Cave 18 after Grünwedel, cf. fig. 5.11 above</p>	6		<p>Left: Only lower part preserved</p> <p>Elegant robes, typical of a high-ranking lady</p> <p>Lower (?) two hands holding flaming jewels (<i>cintāmaṇi</i>)</p>	
<p>Toyok Cave 66, cf. fig. 5.5</p>	<p>Wolf or fierce dog behind deity</p>	<p>Toyok Cave 66 opposite, cf. fig. 5.6</p>		

**PART 2**

*Practices and Rituals*







# Seeking the Pure Land in Tangut Art

*Michelle C. Wang*

## 1 Introduction

One's fate in the afterlife was an abiding concern of devotees across Buddhist cultures. The search for the pure land inspired a vast range of visual and material expressions, from paintings of bodhisattvas to relief sculptures of the wheel of rebirth. Ritual and religious practices ranged from daily practice and pre-mortem preparations to deathbed veneration and post-mortem offerings, all of which could be carried out collectively by devotees and their loved ones. Even given the vast array of soteriological options across medieval Asia, however, one object of devotion remained constant: Amitābha Buddha of the Western Pure Land.

This paper focuses on a small group of paintings in the collection of the Hermitage, originally recovered from Karakhoto, that feature Amitābha Buddha receiving the soul of a devotee into his Western Pure Land. These works are known as welcoming descent paintings (Chin. *laiyingtu* 來迎圖, Jap. *raigōzu*) (fig. 6.1). The first part of my paper delves into questions of visual and religious transmission that have attended the study of Tangut paintings. Based upon stylistic and iconographic features, these and other paintings have figured prominently in discourses concerning the Chinese or Tibetan stylistic origins of Tangut art. The second half, in turn, makes the case that artistic materials and techniques are equally vital to our understanding of transcultural transmission. Not only was the intermedial circulation of visual motifs important for the transmission of the welcoming descent motif, but the paintings from Karakhoto are distinguished materially from welcoming descent paintings produced elsewhere in Asia.

This set of objects presents a unique opportunity for thinking through the stakes of transcultural research, especially concerning assumptions regarding the origins and afterlives of images, which intersect with the concerns of the global and the local. Previous scholarship on these paintings has positioned them in between Song China (960–1279, 宋) and Koryŏ Korea (936–1392, 高麗國). The paintings, then, purportedly stand not only between distinct visual cultures (China and Tibet) but also between temporal and regional Buddhisms



FIGURE 6.1 Greeting the righteous man on the way to the Pure Land of Amitābha, roll on linen, 84.8 × 63.8 cm (with original border 99 × 63.8 cm). Karakhoto, 13th c. X2411, THE STATE HERMITAGE MUSEUM, ST. PETERSBURG

(Song China and Koryŏ Korea). Here, it is useful to bear in mind Naomi Standen's interrogation of "[...] standard definitions of categories like states, ethnicity, religion [...]" in the pursuit of more interconnected histories.<sup>1</sup>

Even prior to the recent scholarly turn toward global art history, Buddhism and its visual cultures offered a readymade model for thinking through transculturalism that has not yet perhaps been fully exploited or complicated. Consider, for example, the following statement by the Islamic art historian David Roxburgh:

The perpetually global nature of Islam—from the seventh century through the modern period—might in fact offer models to some other fields of art history that are now, somewhat belatedly, adopting similar approaches to their materials in recognition of the impact of their individual historiographies, the obfuscation and occlusion of artistic interactions because of nationalism, medium-specific approaches, distinctions between the fine, industrial, and decorative arts, and so on.<sup>2</sup>

It is precisely the focus on the 'individual' character of artistic interactions that is lost by an easy emphasis on the homogeneity of Buddhist cultures across Asia.<sup>3</sup>

A second, related concern is that transcultural transmission needs both a starting point and an end point. For too long, the *locus classicus* of Buddhism was the heartland of India; such views were only fairly recently challenged by the discovery of Buddhist manuscripts in the desert oasis cities of central Asia which pointed to their mediating role in the translation and transmission of

1 Naomi Standen, "Colouring Outside the Lines: Methods for a Global History of Eastern Eurasia," *Transactions of the RHS* 29 (2019): 27. Pay particular attention to the following statement made by Standen (*ibid.*, 28): "I am currently writing a global history of eastern Eurasia between 600 and 1350, without using the word 'China.'" See also Alicia Walker, "Globalism," *Studies in Iconography* 33 (2012): 183–196.

2 David Roxburgh, "Review: Art, Trade, and Culture in the Islamic World and Beyond: From the Fatimids to the Mughals: Studies Presented to Doris Behrens-Abouseif by Alison Ohta, J.M. Rogers, and Rosalind W. Haddon, ed.," *Middle East Studies* 53.1 (2019): 140.

3 See, for example: "A culture that is 'cosmopolitan' or 'international' is marked by a shared political order, set of beliefs, language, and/or aesthetics [...]. I argue that this homogeneous, cosmopolitan Buddhist art style that held sway in East Asia for about a century was underscored by the common ideal or utopia of a 'Buddhist state' or 'Buddhist empire.'" In Dorothy C. Wong, *Buddhist Pilgrim-Monks as Agents of Cultural and Artistic Transmission: The International Buddhist Art Style in East Asia, ca. 645–770* (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2018), 2.

Buddhist texts eastward into China.<sup>4</sup> The discourse of localisation, which gestured toward the sinicisation of foreign forms, has also privileged the cultures of settled states and major dynasties versus those of nomadic or border regimes.<sup>5</sup> This dynamic is revisited time and again in discourses of Tangut art, which emerged with the appearance of the Tangut people in the late 10th to early 11th centuries (in the western part of present-day Gansu (甘肅) province) and the establishment of the Tangut Kingdom in 1038 with its capital in Xingqing (興慶) (present-day Yinchuan (銀川), Ningxia Autonomous Region).<sup>6</sup> Not only was the Tangut state (ca. 1038–1227, in Chinese sources known as Xixia 西夏) surrounded by the Chinese and Tibetans, but those states had much longer sedentary histories than did the Tanguts, and their own visual traditions. While the presence of Chinese and Tibetan Buddhist monks or artists in the Tangut heartland must be acknowledged, so must the agency and innovations of Tangut devotees and donors.<sup>7</sup>

In this paper, I examine paintings of Amitābha's welcoming descent from Song China and from medieval Japan and Korea, not only to hypothesise about possible paths of transmission, but also to examine them in a comparative context. That is to say, by looking at Tangut Pure Land paintings against those of the Tangut state's immediate neighbours, we can gain a clearer sense of their unique particularities which emerged from 'local,' not just 'localised' contexts and distinct phenomenological demands and possibilities.

## 2 Amitābha's Welcoming Descent

The corpus of Amitābha paintings from Karakhoto focuses on two distinct motifs, the first of which is Amitābha in the Western Pure Land and the second of which is Amitābha's welcoming descent from the Western Pure Land. One might say that Amitābha was more or less a moving target, as devotees could aspire to an encounter with the buddha through contemplation of the

4 See, for example, Valerie Hansen, "The Path of Buddhism into China: The View from Turfan," *Asia Major Third Series* 11.2 (1998): 37–66.

5 The term 'localisation' often appeared in tandem with discourses of 'sinicisation' in earlier scholarship on Buddhist art; see, for example, Ning Qiang, *Art, Religion and Politics in Medieval China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), 5, 77.

6 Yu-Min Lee, "Amitābha Paintings from Khara Khoto," *National Palace Museum Bulletin* 31.6 (1997): 1. According to Lee, "Tangut Buddhism developed in the shadow of China and Tibet." See Lee, "Amitābha Paintings from Khara Khoto," 2.

7 Craftsmen from the Northern Song court were requested by the Tangut in 1063. *Xi Xiaji* 西夏紀 [The Tangut Records] as cited in Lee, "Amitābha Paintings from Khara Khoto," 10, n. 39.

Western Pure Land during life, at the moment of their death, or upon their rebirth in the Western Pure Land.<sup>8</sup> Regardless of the motif, visual representations of both were characterised by a remarkable sense of immediacy, as will be further discussed.

Paintings of Amitābha in the Western Pure Land typically showed him seated frontally facing on a lotus throne in between the Bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta (fig. 6.2). The hieratic scale between the buddha and bodhisattvas is reinforced as the latter turn their bodies toward the buddha in a three-quarter pose of adoration. The lotus pedestals of the three deities emerge from a single stalk that rises from a lotus pond. In the lotus pond are miniscule images of the souls being reborn in the Western Pure Land from lotus buds (fig. 6.3). As these two paintings indicate, there were variations in material support, style, and ancillary motifs.

Paintings of Amitābha's welcoming descent in the Hermitage were also executed on a diverse range of material supports: portable paintings made on silk, hemp, as well as mural paintings. These images, too, display several consistent features. The first of these is the descent of Amitābha on a swirl of clouds from the upper right corner of the pictorial frame (fig. 6.1). In front of him, and standing also on the same mass of clouds, are the Bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta, who together hold a lotus pedestal in their hands. As noted by other scholars, a distinctive motif is the appearance of the deceased in the lower left corner, and again alighting on the lotus pedestal held by the two bodhisattvas.<sup>9</sup> Yet another is the leftward-facing orientation of the buddha and bodhisattvas. In extant works, the deceased is a layman (fig. 6.1, 6.4), a female-male couple (fig. 6.5), or a monk (fig. 6.6).

As earlier noted, the discourse on Tangut paintings of Amitābha's welcoming descent has been dominated by the question of their models. In terms of the chronology of these images in East Asia, one of the earliest might have been a mural painting on the west wall of the Northern Song Dynasty (960–1126, 北宋) Kaihua Temple (開化寺), located in Gaoping (高平), Shanxi province (fig. 6.7).<sup>10</sup> In the upper section of the mural painting, a buddha in three-quarter profile descends on a trail of clouds and hovers just above the

8 Jimmy Yu, "Pure Land Devotion in East Asia," in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to East and Inner Asian Buddhism*, ed. Mario Poceski (Chichester; Malden: John Wiley & Sons Inc., 2014), 201–220 provides a helpful overview of the multiplicity of pure land discourses in Asia, problematizing the sectarian history of Pure Land Buddhism and urging attention instead to devotion to Amitābha Buddha and the goal of rebirth in his Western Pure Land. My thanks to an anonymous reviewer of this article for the reference.

9 Lee, "Amitābha Paintings from Khara Khoto," 12.

10 Lee, "Amitābha Paintings from Khara Khoto," 10.



FIGURE 6.2 Pure Land of Amitābha, roll on silk, 58 × 34 cm. Karakhoto, 13th–14th c. X2422, THE STATE HERMITAGE MUSEUM, ST. PETERSBURG



FIGURE 6.3 Pure Land of Amitābha, *thangka* on canvas, 76 × 43 cm. Karakhoto, late 12th–13th c.

X2349, THE STATE HERMITAGE MUSEUM, ST. PETERSBURG





FIGURE 6.4 Greeting the righteous man on the way to the Pure Land of Amitābha, roll on silk, 32 × 19.5 cm. Karakhoto. 13th c. (?)

X2477, THE STATE HERMITAGE MUSEUM, ST. PETERSBURG

heads of a group of richly dressed women standing below, none of whom seem to be aware of his presence. A ray of light emits from the buddha's *ūrṇā*, the spiral at the forehead, and shoots directly toward a male figure who is lifted above a lotus pedestal by gathering clouds. The rapport between this figure and the buddha seems to echo that of Amitābha Buddha and the deceased in



FIGURE 6.5 Amitābha appearing before worshippers, roll on silk, 125 × 64 cm. Karakhoto, 12th–13th c.  
X2416, THE STATE HERMITAGE MUSEUM, ST. PETERSBURG



FIGURE 6.6 Greeting the righteous man on the way to the Pure Land of Amitābha, roll on canvas, 142.5 × 94 cm. Karakhoto, 13th c.

X2410, THE STATE HERMITAGE MUSEUM, ST. PETERSBURG



FIGURE 6.7 Detail from buddha preaching scene, west wall of Kaihua Temple, Chinese, mural painting, Gaoping, Shanxi province

the Tangut welcoming descent paintings. However, the buddha is not attended by bodhisattvas, as is the case with Amitābha. Furthermore, the status of the male figure as having originally been supported by a lotus pedestal seems to rule out his identification as a lay follower, as none of the other figures milling around him stand upon lotus pedestals. Therefore, it is difficult to identify this visual motif with certainty as Amitābha of the welcoming descent.

In fact, the visual motif of Amitābha of the welcoming descent did not flourish until the Southern Song Dynasty (1127–1179, 南宋) (fig. 6.8–6.9), and is



FIGURE 6.8 Buddha Amitābha descending from his Pure Land, hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, 135.9 × 58.4 cm, with mounting and knobs 243.2 × 85.1 cm, 13th c. 1980.275, METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, THE DILLON FUND GIFT



FIGURE 6.9 Amitābha trinity descending on clouds, hanging scroll, ink, color, and gold on silk, 97.1 × 53.8 cm, 12th c.  
09.86, MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS BOSTON, DENMAN WALDO ROSS COLLECTION

closely related to materials from medieval Japan (fig. 6.10) and Korea (fig. 6.11).<sup>11</sup> The modern scholarship on these paintings has hypothesised about the origins and circulation of welcoming descent imagery. For example, Lee Yu-min considered whether the origins of the imagery lay in Northern or Southern Song paintings. As she notes, the Tangut welcoming descent paintings were little known outside of Russia until they were displayed in the traveling exhibition *Lost Empire of the Silk Road—Buddhist Art from Khara Khoto* in Europe and Taiwan in 1993–1994. Before then, because the genre was better known from extant Japanese paintings, Japanese scholars argued from the 1940s onward that the motif had first appeared in Japan.<sup>12</sup>

In articles published only a few years after that landmark exhibition, Lee assessed catalogue essays written by the Russian scholars Maria Rudova and Kira F. Samosyuk, both of whom posited that the welcoming descent motif was based upon Song or Southern Song models.<sup>13</sup> Lee endeavored to uncover whether the prototypes of Tangut welcoming descent imagery lay in Northern or Southern Song paintings, and whether “Hsi-Hsia works [should] be considered extensions of Song painting into a peripheral region, and thus only a footnote to Chinese Buddhist painting?”<sup>14</sup> Ultimately, Lee concluded that Tangut and Southern Song welcoming descent paintings both originated from a Northern Song model but that the compositional differences between them could be explained by their subsequent development into independent traditions.<sup>15</sup> Her argument rests largely on chronology, since the earliest Tangut welcoming descent paintings date to the early twelfth century, or the end of the Northern Song. This is despite her acknowledgment that “[...] unfortunately, no Northern Song *lai-ying* paintings have survived to date.”<sup>16</sup>

On the other hand, scholars of Japanese and Korean art and Buddhism believe that Tangut paintings might have been the source of welcoming descent compositions in Goryeo painting. Following Ide Seinosuke, Richard

11 A detail from the Tang Dynasty Mogao Cave 431 shows the deceased ascending but not the welcoming descent of Amitābha. See Li Yumin 李玉珉, “Heishuicheng chutu Xixia Mituohua chutan 黑水城出土西夏彌陀畫初探 [Preliminary Study of Tangut Amitābha Paintings Excavated from Khara Khoto],” *Gugong xueshu jikan* 故宮學術季刊 [The National Palace Museum Research Quarterly] 13.4 (1996): 1–50; fig. 1.

12 Lee, “Amitābha Paintings from Khara Khoto,” 2. See footnote 3 on the same page for a survey of the relevant Japanese-language scholarship.

13 Lee, “Amitābha Paintings from Khara Khoto,” 3 and nos. 4–5. See also Li, “Heishuicheng chutu Xixia Mituohua chutan,” 14.

14 Lee, “Amitābha Paintings from Khara Khoto,” 3.

15 Yu-Min Lee, “Amitābha Paintings from Khara Khoto (continued),” *National Palace Museum Bulletin* 32.1 (1997): 16–33, especially 17–18, 26.

16 Lee, “Amitābha Paintings from Khara Khoto (continued),” 18.



FIGURE 6.10

Welcoming descent of Amitābha Buddha, hanging scroll, gold ink, cut-gold leaf (kirikane), and color on indigo dyed silk, 98.7 × 38.7 cm, mounting including suspension core and roller ends 194.9 × 61.5 cm, Japanese Nambokuchō period (1333–1392), 14th c.

2013.47, HARVARD ART MUSEUMS/ ARTHUR M. SACKLER MUSEUM, THE LOUIS V. LEDOUX COLLECTION; GIFT OF MRS. L. PIERRE LEDOUX IN MEMORY OF HER HUSBAND





FIGURE 6.11 Amit'a Triad, Korean, hanging scroll, ink, color and gold on silk, 130.2 × 81.9cm, 14th c.  
61.204.30, BROOKLYN MUSEUM, GIFT OF PROFESSOR HAROLD G. HENDERSON

McBride states that the iconography was generally believed to have developed from Tangut and Dunhuang (敦煌) paintings, although both note compositional differences between Tangut and Goryeo works.<sup>17</sup> Yet other scholarship has highlighted the artistic impact of welcoming descent paintings produced in the Chinese port city of Ningbo (寧波) in present-day Zhejiang province in transcultural transmission. Based upon style and iconography, An-yi Pan and Junhyoung Michael Shin argue that Goryeo and Joseon (1392–1897, 朝鮮) welcoming descent paintings display evidence of Sino-Korean artistic transmission.<sup>18</sup>

Here, I want to point out that the emphasis on paintings to the exclusion of works in other media might have turned scholars' eyes away from another fruitful source of material: the frontispieces of woodblock printed *sūtras*. In recent years, scholarly attention has been paid to the role of intermediality in the transcultural transmission of artistic motifs, particularly during the Song, Yuan (1279–1368, 元), and conquest dynasties. In the work of Shih-shan Susan Huang and Anne Saliceti-Collins, the vibrant circulation of woodblock printed *sūtras* between the Tangut and their neighbours has challenged earlier perceptions of them as occupying the periphery of East Asia and instead demonstrated their centrality in the patronage and production of art.<sup>19</sup>

During the Northern Song Dynasty, the composition of woodblock prints often borrowed from paintings. In certain cases, prints were even made to mimic the dimensions and format of hanging scrolls.<sup>20</sup> Yet the direction of intermedial intervention could also flow from print onto painting. In the case of *Lotus sūtra* frontispieces, Shih-shan Susan Huang has argued that the particular placement of the frontispiece at the head of a scroll resulted in a more

17 See Richard McBride, "Koryŏ Buddhist Paintings and the Cult of Amitābha: Visions of a Hwaŏm-Inspired Pure Land," *Journal of Korean Religions* 6.1 (April 2015): 106 and Ide Seinosuke, "The World of Goryeo Buddhist Painting," in *Goryeo Dynasty: Korea's Age of Enlightenment, 918–1392*, ed. Kumja Paik Kim (San Francisco: Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, 2003), 36.

18 See An-yi Pan, "A Southern Song Dynasty Amitābha Triad Painting Reconsidered," *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 81.9 (1994): 351, 359–360 and Junhyoung Michael Shin, "The Face-to-Face Advent of the Amitābha Triad: A Fifteenth-Century Welcoming Descent," *Cleveland Studies in the History of Art* 6 (2001): 37–40.

19 Anne Saliceti-Collins, "Xi Xia Buddhist Woodblock Prints Excavated in Khara Khoto: A Case Study of Transculturation in East Asia, Eleventh-Thirteenth Centuries" (MA thesis, University of Washington, 2007); Shih-shan Susan Huang, "Reassessing Printed Buddhist Frontispieces from Xi Xia," *Zhejiang University Journal of Art and Archaeology* 1 (2014): 129–182, especially 130–131, especially 130, no. 2.

20 Shih-shan Susan Huang terms this "media transfer." See her "Media Transfer and Modular Construction: The Printing of Lotus Sutra Frontispieces in Song China," *Ars Orientalis* 41 (2011): 135–163, especially 137–140.



FIGURE 6.12 Frontispiece to the *Diamond sūtra*, woodblock-printed scroll, ink on paper, 27.6 × 499.5 cm. Dated 868  
OR.S210/P.2, BRITISH LIBRARY

dynamic composition that was diagonally oriented from right to left, distinct from the static and frontally-facing compositions that characterised the Tang Dynasty (618–907, 唐) renditions at Dunhuang. The stacking of the buddha and his retinue in the right-hand side of the frontispiece and their leftward gaze anticipated the unrolling and reading of a Buddhist scroll, an early template of which we can see in the frontispiece to the *Diamond sūtra* from Dunhuang in the British Library (fig. 6.12).<sup>21</sup>

For the *Lotus sūtra* frontispieces, the diagonal orientation of the buddha and his retinue resulted in a purely visual effect that did not necessarily have any substantive bearing on the soteriological concerns of the *sūtra*. In the case of Amitābha's welcoming descent, however, the direction of the buddha's gaze and movement could be considered as significant elements, because they not only distinguished regional variations on the motif, but had the potential to either visually reinforce or obfuscate the movement of the buddha's descent from the Western Pure Land.

21 Huang, "Media Transfer and Modular Construction," 140–141.

### 3 Leftward Looking

The previous scholarship on paintings of Amitābha's welcoming descent has noted that Japanese paintings almost always consistently showed the buddha turning from left to right in a three-quarter profile (fig. 6.10).<sup>22</sup> It is believed that this directional orientation was intended to convey the buddha's eastward (rightward) descent from the west, which was associated with the left-hand side of the painting. Southern Song and Goryeo welcoming descent paintings, on the other hand, were often oriented from right to left (figs. 6.8 and 6.11). This has created confusion, as it seems to imply that the buddha is descending to the west, rather than moving in an eastward direction.

One answer to this visual anomaly, I argue, can be found in printed frontispieces associated with the *Amitābha sūtras*. So far, I am aware of two extant frontispieces that display Amitābha's welcoming descent, both of which were recovered from Karakhoto and now kept in Russian collections. The first is numbered TK 244 (fig. 6.13), which was the frontispiece for the *Smaller Sukhāvativyūhasūtra*, the *Foshuo Amituo jing* 佛說阿彌陀經 [The *Amitābha sūtra* as Spoken by the Buddha]. In this composition, Amitābha occupies the right half of the image, his body enveloped in rays of light and extending his right hand downward in a giving gesture. Descending on a sea of clouds, his bodhisattva attendants Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta take the lead and hold a lotus pedestal in order to receive the soul of the devotee. A monk stands before them with his hands brought together in a gesture of reverence. Despite the fact that it is the bodhisattvas who stand immediately before him, the monk-devotee is connected directly to Amitābha by a ray that shoots out from his *ūrṇā* and broadens to envelop the body of the monk-devotee. Musical instruments and flowers float in the negative space of the left side of the image. A cartouche in the upper right corner reads in Chinese "Amitābha Buddha" (Chin. Amitufo 阿彌陀佛). A cartouche directly above the head of the monk reads in Chinese "disciple Gao Xuanwu" (Chin. *dizi* Gao Xuanwu 弟子高玄悟).<sup>23</sup>

A second frontispiece is numbered x2478 (fig. 6.14). Amitābha similarly stands in the right-hand side and points his right hand downward in the giving gesture. Swirling clouds around his head replace the rays of light seen in the previous frontispiece. Standing in front of him, Avalokiteśvara and

22 Ide, "The World of Goryeo Buddhist Painting," 40; see also Lee, "Amitābha Paintings from Khara Khoto (continued)," 18–19.

23 For a detailed analysis of this image, see Saliceti-Collins, "Xi Xia Buddhist Woodblock Prints Excavated in Khara Khoto," 80–81. See also Han Xiaomang 韓小忙, *Xi Xia meishushi* 西夏美術史 [History of Tangut Art] (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2001), 58–59.



FIGURE 6.13 Frontispiece to the *Smaller Amitābha sūtra*, woodblock print, Karakhoto TK 244, INSTITUTE OF ORIENTAL MANUSCRIPTS (IOM) OF THE RUSSIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

Mahāsthāmaprāpta hold a lotus pedestal as they peer solicitously at a semi-clad baby rising from a mass of clouds originating from the kneeling lay male devotee below. The baby holds his hands together in a gesture of veneration and steps forward toward the lotus pedestal. Due to extensive damage along the top of the extant portion of the frontispiece, we cannot see whether there is a ray of light connecting the buddha and devotee. Nevertheless, the main elements of both frontispieces remain the same, with the primary difference being the inclusion or lack of the baby. The second frontispiece also lacks carouches and inscriptions.

The frontispieces correspond with the right to left orientation of the Tangut paintings, on the other hand, show a left to right orientation consistently. Furthermore, the similarities between the compositions are striking, in particular, the doubling of the figure of the pious deceased and the welcoming role played by the two bodhisattvas. The circulation of Buddhist *sūtras* between



FIGURE 6.14 Greeting the righteous man on the way to the Pure Land of Amitābha (fragment), xylograph, 16.8 × 21.7 cm. Karakhoto, 12th–13th c. X2478, THE STATE HERMITAGE MUSEUM, ST. PETERSBURG

the Tangut and Song China not only resulted in the transmission of Buddhist teachings and practices, but also in the transmission of Buddhist imagery.

#### 4 Pure Land Devotion in Karakhoto

In Karakhoto, thirteen texts pertaining to Amitābha were discovered.<sup>24</sup> From these texts, inscriptions, and prayer texts (Chin. *yuānwén* 願文), it appears that pure land belief among the Tanguts was strongest during the second half of the 12th century to the beginning of the 13th century. Already in the late

24 Li, “Heishuicheng chutu Xixia Mituohua chutan,” 9–10. Saliceti-Collins, “Xi Xia Buddhist Woodblock Prints,” 79; Cui Hongfen 崔紅芬, *Xi Xia Hexi fojiao yanjiu* 西夏河西佛教研究 [Studies on Buddhism of the Hexi Corridor under the Tangut Rule] (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 2010), 109–110.

11th century, references to either the Western Pure Land (Chin. *xifang* 西方) or Pure Land (Chin. *jingfang* 淨方) appear.<sup>25</sup>

Of the pure land texts discovered at Karakhoto, three were in Chinese, seven were in Tangut, and three were in Sanskrit. Of the Chinese texts, there were:

- (1) *Miyan yuanyin wangsheng ji* 密咒圓因往生集 [Collected Secret Mantras of the Perfect Causes of Rebirth into the Pure Land], T. 1956
- (2) *Foshuo dacheng sheng wuliangshou jue ding guangming wang rulai tuoluoni jing* 佛說大乘聖無量壽決定光明王如來陀羅尼經 [Dhāraṇīsūtra Preached by the Buddha on the Greater Vehicle Sage, the Buddha of Immeasurable Life, the Decidedly Radiant King Tathāgata]
- (3) *Wuliangshou jing* 無量壽經 [Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūhasūtra*], T. 360

In Tangut, there were:

- (1) *Wuliangshou jing* 無量壽經 [Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūhasūtra*], T. 360
- (2) *Foshuo Amituo jing* 佛說阿彌陀經 [Smaller *Sukhāvātīvyūhasūtra*], T. 366
- (3) *Wuliangshou zongyao jing* 無量壽宗要經 [Sūtra of the Dhāraṇī of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life]
- (4) *Jingtu qiusheng shuniao lun* 淨土求生順要論 [Discourse on Complying with the Essentials of Seeking Rebirth in the Pure Land]
- (5) *Jingtu qiusheng shuniao yu* 淨土求生順要語 [Discourse on Complying with the Essentials of Seeking Rebirth in the Pure Land]
- (6) *Xifang jingtu shiyi lun* 西方淨土十疑論 [Ten Doubts about the Pure Land], T. 1961
- (7) *Fo suoguan wuliangshou fo jing gaoyao shu* 佛所觀無量壽佛經膏藥疏 [Plaster Commentary on the Sūtra of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life Contemplated by the Buddha]

Finally, in Sanskrit there were:

- (1) *Miyan yuanyin wangsheng ji* 密咒圓因往生集 [Collected Secret Mantras of the Perfect Causes of Rebirth into the Pure Land] T. 1956
- (2) *Sheng wuliangshou yibaiba ming tuoluoni* 聖無量壽一百八名陀羅尼 [Dhāraṇī of the One Hundred and Eight Names of the Sage Buddha of Immeasurable Life]
- (3) *Amituo fo zhou* 阿彌陀佛咒 [Mantra of Amitābha Buddha]

Thus, we can see that foundational texts of pure land Buddhism were available in both Chinese and Tangut; the *Larger Sukhāvātīvyūhasūtra* was preserved in Chinese and Tangut and the *Smaller Sukhāvātīvyūhasūtra* was preserved in Tangut. *Dhāraṇī sūtras* were also preserved in all three languages, indicating the intermingling of Pure Land and Esoteric elements.<sup>26</sup> The *Foshuo guan*

25 Li, "Heishuicheng chutu Xixia Mituohua chutan," 7–10.

26 Li, "Heishuicheng chutu Xixia Amituo hua chutan," 9–10.

*wuliangshoufo jing* 佛說觀無量壽佛經 [Contemplation Sūtra] (T. 365) appears not to have been preserved at Karakhoto in any language. Importantly, given the material features of relevant paintings, none of the extant Pure Land texts were discovered in Tibetan translation. This is intriguing, given that the *Smaller* and *Larger Sukhāvātīyūhasūtra* had both been translated from Sanskrit into Tibetan by the compilation of the Denkarma Catalogue (9th c., Tib. dKar chag lDan dkar ma) and have been listed in all known editions of the Tibetan canon.<sup>27</sup> This is also despite the presence of Tibetan imperial preceptors at the Tangut court by the 12th century.<sup>28</sup>

The presence of the *Larger Sukhāvātīyūhasūtra* is particularly significant, because the welcoming descent motif refers to the vow made by Amitābha to descend from the Western Pure Land and appear before pious devotees, enabling them to be reborn in the Western Pure Land after death.<sup>29</sup> According to the *Larger Sukhāvātīyūhasūtra* (T. 360), Śākyamuni Buddha addresses Ananda regarding the three grades of aspirants who seek rebirth in the Western Pure Land. Each grade of aspirant is distinguished by their monastic or lay status, and commitment to performing meritorious deeds. For those in the highest grade, just as they are about to die, Amitāyus will appear before them with his retinue, whereupon they will follow him to be reborn in his Western Pure Land. They will be born “[...] spontaneously from within seven-jeweled lotus flowers.” To those in the middle grade of aspirants, “[...] Amitāyus will manifest his transformed body, which is fully possessed of the same radiance and physical characteristics and marks as those of the real buddha, and make it appear before them, together with a host of sages. Then they will follow this transformed buddha and be born in the Pure Land.” For those in the lowest

27 Georgios T. Halkias, *Luminous Bliss: A Religious History of Pure Land Literature in Tibet—with an Annotated English Translation and Critical Analysis of the Orgyan-gling Gold Manuscript of the Short Sukhāvātīyūhasūtra* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2017), 63–64.

28 Ruth W. Dunnell studies the eight Tangut imperial preceptors, at least some of whom were Tibetan, in her “Translating History from Tangut Buddhist Texts,” *Asia Major* 22.1 (2009): 41–78. For the preference by Tanguts for the Chinese translations of Buddhist sūtras, see Imre Galambos, *Translating Chinese Tradition and Teaching Tangut Culture: Manuscripts and Printed Books from Khara-Khoto* (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2015), 124–125. Kirill Solonin helpfully outlines the development of “Sinitic Buddhism” among the Tanguts, especially Chan and Huayan Buddhism, in his “Sinitic Buddhism in the Tangut State,” *Central Asiatic Journal* 57 (2014): 157–183. Solonin further points to the role played by Tangut monks in mediating between Chinese and Tibetan Buddhism; see his “Buddhist Connections Between the Liao and Xixia: Preliminary Considerations,” *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 43 (2013): 177.

29 Shin, “The Face-to-Face Advent of the Amitābha Triad,” 28.



grade of aspirants, they will see Amitāyus in a dream and be reborn in the Pure Land.<sup>30</sup>

This notion is elaborated in the *Contemplation sūtra*. Here, a system of nine grades of rebirth, three levels within each grade, is articulated. For those who attain rebirth in the upper, middle, and lowest levels of the highest grade, Amitāyus will appear to the devotee as they are about to die, along with Avalokiteśvara, Mahāsthāmaprāpta, and a large assembly holding either a *vajra* seat, purple-gold seat, or golden lotus flower. They are reborn in the Western Pure Land in the time it takes to snap one's fingers, in an instant (lotus opens after one night), and immediately (lotus opens after a day and a night). For the upper level, it is described that Amitāyus “[...] releases a great flood of light that illuminates the aspirant's body.” The buddha and bodhisattvas extend their hands in welcome in the upper level and in the middle level, he says that “I have come to welcome you.” In the upper level, the aspirant “[...] rejoices so greatly as to dance [...],” in the middle level, he sits on the seat and joins his palms to praise the buddhas, and in the lower level, he sits on the lotus, which closes around him.<sup>31</sup>

The printed Buddhist texts that were discovered at Karakhoto were mostly sponsored by the Tangut royal clan. In 1031–1073, the Tangut made six requests toward the Northern Song for copies of the Kaibao Canon (Chin. *kaibao zang* 開寶藏); these were subsequently housed in monasteries built in the Tangut capital. The second half of the eleventh century further saw translations of Buddhist texts into Tangut, with printing bureaus established in order to produce texts printed in the Tangut script.<sup>32</sup> Of the two frontispieces discussed earlier, the first (fig. 6.13) contained Chinese inscriptions and lacked the figure of the reborn devotee. The second frontispiece (fig. 6.14) lacked inscriptions completely, making it impossible to determine the language in which the *sūtra* had been printed, but it included the image of the devotee reborn as an infant in the Western Pure Land. From a comparison between these two

30 Hisao Inagaki and Harold Stewart, trans., *The Three Pure Land Sutras* (Berkeley: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2003), 35–36. Also T. 12.360, 272b15–272c10.

31 Inagaki and Stewart, *The Three Pure Land Sutras*, 92–94. Also T. 12.365, 344c9–346a26.

32 Huang, “Reassessing Printed Buddhist Frontispieces from Xi Xia,” 137–138. There are five woodblock printed versions of the *Smaller Sukhāvātīyāsūtra* extant; Meng Liefu 孟列夫, *Heishuicheng chutu Hanwen yishu xulu* 黑城出土漢文遺書敘錄 [Record of Chinese Manuscripts Excavated from Khara Khoto], [Lev N. Menshi'khov, *Opisanie kitaiskoi chasti kollektii iz Khara-Khoto (fond Kozlova)*, trans. Wang Kexiao 王克孝] (Yinchuan: Ningxia renmin chubanshe, 1994) cited in Sun Changsheng 孫昌盛, “Lielun Xixia de jingtu xinyang 略論西夏的淨土信仰 [Brief Discussion of Tangut Pure Land Belief],” *Ningxia daxue xuebao* 寧夏大學學報 (人文社會科學版) *Journal of Ningxia University (Humanities & Social Science Edition)* 21.2 (1999): 30, no. 2.

frontispieces, it is tempting to interpret this transformation as visual evidence of the processes behind a distinctively Tangut rendering of the welcoming descent motif.

## 5 Materiality and Vision

We have discovered how print culture likely resulted in the distinctive orientation of Tangut welcoming descent paintings. Despite their closeness to the visual appearance of the welcoming descent as revealed in frontispieces, at least some of which must have been produced in Song China, there remain important differences between the Tangut welcoming descent paintings and Southern Song (and other East Asian) examples, the most important of which are materiality and format. Unlike welcoming descent paintings from Song China, Korea, and Japan in the hanging scroll format, those from Karakhoto were often mounted as *thangkas*. This entailed the use of a different set of materials and techniques. Furthermore, the Tangut welcoming descent paintings were generally smaller in size, unlike related examples from Song China, Korea, and Japan, resulting in different modes of viewer-devotee engagement.

The welcoming descent paintings from Song China, Korea, and Japan discussed previously were all painted on silk and mounted on hanging scrolls, a technique that entailed pasting the painting directly onto a sturdy backing and framing it with decorative strips of silk brocade. The Tangut paintings, on the other hand, were produced on cotton, linen, and silk; several were mounted as *thangkas* or possibly intended for this type of mounting. Cotton and linen are unknown in East Asian paintings and are treated differently than silk before and during painting.<sup>33</sup> Unlike East Asian silk paintings, which were sized before painting, the cotton canvas used in Tibetan *thangka* painting was both sized then treated with gesso before paint was applied. The gesso consisted of a white earth pigment, chalk, or kaolin, that was mixed with the sizing solution (e.g., glue). The application of gesso to the canvas and polishing of the ground resulted in a painting surface that was bright white and opaque.<sup>34</sup> This was distinct from the treatment of silk in East Asian painting, in which white paint could be applied to the underside of the silk in order to brighten the appearance of pigments applied on the other side, but never directly on the front side

33 It should be noted, however, that banner paintings made from materials other than silk have been discovered along the silk roads, such as Dunhuang.

34 David and Janice Jackson, *Tibetan Thangka Painting: Methods and Materials* (London: Serindia Publications, 1984), 18–23.

or painting surface. We might say that the material effect of East Asian silk paintings was predicated upon an aesthetic of translucency whereas Tibetan *thangka* paintings were infused with an aesthetic of opacity.

Welcoming descent paintings from Song China, Korea, and Japan were generally over one hundred centimeters in height and ranged between fifty to one hundred centimeters in width before mounting. With the silk mounting, they were made even larger (sometimes doubling in height) and more splendid. The Tangut welcoming descent paintings, on the other hand, varied in size but were generally smaller. The largest is x2410 (fig. 6.15), which was  $142.5 \times 94$  cm before mounting and  $196.5 \times 105.5$  cm after mounting. This is still smaller than most welcoming descent paintings from Song China, Korea, and Japan, which frequently exceeded 200 cm in height after mounting. However, that particular painting is an outlier, as most of the Tangut welcoming descent paintings were well under one hundred centimeters in height. For example, x2477 (fig. 6.4) measures only  $32 \times 19.5$  cm. On average, the Tangut welcoming descent paintings were roughly half the height of those from Song China, Korea, and Japan. The generally smaller size of the Tangut paintings enabled a more intimate viewing experience.<sup>35</sup> Devoid of the elaborate retinues of certain welcoming descent paintings from Song China, Korea, and Japan, the intimacy of the encounter between the deceased devotee, Amitābha Buddha, and his bodhisattva attendants was foregrounded.

The sense of immediacy and intimacy is thwarted or heightened by the method of mounting: the handscroll versus the *thangka*. As in one Japanese Nambokuchō period (1331–1392, 南北朝時代) example from the Harvard Art Museums (fig. 6.16), the addition of the handscroll mounting, and its verticality served to visually elongate the painting and artificially conflate its overall size. The mounting of *thangkas* before the 15th century entailed only the stitching of smaller strips of fabric onto the top and bottom edge of the painting (figs. 6.15, 6.18, 6.19).<sup>36</sup> Unlike East Asian silk paintings that could only be inscribed on the recto, the *thangka* mounting enabled paintings to be inscribed on the verso, sometimes more than once. The opaque painting surface that resulted from the gesso applied to the canvas prevented inscriptions written on the verso from being seen on the front side. Since dedicatory inscriptions are commonly found on the verso of painted *thangkas*, this brings us to our

35 This also raises intriguing questions regarding how the paintings may have been used in deathbed rituals in different regions of Asia.

36 Marion Boyer and Jean M. Terrier, "Thangka Restoration and Conservation," June 19, 2003, accessed February 29, 2020. <https://www.asianart.com/articles/thangkas-/index.html>.



FIGURE 6.15 Greeting the righteous man on the way to the Pure Land of Amitābha, roll on canvas, 142.5 × 94 cm. Karakhoto, 13th c. X2410 (WITH *THANGKA* MOUNTING), THE STATE HERMITAGE MUSEUM, ST. PETERSBURG



**FIGURE 6.16**  
 Welcoming descent of Amitābha  
 Buddha, hanging scroll, gold ink,  
 cut-gold leaf (kirikane), and color  
 on indigo dyed silk, 98.7 × 38.7 cm,  
 mounting including suspension  
 core and roller ends 194.9 × 61.5 cm.  
 Japanese Nambokuchō period, 14th c.  
 2013.47, HARVARD ART MUSEUMS/  
 ARTHUR M. SACKLER MUSEUM, THE  
 LOUIS V. LEDOUX COLLECTION;  
 GIFT OF MRS. L. PIERRE LEDOUX IN  
 MEMORY OF HER HUSBAND

next topic, which is the presence of the pious deceased in Tangut welcoming descent paintings.

## 6 Devotion and Proximity

As stated earlier, the doubling of the figure of the deceased is an element unique to Tangut welcoming descent paintings. Furthermore, they are striking in their engagement with the deities. It has been said that “Khara Khoto paintings contain many likenesses of Tangut donors, as well as monks.”<sup>37</sup> But are these figures to be understood unequivocally as donors? Were dedicatory inscriptions written on the verso, as per the conventions of the Tibetan *thangka* format? According to Kira Samosyuk, welcoming descent paintings recovered from Karakhoto hardly ever had inscriptions, so it seems unlikely.<sup>38</sup> Therefore, in the absence of donor inscriptions, whether the figure of the deceased in Tangut welcoming descent paintings represents a specific donor or beneficiary of a donation is a question worth pondering.

Other Tangut paintings display donor images similarly positioned in a natural manner, both with and without donor inscriptions. A silk painting of the Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara (Chin. Shuiyue Guanyin 水月觀音) (fig. 6.17) displays a kneeling layman in the lower left corner rising on gathered clouds with a male servant standing at attention behind him. He holds a censer in his hands; the rising smoke of burning incense draws Avalokiteśvara’s attention and gaze to him. In the upper right corner, the elderly man, now reborn as a young boy, descends from the sky toward Avalokiteśvara on trailing clouds. In the lower right foreground of the painting, a group of dancers sporting the Tangut *tufa* hairstyle dances in front of an exposed grave, presumably that of the deceased.<sup>39</sup> Thus, this painting shows the entire cycle from death to rebirth

37 Mikhail Piotrovsky, ed., *Lost Empire of the Silk Road: Buddhist Art from Khara Khoto (X–XIIIth Century)* (Milan: Electa, 1993), 83.

38 Kira Samosyuk, “Donors’ in the Tangut Painting from Khara-Khoto: Their Meaning and Function,” *The Tibet Journal* 26.3–4 (2001): 165. According to a personal communication from Kira Samosyuk on 16th October 2019 that was shared with me by Lilla Russell-Smith: “It is difficult to answer for your question, because each painting is framed and has covered back side. I think that the ‘Welcoming’ have not any inscription. The inscriptions are at Tibetan style *maṇḍala*, sometimes at the other icons with the names of the donators, or sometimes with the *mantras*, or at *Jin guang mingjing* there are the titles of the *sūtra* parts. There is Tibetan style *thangka* Tangut letters *mantra* at the very bad condition Tibetan style Eleven headed Avalokiteśvara, not reproduced in my book. (x 3554). Nobody in 50th–60th years did not think [*sic*] to keep the back of the paintings.”

39 This painting is discussed in Piotrovsky, *Lost Empire of the Silk Road*, 198.



FIGURE 6.17 Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara, roll on silk, 101.5 × 59.5 cm. Karakhoto, early 12th c.

X2439, THE STATE HERMITAGE MUSEUM, ST. PETERSBURG

within a single image, in a manner conceptually similar yet visually distinct from the welcoming descent paintings.

But in the absence of inscriptions, were the images of the deceased intended to represent specific donors/beneficiaries or a more general idea of Tangut devotion? As noted earlier, donor inscriptions are exceedingly rare among Tangut paintings. One notable exception is a *thangka* of a deity identified by the Tangut inscription as “The Planet Li Mei,” Yue Bo (fig. 6.18). In the lower left corner of the painting is a standing male devotee, above which is a Chinese-style red cartouche with a Tangut inscription identifying him as “the donor [surname] Ie.”<sup>40</sup> The writing of inscriptions on the recto of a painting seems to confirm to Chinese practice. More often than not, images of donors or devotees appear in the lower corners of paintings without any dedicatory inscriptions.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, what we can infer from a comparison between the donors or devotees in the welcoming descent, Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara, and Yue Bo paintings is the sense of animation in the representation of those figures and their active engagement with the deities (looking upward, stepping or reaching toward, etc.).

A departure from this is the representation of donors and devotees in tantric paintings, in which there is a greater degree of separation between donors and deities. Two *thangkas* of Acala (figs. 6.19 and 6.20) display kneeling monk and lay devotees in the lower left and right corners of the paintings, with altars or ritual implements placed either directly in front of the figures or in the horizontal frieze between them. They are neatly encased within painted frames, unlike the easy interaction between donor-devotees and deities in the welcoming descent, Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara, and Yue Bo paintings.<sup>42</sup> Kneeling before altars, these figures are engaged in active acts of worship but remain ever distant from the deities above. This is suggestive of the general aims and means of tantric ritual, in which engagement with deities unfolds in a hieratic and highly controlled sequence, beginning with the cordoning off of the ritual space. Also, the ritual activity is mediated by monks; this is distinct from the treatment of the monk as a deceased figure in welcoming descent paintings.

40 Piotrovsky, *Lost Empire of the Silk Road*, 232. On astral deities, see Jeffrey Kotyk, “Astrological Iconography of Planetary Deities in Tang China: Near Eastern and Indian Icons in Chinese Buddhism,” *Journal of Chinese Buddhist Studies* 30 (2017): 33–88.

41 In the *Lost Empire of the Silk Road* catalogue, see 150, 155, 160, 170, 238, and 245 for donors with no inscriptions.

42 It should be noted that the welcoming descent and Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara paintings both pertain to pure land motifs: The Western Pure Land and Mt. Potalaka.





FIGURE 6.18 Yuebo Planet, roll on canvas (with original border), 38.5 × 29.7 cm, with border 53 × 37.7 cm. Karakhoto, 13th c.  
X2454, THE STATE HERMITAGE MUSEUM, ST. PETERSBURG



FIGURE 6.19 Acala, *thangka* on canvas (with border), 47 × 35 cm, with border 61 × 47 cm. Karakhoto, 13th–14th c.(?) X2375, THE STATE HERMITAGE MUSEUM, ST. PETERSBURG



FIGURE 6.20 Acala, *thangka* on silk, 73 × 56.3 cm. Karakhoto, 13th–14th c. (?)  
X2374, THE STATE HERMITAGE MUSEUM, ST. PETERSBURG

The hieratic and static arrangement of figures in the Acala *thangkas* makes the images of the deceased in the welcoming descent paintings appear even more remarkable. It has been argued that they were actually portraits of the residents of Karakhoto.<sup>43</sup> Note the funerary scene in the lower left corner and Sudhana in the upper left corner of the Water-Moon Guanyin painting. Another way to interpret these figures may be to examine them from the point of view of their expectations of deities—were they viewed as distant or remote, or as divine figures with the power to interact and intercede personally on behalf of devotees?

Comparative evidence from medieval Japanese Buddhism demonstrates that devotee-deity engagement in Pure Land Buddhism was powerful and could be realised in a number of ways, such as welcoming descent song and dance performances that were enacted by monks. The *mukaekō* (迎講), or ‘welcoming rite,’ was a public performance enacted before devotees of all social classes by monks and novices who playacted the welcoming descent of Amitābha and his retinue by dressing in costume, playing music, and reciting the *nembutsu* (Jap. 念仏, the Repetition of the Name of Amitābha), all practices that were especially associated with the monk Genshin (942–1017, 源信).<sup>44</sup> Japanese welcoming descent paintings could be introduced near the time of death and some still have strings attached to them that were held on the other end by dying devotees in order to firmly cement their connection with Amitābha at the precipice between life and death.<sup>45</sup> Visually, Japanese paintings of the ‘rapid descent’ brought about a startlingly direct form of viewer engagement by their unflinching frontality and looming presence (fig. 6.21). No such composition exists in the body of welcoming descent paintings from Karakhoto. Yet, I argue that Tangut devotees found another way to accomplish this by literally inserting themselves into paintings of Amitābha, Avalokiteśvara, and other deities that served as visual proof of the efficacy of devotion and of the closeness between deities and their devotees. This interpretation is augmented by the emphasis that was placed by the Tanguts upon Buddhism, which was

43 Samosyuk, “Donors’ in the Tangut Painting from Khara-Khoto,” 165. In this article, Samosyuk argues for the ethnic and class identifications of individual donor figures.

44 Jacqueline I. Stone, “By the Power of One’s Last Nenbutsu: Deathbed Practices in Early Medieval Japan,” in *Approaching the Land of Bliss: Religious Praxis in the Cult of Amitābha*, ed. Richard K. Payne and Kenneth Ken’ichi Tanaka (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2004), 82–83.

45 Stone, “By the Power of One’s Last Nenbutsu,” 82. See, for example, one famous example of such a painting at Konkaikōmyō Temple (金戒光明寺) in Kyoto, Japan.



FIGURE 6.21 Welcoming descent of Amitābha, hanging scroll, ink, color, gold pigment and cut gold leaf (kirikane) on silk, 97.5 × 47.9 cm, mounting with cord and roller ends 198.1 × 73 cm. Japanese Nambokuchō period, 14th c. 1949.95, HARVARD ART MUSEUMS/ARTHUR M. SACKLER MUSEUM, GIFT OF MRS. WALDO E. FORBES

“more closely associated with the idea of the unique position of the Tanguts in the world” than were Confucianism and Daoism.<sup>46</sup>

## 7 Conclusion

A quote from the *Lost Empire of the Silk Road* catalogue cites a 12th century poem that articulates the Tangut sense of identity as positioned in between China and Tibet:

Far to the west stand the mountains of Tibet  
Far to the east lie the lowlands of China [...]<sup>47</sup>

I would argue that in the welcoming descent paintings, the subjectivity of Tangut donors and devotees was maintained not by their sense of in-betweenness, but rather by their insertion into the realm of the divine. Welcoming descent paintings showed the close contact between deities and devotees, as well as their certainty of rebirth in the Western Pure Land. In these images, it can be seen that the Tanguts did not view themselves as having been relegated to the periphery,<sup>48</sup> but rather were themselves placed squarely front and center.

Moreover, one goal of this paper has been to shift the discourse on transcultural artistic transmission, particularly in the Buddhist context, from one that rests primarily upon the visual to one that takes materiality into account as well. Doing so opens up our understanding of the processes of transcultural transmission beyond the surface level and allows us to consider the objects of our inquiry—and their movement between start and end points—from a fuller, one might even say three-dimensional perspective.

46 See Kirill Solonin, “The Formation of Tangut Ideology: Buddhism and Confucianism,” in *Buddhism in Central Asia I—Patronage, Legitimation, Sacred Space, and Pilgrimage*, ed. Carmen Meinert and Henrik Sørensen (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2020), 147. Solonin also explicates the important role that Buddhism played in Tangut state protection; Solonin, “The Formation of Tangut Ideology: Buddhism and Confucianism,” 140. My thanks to an anonymous reviewer of this article for the reference.

47 Kira F. Samosyuk, “The Art of the Tangut Empire: A Historical and Stylistic Interpretation,” in *Lost Empire of the Silk Road: Buddhist Art from Khara Khoto (X–XIIIth Century)*, ed. Mikhail Piotrovsky (Milan: Electa, 1993), 59.

48 In this regard, Susan Huang calls attention to the ‘peripheral vision’ articulated by Rob Linrothe in his article “Peripheral Visions: On Recent Finds of Tangut Buddhist Art,” *Monumenta Serica* 43 (1995): 235–262, especially 250–251, 255–257; as cited in Huang, “Reassessing Printed Buddhist Frontispieces from Xi Xia,” 130, no. 2.

# The Avalokiteśvara Cult in Turfan and Dunhuang in the Pre-Mongolian Period

*Yukiyo Kasai*

## 1 Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Uyghurs established the West Uyghur Kingdom around the Turfan area in the second half of the 9th century. Buddhism spread gradually there, and in the second half of the 10th century or the beginning of the 11th century, the majority of the Uyghurs had probably become Buddhists. This religious condition did not change until the end of the Mongolian period (1368).<sup>2</sup> Scholars point out that the local Buddhist inhabitants, Chinese and Tocharian, played a significant role in the introduction of Buddhism to the Uyghurs.<sup>3</sup> By degrees,

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- 1 I would like to express my special thanks to Dr. Miki Morita (Iwakuni) and Dr. Hou Haoran (Beijing) who kindly gave me their support as specialists in art history and Tibetan Buddhism respectively. I, of course, alone am responsible for my mistakes.
  - 2 For the establishment of the West Uyghur Kingdom, see, e.g., Denis Sinor et al., “The Uighurs, the Kyrgyz and the Tangut (Eight to the Thirteenth Century),” in *The Age of Achievement: AD 750 to the End of the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Muhammad Seyfeydinovich Asimov and Clifford Edmund Bosworth (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 1998), 200–206; Moriyasu Takao 森安孝夫, “Uiguru no seisen ni tsuite ウイグルの西遷について [Uyghurs’ Migration to the Western Region],” in *Tōzai Uiguru to Chūō Yūrashia* 東西ウイグルと中央ユーラシア [Eastern and Western Uyghurs and Central Eurasia], ed. Moriyasu Takao 森安孝夫 (Nagoya: Nagoya daigaku shuppankai, 2015), 276–298. The latter was first published in *Tōyō gakuho* 東洋学報 [The Toyo gakuho] 59.1–2 (1977): 105–130 under the same title. The quoted version is enlarged and revised by the author.
  - 3 For the Uyghurs’ conversion in the Turfan area, see, e.g., Moriyasu Takao 森安孝夫, “Toruko bukkyō no genryū to ko torukogo batten no shutsugen トルコ仏教の源流と古トルコ語仏典の出現 [L’origine du Bouddhisme chez les Turcs et l’apparition des textes bouddhiques en turc ancien],” in *Tōzai Uiguru to Chūō Yūrashia* 東西ウイグルと中央ユーラシア [Eastern and Western Uyghurs and Central Eurasia], ed. Moriyasu Takao 森安孝夫 (Nagoya: Nagoya University Publishers, 2015), 618–644, which was first published in *Shigaku zasshi* 史学雑誌 [Journal of Historical Studies] 98.4 (1989): 1–35; Takao Moriyasu, “L’origine du Bouddhisme chez les Turcs et l’apparition des textes bouddhiques en turc ancien,” in *Documents et archives provenant de l’Asie Centrale. Actes du Colloque Franco-Japonais organisé par l’Association Franco-Japonaise des Études Orientales*, ed. Akira Haneda (Kyoto: Dōhōsha, 1990), 147–165; Moriyasu Takao 森安孝夫, “Uiguru=Mani kyō shi no kenkyū ウイグル=マニ教史の

however, Chinese Buddhism exerted a substantial impact on the Uyghurs and served as the main models for the translation of Buddhist texts into Old Uyghur.<sup>4</sup> After the establishment of the Mongol Empire (13th/14th c.), as the Great Khans' vassals, the Uyghurs expanded their sphere of activity to China and other territories of the Empire. Thus, they came into contact with other Buddhist communities like the Tibetans, through which Uyghur Buddhists gained further impact.

Dunhuang (敦煌) was one of the most relevant of these various Buddhist communities to the Uyghur Buddhists in Turfan during the pre-Mongolian period. One of the main reasons for the Uyghur Buddhists' increasing absorption of Chinese elements was probably the relationship between the West Uyghur Kingdom in Turfan and the Guiyijun (851–1036?, 歸義軍, Return-to-Allegiance Army) government in Dunhuang, which became closer in the 10th century.<sup>5</sup> At the beginning of the 11th century, the West Uyghur Kingdom seems to have supervised Dunhuang, and some Uyghurs even settled down there.<sup>6</sup> In fact, some Buddhist texts written in Old Uyghur show a close relationship with their Chinese counterparts, which were widespread in Dunhuang, or attest to the introduction of Buddhist schools in the region.<sup>7</sup>

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研究 [A Study on the History of Uighur Manichaeism—Research on Some Manichaean Materials and their Historical Background],” *Osaka daigaku bungakubu kiyō* 大阪大学文学部紀要 [Memoirs of the Faculty of Letters Osaka University] 31–32 (1991): 147–174; Takao Moriyasu, *Die Geschichte des uigurischen Manichäismus an der Seidenstraße. Forschungen zu manichäischen Quellen und ihrem geschichtlichen Hintergrund*, trans. Christian Steineck (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2004), 174–209; Xavier Tremblay, “The Spread of Buddhism in Serindia: Buddhism among Iranians, Tocharians and Turks before the 13th Century,” in *The Spread of Buddhism*, ed. Ann Heirman and Stephan Peter Bumbacher (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2007), 108–114.

4 The majority of the Old Uyghur Buddhist texts is translations from other languages. Johan Elverskog gives an overview of those texts. See Johan Elverskog, *Uyghur Buddhist Literature* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997).

5 For the close relationship between these two areas, see, e.g., Takao Moriyasu, “The Sa-chou Uighurs and the West Uighur Kingdom,” *Acta Asiatica* 78 (2000): 28–48; Moriyasu Takao 森安孝夫, “Tonkō to Nishi uiguru ōkoku—Turufan kara no shokan to okurimono wo chūshin ni 敦煌と西ウイグル王国-トルファンからの書簡と贈り物を中心に [Tun-huang and the West Uighur Kingdom: The Historical Background of the Letter, P. 3672 Bis, Sent from Turfan],” in *Tōzai Uiguru to Chūō Yūrashia* 東西ウイグルと中央ユーラシア [Eastern and Western Uyghurs and Central Eurasia], ed. Moriyasu Takao 森安孝夫 (Nagoya: Nagoya University Publishers, 2015), 336–354; Xinjiang Rong, “The Relationship of Dunhuang with the Uighur Kingdom in Turfan in the Tenth Century,” in *De Dunhuang à Istanbul. Hommage à James Russell Hamilton*, ed. Louis Bazin and Peter Zieme (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), 275–298.

6 See, e.g., Takao Moriyasu, “The Sha-chou Uighurs,” 28–48.

7 See Section 2 of this chapter.



These conditions characterise the unique position of Dunhuang in terms of the Uyghur Buddhist community and its culture in Turfan during the pre-Mongolian period. The sources are, however, too fragmentary to provide the details. In addition, the majority of the written sources in Old Uyghur are *sūtras*, which do not give an account of daily religious practices or rituals. Thus, an essential question—whether the Uyghur Buddhist community entirely adopted the Buddhist trends and practices in Dunhuang at that time or made a choice to cultivate their own—is still debatable. Answering this question first requires clarifying the Buddhist trends and practices in both regions through examining the written sources and artistic objects. Then, the differences between the two regions can be assessed. Because of the paucity of available data in Old Uyghur, our discussion has to be developed around the Buddhist trends and practices in Dunhuang, where the most abundant materials in Central Asia have been recovered. This paper takes the cult of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara as a case study since this famous bodhisattva was popular in Dunhuang from the 6th to the 11th centuries and has been worshipped in various forms, including the esoteric ones.<sup>8</sup>

## 2 Doctrinal Written Sources Supporting the Avalokiteśvara Cult Preserved in Old Uyghur

Before discussing the Avalokiteśvara cult in Turfan and Dunhuang, we should examine whether the relevant doctrinal written sources for that cult were in Old Uyghur in the pre-Mongolian period. One of the essential difficulties with the materials in Old Uyghur is dating. On the one hand, the *sūtras* were very probably translated in the pre-Mongolian or the Mongolian period, if their source language was Tocharian (pre-Mongolian period) or Tibetan (Mongolian period). On the other hand, for those translated from Chinese, the date of the extant copy can be suggested sometimes. The possibility, whether that copy was precisely the first translation or was made much later, remains debatable. Therefore, for the texts which were translated from Chinese, their first

8 See, e.g., Miyeko Murase, “Kuan-Yin as Savior of Men: Illustration of the Twenty-Fifth Chapter of the Lotus Sūtra in Chinese Paintings,” *Artibus Asiae* 33.1–2 (1971): 42–43. On the whole Avalokiteśvara cult, see Chün-fang Yü, *Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokiteśvara* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001). Further studies on this topic are discussed in Section 3 of this chapter.

translation date has to be discussed first.<sup>9</sup> At present, the following texts connected with the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara have been identified:<sup>10</sup>

*Prajñāpāramitāhṛdayasūtra* (T. 251–256.8)

The 25th chapter of *Saddharmapūṇḍarikasūtra* [Lotus Sūtra] (T. 262.9)<sup>11</sup>

*Nīlakaṇṭhakasūtra* (T. 1057.20/T. 1060.20)

*Padmacintāmaṇisūtra* (T. 1082.20)

*Foding xin da tuoluoni jing* 佛頂心大陀羅尼經 [Great Dhāraṇīsūtra of the Heart of the Buddha's Crest]

*Cuṇḍīdevīdhāraṇī*<sup>12</sup>

- 9 At least, one text can be omitted in the following discussion: *Buddhāvataṃsakasūtra* (T. 279.10/T. 293.10). This text was translated by the Uyghur monk known under the name Anzang (?–1293, 安藏) in the middle of the 13th century. For a discussion of the translation process of this text and a summary of previous studies on this topic, see Yukiyo Kasai, “The Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, Mt. Wutai, and Uyghur Pilgrims,” *Buddhist Road Paper* 5.4 (2020): 21–25. The possibility that this *sūtra* was already translated into Old Uyghur before that period cannot be denied entirely. Up to now, however, any traces of such earlier translations have not been found.
- 10 Jens Wilkens mentions most of those texts in his contribution in this volume. For the previous studies on those texts, see Chapter 13 in this volume. On the first two texts, see, e.g., Elverskog, *Uyghur Buddhist Literature*, 53–54, 58, nos. 28 and 33. Furthermore, Abudurishid Yakup (Berlin) published the complete edition of the Old Uyghur version of the *Buddhāvataṃsakasūtra*. See, Abudurishid Yakup, *Buddhāvataṃsaka Literature in Old Uyghur* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2021). The seventh text is preserved in various manuscripts. Chün-fang Yü also mentions the *Śūraṅgamasūtra* as a relevant text for Avalokiteśvara (T. 945.19). See Chün-fang Yü, “Guanyin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokiteshvara,” in *Latter Days of the Law: Images of Chinese Buddhism 850–1850*, ed. Marsha Weidner (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1994), 152. Up to now, this text has not been identified in Old Uyghur, although some citations from it were recognised. See, e.g., Elverskog, *Uyghur Buddhist Literature*, 147. *Dhāraṇīs* or amulets connected with the bodhisattva were used for the practice of the Avalokiteśvara cult. Thus, they are also one of the relevant topics. As Peter Zieme points out, those *dhāraṇīs* are translated into Old Uyghur and seem to have been worn as amulets. See BT XXIII, 179–189. I prepared a detailed discussion of this topic in another paper.
- 11 In association with this text, one further text called three *Avadānas to Avalokiteśvarasūtra* is worth mentioning. According to Shōgaito Masahiro who first worked on this text, it was recited after the recitation of the *Avalokiteśvarasūtra*, namely the 25th chapter of *Saddharmapūṇḍarika*. The extant manuscript was copied in the Mongolian period, although its original composition date stays obscure. See, e.g., Shōgaito Masahiro 庄垣内正弘, “Uigurugo shahon, ‘Kannonkyō sō’ō’—Kannonkyō ni kansuru ‘avadāna’ ウイグル語写本‘観音経相応’-観音経に関する‘avadāna’ [An Uyghur *avadāna to Avalokiteśvara Sūtra*],” *Tōyō gakuō* 東洋学報 [The Toyo gakuho] 58 (1976): 258–222.
- 12 Furthermore, two versions of the *Avalokiteśvarasādhana* and *Tārāekaviṃśatistotra* can be mentioned as those which deal with the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. Because they were translated from Tibetan, their production was dated in the Mongolian period.

For the first five texts, Chinese versions probably served as the source. The origin of the last text is still under debate, although some similarities to the Chinese version of the *Buddhabhāṣitasaptakoṭibuddhamāṭṛkacuṇḍimahāvidyādhāraṇīsūtra* (T. 1075.20) have been pointed out.<sup>13</sup>

Among these texts, the translations of the *Nilakaṇṭhakasūtra* and the 25th chapter of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarikasūtra* [Lotus Sūtra], which became famous as an independent sūtra under the title *Avalokiteśvarasūtra*, date to the pre-Mongolian period. The former was translated by the famous translator Śiṅko Šāli Tutuṅ (fl. second half of 10th c./beginning of 11th c.).<sup>14</sup> Kudara Kōgi and Klaus Röhrborn point out that his education was closely connected with Chinese Buddhist schools in Dunhuang.<sup>15</sup> The 25th chapter of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarikasūtra* in Old Uyghur was identified among the fragments found in Cave 17 in Dunhuang, which was closed at the beginning of

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- 13 See BT XXIII, 65–79. A part of this *dhāraṇī* is quoted and written in Chinese on the Buddhist temple banner III 4432, which dates to the late 10th–11th century. Both Chinese and Uyghur inscriptions are written on that banner. On the inscription, see Takao Moriyasu in collaboration with Peter Zieme, “Uighur Inscriptions on the Banners from Turfan Housed in the Museum für Indische Kunst, Berlin,” in *Central Asian Temple Banners in the Turfan Collection of the Museum für Indische Kunst, Berlin*, ed. Chhaya Bhattacharya-Haesner (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 2003), 464. For a discussion of the paintings on that banner, see Chhaya Bhattacharya-Haesner, *Central Asian Temple Banners in the Turfan Collection of the Museum für Indische Kunst, Berlin* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 2003), 130–137, cat. no. 120.
- 14 On the date of his lifetime, see James Russell Hamilton, “Les titres Šāli et Tutuṅ en ouïgour,” *Journal Asiatique* 272 (1984): 435–436; Moriyasu Takao 森安孝夫, “Chibetto moji de kakareta Uiguru-bun Bukkyō kyōri mondō (P. t. 1292) no kenkyū チベット文字で書かれたウイグル文仏教教理問答 (P. t. 1292) の研究 [Études sur un catéchisme bouddhique ouïgour en écriture tibétaine (P. t. 1292)],” *Ōsaka daigaku bungakubu kiyō* 大阪大学文学部紀要 [Memoirs of the Faculty of Letters, Osaka University] 25 (1985): 59–60; Peter Zieme, *Religion und Gesellschaft im uigurischen Königreich von Qočo: Kolophon und Stifter des alttürkischen buddhistischen Schrifttums aus Zentralasien* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1992), 25.
- 15 See, e.g., Kudara Kōgi 百濟康義, “Myōhō rengo kyō gansen no uiguruگو dampen 妙法蓮華經玄贊のウイグル訳断片 [Uigurische Fragmente des *Miao-fa-lian-hua-jing Xuan-zan*],” in *Nairiku ajia, nishi ajia no shakai to bunka* 内陸アジア 西アジアの社会と文化 [Society and Culture of Inner Asia and the Muslim World], ed. Mori Masao 護雅夫 (Tokyo: Yamakawa shuppansha, 1983), 201; Klaus Röhrborn, “Die alttürkische Xuanzang-Vita: Biographie oder Hagiographie?” in *Bauddhavidyāsudhākarah: Studies in Honour of Heinz Bechert on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday*, ed. Petra Kieffer-Pülz and Jens-Uwe Hartmann (Swisttal-Odendorf: Indica et Tibetica Verlag, 1997), 551; BT XXIX, 14–15, 18–21. On his activities, see also, Peter Zieme, “Sngqu Šāli Tutuṅ—Übersetzer buddhistischer Schriften ins Uigurische,” in *Tractata Altaica: Denis Sinor, sexagenario optime de rebus altaicis merito dedicata*, ed. Walther Heissig, et al. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1976), 767–775.

the 11th century. Thus, the translation must have been carried out before that period.<sup>16</sup> Peter Zieme points out that illustrations in one booklet of that *sūtra* in Old Uyghur correspond exactly to those in a Chinese booklet found in Dunhuang.<sup>17</sup> Some manuscripts of it in Old Uyghur, therefore, seem to have been produced in a close relationship with developments in Dunhuang.

The extant fragments of the other texts do not provide any information on their translation process. One published fragment of the *Padmacintāmaṇisūtra* is written in Uyghur square script, which does not indicate any date.<sup>18</sup> On the

- 16 Oda Juten intensively examined various manuscripts of this text, and discusses their dates. See Oda Juten 小田壽典, "Torukogo 'Kannongyō' shahon no kenkyū. Fuhēn kyū 'Su Wenzhen zō' shahon danpen yakuchū トルコ語「観音経」写本の研究 付編 旧「素文珍藏」写本断片訳注 [Studies on the Manuscripts of Old Uyghur *Avalokiteśvara Sūtra*. Appendix: Edition of the Fragments Preserved Initially by Su Wenzhen]," *Seinan ajia kenkyū* 西南アジア研究 [Middle Eastern Studies] 34 (1991): 1–32; Oda Juten 小田壽典, "Torukogo bukkyō shahon ni kansuru nendairon—Hachiyōkyō to Kannongyō トルコ語佛教寫本に關する年代論—八陽經と観音経 [The Chronology of the Säkiz yūkmäk yaruq and the Quansi-im pūsar Sūtras]," *Tōyōshi kenkyū* 東洋史研究 [The Journal of Oriental Researches] 59.1 (2000): 114–171; Oda Juten 小田壽典, "Torukogo 'Kannongyō' shahon no kenkyū zokuhen—*Quanṣi-'im pūsar* to *Quanṣi-'im bodistv* トルコ語「観音経」写本の研究続編—*Quanṣi-'im pūsar* と *Quanṣi-'im bodistv* [Studies on the Manuscripts of Old Uyghur *Avalokiteśvarasūtra* (2).—*Quanṣi-'im pūsar* and *Quanṣi-'im bodistv*]," *Seinan ajia kenkyū* 西南アジア研究 [Middle Eastern Studies] 68 (2008): 1–32; Juten Oda, "A Fragment of the Uighur *Avalokiteśvara-Sūtra* with Notes," in *Turfan, Khotan and Dunhuang: Vorträge der Tagung "Annemarie v. Gabain und die Turfanforschung"*, Berlin, 9.–12. 1994, ed. Ronald E. Emmerick, et al. (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1996), 229–243.
- 17 See Peter Zieme, "Some Notes on Old Uigur Art and Texts," in *Turfan no bukkyō to bijutsu—Uiguru bukkyō wo chūshin ni—Shiruku rōdo no bukkyō bunka—Gandāra, Kucha, Turfan—Dainibu トルファンへの仏教と美術—ウイグル 仏教を中心に—シルクロードの仏教文化—ガンダーラ・クチャ トルファン—第 II 部 [Buddhism and Art in Turfan: From the Perspective of Uyghur Buddhism. Buddhist Culture along the Silk Road: Gandhāra, Kucha, and Turfan. Section II]*, ed. Ryūkoku daigaku ajia bukkyō bunka sentā 龍谷大学アジア仏教文化センター (Kyoto: Ryūkoku daigaku ajia bukkyō bunka sentā, 2013), 12.
- 18 See Shōgaito Masahiro 庄垣内正弘, *Roshia shozō uigurugo bunken no kenkyū—Uiguru moji hyōki kanbun to uigurugo butten tekisuto* ロシア所蔵ウイグル語文献の研究—ウイグル文字表記漢文とウイグル語仏典テキスト [Uighur Manuscripts in St. Petersburg: Chinese Texts in Uighur Script and Buddhist Uighur Texts] (Kyoto: Graduate School of Letters Kyoto University, 2003), 196–199. According to Peter Zieme, further fragments of this text are preserved in the Berlin Turfan Collection, although they are still unpublished. See Peter Zieme, "Local Literatures: Uighur," in *Brill's Encyclopedia of Buddhism, Volume I: Literature and Languages*, ed. Jonathan A. Silk (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2017), 876. On the script types and their dating, see, e.g., Peter Zieme ペーター ツィエメ and Kudara Kōgi 百濟康義, *Uigurugo no Kanmuryōju kyō* ウイグル語の観無量壽経 [Guanwuliangshoujing in Uigur] (Kyoto: Nagata Bunshōdō, 1985), 29–35; Takao Moriyasu, "From Silk, Cotton and Copper Coin to Silver. Transition of the Currency Used by the Uighurs during the Period

other hand, the remaining fragments of the *Prajñāpāramitāhṛdayasūtra*, the *Great Dhāraṇīsūtra of the Heart of the Buddha's Crest*,<sup>19</sup> are written in cursive script or were block printed, which is one of the relevant features that dates to the Mongolian period. The manuscripts of the *Cuṇḍīdevīdhāraṇī* show the characteristics of the half-cursive or cursive script.<sup>20</sup> Thus, at least indicating their popularity in the Mongolian period.

Those texts indicate that, in the pre-Mongolian period, some doctrinal texts connected with the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara were translated into Old Uyghur.<sup>21</sup> It means that the Uyghurs could have access to this bodhisattva's dogmatic background in their language.

In addition to those canonical texts, other sources that can indicate the transmission of the Avalokiteśvara cult among the Uyghurs with the doctrinal contents are some eulogies dedicated to the bodhisattva. The composition of at least two of these eulogies—one for Sahasrabhujasahasranetra and one for Avalokiteśvara—can likely be dated to the pre-Mongolian period, according to features of their extant manuscripts.<sup>22</sup> Both eulogies are written in Uyghur square script, which does not provide any datable information. The first one is written in alliterative verse, the use of which became widespread among Uyghur Buddhists in the Mongolian period. If it had been composed in the earlier period, this verse would be counted as one of the earliest Buddhist alliterative verses.<sup>23</sup> To the second eulogie, a colophon which is written in half-square

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from the 8th to the 14th Centuries,” in *Turfan Revisited: The First Century of Research into the Arts and Cultures of the Silk Road*, ed. Desmond Durkin-Meisterernst, et al. (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 2004), 228–229, 232–233.

- 19 See BT XXVIII, 223–234; Georg Kara and Peter Zieme, “Die uigurische Übersetzung des apokryphen Sūtras ‘Fo ding xin da tuo luo ni,’” *Altorientalische Forschungen* 13 (1986): 319–322.
- 20 See BT XXIII, 65–79.
- 21 In the Mongolian period, it seems that the cult of Avalokiteśvara experienced a florescence or possibly a re-florescence. In that period, the Tibetan texts also served as sources, see fn. 12.
- 22 On those two eulogies, see BT XIII, 126–130, no. 21; BT XXVI, 229–231, colophon no. 124. Johan Elverskog classifies the eulogies under various topics. See Elverskog, *Uyghur Buddhist Literature*, 126–129. In addition to the eulogies listed, there are some additional ones dedicated to that bodhisattva. Their extant manuscripts are either written in cursive script or block printed. Those features can only indicate that the extant manuscripts were prepared in the Mongolian period. The possibility that the originals of those eulogies were composed in an earlier period and copied in a later period, is not negated. Materials to confirm their earlier composition are lacking.
- 23 On Uyghur Buddhist alliteration, see Peter Zieme, *Die Stabreimtexte der Uiguren von Turfan und Dunhuang. Studien zur alttürkischen Dichtung* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1991), 23–25. There are a few Buddhist alliterative verses that were composed in the pre-Mongolian period. See Zieme, *Die Stabreimtexte der Uiguren*, 292–294; Jens Peter Laut,

script is added. Thus, for the second one, the possible composition in the pre-Mongolian period is supposed.<sup>24</sup>

Besides those texts, however, not many sources that show the practice of the Avalokiteśvara cult in Turfan are survived.<sup>25</sup> This fragmentary condition of sources causes the difficulties to get a reasonable prospect: how that cult was practised there and whether it differed from that in the neighbouring oasis Dunhuang. In contrast, from Dunhuang, numerous written and artistic sources were found which provide rich information for the practice of that cult. Thus, the following section first discusses how the cult of Avalokiteśvara was practised in Dunhuang for preparing the discussion on the case in Turfan.

### 3 The Cult of Avalokiteśvara in Dunhuang

#### 3.1 *Practice of the Avalokiteśvara Cult in Prayer Texts*

In Dunhuang, Avalokiteśvara was probably one of the most popular bodhisattvas. Besides the so-called *Avalokiteśvarasūtra*, the *Nilakanṭhakasūtra*, which was translated into Old Uyghur in the pre-Mongolian period, seems to have also been widespread in Dunhuang.<sup>26</sup> A significant number of copies have been

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“Gedanken zum alttürkischen Stabreim,” in *Splitter aus der Gegend von Turfan. Festschrift für Peter Zieme anlässlich seines 60. Geburtstags*, ed. Mehmer Ölmez and Simone-Christiane Raschmann (Istanbul, Berlin: Şafak Matbaacılık, 2002), 129–138. Compared with those alliterative verses that give us a less polished impression, the one mentioned above was probably written by a mature Buddhist poet.

24 See BT XXVI, 229–230.

25 Those texts are discussed in Section 4.1.

26 Dunhuang was under Tibetan rule until the middle of the 9th century. According to Sam van Schaik, the first trace of the cult of Avalokiteśvara among the Tibetan Buddhists is already seen in the Dunhuang manuscripts in the 10th century. See Sam van Schaik, “The Tibetan Avalokiteśvara Cult in the Tenth Century: Evidence from the Dunhuang Manuscripts,” in *Tibetan Buddhist Literature and Praxis. Studies in its Formative Period, 900–1400. PIATS 2003: Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the Tenth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Oxford, 2003*, ed. Ronald M. Davidson and Christian K. Wedemeyer (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2006), 55–72. Thus, the possibility that the cult under Chinese Guiyijun rule was partly or completely inherited from the Tibetan cult should be taken into consideration. However, the cult of Avalokiteśvara in Tibet mainly flourished in the post-imperial period, as Matthew Kapstein points out. See Matthew Kapstein, “Remarks on the *Mani bKa’-bum* and the Cult of Avalokiteśvara in Tibet,” in *Tibetan Buddhism: Reason and Revelation*, ed. Steven D. Goodman and Ronald M. Davidson (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 79–93. The role of the Tibetan Avalokiteśvara cult in the same cult among the Chinese Buddhists under Guiyijun rule is, therefore, still a point of debate, such that the Tibetan contribution on the Uyghur Avalokiteśvara cult in the pre-Mongolian period also remains an open question.

found so that the dogmatic ground was well prepared for the Avalokiteśvara cult in that oasis.<sup>27</sup>

What kinds of benefits did the Buddhists in Dunhuang expect from Avalokiteśvara in practice? On this question, not the *sūtras* but the texts in which the Buddhist worship practice is reflected provide useful information: the Buddhist prayer texts.<sup>28</sup> Each Buddhists wrote the prayer text at various events and expressed their wishes mentioning different buddhas and bodhisattvas. Compared to major buddhas like Amitābha or Maitreya, Avalokiteśvara is not frequently mentioned in the prayer texts. These buddhas' popularity in prayer texts probably depends on their particular characteristics. If a deceased person meets with one of these buddhas, then they can be reborn in their respective heaven or reach buddhahood. An encounter with Avalokiteśvara, in contrast, does not promise immediate rebirth in any heaven because this bodhisattva does not have his heaven. Still, there are some prayer texts that mention this bodhisattva. In these texts, in which devotees pray for the healing of diseases, Avalokiteśvara often appears together with the bodhisattvas Bhaiṣajyarāja, Bhaiṣajya-samudgata, and Gadgadasvara.<sup>29</sup> The healing of diseases is one of the well-known functions of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, which was explained in various texts and taken as the topic of the mural paintings. Most of these prayer texts do not contain any information on the date they were composed, but a few mention the governor (Chin. *jiedu* 節度) of Hexi.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara was recognised as a saviour from diseases under the period of Guiyijun rule, which followed the long-established Chinese tradition.

His function as a saviour is seen in another prayer text, P. 2055, which was written in 958 by the devotee Zhai Fengda (ca. 881–959, 翟奉達). There,

27 Hirai Yūkei 平井宥慶, "Senjūseigan daranikyō 千手千眼陀羅尼經 [Nilkaṇṭhakasūtra]," in *Tonkō to Chūgoku bukkyō* 敦煌と中国仏教 [Dunhuang and Chinese Buddhism], ed. Makita Tairyō 牧田諦亮 and Fukui Masami 福井文雅 (Tokyo: Daitō shuppansha, 1984), 131–153.

28 These texts were collected and edited by Huang Zheng and Wu Wei. In the following discussion, the prayer texts included in their edition are taken into consideration. See Huang Zheng 黃徵 and Wu Wei 吳偉, *Dunhuang yuanwenji* 敦煌願文集 [Collection of the Prayer Texts from Dunhuang] (Changsha: Yuelu shubanshe, 1995).

29 According to Huang Zheng and Wu Wei's edition, the following fragments mention the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara with the bodhisattvas mentioned above: S. 1441, S. 4081, S. 4537, S. 5561, S. 6417, P. 2058/P. 3566, P. 2237, and P. 2854. See Huang and Wu, *Dunhuang yuanwenji*, 34, 53, 56, 172, 308, 664, 672, 674, 694, 703, 709.

30 See, e.g., P. 2854 and S. 4537, in Huang and Wu, *Dunhuang yuanwenji*, 672, 674.

after listing the various *sūtras* copied for the merit of his late wife, Mrs. Ma, he wishes:

The merit from copying the scriptures itemed above is dedicated as a posthumous blessing to the departed, Mrs. Ma. We respectfully invite dragons, gods, and the eight classes of beings; Kuan-shi-yin (Skt. Avalokiteśvara: author) Bodhisattva, Ti-tsang (Skt. Kṣitigarbha: author) Bodhisattva, the four great kings of heaven, and the Eight Chin-kang to authenticate it. May she receive every bit of the field of blessings, be reborn in a happy place, and encounter good people. Offered with a single mind.<sup>31</sup>

Here, the type of suffering is not precisely defined. Avalokiteśvara, the other Buddhist guardians, and deities are invoked in hopes of benefiting the late person through the merits of the devotee's good action in copying the *sūtras*.<sup>32</sup>

Furthermore, the other function of this bodhisattva appears in the manuscript that is now preserved in Paris as P. 2864. The manuscript contains the text written for the anniversary of the death of Empress Wang (?–845, 王), who was the empress of the Tang Emperor Muzong (r. 820–824, 穆宗). In it, one wishes for the late empress to “see Amitābha in Sukhāvātī and meet Maitreya in the palace of Tuṣita heaven”<sup>33</sup> and that “Avalokiteśvara should guide the way, and Mahāsthāmaprāpta should come and greet (her).”<sup>34</sup>

31 P. 2055: 右件寫經功德為過往馬氏追福奉請龍天八部救苦觀世音菩薩地藏菩薩四大天王八大金剛以作證盟一一領受福田往生樂處遇善知識一心供養。Huang and Wu do not read Bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha (地藏菩薩) after Avalokiteśvara. However, this bodhisattva's name is clearly legible on the fragment. See Huang and Wu, *Dunhuang yuanwenji*, 931. The translation quoted above was made by Stephen F. Teiser. See Stephen F. Teiser, *The Scripture on the Ten Kings and the Making of Purgatory in Medieval Chinese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994), 106. On Zhai Fengda's Buddhist activities, see Teiser, *The Scripture on the Ten Kings*, 102–121. The Sanskrit equivalents for two bodhisattvas are added by me.

32 Zhai Fengda also ordered a drawing Avalokiteśvara as an attendant of Mañjuśrī for the wall of Mogao Cave 220. The inscription is contained in Huang and Wu's edition and was translated into English by Wei-cheng Lin. See Huang and Wu, *Dunhuang yuanwenji*, 924; Wei-cheng Lin, *Building a Sacred Mountain. The Buddhist Architecture of China's Mount Wutai* (Seattle, London: University of Washington Press, 2014), 173.

33 P. 2864: 安養世界睹彌陀, 知足天宮遇彌勒。The reading follows Huang and Wu's edition. See Huang and Wu, *Dunhuang yuanwenji*, 724.

34 Ibid.: 觀音引路, 勢至來迎。The reading follows Huang and Wu's edition. See Huang and Wu, *Dunhuang yuanwenji*, 724.



The Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara has close ties to the Buddha Amitābha and is recognised as the latter's successor.<sup>35</sup> Thus, it is logical that Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta, Amitābha's other primary attendant, guide the late person who will see Amitābha in Sukhāvātī. Those bodhisattvas are also mentioned in another text in which both buddhas, Amitābha and Maitreya, appear.<sup>36</sup> As will be discussed later, Avalokiteśvara, as the bodhisattva 'sentient beings' guide', is widespread in Dunhuang and is also a motif in paintings in the late Tang Dynasty (875–907, 晚唐), the Five Dynasties (906–978, 五代), and the Song Dynasty (960–1279, 宋).<sup>37</sup>

These prayer texts prove that the Buddhists in Dunhuang under Guiyijun rule venerated Avalokiteśvara, because this particular bodhisattva carries out two relevant functions: a saviour who cures illness and relieves suffering, and sentient beings' guide to Sukhāvātī.

### 3.2 *Avalokiteśvara in Artistic Sources*

Many wall paintings and paintings on silk adopted Avalokiteśvara as their primary subject or as a buddha's attendant.<sup>38</sup> Some of these representations provide inscriptions recording the names of the donors and the reasons for their donation; the foremost was a good rebirth.<sup>39</sup>

He is portrayed in various forms, one of which is as the bodhisattva 'sentient beings' guide' mentioned above. In this form, this bodhisattva leads deceased persons to the Paradise of the Buddha Amitābha, namely, Sukhāvātī, the Western Pure Land. In the Dunhuang area, this form probably developed from the second half of the 9th century onward.<sup>40</sup> Another form of Avalokiteśvara

35 See, e.g., Yü, *Kuan-yin*, 32, 36.

36 This text forms one of many texts contained in the manuscript that is preserved in London under the signature S. 4474. Huang and Wu give the number 10 for this text. They suppose that the manuscript was written around 908. See Huang and Wu, *Dunhuang yuanwenji*, 183.

37 See Section 3.2 below.

38 For an overview, see, e.g., Murase, "Kuan-Yin as Savior of Men". See also, Yü, *Kuan-yin*, 224–228.

39 Yü, *Kuan-yin*, 225.

40 See, e.g., Yü, *Kuan-yin*, 225–228; Li Ling 李翎, "'Yinlu pusa' yu 'lianhuashou'—Hanzang chi lianhua guanyinxiang bijiao '引路菩萨'与'莲花手'—汉藏持莲花观音像比较 [The Soul-Guiding Bodhisattva' and 'Padmapani']," *Xizang yanjiu* 西藏研究 [Tibetan Studies] 3 (2006): 59–62. This article was also published in the *Meiyuan* 美苑 6 (2006): 52–56, which additionally contains the images of the paintings and statues. See also, Wang Ming 王铭, "Pusa yinlu: Tang song shiqi sangzang yishizhong de yinhunfan 菩萨引路：唐宋时期丧葬仪式中的引魂幡 [Road-Guiding Bodhisattva: Soul-Guiding

that was popular in Dunhuang during the same period was the Water–Moon Avalokiteśvara (Chin. Shuiyue Guanyin 水月觀音). Wang Huimin’s investigation of this bodhisattva identifies 32 paintings of the Water–Moon Avalokiteśvara from Dunhuang altogether.<sup>41</sup>

Furthermore, some of the other forms attested among those paintings belong to Esoteric Buddhism.<sup>42</sup> In this context, it is worth mentioning the popularity of Sahasrabhujasahasranetra, that is, the Thousand-armed and Thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara.<sup>43</sup> This form of Avalokiteśvara appears in many wall paintings, and this bodhisattva’s numerous entourage is presented in various ways. Hamada Tamami investigates this entourage in wall paintings in Dunhuang and points out different entourages from the period of the Tang to that of the Five Dynasties.<sup>44</sup> The paintings from the Tang period show either eight great bodhisattvas or twelve celestials, both groups on lotuses and surrounding Sahasrabhujasahasranetra. In later paintings from the Five Dynasties period, the bodhisattva’s companions are depicted as deities flying on clouds. This new entourage is mentioned in the *Nilakanṭhakasūtra*. Hamada suggests that this change was probably connected with the increasing popularity

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Flags in Funeral Rituals in the Tang and Song Dynasties], *Dunhuang yanjiu* 敦煌研究 [Dunhuang Research] 1 (2014): 37–45.

- 41 The breakdown of 32 paintings is 27 wall paintings and 5 paintings on paper and silk. See Wang Huimin 王惠民, “Dunhuang shuiyue guanyinxiang 敦煌水月观音像 [The Avalokiteśvara Statue Viewing the Moon in Water of Dunhuang],” *Dunhuang yanjiu* 敦煌研究 [Dunhuang Research] 1 (1987): 31–38. On this bodhisattva, see also, Yü, *Kuan-yin*, 233–247.
- 42 See, e.g., Henrik H. Sørensen, “Typology and Iconography in the Esoteric Buddhist Art of Dunhuang,” *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 2 (1992): 302–309; Michelle C. Wang, *Maṇḍalas in the Making. The Visual Culture of Esoteric Buddhism at Dunhuang* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2018), 138–155.
- 43 For a detailed iconographic study of this form Avalokiteśvara, see, e.g. Wang Huimin 王惠民, “Dunhuang qianshou qianyan guanyinxiang 敦煌千手千眼观音像 [Iconographies of the Thousand-armed and Thousand-eyed Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara in Dunhuang],” *Dunhuangxue jikan* 敦煌学辑刊 [Journal of the Dunhuang Studies] 1 (1994): 63–76; Peng Jinzhang 彭金章, “Qianyan zhaojian, Qianshou huchi—Dunhuang mijiao jingbian yanjiu zhi san 千眼照见·千手护持—敦煌密教经变研究之三 [Illumination of Thousand Arms and Shield of Thousand Eyes—Study of Stories of Esoteric Buddhism in the Dunhuang Grottes 3],” *Dunhuang yanjiu* 敦煌研究 [Dunhuang Research] 1 (1996): 11–30.
- 44 Hamada Tamami 濱田瑞美, “Tonkō tōsō jidai no senju sengan kan'onhen no kenzokushū ni tsuite 敦煌唐宋時代の千手千眼観音變の眷属衆について [On the Assemblage Surrounding the Thousand Armed Avalokitesvara in the Tang Sung Dunhuang Thousand Armed Avalokitesvara Scenes],” *Nara bijutsu kenkyū* 奈良美術研究 [Journal of Nara Art Studies] 9 (2010): 41–72.

of the *Dabei zhou* 大悲咒 [Great Compassion Dhāraṇī], which is contained in the *Nīlakaṇṭhakaśūtra*. The *Dabei qiqing* 大悲啓請 [Invocation of the Great Compassionate One] is also among the manuscripts found in Dunhuang. In this text, only the *dhāraṇī* part is extracted from the *Nīlakaṇṭhakaśūtra* and added to the text's verses.<sup>45</sup> During the time of the Five Dynasties, assemblies for reciting this *dhāraṇī* were held in Dunhuang, where Sahasrabhūjasahasranetra, the Thousand-armed and Thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara, was worshipped as the main deity. On such occasions, the bodhisattva's entourage should come in response to the devotees' invitation and help those assemblies.

The textual and iconographic sources in Dunhuang under Guiyijun rule indicate that people worshipped Avalokiteśvara for the sake of healing their ailments. This bodhisattva guides beings to the Sukhāvātī and serves as a saviour for those who seek a good rebirth. Sahasrabhūjasahasranetra was a favorite painting motif in Dunhuang. Changes in its iconography were probably associated with the prevalence of the *Great Compassion dhāraṇī*, which was recited in Buddhist assemblies from the 10th century onward.

## 4 Avalokiteśvara Cult in Turfan

### 4.1 Practice of the Avalokiteśvara Cult Traced in Written Sources

In contrast to the Chinese sources in Dunhuang, the written sources in Old Uyghur from Turfan do not show that Avalokiteśvara was worshipped as the saviour. As mentioned above, the sources that show us the Avalokiteśvara cult's practice in Turfan are generally few. The prayer texts are found neither in Old Uyghur nor in Chinese from Turfan.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, we have no way of knowing

45 Maria Reis-Habito investigates the repentance ritual of the Thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara, in which the *Great Compassion Dhāraṇī* played the central role. She suggests that this extracted *dhāraṇī* text probably led to the emergence of that ritual, which was composed by the Tiantai monk Zhiyi (960–1028, 智顛). See Maria Reis-Habito, "The Repentance Ritual of the Thousand-armed Guanyin," *Studies in Central and East Asian Religions* 4 (1991): 42–51; Maria Reis-Habito, *Die Dhāraṇī des Großen Erbarmens des Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara mit tausend Händen und Augen. Übersetzung und Untersuchung ihrer textlichen Grundlage sowie Erforschung ihres Kultes in China* (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1993), 127–132.

46 Peter Zieme recently published a manuscript which he calls "vow text" because of its contents. See, Peter Zieme, "Merit Transfer and Vow according to an Old Uyghur Buddhist Text from Qočo/Gaochang," *Sōka daigaku Kokusai bukkyōgaku kōtōkenkyūjo nenpō Reiva ninendo* 創価大学国際仏教学高等研究所年報 令和二年度 [Annual Report of the International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhism (ARIRIAB) at Soka University for the Academic Year 2020] 24 (2021): 217–229. According to the catalogue of the Turfan

whether or how the Uyghur devotees expressed their aspirations to the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. Colophons and inscriptions added at the end of copied *sūtras* or on the side of pictures on banners sometimes contain some names of buddhas, bodhisattvas, or deities to which donors' aspirations are addressed.<sup>47</sup> In those colophons and inscriptions, however, the Buddha (or Bodhisattva) Maitreya is mentioned most frequently. The Uyghur donors in those sources aspired to rebirth in Tuṣita heaven, to meet with Maitreya, or to get assurance of future enlightenment from that buddha.<sup>48</sup>

In this context, it is worth mentioning the fact that Buddha Amitābha does not appear at the same frequency as Maitreya. As mentioned above, in Dunhuang documents, Amitābha is closely linked with Avalokiteśvara, who is recognised as the guide to the buddha's paradise, Sukhāvātī. This buddha was the object of worship for Uyghur donors in six colophons. Four of them are block printed or written in a cursive script, which probably date to the Mongolian period. The other two are written in square script, providing no

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manuscripts preserved in European and American collections, only three Chinese manuscripts are identified as prayer texts. See, *Tulufan wenshu zongmu. Oumei shoucang juan* 吐鲁番文书总目 欧美收藏卷 [The Complete Catalogue of the Turfan Manuscripts. Volume for the European and American Collections], comp. Rong Xinjiang 荣新江 (Wuchang: Wuhan daxue shubanshe, 2007), 156 (Ch 1881), 380 (Ch/U 6615), and 402 (Ch/U 6927). None of them are dated. The very few numbers of the prayer texts indicate, however, that the custom of writing prayer texts were not widespread in Turfan in contrast to Dunhuang.

47 There are also block-printed *sūtras* whose printing was donated by the Uyghur Buddhists. As mentioned above, the block-printed texts probably date to the Mongolian period. The period which is dealt with in this paper is the pre-Mongolian period, so the block-printed sources are only used secondarily.

48 To my knowledge, ten colophons mention the Buddha (or Bodhisattva) Maitreya, and among them, six were probably written in the pre-Mongolian period. They are listed with the corresponding quotations in my article. See Kasai Yukiyo 笠井幸代, "Uiguru bukkyō ni okeru miroku shinkō—sono kigen to hatten heno shiron ウイグル仏教における弥勒信仰—その起源と発展への試論 [The Maitreya-Cult in Uyghur Buddhism—An Attempt to Its Origin and Development]," in 2014 *nendo kenkyū hōkokusho* 2014年度研究報告書 [The Research Report for the Year 2014], 185–187, accessed March 3, 2020. <http://barc.ryukoku.ac.jp/research/upfile/2014年度研究報告書.pdf>. Among the banner inscriptions preserved in the Museum für Asiatische Kunst, Berlin, one inscription, III 533, mentions the Buddha Maitreya. See Moriyasu and Zieme, "Uighur Inscriptions on the Banners," 463–464.

There are a few colophons and inscriptions in which the Uyghur donors addressed their wishes to Avalokiteśvara. The colophon U 4707 [T III M 187] and the inscription III 7307 on the banner can be mentioned as those examples. They are, however, probably written in the Mongolian period. For a detailed description of the colophon U 4707 and information on previous studies, see BT XXVI, 56–58, colophon no. 6. For the inscription III 7307, see Moriyasu and Zieme, "Uighur Inscriptions on the Banners," 466.

information that enables the dating of the documents.<sup>49</sup> The scriptural sources for the Amitābha cult were probably already available in Old Uyghur in the pre-Mongolian period, and some Uyghurs might have engaged in practicing that cult. However, the extant materials, including colophons, establish the prevalence of this cult among Uyghurs in the Mongolian period.<sup>50</sup> The lack of material makes it difficult to determine how widespread the Amitābha cult was among the Uyghurs in the pre-Mongolian period. In Dunhuang, the Buddha Amitābha and Maitreya are often addressed side by side in prayers texts as the recipients of devotees' devotions.<sup>51</sup> Despite the differences between prayer texts and colophons, Amitābha's paradise of Sukhāvātī may have been a goal for Buddhist donors or their dead relatives, exactly like Maitreya's Tuṣita heaven. In that respect, it is no wonder that Amitābha appears beside Maitreya in the part of the colophons expressing the Uyghur donors' aspirations. Considering Amitābha's relative absence in the Uyghur colophons, this buddha does not seem to have gained the same popularity as Maitreya among the Uyghurs, or perhaps, he and his functions were possibly envisioned differently in Turfan than in Dunhuang.<sup>52</sup>

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- 49 These colophons have been reedited. For the text and information on previous studies of these colophons, see BT XXVI, 49–52, 65–67, 112–115, 211–212, 239–243, and 252–253; colophon nos. 3, 12, 40, 113, 129, and 135. While colophon nos. 3 and 135 are written in Uyghur square script, colophon nos. 12, 40, and 129 are block printed. The script used in colophon no. 113 is categorised as cursive. On the classification of the various Uyghur scripts and their dating possibilities, see fn. 17.
- 50 On that topic, see also, Jens Wilkens, “Practice and Rituals in Uyghur Buddhist Texts: A Preliminary Appraisal,” Chapter 13 in this volume.
- 51 One example is quoted in Section 3.1 above. For the original text, see fn. 33. Furthermore, similar sentences appear in prayer texts that Huang and Wu edited. See Huang and Wu, *Dunhuang yuanwenji*, 14, 28, 139, 239, 277, 214, 765, 800.
- 52 In this context, one Buddhist temple banner, III 6242 (cat. no. 496), demands special attention. See Bhattacharya-Haesner, *Central Asian Temple Banners*, 352, no. 496. According to Bhattacharya-Haesner, it could date in the 10th–11th centuries. On that banner, a Uyghur lady with a buddha figure in her headpiece is depicted. Zsuzsanna Gulácsi identifies that buddha figure as Amitābha and regards this banner as a trace of the Uyghurs' adherence to Pure Land Buddhism in that early period. Furthermore, she also claims that there are some similarities between the pictorial programmes of that banner and the Manichaeic banner. See Zsuzsanna Gulácsi, “The Manichaeic Roots of a Pure Land Banner from Kocho (III 4524) in the Asian Art Museum, Berlin,” in *Language, Society, and Religion in the World of the Turks. Festschrift for Larry Clark at Seventy-Five*, ed. Zsuzsanna Gulácsi (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018), 345–350. If her assertion is correct, banner III 6242 is one of the most relevant pieces of evidence proving the prevalence of Pure Land Buddhism among the Uyghurs in the pre-Mongolian period, and the shared pictorial programme in Manichaeic and Buddhist paintings provides a powerful lens through which to view the Uyghurs' understanding the afterworld. The identification of the buddha figure with

Remarkably, even in the texts in which the names Avalokiteśvara or Amitābha can be expected, this bodhisattva and buddha are not mentioned. In the colophon which was added to the above-mentioned eulogy dedicated to Avalokiteśvara,<sup>53</sup> the Uyghur donors wish to meet the Buddha Maitreya and receive that buddha's assurance of their future enlightenment.<sup>54</sup> A similar case is also found in the inscription added to a banner III 533. Although the fragmentary condition does not allow to identify the topics of this banner, according to the inscription, Cakravartīcintāmaṇīcakra, a form of Avalokiteśvara, and possibly of Maitreya are depicted on it. There, the Uyghur devotees wish that: "all of us shall be joyful, and free from illness and disease, from pain and danger in this present world."<sup>55</sup> At last they shall:

be reborn above in the Tuṣṭa heaven. And let us see in the future time Maitreya Buddha by the strength of this meritorious and good deed. [Let us decorate] Maitreya Buddha's graceful body with the Jambu-river gold (= Jāmbūnada-suvarṇa).<sup>56</sup>

The first part could possibly indicate that the Uyghur devotees were aware of Avalokiteśvara's function as the saviour of from disease. As discussed in Section 3.1. above, this was one of Avalokiteśvara's major functions, which motivated devotees to pray to the bodhisattva in Dunhuang. On the other hand, it is not the Buddha Amitābha but rather Maitreya who is mentioned in that banner inscription. Thus, the close link with Amitābha attested in both written and artistic sources in Dunhuang does not necessarily seem to have been recognised among the Uyghur Buddhists.

The extant written sources in Old Uyghur do not explicitly attest to Avalokiteśvara's primary function as a saviour from disease.<sup>57</sup> While the written sources found in Dunhuang attest to the close connection between Avalokiteśvara and Amitābha, none of the sources in Old Uyghur provide

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Amitābha is, however, uncertain. Also, the inscription on that banner only mentions a buddha land without further substantiating. This, therefore, requires further research.

53 See, Section 2.

54 See BT XXVI, 229–230, lines 15–18.

55 The English translation follows the edition Takao Moriyas worked on in collaboration with Peter Zieme. See Moriyasu and Zieme, "Uighur Inscriptions on the Banners," 463, lines 16–18.

56 The English translation follows Moriyasu and Zieme's edition. See Moriyasu and Zieme, "Uighur Inscriptions on the Banners," 463, lines 22–26.

57 This raises the further question of what kind of traditions the Uyghur Buddhists had when they prayed for healing from diseases. So far as prayer texts in Old Uyghur were not found, their tradition could differ from that in Dunhuang.

traces of this connection's recognition by the Uyghur Buddhists. These findings are also supported by the fact that the Uyghur devotees did not address Avalokiteśvara when praying for a good rebirth.

#### 4.2 *Avalokiteśvara in Artistic Sources*

The artistic sources found in Turfan are much less systematically analysed than those of Dunhuang. Still, some paintings found on walls and textiles provide clues to the iconographic trends among the Uyghur Buddhists. Bezeklik Cave 20 has drawn much attention for its wall paintings depicting Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. In this cave, Sahasrabhujasahasranetra has been identified as the central figure on the back wall of the cella.<sup>58</sup> Several scenes, the topic of which is the Buddha Śākyamuni's vow (Skt. *praṇidhi*) in his former lives and his getting the assurance of further enlightenment, are depicted on the walls in the ambulatory. On each side of the entrance, three monks are pictured. The monks' clothes and associated inscriptions identify them as Chinese and Tocharians.<sup>59</sup> This cave also contains Uyghur donor figures on the interior east (front) wall of the cella. From their clothes and ornaments, they are probably Uyghur princesses and princes.<sup>60</sup> Thus, it is one of the caves that was established under the patronage of high-ranking Uyghur Buddhists, and in it, Sahasrabhujasahasranetra was chosen for the main iconographic programme.

Otherwise, Avalokiteśvara does not enjoy the predominant presence in the wall paintings. In contrast, other art objects provide this bodhisattva's prevalence in Turfan: Buddhist banners. Chhaya Bhattacharya-Haesner made the catalogue of the temple banners preserved in the Berlin Turfan Collection, one of the most important collections of art objects and written sources from

58 About the detailed study on that cave, see, e.g. Denise P. Leidy, "Bezeklik Temple 20 and Early Esoteric Buddhism," *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 7 (2001): 201–222; Kitsudō Kōichi 橘堂晃一, "Bezekuriku sekkutsu kuyō bikuzu saikō—Tonkō bakkōkutsu no meibum wo tegakari to shite ベゼクリク石窟供養比丘図再考—敦煌莫高窟の銘文を手がかりとして [Reconsideration of the Monk's Donor Portrait in the Bezeklik Cave—According to the Inscription in the Dunhuang Cave]," in *Ajia bukkyō bijutsushū. Chūō Ajia I. Gandāra~Tōzai Torukisutan* アジア仏教美術論集中央アジア I ガンダーラ～東西トルキスタン [Essays on the Asian Buddhist Arts. Central Asia I. Gandhara–Eastern and Western Turkestan], ed. Miyaji Akira 宮治昭 (Tokyo: Chūō kōron bijutsu shuppan, 2018), 523–550.

59 Kitsudō Kōichi summarise the previous studies on the monk's figures and their identifications. See, Kitsudō, "Bezekuriku sekkutsu kuyō bikuzu saikō," 525–526.

60 About the donor figures, see, e.g. Lilla Russell-Smith, *Uyghur Patronage in Dunhuang. Regional Art Centres on the Northern Silk Road in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2005), 23–28.

Turfan.<sup>61</sup> In her catalogue, 148 entries altogether are devoted to banners depicting bodhisattvas.<sup>62</sup> Among them, the bodhisattva is unidentified in 42 of the entries. The number of banners depicting the various forms of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara amounts to 80. The number of banners depicting other bodhisattvas—Maitreya, Mahāsthāmaprāpta, Samantabhadra (Chin. Puxian 普賢), Kṣitigarbha, and Mañjuśrī—totals, in contrast, 27.<sup>63</sup> The fragmentary condition of the banners sometimes makes it difficult to completely follow Bhattacharya-Haesner's identification. However, the relatively large number of banners devoted to Avalokiteśvara indicates the bodhisattva's popularity in Turfan. According to Bhattacharya-Haesner's dating, the production of Avalokiteśvara banners is scattered from the 7th to 14th centuries. Buddhism probably became the dominant religion of the Uyghurs in the second half of the 10th or beginning of the 11th century. Thus, the turn from the 10th to the

61 Bhattacharya-Haesner, *Central Asian Temple Banners*.

62 Those entries are from the catalogue number 157 to 312. Here, only the entries in the headline of which the word 'bodhisattva' or the identified bodhisattvas' name appear, are counted. It should give the first impression of how many banners are devoted to the bodhisattvas. There are further banners on which bodhisattvas are depicted as one of the component elements of the various scenes like hell or paradises.

63 The entries for banners of the various forms of Avalokiteśvara are catalogue nos. 168–196, 198–199, 202–249, 260. See Bhattacharya-Haesner, *Central Asian Temple Banners*, 169–194, 195–199, 200–231, 240–242. Furthermore, she also indicates there is a connection between the moon motif on banner 64 and Avalokiteśvara, but Jens Wilkens refutes this. See Jens Wilkens, "Review: Central Asian Temple Banners in the Turfan Collection of the Museum für Indische Kunst, Berlin by Chhaya Bhattacharya-Haesner," *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* 100 (2005): 321. She also identifies the figures on banner 113. As she discusses, however, there are multiple possible identifications, one of which is even Zoroastrian. Because of this difference in opinion among the specialists, I do not take it into consideration in this paper. See Bhattacharya-Haesner, *Central Asian Temple Banners*, 35–38, 124–126. On this topic, see also, Lilla Russell-Smith, "The 'Sogdian Deities' Twenty Years on: A Reconsideration of a Small Painting from Dunhuang," Chapter 5 in this volume. Banner no. 260 depicts not only Avalokiteśvara but also Kṣitigarbha and Amitābha. The banners that depict Maitreya are banners 157, 160–167; Mahāsthāmaprāpta: banner 197; Samantabhadra: banner 250; Kṣitigarbha: banners 251–262; and Mañjuśrī: banners 267–270. See Bhattacharya-Haesner, *Central Asian Temple Banners*, 161–169, 194–195, 231–243, 246–247. Kṣitigarbha is also depicted in the scenes of hell. See Bhattacharya-Haesner, *Central Asian Temple Banners*, 245, banner 265. Peter Zieme mentions an additional Avalokiteśvara banner preserved in St. Petersburg. This banner bears a short inscription in Old Uyghur, which is written in cursive script. See Zieme, "Some notes on Old Uigur art and texts," 10.



11th centuries is relevant, because the identity of the donors for Avalokiteśvara banners could change in that period.<sup>64</sup>

TABLE 7.1 Avalokiteśvara banners in the Berlin Turfan Collection currently dated 7th to 10th centuries

Iconographic forms of Avalokiteśvara	Dating	Number
Avalokiteśvara/Avalokiteśvara in gesture of reverence	7–9th c.	2
(Skt. <i>añjalimudrā</i> )/Avalokiteśvara Padmapāṇi and Avalokiteśvara	9–10th c.	9
<i>maṇḍala</i> of Avalokiteśvara	9–10th c.	2
Eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara	9–10th c.	2
Thousand-armed and Thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara	9–10th c.	5
<i>maṇḍala</i> of Thousand-armed and Thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara	9–10th c.	2
Total number		22

64 The following tables are based on Bhattacharya-Haesner's identification and dating. Among the entries listed in n. 53, cat. nos. 235, 236, 237, 238, and 239 belong to the same banner, so they are counted as one. The same applies for nos. 216, 229–232. Bhattacharya-Haesner only dates no. 232 in the 10th–11th centuries, but here it is treated together with the others that are dated in the 11th–12th centuries. As mentioned above, some banners are too fragmented to understand her identification. Thus, those banners are not taken into consideration here. They are catalogue nos. 168, 177, 182, 190, 194, 207, 208, 214, 221, 223, 224, 226, 227, and 228. The identification of the bodhisattva figure in the banner that depicts a buddha at the top is still debated. Bhattacharya-Haesner identifies it as Avalokiteśvara, because she interprets the buddha figure at the top of the banner as Buddha Amitābha. This interpretation, however, remains debatable. Thus, the identification of nos. 180, 181, and 183 may change through future studies. The banner III 6242 (cat. no. 496), which Zsuzanna Gulácsi discusses, also belongs to this category. See fn. 52. Furthermore, Bhattacharya-Haesner points out that nos. 219, 211, 212, 213, 215–218, 220–232, 234, and 243 stylistically belong together, although they are not contiguous and could date to different periods. Because of the fragmentary condition, this assumption cannot be affirmed.

TABLE 7.2 Avalokiteśvara banners in the Berlin Turfan Collection currently dated 10th to 12th centuries

Chosen Avalokiteśvara motifs	Dating	Number
Avalokiteśvara/Avalokiteśvara in <i>añjalimudrā</i>	10–11th c.	5
	11–12th c.	1
<i>maṇḍala</i> of Avalokiteśvara	Late 10–11th c.	1
Cintāmaṇicakra	Late 10–11th c.	1
Eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara	10–11th c.	1
Eleven-headed and Thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara	11–12th c.	1
Thousand-armed and Thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara	10–11th c.	1
	11–12th c.	10
<i>maṇḍala</i> of Thousand-armed and Thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara	10–11th c.	1
Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara	10–11th c.	1
	11–12th c.	1
Total number		24

The total number in both tables indicates that the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara was a favourite subject for temple banners throughout the 7th and 12th centuries. The banners devoted to the Water–Moon Avalokiteśvara indicate the exchange with the Buddhist community in Dunhuang, where that form was popular.<sup>65</sup> The same is true for the increasing number of banners devoted to Sahasrabhujasahasranetra. The *Invocation of the Great Compassionate One*, which was connected with that form in Dunhuang, has not, however, been identified yet in Old Uyghur.

65 Peter Zieme also discusses the image of ‘moon in the water’ in Old Uyghur texts. See Peter Zieme, “Das Bild vom ‘Mond im Wasser (水月)’ in altuigurischen Texten,” *academia.edu*, last accessed March 8, 2020, 1–3. [https://www.academia.edu/34518806/Das\\_Bild\\_vom\\_Mond\\_im\\_Wasser\\_水月\\_in\\_altuigurischen\\_Texten](https://www.academia.edu/34518806/Das_Bild_vom_Mond_im_Wasser_水月_in_altuigurischen_Texten). On Avalokiteśvara’s various forms in Old Uyghur, see also, Peter Zieme, “Uigur Version of the Lotus Sutra with Special Reference to Avalokiteśvara’s Transformation Bodies,” *Yūrashia kogo bunken no bunkengakuteki kenkyū. Newsletter ユーラシア古語文献の文献学的研究. Newsletter [Philological Research on the Manuscripts in Old Languages from Eurasia. Newsletter]* 13 (2005): 2–7.

Among them, only a few banners bear an inscription, so the process of making the banners remains mostly unknown. However, if we assume that locals in Turfan donated most of the banners, then the donors were probably the Buddhists, most of whom were perhaps non-Uyghur speakers, especially before the Uyghurs' migration.<sup>66</sup> These donors were probably Chinese rather than Tocharians—although the latter were also an essential component of the Turfan area—because of the flourishing Avalokiteśvara cult in the neighbouring Chinese Buddhist community in Dunhuang. The inscriptions on three of the banners, III 6588, III 6458, and III 6564 (cat. nos. 178, 183, and 191), are written in Chinese, and according to Bhattacharya-Haesne, were produced in that 7th–10th-centuries period. If her dating is correct, then the Chinese inscriptions also indicate the involvement of Chinese Buddhists.<sup>67</sup>

66 Already in the East Uyghur Kaganate period, some Uyghurs were active in that area, and among them, there were probably a few who already had contact with the local Buddhists in Turfan and became Buddhists individually. Thus, the possibility that those Uyghur speaking Buddhists donated some of those banners also has to be considered. However, the Manichaean hymn book called *Mahrnāmag* was produced in the Turfan area in the Kaganate period, indicating the local Manichaean communities there. This Manichaean book is written in the Middle Iranian language, was kept unfinished in the monastery of Karashar (Chin. Yanqi 焉耆) and was completed, still before the Uyghurs' migration. According to Werner Sundermann, the list of many high-ranking Uyghurs in the Turfan area in its colophon "enumerate as well those regions where Manichaean communities existed and enjoyed local protection". See, Werner Sundermann, "Iranian Manichaean Turfan Texts Concerning the Turfan Region," in *Turfan and Tun-Huang. The Texts. Encounter of Civilisations on the Silk Road*, ed. Alfredo Cadonna (Florenz: Casa Editrice Leo S. Olschki, 1992), 72. Furthermore, after their migration, the Uyghurs produced Manichaean texts in Old Uyghur in the Turfan area, and their rulers also used the legitimation supported by the Manichaean community to stabilize the newly founded West Uyghur Kingdom. See, Kasai, "Uyghur Legitimation," 66–73. It shows that for most of the Uyghurs in that area, Manichaeism still played a relevant role for a while, even if some could become Buddhism shortly after their migration.

As is well known, some Uyghur Buddhists could read Chinese texts and write Chinese characters. See, e.g. Kōgi Kudara and Peter Zieme, "Uigurische 'Āgama'-Fragmente (1)," *Altorientalische Forschungen* 10 (1983): 271–272; Yukiyo Kasai, "Old Uyghur Translations of Buddhist Texts and Their Usage," in *Premodern Translation: Comparative Approaches to Cross-Cultural Transformations. Contact and Transmission* 2, ed. Sonja Brentjes and Alexander Fidora (Turnhout: Brepols, 2021), 20–23. However, it is still debatable when they began to learn Chinese and how large that group under the Uyghurs was. Many datable pieces of evidence for using Chinese texts and characters are from the Mongolian period. Thus, the absence of Old Uyghur texts cannot immediately be interpreted as that the Uyghur Buddhists used Chinese Buddhist texts in the practice of the Avalokiteśvara cult.

67 For the inscriptions on banners 178 and 191, see Rong Xinjiang, "Chinese Inscriptions on the Turfan Textiles in the Museum of Indian Art, Berlin," in *Central Asian Temple Banners in the Turfan Collection of the Museum für Indische Kunst, Berlin*, ed. Chhaya

The Chinese ambassador from the Song Dynasty, Wang Yande (939–1006, 王延德), visited the West Uyghur Kingdom around 980 and reported that he was able to recognise more than fifty monasteries, and they all still had their nameplate on the gatepost, which were awarded by the Tang court.<sup>68</sup> It seems that the Buddhist temples in the Turfan area were largely undamaged, even after the establishment of the West Uyghur Kingdom, when Manichaeism was the dominant religion among the Uyghur ruling classes in the first decades. Thus, the local Chinese Buddhists who supported those temples were also able to continue their religious activities, including making various donations.<sup>69</sup> Their continuous involvement in those Buddhist activities prompts the question of why Chinese prayer texts were not found in Turfan, unlike in Dunhuang. The absence of those texts in Turfan could indicate the possibility, on the one hand, that the Chinese Buddhists in Turfan had different practices than those in Dunhuang, or on the other hand, that the changes to the Chinese Buddhist community in Turfan under Uyghur rule somehow prevented those Chinese materials from surviving to the present day. These possible changes—which include a preference for the Uyghur language—are mostly still under discussion, so that the question has to remain unanswered.

Should we then think that the Uyghurs donated most of the banners from the 10th–12th century and that these banners precisely reflect their Buddhist activities? Two of the banners, III 533 and III 8559 (cat. nos. 202 and 246), were clearly donated by Uyghur Buddhists, because their inscriptions are in Old Uyghur.<sup>70</sup> However, the donors of most of the banners remain unidentified. The Uyghurs' conversion to Buddhism did not mean that the Chinese Buddhist community's activities came to a standstill, nor that they were immediately assimilated to the Uyghurs. Thus, both Uyghurs and Chinese

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Bhattacharya-Haesner (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 2003), 475. In particular, banner 178 is the invocation Avalokiteśvara and contains a Chinese quotation from the 25th chapter of the *Saddharmapūṇḍarikasūtra*, namely the so-called *Avalokiteśvarasūtra*. The banner 245 also bears a Chinese inscription, but according to Takao Moriyasu, it was probably written in the Mongolian period. See Moriyasu and Zieme, "Uighur Inscriptions on the Banners," 466.

68 This part is translated into German. See, e.g., Moriyasu, *Die Geschichte des uigurischen Manichäismus an der Seidenstraße*, 167–168.

69 Several Chinese manuscripts of the *Saddharmapūṇḍarikasūtra*, volume 7, which contains the 25th chapter, the relevant chapter for the Avalokiteśvara, are found from Turfan and dated in the 9th to 10th centuries. See *Tulufan wenshu zongmu*. It indicates the local Buddhists used and copied this text in Chinese during that period.

70 Those inscriptions are edited in Moriyasu and Zieme, "Uighur Inscriptions on the Banners," 463–464, 468–469.

should be considered as the donors of those banners.<sup>71</sup> The support of the Uyghurs as the new ruling class in the Turfan area might even have been an impetus to local Buddhist activities. On banner III 7513 (cat. no. 179), which Bhattacharya-Haesner dates to the 10th–11th centuries, the cartouche is written with Chinese characters.<sup>72</sup> If we accept her dating, the use of Chinese characters could indicate that the process of making some Avalokiteśvara banners remained in close relationship with the Chinese tradition at that time.

## 5 Closing Remarks

As discussed in Section 2, doctrinal written sources related to Avalokiteśvara were probably translated into Old Uyghur absorbing Chinese Buddhism in Dunhuang in the pre-Mongolian period. The other textual sources in Old Uyghur that are dealt with in Section 4.1 show different features than those from Dunhuang. In those sources, the Uyghur devotees did not choose the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara as the recipient of their devotions. Furthermore, neither his close connection to the Buddha Amitābha nor his role as the guide to the latter's paradise, Sukhāvātī, appears. The complete absence of this latter role in the colophons is especially relevant. This role is strongly connected with the afterworld, such that—like Maitreya and his paradise—it is a topic that should be addressed in the colophons, because they involve donors' devotions for themselves and their late relatives. The paintings on the banner discussed in Section 4.2 show that Avalokiteśvara was continuously one of the favourite motifs before and after Buddhism became the dominant religion of the Uyghurs when they became the ruling class in Turfan after the second half of the 9th century. Thus, during the 7th–12th centuries, those Avalokiteśvara banners were probably donated by both the Chinese and Uyghur Buddhists in Turfan. The Uyghurs were involved in the donation mainly from the second half of the 10th century onward, while the Chinese acted as donor throughout the whole period. The popularity of that bodhisattva in paintings and the bodhisattva's absence in textual sources in Old Uyghur outside of *sūtras*, leads us to the position that the Avalokiteśvara cult was practised among the Chinese

71 The involvement of other groups who used other languages living in the Turfan area, including Tocharians and Sogdians, also has to be taken into consideration. For Tocharians and Sogdians, however, their assimilation to the Uyghurs could progress quicker than the Chinese or their preferred Buddhist donations could differ from those of the Chinese and Uyghurs following the Chinese tradition. To date, any inscriptions provide no clear evidence of Tocharian and Sogdian Buddhists donating temple banners.

72 See Rong, "Chinese Inscriptions on the Turfan Textiles," 476.

Buddhist community and the Uyghur Buddhists who had a close relationship with it.

In this context, it is worth reexamining the wall painting in Bezeklik Cave 20. As mentioned in Section 4.2, it was established by the donation of high-ranking Uyghurs. The iconography selected, the Sahasrabhujasahasranetra and vow (Skt. *praṇidhi*) scenes, reflect the presence of both Chinese and Tocharian traditions.<sup>73</sup> At the entrance of the ambulatory, the Chinese and Tocharian monks are depicted in threes on each side. The whole iconographic programme in this cave seems to have been chosen with careful consideration for both the Chinese and the Tocharian Buddhist traditions that existed in the West Uyghur Kingdom. To give equal acknowledgement to both Buddhist traditions in their kingdom seems to have been relevant for the Uyghurs as rulers. For example, not only the Chinese but also the Tocharian monks were appointed to the high-ranking position of having the gold seal bestowed on them.<sup>74</sup> Even in the period when the Manichaean and Buddhist communities still co-existed, both communities received official financial support.<sup>75</sup> It seems, therefore, to have been an essential political issue for the Uyghur rulers to maintain a balance between the various religious communities in their kingdom.

Bezeklik Cave 20 was sponsored by the high-ranking Uyghurs who belonged to the ruling clans. Thus, its iconographic programme can be interpreted as a representation of the political treatment of the religious communities in the West Uyghur Kingdom. The Buddhist caves were not only a place of worship but also of political demonstration, as some of Mogao and Yulin Caves (Chin. Yulin ku 榆林窟) in Dunhuang region show. One such example is Mogao Cave 61. There, the international marriage alliance of the ruling family in Dunhuang is evident in its donor figures. Additionally, Mt. Wutai (Chin. Wutai shan 五台山), which is connected with legitimating the rulers, is also depicted

73 See, e.g., Ines Konczak, "Origin, Development and Meaning of the Praṇidhi Paintings on the Northern Silk Road," in *Turfan no bukk'yō to bijutsu—Uiguru bukk'yō wo chūshin ni—Shiruku rōdo no bukk'yō bunka—Gandāra, Kucha, Turfan—Dainibu* トルファンの仏教と美術—ウイグル 仏教を中心に—シルクロードの仏教文化—ガンダーラ・クチャ・トルファン—第II部 [Buddhism and Art in Turfan: From the Perspective of Uyghur Buddhism. Buddhist Culture along the Silk Road: Gandhāra, Kucha, and Turfan. Section II], ed. Ryūkoku daigaku ajia bukk'yō bunka sentā 龍谷大学アジア仏教文化センター (Kyoto: Ryūkoku daigaku ajia bukk'yō bunka sentā, 2013), 47–49; Kitsudō, "Bezekuriku sekkutsu kuyō bikuzu saikō," 525.

74 Kitsudō, "Bezekuriku sekkutsu kuyō bikuzu saikō," 527–528.

75 On this topic, see, e.g., Yukiyo Kasai, "Uyghur Legitimation and the Role of Buddhism," in *Buddhism in Central Asia I: Patronage, Legitimation, Sacred Space, and Pilgrimage*, ed. Carmen Meinert and Henrik Sørensen (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2020), 73–78.

there.<sup>76</sup> To date, such a function has not been discussed in regard to any of the Bezeklik Caves. The careful choice of the iconography, the delicate balance between the Chinese and the Tocharian traditions, and the involvement of the high-ranking Uyghur donors indicate that Cave 20 also served to represent the political function of the Uyghur ruling clans. Furthermore, this cave is not the only exceptional example. Kitsudō Kōichi points out that the iconography in Yulin Cave 39 has similarities with that in Cave 20. High-ranking Uyghurs sponsored Cave 39, too. Like Bezeklik Cave 20, Yulin Cave 39, therefore, had the function of making the Uyghurs' religious policy visible.<sup>77</sup> Those examples show that the Uyghurs seem to have made some caves to demonstrate their political position, in addition to any religious motivation.

If this is the case, Sahasrabhujasahasranetra was not necessarily chosen because of the popularity of that bodhisattva among the Uyghurs at that time, or because the Uyghur donors of Cave 20 might have worshipped Avalokiteśvara privately. Instead, Avalokiteśvara was recognised as one of the essential figures worshipped in the Chinese Buddhist community. The same was true for the vow scenes and the Tocharian community. The Uyghur Buddhists absorbed Buddhist teaching and cultures from these two major Buddhist communities in the West Uyghur Kingdom. They accepted the various cults and practices, while the Chinese and Tocharian Buddhists also continuously engaged in Buddhist activities. The cult of Avalokiteśvara, which was a result of absorption from Chinese Buddhism, was one of those cults. The Uyghurs adopted it through the Chinese community in Turfan. Although the Chinese Buddhist contribution from Dunhuang to the Uyghurs was significant, the adoption of a cult or trend from that area does not necessarily mean that it became popular for all Uyghur Buddhists or was practiced exactly in the same way in Turfan as in Dunhuang. In the West Uyghur Kingdom, various Buddhist communities—commencing with those established by the Tocharians and Chinese—seem

76 See, e.g., Moriyasu Takao 森安孝夫, "Uiguru to tonkō ウイグルと敦煌 [Uyghur and Dunhuang]," in *Tōzai Uiguru to Chūō Yūrashia* 東西ウイグルと中央ユーラシア [Eastern and Western Uyghurs and Central Eurasia], ed. by Moriyasu Takao (Nagoya: Nagoya daigaku shuppankai, 2015), 318–322. I also discuss this topic. See Kasai, "Uyghur Legitimation," 79. On the painting of Mt. Wutai, see, e.g., Kasai, "The Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, Mt. Wutai, and Uyghur Pilgrims," 15–16.

77 Kitsudō, "Bezekuriku sekkutsu kuyō bikuzu saikō," 527–528. In Yulin Cave 39, the numerous Uyghur male and female donor figures are also depicted. Some inscriptions inform us that the figures of the empress and the minister are included among them. See Matsui Dai 松井太, "Tonkō shosekkutsu no uigurugo daiki meibum ni kansuru sakki 敦煌諸石窟のウイグル語題記銘文に関する筈記 [Notes on the Old Uigur Wall Inscriptions in the Dunhuang Caves]," *Jinbun shakai ronsō Jinbun kagaku hen* 人文社會論叢 人文科學編 [Studies in the Humanities Volume of Cultural Science] 30 (2013): 30–33.

to have existed, and cultivated and retained their traditions. The Uyghurs had different relationships with those communities so that their impacts were varied.<sup>78</sup> As mentioned above, the Chinese Buddhist elements from Dunhuang was probably the strongest ones that the majority of the Uyghurs absorbed. This, however, does not mean that all Uyghurs uniformly followed the same Chinese Buddhist practices. There were various Buddhist groups and communities that contained different language speakers and Buddhist traditions. The cult of Avalokiteśvara was one of them. The activities of those various communities are reflected in the extant textual and artistic sources in Turfan.

78 Three so-called stake inscriptions that are preserved in the Berlin Turfan Collection, for example, show one of those features. They were all donated by the high-ranking Uyghurs. While one is written in Chinese, the other two are written in Old Uyghur. See, e.g., Moriyasu Takao 森安孝夫, “Nishi uiguru ōkokushi no konpon shiryō to shitenō bōkui monjo 西ウイグル王国史の根本史料としての棒杭文書 [The Stake Inscriptions as Fundamental Sources for the History of the West Uyghur Kingdom],” in *Tōzai Uiguru to Chūō Yūrashia* 東西ウイグルと中央ユーラシア [Eastern and Western Uyghurs and Central Eurasia], ed. Moriyasu Takao (Nagoya: Nagoya daigaku shuppankai, 2015), 678–736. The use of Chinese language and characters can be interpreted as the result of a strong Chinese involvement in the Uyghurs donation activities that were carried out at the initiative of Chinese Buddhists agents.



# Bridging Yoga and Mahāyoga: Samaya in Early Tantric Buddhism

Jacob P. Dalton

## 1 Introduction

The 7th and 8th centuries saw sudden-gradual debates popping up in all sorts of ways. Not only did the Chan Master Shenhui (668–760, 神會) claim the superiority of his lineage to that of Shenxiu (606–706, 神秀), not only did Tibetans have to negotiate the doctrinal differences between the Indian and the Chinese teachers who arrived at court, but Indian Buddhists too were debating the import of the burgeoning *tantras*. From Bhavaviveka's 6th-century complaint that, "[...] *dhāraṇīmantras* cannot pacify sin, because they do not counteract its causes [...]," to Kamalaśīla's 8th-century nuancing of how to understand the non-application of mind (Skt. *amanasikāra*), the possibility of a more immediate approach to awakening was causing consternation for some of India's best Buddhist scholars.<sup>1</sup> Even Dharmakīrti took care to ground the transformative power of *mantra* in the ritualist's own capabilities, in "[...] the utterance and the *samaya* of [persons] who are endowed with truthfulness, etc."<sup>2</sup> By the 9th century, however, the concept of a teacher transmitting immediate

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- 1 *Madhyamakahrdayavṛttitarkajvāla* (Derge Tōhoku no. 3856), in *bsTan 'gyur (sde dge)*, 213 vols., ed. Shuchen Tsultrim Rinchen (Delhi: Delhi Karmapae Chodhey Gyalwae Sungrab Partun Khang, 1982–1985), 184a.7–b.1: *gzungs sngags kyiis kyang sdig pa zhi bar byed pa ma yin te/ de'i rgyu dang mi 'gal ba nyid kyi phyir*. For an English translation of the entire section, see Malcolm David Eckel, *Bhāvaviveka and his Buddhist Opponents* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 179–182. On Kamalaśīla, see Luis O. Gomez, "Indian Materials on the Doctrine of Sudden Enlightenment," in *Early Ch'an in China and Tibet*, ed. Whalen Lai and Lewis R. Lancaster (Berkeley: Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series, 1983). Other Indian examples are may be cited, and it is worth noting that related debates continued well into the 11th century, as seen in the *Abhiṣekhanirukti*, which warns against taking the realisation gained through initiation as the ultimate goal of Buddhist practice. "This is wrong," it explains, "because it would mean that [complete] liberation would follow immediately from initiation" (*tan na yuktaṃ tu sekānantaramuktitāḥ*); as translated in Isabella Onians, "Tantric Buddhist Apologetics or Antinomianism as a Norm" (PhD diss., Oxford University, 2001), 351.
- 2 *Pramāṇavārttikasvavṛtti* 124.14–15: *na mantrō nāmānyad eva kiñcit satyādimitāṃ vacanasamayād iti*. As cited and translated by Vincent Eltschinger, *Buddhist Epistemology as Apologetics: Studies on the History, Self-understanding and Dogmatic Foundations of*

awakening to a disciple was being enshrined in the tantric fourth initiation, and before long, many Tibetans were enumerating various methods for ‘introduction’ (Tib. *ngo sprod*), introducing a disciple to the nature of mind.<sup>3</sup>

With such trends in view, the present chapter examines the role of *samaya* (Tib. *dam tshig*) in the early development of tantric Buddhist ritual. Arguing that the term was pivotal to 8th-century ritual developments in ways that have not yet been sufficiently recognised, the chapter suggests that the effecting of *samaya*’s entry (Skt. *āveśa*) into the practitioner’s heart constituted a central theme for both Yoga and early Mahāyoga. Indeed, once the centrality of *samaya* is recognised, the development of the ‘secret’ sexual practices of early Mahāyoga out of the earlier rites of the Yogatantras appears in a new light.<sup>4</sup> For my evidence, I turn foremost to the Dunhuang collection, as its numerous ritual manuals offer so many rare glimpses of early tantric practice, but also to some closely associated *tantras* and commentaries.

## 2 Yogatantra

We begin with the rituals of the *Sarvatathāgatattvasaṃgraha* (henceforth the STTs), the most influential of the Yogatantras, portions of which likely date to the late 7th century. First, we will examine the place of *samaya* in the initiation ceremony as it is described in the *tantra* itself and then in a Dunhuang (敦煌) *sādhana* for post-initiatory practice.

The fundamentals of the STTs ritual system may be found in the *tantra*’s first chapter. Following the creation of the system’s Vajradhātu *maṇḍala*, the

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*Late Indian Buddhist Philosophy* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2014), 129, except that I leave *samaya* untranslated.

3 On the emergence of the fourth initiation in the early 9th century, see Catherine Dalton, “Enacting Perfection: Buddhajñānapāda’s Vision of a Tantric Buddhist World” (PhD diss., UC Berkeley, 2019).

4 In the area of East Asian Buddhist Studies, some recent work has been done on the centrality of precepts (Chin. *jiē* 戒) and precept-conferral rites in early Chan and ‘esoteric’ texts associated with Śubhakarasiṃha, Amoghavajra, and others; see in particular Pei-ying Lin, “A Comparative Approach to Śubhakarasiṃha’s (637–735) ‘Essentials of Meditation’: Meditation and Precepts in Eighth-Century China,” in *Chinese and Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism*, ed. Yael Bentor und Me’ir Shaḥar (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2017), 121–146; Robert Sharf, “Buddhist Veda and the Rise of Chan,” in the same volume, 85–120. Many of the observations made in these studies fit well with those of the present paper, though they are more relevant to a slightly earlier period of tantric ritual development and, of course, to a more specifically Chinese Buddhist cultural context. The present paper focuses more particularly on the place of *samaya* in Yoga and early Mahāyoga tantric practice.

chapter revolves around the initiation rites, which it describes in some detail. The ceremony's central sequence begins, following some initial prostrations, when the teacher covers the disciple's eyes and has him bind the so-called *sattvavajrāmudrā*, a gesture formed by clasping both hands together into a single fist and raising the two middle fingers to face each other. This gesture, as the late 8th-century STTS commentator, Śākyamitra, explains, represents a *vajra* standing upon a moon disc:

Resting within mind-only, that mind-only is explained to be like a moon disc. In order to make that firm, moreover, a five-spoked *jñānavajra* is placed there. This is the *samaya*; it is established as the form of the *jñāna* of the buddhas and bodhisattvas throughout the Mahāyāna. How so? The moon disc is demonstrated by the *vajra*-clasp, and the *vajra* is shown as the two raised middle fingers.<sup>5</sup>

The *vajrasattvīmudrā*, then, is an instantiation of the buddhas' *jñāna*, here symbolised by a *vajra* standing upon a moon disc. The identification of *samaya* with the mind of buddha is seen throughout the STTS, wherein the four *mudrās* of *mahāmudrā*, *dharmamudrā*, *samayamudrā*, and *karmamudrā* are correlated with the buddha's body, speech, mind, and activities. The *vajrasattvīmudrā* is therefore equivalent to the *samaya* and thus to the buddhas' *jñāna*.

Having formed the *sattvavajrāmudrā*, the disciple pronounces the *mantra*: 'You are the *samaya*' (Skt. *samayastvaṃ*). This is a significant moment that marks the disciple's initial encounter with the *samayamudrā*, the *jñāna* of the buddhas. The rites that follow all revolve around this same *mudrā*. Through a series of two acts, the ritual master installs the *mudrā* in the disciple's heart. The first rite emphasises the aspect of the *samaya* as an oath, while the second highlights its aspect as *jñāna*.

Leading him into the *maṇḍala*, the *ācārya* has the disciple recite *samaya hūṃ* and explains that he will now generate the *vajrajñāna* within him. He then himself binds the same *sattvavajrāmudrā* that the disciple is still holding. Placing it face-downward on the disciple's head, he explains that it is the *samayavajra*. We read on:

5 *Kosalālamkāra*, Derge Tōhoku no. 2503, 108a.4–6. *sems tsam du bzhag la sems tsam de yang zla ba'i dkyil 'khor lta bur bshad de/ de brtan par bya ba'i phyir yang de ye shes kyi rdo rje rtse lnga pa gzhag pa 'di ni dam tshig yin te/ theg pa chen po thams cad du sangs rgyas dang byang chub sems dpa' rmams kyi ye shes kyi skur bsgrubs pa yin no/ gang gi phyir rdo rje bsdams pas ni zla ba'i dkyil 'khor ston pa yin la/ so mo gnyis bsgreng bas ni rdo rjer bstan te.*

Then, with that same *samayamudrā*, he [consecrates] some water, pronouncing the pledge heart[-*mantra*] one time, then has the disciple drink it. Now, this is the pledge heart[-*mantra*]:

“Now Vajrasattva himself dwells in your heart. If you speak of this precept, you will instantaneously be destroyed. *Oṃ vajrodaka tḥaḥ*.”<sup>6</sup>

Vajrasattva in the form of the *sattvavajrīmudrā* thus enters into the student as he drinks the water. “In order for the *jñāna* to enter, [...]” concludes Śākyamitra in his commentary, “[...] the *sattvavajrīmudrā* is positioned in the student’s heart, and the heart[-*mantra*] is recited.”<sup>7</sup> As Śākyamitra, explains, this is the crucial moment of entry (Skt. *āveśa*), when the buddhas’ *jñāna* enters inside the disciple for the first time. The master then informs the disciple that henceforth he must happily obey his every command or suffer dire consequences, after which he has the disciple pronounce, “May all the *tathāgatas* empower [me]! May Vajrasattva enter me!”<sup>8</sup>

Having thus completed the bestowal of the *samaya* in the context of the vows of obeisance, the master *once again* binds the now familiar *sattvavajrīmudrā* and explains that it is none other than Vajrasattva. “May the unsurpassable *vajrajñāna* enter you this very day. *Vajrāveśa aḥ*.”<sup>9</sup> He then breaks open the disciple’s own *sattvavajrīmudrā*, which is still held at his heart, thereby causing it to enter once more into the disciple’s bodily interior. This time, the *samayamudrā*’s entry brings divine knowledge and all other pleasures, *samādhis*, and attainments. The rite concludes with the disciple reciting a *mantra* so that the *vajrajñāna* may consecrate his heart and remain there steadfastly.

The disciple then tosses the flower-garland and is introduced to the details of the *maṇḍala*, but with the double entry of the *samaya*, first as an oath and then as the buddhas’ *jñāna*, the main part of the initiation is complete. Two aspects of these proceedings stand out: the importance of entry and the dual valence of the *samaya/samayamudrā*, as oath and as *jñāna*.

6 *Sarvatathāgatattvasaṃgraha*, vv. 221–223: *tatas tathaiṃ samaya-mudrayodakam śapathā-hṛdayena sakṛt parijāpya tasmai śiṣyāya pāyayed iti/ tatredaṃ śapathā-hṛdayaṃ bhavati/ vajra-satvaḥ svayaṃ te ’dya hṛdaye samavasthitaḥ/ nirbhīdya tat-kṣaṇaṃ yāyād yadi brūyād imaṃ nayam// vajrodaka tḥaḥ*. For the Tibetan corresponding to these and the next few lines, see Derge Tōhoku no. 479, 27b.2–6.

7 *Kosalālamkāra*, Derge Tōhoku no. 2503, 99a.1: *ye shes dbab pa’i phyir sems dpa’ rdo rje ma’i phyag rgya rdo rje slob ma’i snying gar bzhag la snying po brjod par bya’o*.

8 *Sarvatathāgatattvasaṃgraha*, v. 223: *sarva-tathāgatāḥ adhiṭiṣṭhantāṃ vajra-satvo ma āviśatu*.

9 *Sarvatathāgatattvasaṃgraha*, v. 224: *āveśayatu te ’dyaiva vajra-jñānam anuttaram/ vajrāveśa aḥ*.

The centrality of the *samayamudrā*, qua a *vajra* standing upon a moon disc, is evident already in the narrative that opens the STTS itself. There, the soon-to-be-awakened Sarvārthasiddhi (a.k.a. Śākyamuni) is led through the five stages of the *pañcākārābhisambodhikrama* in order to generate himself as the Buddha Mahāvairocana. While the precise nature of these five stages differs between manuals, in the *tantra* itself, the first two stages produce a moon disc and its consecration, and the third and fourth produce a *vajra* upon that disc and its consecration. Significantly, the resulting formation of a *vajra* upon a moon disc is referred to twice as the *sattvavajra*, marking it as identical with the *sattvavajrīmudrā* that plays such a crucial role in the initiation ceremony.<sup>10</sup> It is out of this *mudrā* that the form of Mahāvairocana emerges in the final, fifth stage. We may presume that the *sattvavajra* remains at the resulting buddha's heart. Indeed, immediately following the last of the five stages, the resulting form is consecrated by all the *tathāgatas* entering into that same *sattvavajra*, presumably at Mahāvairocana's heart, in a moment that mirrors in many respects the initiation described above.<sup>11</sup> The presence of all these elements in the *tantra's* framing narrative further confirms the importance of the *sattvavajrīmudrā*, the instantiation of the *samaya*, which is also the *jñāna* of the buddhas.

Following his initiation, the disciple would commence upon his *sādhana* practice. One such *sādhana* is the *Tattvasaṃgrahasāadhanopāyikā*, a text that appears in at least five copies at Dunhuang, plus a nearly complete commentary. I have published on this text elsewhere, but for the sake of convenience, the relevant manuscripts are listed here:

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- 10 Throughout our sources, the masculine and feminine forms of *sattvavajra/i* are used more-or-less indiscriminately. This is probably due to the identity of, on the one hand, the *sattvavajra* in the opening narrative and, on the other, the *sattvavajrī pāramitā* goddess who performs the consecration in a ritual setting. Thus, Amoghavajra's ritual manual for the worship of Uṣṇīṣavijayā (*Foding zunsheng tuoluoni niansong yiqi fa* 佛頂尊勝陀羅尼念誦儀軌法 [Rite for the Recitation of the Superlative Dhāraṇī of the Buddha's Crown], T. 972.367a4), the same *mudrā* is used for a similar purpose, though there it is called the '*vajrapāramitāmudrā*,' which likewise reflects the feminine gender of the *mudrā*. We shall see the feminine gendering of the *mudrā* again below in a parallel context. Ultimately, Śākyamitra observes that the masculine and feminine forms are really the same: *rdo rje sems dpa' dang sems dpa' rdo rje ma'i phyag rgya 'ba' zhid tha mi dad pa*. See *Kosalālamkāra*, vol. yi, 108b.1.
- 11 *Sarvatathāgatataṭṭvasaṃgraha*, 30: *sarva-tathāgatāḥ vajra-dhātos tathāgatasya tasmin sattva-vajre praviṣṭāḥ*.

*Ārya-sarvatathāgatattvasaṃgrahasādhanopāyikā:*

- (1) P. 792/IO L Tib J 551: Complete copy.
- (2) IO L Tib J 417 /P. T. 300/IO L Tib J 519: Almost complete (missing first folio).
- (3) P. T. 265: Single folio from the middle of the *sādhana*.
- (4) P. T. 271: Single folio from near the end.
- (5) IO L Tib J 448/P. T. 270: Another copy, with various appended notes missing several folios from both beginning and end.

*Commentary to the Tattvasaṃgrahasādhanopāyikā:*

- (1) IO L Tib J 447: Same paper and handwriting as IO L Tib J 448 (missing first folio).

Elsewhere I have argued that this work is a translation from an Indic original, though the lengthy commentary contained in IO L Tib J 447 is likely of Tibetan authorship.<sup>12</sup> The *sādhana*'s general outline also closely mirrors the ritual structures followed in Amoghavajra's (705–774, Chin. Bukong 不空) Chinese writings. All this is to say that in this work we likely have a fairly standard example of an 8th-century STTS-related *sādhana*.

According to our *Tattvasaṃgrahasādhanopāyikā*, following some prostrations and initial purifications, the practitioner generates himself as the deity, what we today might call the *samayasattva*, though that term may not yet have come into use at the time of our *sādhana*'s composition. As is well known, in *sādhanas* of later centuries, union with the deity was affected in two steps, with the practitioner first generating his body in the form of the buddha, called the *samayasattva*, and then consecrating that form by installing into himself the *jñānasattva*, or the mind of the buddha. In our *Tattvasaṃgrahasādhanopāyikā*, we find the same two-step process of creation and consecration, but here the inert form is consecrated not with the *jñānasattva* but with its equivalent, the *samayamudrā*. As I have suggested elsewhere, this shift in terminology, from the earlier *samayamudrā* to the later *jñānasattva*, probably occurred sometime around the late 8th century, and authors were quite explicit about the change.<sup>13</sup>

12 See Jacob P. Dalton, "On the Significance of the *Ārya-tattvasaṃgraha-sādhanopāyikā* and Its Commentary," in *Chinese and Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism*, ed. Yael Bentor and Meir Shahar (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2017), 321–327.

13 Jacob P. Dalton, "Mahāmudrā and Samayamudrā in the Dunhuang Documents and Beyond," in *Mahāmudrā in India and Tibet*, ed. Roger R. Jackson and Klaus-Dieter Mathes (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2020), 126–128.

Returning to the specifics of our *Tattvasaṃgrahasādhanopāyikā*, the practitioner first generates himself in the form of the deity by means of the *pañcākārābhisaṃbodhikrama*. As in the STTS's opening narrative about Sarvārthasiddhi, this is immediately followed by the practitioner's (self-) consecration (Skt. *svādhiṣṭhāna*) of the resulting form:

For the *tathāgata* [buddha] family, bind the *mudrā* of Sattvavajrī. 'You are the *samaya*' [(Skt. *samayastvam*)]. By means of this [*mudrā* and *mantra*], place a moon disc that encircles one with light behind. For binding the *sattvavajrī*[*mudrā*], raise the middle fingers with level fingertips. With this [*mudrā*], bless the four places—the heart, between the eyes, the throat, and the top of the head—together with this *mantra*: *Sattvavajrī adhiṣṭhasva mām*.<sup>14</sup>

Then generate pride, saying, "I am the *mahāsamaya*." Then, thinking that oneself is identical with that *sattva*, who is one's own *mudrā*, recite this heart[*-mantra*] and imagine it is so: "I am the *samaya*" [(Skt. *samayo'ham*)].<sup>15</sup>

Here the practitioner brings the *samayamudrā*, i.e., the enlivening *jñāna* of the buddhas, into his transformed body through a series of ritual acts. First, he arranges his hands into the now familiar *sattvavajrīmudrā*. Gazing at this *mudrā*, he pronounces a Sanskrit *mantra*: "You are the *samaya*" (Skt. *samayastvam*), precisely the same *mantra* that the disciple recited during his initiation, at the beginning of the sequence that affected its entry into his heart. The consecration of the practitioner's body with the *jñāna*/*samayamudrā* is now performed by touching this *sattvavajrīmudrā* to four places on his own body, while reciting a *mantra*. This accomplished, he generates divine pride and finally seals the union by proclaiming, "I am the *samaya*" (Skt. *samayo'ham*).

This consecration of the practitioner's body with the *samayamudrā* represents a significant moment in our *sādhana*'s proceedings. As Ānandagarbha,

14 IOL Tib J 447, r16.4–6, "aligns the heart with the mind, the forehead with the body, the throat with the speech, and the crown of the head with the activities".

15 IOL Tib J 417, 42v.4–41r.1: *yang dag par gshegs pa'i rigs su sad twa ba dzra'i phyag rgya bchings la/ sa ma ya stwam/ 'dis rgyab du 'od gyi 'kord du gyurd pa'i/ zla ba'i dkyil 'khor zhog shig/ sad twa ba dzra'i bchings la/ gung mo bsgreng ste/ rtse mo bsnnyams la 'dis snying ka dang smyin mtshams dang/ lkog ma dang spyi bo dang gnas bzhir sngags 'di dang bcas te byin gyis brlab pa bya'o/ sad twa ba dzri a dhi ti sta swa mām/ de nas bdag ni ma ha sa ma ya yin no zhes/ nga rgyal skyed chig/ de nas bdagi phyag rgya'i/ sad twa bdag yin no snyam du/ snying po 'di rjod de soms shig/ sa ma yo ham. Here, the folio marked by the British Library as fol. 42 should come immediately before (not after) fol. 41. That the '*mudrā* for one's family' named in the first line is indeed the *samayamudrā* is clarified by Śākyamitra's *Kosalālakāra*, vol. yi, 107b.7–108a.1.*

a 10th-century Indian commentator on the STTS, explains, this final statement, “I am the *samaya*” (Skt. *samayo’ham*), is “a display of the accomplishment of the *mahāmudrā* as the final result of one’s meditation.”<sup>16</sup> Insofar as the consummation of the practitioner as the fully consecrated deity is accomplished through the entry of the *samaya* into his heart, the post-initiatory practitioner thus seeks to reenact his original initiation, to return to the original transmission he received from his guru. The entry of the *samaya* therefore marks a central moment in both the initiation and the associated post-initiatory *sādhana* rites.

### 3 Mahāyoga

Fifty to a hundred years after the STTS rites were taking shape, the sexual *yogas* of the Mahāyogatantras were spreading. It is now well established that the Mahāyoga materials from Dunhuang reflect a kind of ‘intermediate period’ in the development of sexual *yoga*.<sup>17</sup> Perhaps better called ‘early Mahāyoga,’ this period is characterised by a ritual focus on a sacramental drop of sexual fluids—a transformative instantiation of *bodhicitta*. Accordingly, in India around the turn of the 9th century, there existed only the first two of the four tantric initiations that are common today. The equivalent of the vase initiation (Tib. *bum dbang*; Skt. *kalāsābhiṣeka*) had already emerged around the late 7th century with the Yogatantras, while the second, the so-called secret initiation (Tib. *gsang dbang*; Skt. *guhābhiṣeka*), appears to have emerged roughly a century later to formalise what was by then the cutting-edge focus of early Mahāyoga *sādhana* practice.

Somewhat curiously, I know of no unambiguous reference to the secret initiation as such anywhere in the Dunhuang manuscripts, despite the fact that consuming the *bodhicitta* as a sacrament is a central element of the early Mahāyoga rituals seen at Dunhuang. The term secret initiation does appear in IOL Tib J 579, a *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana*-based initiation manual. There, the secret initiation is listed as the last of eleven initiations, the other ten being variations on the standard initiations that came to comprise the vase initiation.<sup>18</sup> The procedure described, however, consists of just touching the

16 *Tattvāloka*, Derge Tōhoku no. 2510, 150a.6–7: *bsgom pa’i rab kyi mthar thug pa las byung ba phyag rgya chen po grub pa yin zhes bya ba ’di yang ston pa yin*.

17 Jacob P. Dalton, “The Development of Perfection: The Interiorization of Buddhist Ritual in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 32.1 (2004): 1–30.

18 They are: *vajra*, crown (Tib. *dbu rgyan*), vase, rosary, crown pendants (Tib. *cod pan*), *mudrā*, name, four activities, *dharmarāja*, *dhāraṇī*, and secret (discussed in IOL Tib J 579, 16r.4–18r.5).



*mudrā* of the principle deity to five places on the disciple's body while reciting the relevant *mantras*.<sup>19</sup> Possibly related are some odd lines in another *Sarvadurgati* initiation manual, IOL Tib J 439/712, which describe three levels (outer, inner, and secret) of *bodhicitta* initiations.

In short, the directional guardians, the bodhisattvas of good fortune, the goddesses of the times, and so on have been initiated by means of the outer *bodhicitta*. All appearances within the outer scope of all sentient beings, are likewise initiated by that outer *bodhicitta*, so that they arise in the manner of the *saṃbhoga[kāya]*. The eight great *uṣṇīṣa* [i.e. the bud-dhas] have the nature of the inner *bodhicitta*. When one has arrived there [at their circle], one obtains the initiation of the inner *bodhicitta*, being initiated by the *nirmāṇakāya*. The central circle is called the great peace of the *dharmakāya*, the secret *bodhicitta*. In that way, the master grants the excellent initiation of the *dharmakāya*, the secret *bodhicitta*, to the present patron and all limitless sentient beings. Having obtained [the initiation] thusly, they manifestly and completely awaken and are ones who display the *siddhi* of vastly enacting the purposes of all sentient beings in the nature of the spontaneously present three bodies.<sup>20</sup>

Despite the presence of this passage, the initiations that follow in the same manuscript make no further mention of a secret initiation. Significant, however, is one line in the *Precept for Supreme Goodness*, a brief Mahāyoga *sādhana* found in ITJ331/1. While it does not reference the secret initiation by name, it

19 See IOL Tib J 579, 18r.5–7.

20 IOL Tib J 439/712, 14r.5–14v.4: *mdor na/ phyogs skyong dang/ bskal pa bzang po'i byang cub sems dpa' dang/ dus kyi lha mo la bstogs pa ni/ phyi byang cub kyi sems kyi dbang bskur te/ sems can thams cad kyi phyi'i spyod yul du snang ba thams cad kyang/ phyi byang cub kyi sems kyi dbang bskur te/ longs spyod rdzogs pa'i tshul du 'byung ba dang/ gtsug tor chen po brgyad ni nang byang cub kyi sems kyi dbang rang bzhin te/ 'dir phyin pa tsaṃ na/ nang byang cub kyi sems kyi dbang thob ste/ sprul pa'i sku dbang bskur ba dang/ dbus zlum ba ni/ chos kyi sku zhi ba chen po gsang ba byang cub kyi sems zhes bya ste/ de ltar deng gi yon bdag dang/ mtha' yas pa'i sems can thams cad chos kyi sku/ gsang ba byang cub kyi sems kyi dbang dam pa/ slob pa'i sems can thams cad kyi don rgya cher mdzad pa'i dngos bar rdzogs par sangs rgyas te/ sems can thams cad kyi don rgya cher mdzad pa'i dngos grub sku gsum lhun kyi grub pa'i rang bzhin du bstan pa lags. The *saṃbhogakāya* and *nirmāṇakāya* are probably reversed. Note too that the Vajravarmaṇ-attributed commentary to the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra* references both the more standard secret initiation, as well as the third, wisdom-*jñāna* initiation (Tib. *shes rab ye shes dbang*; Skt. *prajñājñānābhīṣeka*), though no fourth initiation, which may well date the work to the 9th century; see Tadeusz Skorupski, *The Sarvadurgatipariśodhana Tantra: Elimination of All Evil Destinies: Sanskrit and Tibetan Texts with Introduction, English Translation and Notes* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983), 47.*

does describe the prerequisite to practice as the “initiation by means of the drop” (ITJ331/1, 1r.2: *thigs pas dbang bskur*). Given that the *Precept* is attributed to Mañjuśrīmitra, who lived in the second half of the eighth century, this may be our earliest evidence for the secret initiation, even if not by name. Otherwise, to date, our earliest dateable reference to the secret initiation by name remains the early 9th-century *Dvitiyakramatattvabhāvanāmukhāgama* of Buddhajñānapāda.<sup>21</sup>

What we do find in the Dunhuang manuscripts, however, is the bestowal of a so-called supreme *samaya* (Tib. *dam tshig mchog*) within the context of a group practice. P. 321 is a *pothi*-style manuscript of 24 folios from Dunhuang. Complete at the beginning, missing no pages in the middle, but cut off mid-sentence at the end, it remains unclear how many pages might be missing. The manuscript contains a single text, an untitled manual for a *gaṇacakra*. The text begins with the ritual master generating himself as Śrī Heruka at the centre of a wrathful *maṇḍala*, after which it directs the ritual participants to perform an offering of the five ambrosias (Tib. *bdud rtsi lnga*; Skt. *pañcāmṛta*), the five transgressive ambrosias of human flesh, urine, feces, semen, and menstrual blood. Though it is mixed with other substances, the text makes it clear that the semen, or *bodhicitta*, is primary. Thus, we read, for example:

The medicinal compound of the ambrosia of immortality,  
The medicine composed of the *rasāyana* and so forth,  
These medicines that are innately secret,  
Are the secret of all the *tathāgatas*.

21 Dalton, “Enacting Perfection,” 248. The later tradition often points to the eighth chapter of the *Guhyasamāja* as a *locus classicus* for this secret initiation, but read free of later commentaries, the chapter was clearly originally intended as a discussion of a rite of sexual worship (Skt. *pūjā*), as indicated already in Dalton, “The Development of Perfection,” 16 fn. 41. Another possible early reference might be chapter three of the *Cakrasamvara* (*Śrīherukābhīdhāna*), which probably reached its received form around the early 9th century. On dating the *Cakrasamvara*, see David Gray, *The Cakrasamvara Tantra: Editions of the Sanskrit and Tibetan Texts* (New York: The American Institute of Buddhist Studies [Columbia University Press], 2012), 6–8. There we read, “The master, well equipped, should worship the consort (*mudrā*). On the second day he should make the drop for the disciples with blood thrice enchanted. Having unveiled his [blindfolded] face, he should then show the *maṇḍala* to the disciple” (as translated in David Gray, *The Cakrasamvara Tantra (The Discourse of Śrī Heruka) (Śrīherukābhīdhāna): A Study and Annotated Translation* (New York: The American Institute of Buddhist Studies [Columbia University Press], 2007), 174), with the Sanskrit edited in Gray, *Cakrasamvara Tantra: Editions of the Sanskrit and Tibetan*, 63: *tato hi pūjayen mudrām ācāryaḥ susamāhitaḥ/ śiṣyāṇaṃ tu dvitīye ahani raktena trijaptena tilakaṃ tasya kārayet*. The verse appears within a larger discussion of an initiation, though the bestowal of the sacrament (Skt. *tilaka*; Tib. *thig le*) itself is somewhat veiled. Nonetheless, the passage remains a significant.

Within the sky-expanse of Samantabhadrī,  
The *bodhicitta* pearl is emitted.

At the centre of Samantabhadrī's expanse,  
Through the stirring of Samanatabhadra's body,  
There comes the supreme *samaya* of yoga:  
May it be received with the thought of being pleased.

Through the offering of this *samaya* worship,  
The unsurpassable *samaya* substance, the supreme of ambrosias,  
May the Bhagavan Buddha Heruka  
And Buddha Krodhīśvarī,  
Receive it and be thoroughly pleased.  
And may they bestow the magical *siddhi*.<sup>22</sup>

This supreme *samaya*, then, consists primarily of the drop of seminal *bodhicitta* that is emitted through ritualised sexual union, even when the result is mixed with the other four substances.

After offering the preparation to the *vajrācārya* (here termed the 'Vajra-King'),<sup>23</sup> the assembled receive the *samaya* themselves:

Administer the *samaya* to the gathered [*dharma*] brethren:<sup>24</sup> With the tips of one's thumb and ring finger together, while perceiving that the

22 P. T. 321, 5v.5–6r.3: 'chi myed bdud rtsi sman sbyor ba/ ra sa ya na las bstsoqs sman/ rang bzhin gsang ba'i sman nmams 'di/ de bzhin gshegs pa kun gi gsang/ kun du bzang mo mkha' dbyings su/ byang cub sems ni mu tig 'phro/ kun du bzang mo 'i dbyings dkyil du/ kun du bzang po 'i sku bskyod pas/ rnal 'byor dam tshlg mchog lags kyls/ dgyes par dgongs te bzhes su gsol/ bcom ldan 'bu ta he ru dang/ 'bu ta gro ti swa ri la/ bla myed dam rdzas bdud rtsi 'I mchog/ dam tshlg mchog pa 'di 'bul gis/ bzhes nas kun dgyes mdzod la/ 'phrul gi dngos sgrub stsal du gsol.

23 P. T. 283, R1, ll. 15–16 clarifies that this refers to the *vajrācārya* (Tib. *slobs dpon rdo rje rgyal po*).

24 *Byin* here and throughout the manuscript (e.g., P. T. 321, 7v.5 and 9v.3) is used to mean something like 'all'. Thus, already on the manuscript's opening line, we read: *da ni rgyal po man cad mched byin dgongs pa mthun par* [...], which might be translated as, "Now, all the [*dharma*] brethren, from the king on down, being in general agreement [...]." Such phrases may be compared with the parallel construction seen at *ibid.*, 10v.4, *mched lcam dral ma lus pa'i nmams*, where *ma lus pa* appears to serve a similar purpose to *byin*. The same term, in a similar context, also appears in P. T. 283, R1, l. 28 (*rdo rje rgyal po man cad mched lcam dral byin*), and in that same manuscript, we find another parallel alternative, with *tshogs* replacing *byin*, as on *ibid.*, l. 18: *slobs dpon man cad mched lam dral tshogs*. Finally, we may suggest that the term comes from the Chinese character *jin* (盡) as the

nature of this ambrosia, the *siddhis* of body, speech, and mind, are being attained, place it upon the [disciple's] tongue three times and pronounce these words:

'A union of all the buddhas [(Skt. \**sarvabuddhasamāyoga*)],  
Should this bond [(Tib. *sdom pa*)] be transgressed by anyone,  
Then all the buddhas there are,  
The bodhisattvas and *vajra*-holding [protectors],  
The gods and humans,  
The *siddhas* and the *yogins*—  
All of them will become enraged,  
Draw forth the human blood  
From his corrupted heart and drink it.

A mixture of human flesh, urine, feces,  
Semen and menstrual blood, this medicine  
Should be drunk with yogic commitment.

This is the supreme *samaya*,  
To be protected by *vajra*-bearers.

The secret of body, speech, and mind,  
This *samaya* is a great wonder.  
You must not transgress this *samaya*.

If you transgress this *samaya*,  
Your tongue and heart will be drawn out through your throat;  
This will be a hell-water,  
That will rest at your heart.  
If you protect the *samaya*, there will be *siddhi*,  
So, drink; it is a fresh ambrosia.<sup>25</sup>

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latter is used as an equivalent of *thams cad* in the 821/2 Sino-Tibetan treaty; see Kazuo Iwao, et al., ed. *Old Tibetan Inscriptions* (Tokyo: Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, 2009), 33–35. On another note, *dam bsre* appears repeatedly in the manuscript to mean something like, 'to administer the *samaya*,' presumably with the implication of mixing (Tib. *bsre*) the *samaya* with their mindstreams.

25 P. T. 321, 9v.3–10r.3: *mched byin dam bsre/ srin lag dang mthe bo rtse sprad de/ bdud rtsI 'i rang bzhIn/ sku gsung thugs kyI dngos grub thob par dnylgs nas/ lce 'I thog du lan gsum bzhag cIng/ tshIq 'dI skad brjod do/ sangs rgyas kun dang mnyam sbyor ba'I/ sdom ba las nI gang 'das pa/ ci snyed sangs rgyas thams cad dang/ byang cub sems dang rdo rje 'dzin/ lha*

The opening instruction here emphasises that the ambrosia's nature, the buddha's body, speech, and mind, is attained immediately upon its bestowal, yet the recited verses make it clear—and here we return to the dual valences of term—that the supreme *samaya* is also an oath not to be transgressed. This dual nature of the supreme *samaya* relates to the paradox that is fundamental to Mahāyoga practice, i.e. that one is already a buddha, yet often quite elaborate rituals are required. Put another way, the supreme *samaya* brings immediate and complete awakening, yet it needs to be cultivated.

Having swallowed the sacramental drop, the *gaṇacakra* recipients are told to “rest with vitality in the realisation of the conqueror.”<sup>26</sup> To get a better sense of what was expected from drinking the sacrament, we may look to chapter eight of the Padmasambhava-attributed commentary on the *Thabs kyi zhags pa*. Here again, the sacrament is bestowed in conjunction with a group practice (Tib. *tshom bu*) that culminates in *gaṇacakra*-style feasting, singing, and dancing, and here the *bodhicitta* is bestowed alone, without the other four substances:

When one drinks it down, the supreme accomplishment is attained [...] Through the consecration that thusly unites expanse and awareness, there arises an awareness that unerringly realises the aim. By means of that *bodhicitta*, which is Vajrasattva, one passes beyond subject and object and enters into absorption in non-duality, the realm of *mūṃ* [i.e., emptiness]. For this reason, one is called Vajrasattva, he who dwells on the level of Vajra Holder, and he of the thirteenth level. This is the supreme accomplishment.<sup>27</sup>

The sacrament thus bestows a direct taste of buddhahood. Ritual falls away, and a direct meditation on non-duality emerges.

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*mams dang ni myi mams dang/ grub pa po dang mal 'byor mams/ de dag khros nas khrag chen po/ nyams pa'i snying nas drangs te 'thung/ sha chen dang ni bsang gci dang/ khu ba khrag dang sbyar pa'i sman/ brtul bzhuḡs can gis btung bar bya/ 'di ni dam tshIḡ mchog yin te/ rdo rje can gIs bsrung bar bya/ sku dang gsung dang thugs gsang ba/ dam tshIḡ 'dI nI smad po che/ dam tshIḡ 'dI las khyed ma 'da/ dam tshIḡ 'di las khyed 'das na/ lce dang snying yang rkog mar 'dren/ 'di ni dmyal ba'i chu yin te/ snying la rab du gnas pa 'o.*

26 P. T. 321, 10r.5: *rgyal po dgongs pa myi g.yel bar bzhuḡs.*

27 10L Tib J 321, 30r.5–30v.4: *khong du 'thungs na dngos 'grub mchog thob bo/ [...] de ltar dbyings nyid dang rig pa'i gnyis su 'byor pa'i byin brlas las/ don ma nor bar rtogs pa'i rig pa 'byung ba ni/ byang chub kyi sems te/ rdo rje sems dpa'yin/ des gzungs 'dzin las 'das nas/ gnyis su myed pa mUM gi sa la snyoms par 'jug go/ de 'i phyir rdo rje sems dpa' ni/ rdo rje 'dzin kyi sa la gnas te/ sa bcu gsum pa zhes kyang bya 'o/ 'di ni dngos grub mchog yin te.*

The secret initiation likely would have been supposed to engender a similar taste of immediate realisation. Writing around the turn of the ninth century, Buddhajñānapāda offers an early glimpse of how the secret initiation was understood:

Having descended, [the drop] enters the lotus at his heart. By this means, the field is purified; [Perceiving] all phenomena as illusions, and so forth—the twelve [experiences]—are realized in actuality.<sup>28</sup>

As Jñānapāda's commentator, Vaidyapāda, explains, the 'field' here refers to the disciple's psycho-physical aggregates, while the twelve experiences engendered by the secret initiation are twelve metaphors that demonstrate the illusory nature of phenomena.<sup>29</sup> Again, the drop's entry into the heart brings instant insight into the nature of reality.

With the shift from Yoga to Mahāyoga, the entry of the *samaya* into the initiand's heart acquired a new, 'secret' (read sexualised) form. The *samayamudrā* and the *samaya* water it consecrated in the STTs were replaced in Mahāyoga with the supreme *samaya*/the seminal drop of *bodhicitta*. In both vehicles, the *samaya* would come to rest in the recipient's heart, and in both, it played on the term's dual valences of oath and *jñāna*.

The taking of *bodhicitta* as a sacrament also appears in post-initiatory Mahāyoga *sādhana* practice. Here we see the practitioner administering the sacrament to himself. IOL Tib J 464 offers a particularly clear example. We join the text at the end of the sexual *yoga*, just after the drop of *bodhicitta* has been emitted:

Having thoroughly cultivated in that way, by means of the inner and outer praises and the melodies of the *śāḍava* and so forth, in the manner of supreme yearning, strongly praise the great identity. The offering is made, and the *siddhi* [i.e. the drop] received [(...)] When one comes to know it is time for the dismissal, snap the fingers with [arms] crossed.<sup>30</sup>

28 Translation based on Catherine Dalton's recent edition of Jñānapāda's *Dvītyakramatatt vabhāvanāmukhāgama*; see Dalton, "Enacting Perfection," 312: *ltung bas snying gi padma zhugs/ de yis zhing ni dag byas te/ chos kun sgyu ma la sogs pa'i/ bcu gnyis don du rtogs par 'gyur*.

29 As observed by C. Dalton, "Enacting Perfection," 380, fn. 174.

30 IOL Tib J 464, 4v.3–5r.1: *de ltar shin du bsgoms nas su/ phyI dang nang gi bstod ra dang/ sha da ba las stogs pa'i glu/ mchog du gdung ba'i tshul gyis su/ bdag nyid chen po rab du bstod/ mchod pa dbul zhing grub pa blang/ gtong ba'i du ni shes pa na/ se gol snol mar gtogs*. For a canonical reference to the *śāḍava* (hexatonic) melody, see the *Sarvabuddhasamāyogaḍ*

Of particular interest and significance is the ellipsis, the three dots (...). Of course, these appear only in my translation, but their presence is implied by the author's careful wording. The text could have said, "when it is time for the dismissal" (Tib. *gtong ba'i dus na*), but it adds, "when one comes to know it is time" (with *shes pa na*), so that following the reception of the *siddhi* (elsewhere clearly the drop of *bodhicitta*), one loses track of time, until one emerges from the resultant state.<sup>31</sup> It would seem, then, that the manual's careful wording represents a nod to the idea that following the reception of the sacrament, one is supposed to enter a non-dual state of timelessness, "the realm of *mūṃ*," as the *Thabs kyi zhags pa* said. The culmination of such early Mahāyoga practices was in this sense a reenactment of the secret initiation and a recollection of the encounter with awakening that one first experienced at that moment.

While IOL Tib J 464 does not refer to the sacramental drop of *bodhicitta* that is self-administered in post-initiatory *sādhana* practice as the *samaya*, the *Guhyagarbhatantra* does. In fact, the *Guhyagarbha* uses the now-familiar term, supreme *samaya*, regularly. Chapter nine includes a particularly relevant verse:

With a consort who has luminosity or has been consecrated,  
In the manner of the [entire] trichiliochasm entering inside a mustard  
seed,  
The *maṇḍala* is invited into the expanse and worshipped.  
Having pleased [the deities], one [receives] the supreme *samaya* of  
accomplishment.<sup>32</sup>

Here we see a fairly standard, if abbreviated, description of the sexual yoga that results in the emission of the *bodhicitta*, which is then offered first to the buddhas and then to oneself as 'the supreme *samaya*' that grants all

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*ākinijālasaṃvara*, 157a.1. In his 'Od *gsal snying po*, Mipham offers a later Tibetan description of it: "With this approach, the tone is intense and forceful like thunder. The syllables are recited slightly fast and intensely, like water rushing off the face of the cliff" (Jamgön Mipham, *Luminous Essence: A Guide to the Guhyagarbhatantra*, trans. Dharmacakra Translation Committee (New York: Snow Lion Publications, 2009), 156–157). I am indebted to Douglas Duckworth for first bringing this reference to my attention. It has to be said that Dalton, "The Development of Perfection," 11, was way off in his interpretation of the term.

31 On the *siddhi* being the drop, see IOL Tib J 464, 4r.4–5, where the reader is instructed to hold the drop of *bodhicitta* at the tip of the *vajra* for as long as possible: *bsrung ba'i sbyor ba s ci nus pas/ grub pa'i bdag nyid brtan bar bsrung*.

32 *Guhyagarbhatantra*, Derge Tōhoku no. 832, 120a.1–2: *gsal ldan ma'am byin brlabs la/ stong gsum yungs 'brur 'jug tshul du/ dbyings nas dkyil 'khor spyen drangs mchod/ mnyes nas grub pa'i dam tshig mchog*.

*siddhis*. The *sPar khab*, an early (though just how early remains a question) *Guhyagarbha* commentary traditionally attributed to the mid-8th-century Indian author, Vilāsavajra, explains that the verse teaches the secret worship (Tib. *gsang ba'i mchod pa*).<sup>33</sup> Such a worship (Skt. *pūjā*) could constitute a stand-alone *sādhana* or function as part of the master's preparations for an initiation rite. And indeed, a description of the *Guhyagarbha's* initiation rite does follow shortly after the above-cited verse. Either way, we may conclude that still in the second half of the eighth century (when the *Guhyagarbha* was likely composed), the term 'supreme *samaya*' was being used not only in the context of a *gaṇacakra*, but also in *sādhana*-style practice to refer to the self-administered sacramental drop of *bodhicitta*.

As in the earlier Yogatantra system of the STTS, then, the early Mahāyoga *sādhana* practitioner sought to reenact the entry of the buddhas' *jñāna* into his heart that he first experienced during the secret initiation.

#### 4 Conclusions

Throughout this paper, we have repeatedly observed how the term *samaya* carried two meanings. From the STTS's initiation to the early Mahāyoga *gaṇacakra*, whether in the form of the *samayamudrā* or the supreme *samaya*, it was both an oath and the buddhas' *jñāna*. In his mid-8th-century commentary to the STTS, Buddhaguhya/Buddhagupta addresses these two uses of the term explicitly and reconciles them as follows:

The secret mind of the great beings is referred to with the term *samaya*. The *tantras* explain that *samaya* can be for what will be correctly attained or realised, or for the purpose of what is not to be transgressed. Why? The suchness of one's own domain is the *samayamudrā* [...] Because it is like that, the symbol of the secret mind of the deity is explained as the *samaya*.<sup>34</sup>

For Buddhagupta, the *samaya* defines the horizon of the Buddha's mind, as both an oath not to be transgressed and the mind of awakening that is always

33 *Guhyagarbhatantra*, Derge Tōhoku no. 832, 60a.1.

34 *Tantrārthāvatāra*, Derge Tōhoku no. 2501, 6a.1–3; *bdag nyid chen po rnam kyī thugs gsang ba ni dam tshig ces bya ba'i sgrar brjod de/ rgyud nas bshad pa ni yang dag par 'thob pa 'am / rtogs par bya ba'i phyir ram/ mi 'da' ba'i don du dam tshig ces bya'o/ gang gi phyir zhe na/ de rang gi yul gyi de kho na nyid ni dam tshig gi phyag rgya ste/ [...]* *de lta bas na lha'i thugs gsang ba'i mtshan ma ni dam tshig ces bshad pa'i don te.*



already accomplished. The *samaya* that is the tantric oath is precisely the mind of the Buddha, which in both the STTS's ritual settings of initiation and *sādhana* takes the form of a *vajra* upon a moon-disc at the practitioner's heart.

*Samaya* was therefore a Janus-faced concept, at once an oath, or set of oaths, to be observed and an instantiation of *jñāna* that could be immediately inserted into one's heart and mixed with one's mindstream. Insofar as the efficacy of *mantra* was rooted in *samaya*, then, it depended on the purity of the *mantra* reciter but also on the entry of the *jñāna* into his heart, put another way, on his having received the proper initiation. Here it may be significant that chapter nineteen of the *Guhyagarbha* opens with: "Then the Bhagavan, with great pleasure, expressed the *mahāsamaya*, so that mantrins might accomplish their aims."<sup>35</sup> The chapter then proceeds to discuss first this *mahāsamaya*, which it also terms the 'supreme *samaya*,' as beyond all transgression, and then proceeds to enumerate the various *samaya* vows to be maintained.

Over time, the ritual centrality of *samaya* as the buddhas' *jñāna* faded, though its vestiges may still be seen in moments such as the drinking of the *samaya* waters, the secret initiation, and the entry of the *jñānasattva*. Already in the late 8th century, the all-important *samayamudrā* was being replaced by the *jñānasattva*, and by the turn of the 9th century, identifications of the sacramental drop of *bodhicitta* as a supreme *samaya* were becoming increasingly rare. In later centuries, the tantric term *samaya* came to be generally understood in terms of the oaths taken during an initiation, oaths that could be enumerated in various ways.<sup>36</sup> Occasionally, one might encounter in later writings an ultimate-truth discussion of *samaya* as being beyond any possibility of transgression, but the ritual significance of such distinctions has been largely lost.

From the late 7th century, right through to the end of the 8th century, *samaya* played a crucial role in tantric Buddhist practice, not simply as sets of tantric vows to be observed but as a core aspect of immediate awakening.<sup>37</sup>

35 *Guhyagarbhatantra*, Derge Tōhoku no. 832, 129b.5: *de nas bcom ldan 'das dgyes pa chen pos/ sngags 'chang mams don yod par bya ba'i phyir/ dam tshig chen po 'di ched du brjod do*. Note that the 'great *samaya*' is also discussed at the end of Vilāsavajra's *Dam tshig gsal bkra*, 1202, ll. 12–13, where he too writes, "In this, there is absolutely nothing to protect; there exists no even a particle of diminishment."

36 On such enumerations in Tantric Buddhist writings, see Sam van Schaik, "The Limits of Transgression: The *Samaya* Vows of Mahāyoga," in *Esoteric Buddhism at Dunhuang: Rites and Teachings for this Life and Beyond*, ed. Matthew T. Kapstein and Sam van Schaik (Leiden: Brill Publications, 2010), 61–83.

37 Note that in Dalton, "Mahāmudrā and Samayamudrā," 129, I highlight the centrality of *samaya* and 'the great *samaya*' in certain Chinese Tantric texts from Dunhuang. Here we may be approaching a point of contact between tantric initiation and the precept

Recognising the larger ritual significance of *samaya* in this way allows us to see too the importance of entry (Skt. *āveśa*) and how the earlier Yogatantra practices of the STTS underwent remarkably straightforward transformations to become the 'secret' rites of early Mahāyoga. These transformations turned the STTS initiation's key moment of *āveśa*, or entry of the *samaya* into the practitioner's heart, into the secret initiation's swallowing of the *bodhicitta* whereby the sacramental drop comes to rest, once again, at the heart. Meanwhile, the installation of the *samayamudrā* (read *jñānasattva*) within one's own body within the context of post-initiatory *sādhana* practice in the STTS became the self-administering of the drop of *bodhicitta*, the supreme *samaya*, at the culmination of early Mahāyoga sexual union. According to the logic of this transformation, the Mahāyoga's *bodhicitta* sacrament is the *jñānasattva*. The development of early Mahāyoga practice in the 8th century was thus fundamentally rooted in Tantric Buddhism's early focus on the key concept of *samaya*. *Samaya* served as the developmental bridge, *samaya* as the horizon of the buddha's *jñāna*, a sacramental *bindu* resting at the practitioner's heart.

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ordination of Chan, rites that other scholars too have suggested may have been equated by some early Chinese authors; see, for example, Robert Sharf, "Buddhist Veda and the Rise of Chan," in *Chinese and Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism*, ed. Yael Bentor and Meir Shahar (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 85–120.

# Visualising Oneself as the Cosmos: An Esoteric Buddhist Meditation Text from Dunhuang

*Henrik H. Sørensen*

## 1 Introduction

As the hoard of manuscripts from Dunhuang (敦煌) is slowly but steadily more studied, and the community of concerned scholars are in closer contact than hitherto, it is fair to say that overall progress in research is proceeding more effectively and rapidly than before. On the flipside of this is the fact that the current large number of scholars working in the field also diminishes the chances of discovering new and paradigmatic materials and of re-discovering the significance of material that has been previously overlooked. In contrast, new findings regarding and new approaches to the manuscripts and votive paintings are now more likely to occur because of the combination of both reading the material from new angles and taking new approaches to the available data. Even so, once in a while there are manuscripts (and more rarely paintings) that have somehow fallen through the ‘mesh of the scholarly sieve’, and which—when met with discerning eyes—are brought forth in the light of day. One such case happened to yours truly during the early summer of 2020, when perusing the French catalogues of the Dunhuang material, but as usual, for some entirely unrelated reason. In actual fact, the ‘finding’ took place as a by-product of research into other manuscripts, and I only paid notice to the manuscript in question because the French catalogue’s description of the text was strangely oblique and enigmatic. Nevertheless, the description was sufficiently interesting to capture my fancy. The item in question is the manuscript S. 6897V<sup>o</sup>,<sup>1</sup> which features a hitherto unidentified Esoteric Buddhist text.<sup>2</sup>

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- 1 *Dunhuang mizong wenxian jicheng xubian* 敦煌密宗文獻集成續編 [Collated Texts of Esoteric Buddhism from Dunhuang Continued], 2 vols., ed. Lin Shitian 林世田 and Shen Guomei 申国美 (Beijing: Quanguo tushuguan wenxian suowei fuzhi zhongxin, 2000), 421–427.
  - 2 For an attempt at conceptualising Esoteric Buddhism in both the Chinese context and in regard to its Indian origins, see Henrik H. Sørensen, “On Esoteric Buddhism in China: A Working Definition,” in *Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras in East Asia* (hereafter EBTEA), ed. Charles D. Orzech, Henrik H. Sørensen, and Richard K. Payne (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 156–175. See

I cannot, of course, claim that my taking notice of S. 6897V<sup>o</sup> (or the other copy of it as found in P. 2649V<sup>o</sup>) constitutes a true discovery, that is, one that no one else has ever seen before. Of course, the manuscript has been available and, I presume, reasonably well-known for some time, but it appears that its contents and the context in which it was produced have never been worked on to any great extent. For those reasons at least, I consider the encounter with S. 6897V<sup>o</sup> (and P. 2649V<sup>o</sup>) a kind of discovery, and in what follows, I share what I found when I began working my way through it.

First, I provide a brief description of the manuscript itself, followed by a fully annotated translation. Next, I discuss the contents in some detail, and in that process, identify the salient topics presented in the text and try to contextualise them, in both the context of Buddhism in Dunuang during the late medieval period and Chinese Esoteric Buddhism more broadly. A modern, annotated edition of the complete manuscript is given as an appendix.

## 2 Discussing S. 6897V<sup>o</sup>

The concerned text does not occur as an individual stand-alone manuscript, but forms part of what appears to be a ritual compendium. Thus, it appears together with a number of other Buddhist texts. The recto side of S. 6897V<sup>o</sup> is taken up by parts of the first chapter of the *Ghanavyūhasūtra* (T. 681.16), while the verso side consists of a collection of primarily ritual texts.<sup>3</sup> Both S. 6897V<sup>o</sup> (5) and P. 2649V<sup>o</sup> follow directly after the text of the *Shi e'gui shi bing shui zhenyan yin fa* 施餓鬼食並水真言印法 [Mantra and Mudrā Methods for Bestowing Food and Water on the Hungry Ghosts].<sup>4</sup> The two versions of the text are not vastly different, but there are more lacunae and oddities—including inversions—in the manuscript of P. 2649V<sup>o</sup>. For this reason, I choose

also, Henrik H. Sørensen, “Spells and Magical Practices in the Early Chinese Buddhist Sources (c. 300–600 CE) and Their Implications for the Rise and Development of Esoteric Buddhism,” in *Chinese and Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism*, ed. Yael Bentor and Meir Shahar (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 41–71.

3 The manuscript as a whole is briefly described in Lionel Giles, *Descriptive Catalogue of the Chinese Manuscripts from Tunhuang in the British Museum* (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1957), 110b. For some similar text compilations from Dunhuang that were evidently meant for private use, see Imre Galambos, “Composite Manuscripts in Medieval China: The Case of Scroll P.3720 from Dunhuang,” in *One-Volume Libraries: Composite and Multiple-Text Manuscripts*, ed. Michael Friedrich and Cosima Schwarke (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2016), 355–378.

4 This is similar to the *Shi zhu e'gui yinshi ji shui fa* 施諸餓鬼飲食及水法 [Method for Bestowing Food and Water on all the Hungry Ghosts] attributed to Amoghavajra (T. 1315.21).

to rely on the text of S. 6897V<sup>o</sup> (5), as it affords a better read and appears to have fewer formal errors and omissions. Even so, there are indications here and there that this manuscript also has mistakes and omissions. The relationship between the two versions of the text is not entirely clear. However, it is certain that they both refer back to the same source, a master copy, and also P. 2649V<sup>o</sup> may be further removed from a supposed *Urtext* because it is a more uneven text with more errors. However, this is also not entirely certain. Both texts feature the same abbreviations for 'bodhisattva' and '*nirvāṇa*' that are common to many Buddhist manuscripts from Dunhuang; both lack the text of the same spell, and both feature a noteworthy passage regarding the Vairocana painting in the Western Temple (西寺) of Tingzhou (庭州), to the north of Turfan in the Tarim Basin. All in all, this shows that both manuscripts derive from the same source text. As for the discrepancies between them, we may, therefore, consider them scribal errors. It should be noted that P. 2649V<sup>o</sup> also has a number of corrections, including an interlinear insertion in smaller characters of an entire section that the copyist had evidently overlooked. However, what is perhaps the most important point with regard to the text of these two manuscripts, is that they indicate a local origin. It is evident from the manner in which the manuscript is written that Faxing (d.u., 法興)<sup>5</sup> should not be considered the author of the text, but probably its transmitter in Dunhuang. As such, the ritual-cum meditation text forms part of what appears to be a sort of Buddhist text collection, most probably meant for personal or private use. The text's reference to the Vairocana image in Beš Balık, i.e. Beiting (北庭) in Tingzhou, mentioned above, indicates that the author of the text had an intimate knowledge of the Buddhist sites in Central Asia along the Silk Road, and also that he was a practitioner of Esoteric Buddhism of the type associated with Amoghavajra (704–774).

The manuscript under discussion consists of a total of 93 lines of text (see the Appendix). The calligraphy of the text is even, but of middling quality. Despite the fact that the beginning of the text appears to be incomplete—there is neither title nor formal introductory opening, as is otherwise common for this type of Esoteric Buddhist work—the manuscript itself is, nevertheless, in a good state of preservation. Moreover, its overall and reasonably adept calligraphy affords a consistent and straight-forward reading, which means that

5 A monk with the same name, Faxing, appears in a census list dating from 921 (S. 2614V<sup>o</sup>). However, it is not certain that this is the same person as the owner of S. 6897V<sup>o</sup>, even though the time frame actually fits rather well for both the person and the text.

there were few problems preparing the critical version on which my translation is based.<sup>6</sup>

In terms of the content, the text features a set of interlinked meditations. Through the meditations, the practitioner first transforms the four great elements (Chin. *sida* 四大)<sup>7</sup> that make up his own body in an elaborate visualisation purifying process involving the use of so-called seed syllables (Skt. *bīja*, Chin. *zhongzi zi* 種子字). This practice is meant to transform the 'coarse' elements into holy elements, that is, the very stuff of the *dharmakāya* Buddha Vairocana. The outcome of this is a self-identification between the practitioner and the cosmos, as represented by this buddha. A *dhāraṇī* is uttered in various phases of the visualisation, including in the process of self-empowerment (Chin. *jiachi* 加持, Skt. *adhiṣṭhāna*).<sup>8</sup> The practitioner then continues with the visualisation, transforming his ordinary consciousnesses into the four wisdoms (Chin. *sizhi* 四智), whereby the practitioner is said to perfect the three bodies (Skt. *trikāya*, Chin. *sanshen* 三身).<sup>9</sup> This phase in the practice mainly involves focusing on the seed syllable *A* (Chin. *a* 阿) (more on this in the following). In a following phase in the practice, the meditator directs his visualisation towards the salvation of beings suffering in the hot and cold hells. Through a series of special, internal visions involving an imaginary ocean of milk, he first alleviates the suffering of sentient beings, including animals and insects, by emptying the hells of their denizens and transporting them all to rebirth in the pure land of Amitābha Buddha.

Typologically, the text of S. 6897V<sup>o</sup> is a combination of an instruction in meditation and a ritual text, even though its performative ritual aspects are entirely internalised and effectuated through the practice of meditation alone. For these reasons, I consider the text an interesting example of a meditation text that combines both an internalisation of the cosmos and, at the same time, a contemplative, outward-reaching, and active agenda of salvation. Its

6 That process was greatly aided by the chance discovery of an electronic version of the text, which although helpful, nevertheless contains formal mistakes, missing parts, and lacks comments. It was compiled by a certain Shan Zonghong (善宗弘), cf. accessed September 6, 2019. <https://www.jianshu.com/p/00ae106b5942>.

7 In Esoteric Buddhism, there are actually five elements, i.e. earth, water, fire, wind, and space. *Foguang da cidian* 佛光大辭典 [Great Dictionary of Foguang Shan; hereafter FDC], vol. 2 (Gaoxiang: Foguang chubanshe, 1988), 1056b–1057a.

8 See the detailed discussion in David Snellgrove, *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism: Indian Buddhists and Their Tibetan Successors* (London: Serindia, 1987), 240–243.

9 The four wisdoms are: The mirror-like wisdom, the wisdom of equanimity, the wisdom of wondrous vision, and the wisdom of accomplishment. FDC, vol. 2, 1769c–1771a. For the relationship between the three bodies and the four wisdoms, see *ibid.*, vol. 1, 561a.

overall concern with the liberation of sentient beings is, of course, in full alignment with standard Mahāyāna and contemporary Daoist ideology.<sup>10</sup>

As will be clear in the discussion below, one gradually realises that the text is, indeed, a unique one, which has so far not appeared in the extant canonical material transmitted in the Chinese language. However, this does not mean that its overall message, description of practices, nor basic terminology are so. The text actually conveys concepts and ritual elements that are familiar from the literature of Esoteric Buddhism, broadly stated, but here imagined and internalised.

### 3 Translation (S. 6897V<sup>o</sup>)

If one desires to visualise the three-thousand great thousand-fold worlds, as well as the worlds in the ten directions, one must first enter the signless meditative absorption [(Skt. *samādhi*)] of the Mahāyāna. One should begin by making holy the four great elements. Then, in the quiet of the night, at midnight, and in the three watches of the night, one must rise well-rested and sit correctly [in meditation], with an erect body. Restrain and pacify [(Chin. *shoushe* 收攝)] the six roots and the six consciousnesses [(Skt. *ṣaṭvijñāna*)], only leaving the thought consciousness [(Skt. *manovijñāna*)]. Then this thought consciousness is called the wondrous observing wisdom. [Then one should] gaze straight down and visualise a space disk on top of which one places the seed syllable letter *HE* [(Chin. *he* 訶)]. It is of dark colour, and emits a dark light, fully transforming the Vairambha wind, which is extensive and limitless, extending sixteen *lakh*. Then visualise on top of the space disk, a water disk. Place in the middle of it the letter *FU* [(Chin. *fu* 縛)] as the seed syllable. It is of white colour and emits a white light which transforms and completes the water disk, and which has a depth of eleven myriads and twenty-thousand *yojanas* and eight *laks*. Complete the golden disk. On the golden disk is placed the letter *A*. It is of yellow colour, and emits a yellow light, transforming the golden disk. Above the golden disk, extend [the visualisation] to the place where one's own body sits. Visualise oneself sitting on top of the golden disk, [with] one's own body sitting on the ground. [Then] visualise the letter *OM* [(Chin. *an* 唵)] as the seed syllable, which transforms and completes a fiery consumption of the impure four great elements. In the space of a moment, they are completely transformed into ashes and cinders, all pure. If one sees one's own body and

10 One may even read this as reflecting in an incipient manner some of the standard elements that later became salient features in the Shuilu (水陸) tradition of the mid-Song period.

all of the bones, then one combines empty nothingness of suffering and constant no self, and visualises the four elements [(Chin. *sixing* 四行)],<sup>11</sup> in which one contemplates the truth of suffering [(Chin. *kudi* 苦諦)] burning the four great elements.<sup>12</sup> It is not necessary to destroy the mind's consciousness [in the visualisation].<sup>13</sup> [Because] if the mind's consciousness is being destroyed, the wondrous contemplative wisdom will also be destroyed. Therefore, if the nature of consciousness is destroyed, it follows that one will be unable to have contemplative wisdom, thus making the [entire] affair incomplete. It will simply be a colourless realm. At the time of burning at the end of the *kalpa*, the fire will not be able to burn sentient beings. Therefore, the consciousness of your own mind will be like this as well. It will not be burnt in the fire completely [in the meditation], and as that is the case, place on the above ashes [of the consciousness] the letter *A* as the seed syllable. Then this *A* letter, as well as the ashes, will of themselves transform into the pure *dharmakāya* of Vairocana, the essence of which is signless. Proceeding from this, one reaches the knees, where one places the letter *A* as the seed syllable. It transforms [the element] earth. It is of intense yellow colour, [emitting] a yellow light. Proceeding from the knee to the waist, one places the letter *FU* as the seed syllable, transforming the [element of] water. It is of an intense white colour and [emits] an intense white light. Proceeding from the waist [and up], one reaches the shoulders, [where one places] the letter *OM* as the seed syllable, transforming [the element of] fire, which is of an intense red colour, [emitting] a red light. Proceeding from the face one reaches the chignon, [where] one visualises the letter *SVĀ* [(Chin. *suofu* 娑縛)]<sup>14</sup> as the seed syllable. It transforms the element of wind into an intense purple colour, which emits a purple light. On top of the crown of your head, visualise the letter *HE* as the seed syllable, which transforms [the element of] space with an intense dark colour, [emitting] a dark light. These, then, are the four great holy elements. They are the essence of the Great Sun, the World-Honoured Vairocana Buddha's *dharmakāya*. Following this, proceed from the crown of the head to the feet, limb by limb, joint by joint, and visualise in all [of them] the letter *A* as the seed syllable. All should be empowered with the [following] *dhāraṇī* when making the visualisation. One must also utter:

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- 11 Here, the text employs the standard terminology for rendering the idea of 'element,' similar to the five elements or agents (Chin. *wuxing* 五行).
- 12 I suppose that the meaning of this is that, as the elements are contingent, i.e. temporary and causal, they are subject to impermanence, which is at the heart of the noble truth of suffering.
- 13 This is what is referred to at the beginning of the meditation as 'retaining the consciousness.'
- 14 This is in accordance with the phonetic system for transcribing Sanskrit initiated by Amoghavajra.



“*Namo samanta buddhanam* (‘Praise to the Universal Buddha’).<sup>15</sup> When the [letter] *A* is placed on the crown of your head, [the visualisation] is complete. Then [one proceeds with the visualisation] from the top knot of your head and down to your feet, and for self-empowering the crown of one’s head, one uses the *Yiqie rulai xin tuoluoni* 一切如來心陀羅尼 [Heart Dhāraṇī of all the Tathāgatas] to empower it [(Chin. *jiachi* 加持)]. This, then, is the method for perfecting one’s body. The *dhāraṇī* goes, [...].<sup>16</sup> With this *dhāraṇī*, one empowers the crown of one’s head, as well as both shoulders, chanting it once for each of them, while at the same time visualising your own body seated on the extensive full moon disk. The moon disk then becomes your complete mirror-like wisdom. Then, in its brilliance, behold the three-thousand great thousand-fold worlds as in your own body. Proceeding from the top of the head down to the chest, this is the form realm of the twenty heavens [(Chin. *ershi tian* 二十天)]. Continuing [the visualisation] from the chest [on down], one reaches the lower abdomen, where one visualises the six heavens of desire [(Chin. *liuyu tian* 六欲天)], Mt. Meru [(須彌山)], the great oceans [(Chin. *dahai* 大海)], and the four continents [(Chin. *sizhou* 四洲)]. Proceeding from this, one reaches the feet, where one should visualise all the sentient beings [stuck] in the three evil paths [(Chin. *san’e dao* 三惡道)].

This [visualisation] compares with the wall in the Western Temple of Beiting [(庭西寺)], on which there is a painting of Vairocana Buddha, etc., and is no different from that. Having situated the three-thousand great thousand-fold worlds in oneself, then at that time, you should, with [both] mind and mouth, utter as follows: “Letter *A*, adorn my body!” Limb by limb, joint by joint, all the parts of one’s body are transformed [so that] the letter *A* becomes my body, and the letter *A* becomes my life force, which is also due to the power of empowerment of my upholding of all the *tathāgatas*’ mind. “This, my present body, is the *dharmakāya*. Its essence is the same as the *dharma* realm and no different from the *dharmakāya* of all buddhas.” By refining the eight consciousnesses, one perfects the four wisdoms. The four wisdoms [in turn] perfect the three bodies [(Skt. *trikāya*)], the pure *dharmakāya* of Vairocana, which is formless in essence, illuminating the worlds of the ten directions.

15 The manuscript reads, *Nanwu suomantuo munan* (南无娑謨陁暮喃), which is obviously a corruption of *namo samanta buddhanam* (南莫三滿多沒馱喃).

16 The manuscript has a lacuna here, indicating where the text of the same *dhāraṇī* should rightly be. The only *mantra* I have come across, and which matches this title, is the *Sarva tathāgatahrdayasamavairocanadhāraṇī* found in Dānapāla’s translation of the *Raśvīnīla viśuddhaprabhadhāraṇīsūtra* (T. 1023.19, 717a).

This meditative absorption is called the Śuraṅgama Samādhi.<sup>17</sup> At that time the *sambhogakāya* [i.e. the bliss body] dwells in meditative absorption. If one wishes to attain merit, one should give rise to the four immeasurable states of mind [(Chin. *si wuliang xin* 四無量心)].<sup>18</sup> First, visualise the ocean of milk in the lower abdomen, and visualise the letter *A* in the ocean, with the letter *A* becoming the root syllable. Proceeding from the letter *A*, visualise a golden lotus flower extending from the navel. Within the flower, visualise the letter *A* changing into a complete altar. On the altar, place the white-coloured letter *VA* as the seed syllable. It transforms into a moon disk with a great and precious Bhilaṅka Pearl [(Skt. *śākya bhilaṅka maṇi ratna*)].<sup>19</sup> Proceeding [with the visualisation], the precious pearl on the full moon disk emits a thousand rays of purifying light that issue forth, streaming into the ocean of milk. When the frosty stream of rays enters the ocean of milk, it then cools. Its cold milk runs in six streams into the eight hot hells, completely extinguishing and exhausting the fire there. This milk then flows into the mouths of all the evil and sinful people there, all of whom will surely be satiated, and they will surely all be relieved from their sufferings. Furthermore, visualise that from your body, one hundred million rays of light emanate, which illuminate the bodies of the evil people, and upon which all their karmic hindrances will surely be eliminated and exhausted. Moreover, inside all of the rays, visualise all evil people being transformed. In each of them can be seen transformed people. When beholding this, all the transformed people extol Amitabha's name. Due to the power of invoking the Buddha, they will go for rebirth in Amitabha's paradise after they die. [Then] visualise that all the hells have become empty. Furthermore, and in your mind, visualise that there is an ocean of milk. In the ocean of milk, visualise the letter *A* becoming a triangular altar. On the altar, visualise the letter *RA* [(Chin. *luo* 囉)] as the seed syllable, which transforms into the sun disk and the precious pearl. Proceed from the precious pearl on the sun disk to visualise one-hundred million rays of light illuminating this ocean of milk. The ocean of milk then heats up, and its hot milk runs into the eight cold hells. The hells and their icy mountains will surely all be eliminated and done away with. Then visualise the warm milk flowing into the mouths of the evil people,

17 The four immeasurable states of mind are kindness (Skt. *maitri*), great compassion (Skt. *karuṇā*), joy (Skt. *muditā*), and being impervious to adverse conditions (Skt. *upekṣā*). FDC, vol. 2, 1777a–1778b.

18 This most likely refers to the *Śuraṅgamasamādhisūtra* (T. 642.15). However, as it is unclear which textual source is actually referred to here, this could also refer to one of the meditative absorptions found in the *Shou lengyan jing* 首楞嚴經 [Pseudo-Śuraṅgama Scripture] (T. 945.19).

19 For this holy relic, see FDC, vol. 7, 683obc.

upon which all of them will become fully satiated and removed from the suffering of the cold. Then emit [from your own body] thousand rays of light, which illuminate the bodies of those evil. In this light, each of them should be visualised as a transformation buddha, whereupon each one in this crowd of evil people will see these transformation buddhas, their mouths extolling the name of Amitābha. Because of the buddha's power, with each recitation, all of them will go for rebirth in the realm of Sukhāvātī. [Then] visualise that all the hells become empty. Then visualise the milk reaching the kings and ministers in the realm [(Skt. *gati*)] of humans [(Chin. *rendao* 人道)], and from them, extending to both rich and poor people, all of whom will surely be satiated. Then extend one-million rays of light to illuminate the rich [people], etc., who will abandon suffering and be liberated upon rebirth in the paradise of Sukhāvātī. Visualise [next] travellers to distant places and those who are very sick; behold [how] their mouths become full of milk, so that they become fully satiated. Their sickness and painful suffering will be done away with, and they will [also] be reborn in the land of Sukhāvātī. Then visualise those in the realm of domestic animals, including lions, tigers, wolves, blood-sucking creep, wild beasts, oxen, donkeys, horses, etc., as well as snakes, scorpions, mosquitos, gadflies, ants, etc., all such kinds. In their mouths, they will surely all [receive the] milk and be fully satiated. Then emit [from your own body] thousand rays of light illuminating the evil peoples' bodies. In each ray of light, each of them will appear as transformed people, and each of these delivered, and all of them will give rise to joy and be reborn in the paradise of Sukhāvātī.

[The practitioner should then] enter the four limitless *samādhis*. Visualise the letter *A*, and on the crown of one's head, visualise the bodhi tree. In the bodhi tree, one should [next] visualise the western world of Sukhāvātī. Then visualise Amitābha Buddha, Avalokiteśvara, Mahāsthāmaprāpta, and all of their host. Next, in the muddy water [of the paradisaical ponds], visualise ten-million lotus flowers. In the flowers, visualise ten-million youths of transformed rebirth. Your own body then transforms into one of them. [Next], visualise your eyes beholding Amitabha Buddha. Afterwards, one enters the four limitless *samādhis* and may access the three-thousand great thousand-fold worlds. This is referred to as the mirror-like wisdom of the *nirmāṇakāya*. Above, one should behold names of the small thousand-fold worlds. The mirror-like wisdom of *sambhogakāya* can be seen as the middle thousand-fold worlds. If the *dharmakāya* Vairocana's entire great and complete mirror-like wisdom body is seen as above, it is referred to as the great thousand-fold worlds. Moreover, it extends in the four cardinal directions, above, and below the three-thousand-fold worlds of the ten directions, which are all illuminated. Therefore, he is called Vairocana Buddha in Sanskrit. In Chinese, this means 'All Illuminating One'. He is explained as the essence of the great complete mirror encircling

the *dharmadhātu*. Hence, without the latter there will be no illumination, and without this, it (i.e. the light) can not reach everywhere. The former two bodies [(i.e., the *sambhogakāya* and *nīrmānakāya*)] also will not reach everywhere. The third, the *dharmakāya*, is able to illuminate and is all-pervading. When one reaches this stage of abandonment, then one abides in the wisdom of the nature of equanimity. Its essence has three types of equanimity. The first is to see life and death as fully even, and one neither enters nor leaves them. The second is to see the nine worthy ones<sup>20</sup> as the same, without there being high or low. The third is to see suffering and bliss as the same, without choosing and without rejecting. Then the essence of this wisdom of equanimity is your own [basic] ground. One may then receive and use the two in one's *sambhogakāya*. Then, like above, they may be referred to in meditative absorption as the thought consciousness, which is called the wisdom of wondrous contemplation and introspection. Vigorously exiting from meditative absorption, one will afterwards discourse on the teaching, transforming people, [so that they will have] correct dispositions and correct views. Their thoughts will not give rise to confusion when seeing and hearing, as the signs of the six consciousnesses, feeling, knowing, etc., will correspond to wisdom. This is termed the perfected wisdom. This, then, is your own *nirmānakāya*. Furthermore, this priceless treasure will fulfill all of what one prays for. These *dhāraṇī*-manifested seed syllables [used in the] contemplation method of Mahāyāna reveal themselves as the buddha's expedient means [(Skt. *upāya*, Chin. *fangbian* 方便)]. Without exaggeration, they may be referred to as a thousand pieces of gold. Do not transmit them [lightly]!

This is the so-and-so essential method of constant practice. With all of the four limitless states of mind united, one cultivates the practice of the previous meditative absorption, which is the great wisdom. Next are the four limitless states of mind, which are [expressions of] great compassion. With compassion and wisdom unified, one will quickly obtain the Buddha's way. This, then, is the complete teaching of Mahāyāna.

If one desires to seek the fruits of the Buddha's *sambhogakāya*, it is necessary to have equanimity of one's own inner mind. When the inner and outer mind are both in balance, it is not necessary to attend to the three *buddhakāyas*. Worldly fellows hold on to false liberation and [consequently] sink in the rounds of birth and death, unable to obtain liberation, without which there will be no escape. Therefore, it is important that one gets rid of all *śrāvaka* attachments and the error of emptiness of birth and death in order

20 They are Vairocana surrounded by the four other *dhyaṇi* buddhas and the four bodhisattvas of the Garbhadhātu *maṇḍala*, also known as the nine worthy ones (Chin. Jiuzun 九尊). FDC, vol. 1, 146ab.

to enter the fruits of emptiness. [If one fails to do so] one destroys forever the unborn, so that one can not obtain the buddha fruit. Hence, it is essential to seek that which is, and not to hold on to empty existence, whereby one will not remove oneself from empty existence, but [instead], will enter the gate of non-duality [(Chin. *ru buer men* 入不二門)]. Even if one remains in *samsāra*, one is not contaminated by worldly phenomena. It is like a lotus flower growing in [muddy] water. Although one obtains liberation, one does not seek extinction.<sup>21</sup> One does not discard the vow of compassion to exert oneself in benefitting with bliss sentient beings in the future. Hence, one should not hold on to empty existence.

The disciple Faxing's book.

#### 4 Text and Context of S. 6897V<sup>o</sup>

Having read the text of the manuscript and accessed the scope of its practice-oriented discourse, let us now proceed to a more detailed analysis of the contents and their implications.

There are a number of salient features in the text that are characteristic of Esoteric Buddhist practice and belief, such as the visualisation of seed syllables, the self-identification with the deity, the ritual destruction of the hells, the non-dual teaching of equanimity, the special three body concept, the manner of defining the Buddhist wisdoms, the ubiquitous use of spells for effectuating the practice, etc. That being said, it is also clear that there are important aspects of Esoteric Buddhist practice that are not present here. They include the absence of any mention of the five Buddha families<sup>22</sup> although an altar for fire offering (Skt. *homa*) is referred to, neither its name nor the practice itself occur in the text. Moreover, although spells seem to play an important part in S. 6897V<sup>o</sup>, only one *mantra* is actually given in full. Likewise, *mudrās*, a standard element in Esoteric Buddhist ritual practice, are entirely absent from the text. Of course, this could be because everything in the text deals with visualisation practice, but even so, normally *mudrās* are used in tandem with both chanting spells and visualisations in standard Esoteric Buddhist practice as part of the three mysteries (Chin. *sanmi* 三密), that is, the mysteries of

21 On the surface, this seems to contradict basic Buddhist tenets. However, it would appear that this is done in order to stress the bodhisattva ideal, according to which the practitioner foregoes the extinction of *nirvāṇa* in order to remain in, but not of, the world.

22 The Five Buddha families otherwise occur prominently in the Esoteric Buddhist manuscripts from Dunhuang, revealing that much of it derives from the mature dispensation of Chinese Esoteric Buddhism especially that of Amoghavajra. As to why they are not referred to in our text is perhaps because they were taken for granted.

body, speech, and mind. As it is, all of these features appear in other Esoteric Buddhist scriptures from Dunhuang, including the celebrated *Tanfa yize* 壇法儀則 [Altar Methods for Ritual Proceedings (abbreviated title)].<sup>23</sup>

Since the manuscript is essentially a meditation text, the main practice of which revolves around a series of visualisations, we need to come to term with these visualisations in order to understand the context from which they derive. The meditation and visualisation process set forth in the text can be broken into the following constituent parts:

- (1) The meditation on the four elements;
- (2) The meditation on the merger with the divinity;
- (3) The visualisation of the four wisdoms;
- (4) The visualisation of the ocean of milk and the cold and hot hells;
- (5) The visualisation of the liberation of the all sentient beings;
- (6) The visualisation of Sukhāvātī;
- (7) Accessing the four limitless *samādhis*.

It makes sense to try to pinpoint the immediate textual origins of these practices that occur in the text in the canonical Esoteric Buddhist literature. Indeed, as we shall see, a number of them can readily be traced in that material.

Beginning with the first visualisation, one of the earliest, if not the earliest, occurrence of meditation on the four elements in one's own body within the context of Esoteric Buddhist practice is found in the *Mahāvairocanasūtra* (T. 848.18). The short verse in question reads:

The mantrin [(Chin. *zhenyanzhe* 真言者)] first places the complete altar in his own body;<sup>24</sup>

[Proceeding] from the feet up to the navel, it constitutes the great disk of *vajras*;

From there, and reaching the heart, he should visualise a water disk;

23 This is an abbreviation of an otherwise hopelessly elaborate and lengthy title. Hou Chong (侯冲) prepared an authoritative, modern edition in ZWF 11, 17–231. For a study of this important text, see Amanda K. Goodman, “The Ritual Instructions for Altar Methods (*Tanfa yize*): Prolegomenon to the Study of a Chinese Esoteric Buddhist Ritual Compendium from Late-Medieval Dunhuang,” (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2013). See also, Hou Chong, “Mijiao zhongguo hua de jingdian fenxi: Yi Dunhuang ben Jingangding yingqing yi, Jingangding xiuxi yujia yi, he Tanfa yize wei qieru dian 密教中國化的經典分析: 以敦煌本金剛頂迎請儀, 金剛頂修習瑜伽儀, 和 壇法儀則 為切入點 [A Discussion of Esoteric Buddhism with Chinese Characteristics based on Esoteric Buddhist Manuscripts found in Dunhuang such as the *Jingangding yingqing yi*, the *Jingangding xiuxi yujia yi* and the *Tanfa yize*],” *Yuanguang foxuexuebao* 圓光佛學學報 [Journal of Yuanguang Buddhist Studies] 19 (2012): 149–153.

24 These are the internalised *maṇḍala*-altars of the elements generated in the meditation practice.

Above the water disk, there is a fire disk, and above it a wind disk.

Next, he should consider the supporting ground and draw the host of images [for the *maṇḍala*].<sup>25</sup>

This brief instruction on visualisation of the elements in one's body is, of course, much more rudimentary and simplistic than the lengthy and elaborate instructions found in the text of the manuscript. However, in the context of the *Mahāvairocanasūtra*, this is simply a template for visualising the elements, and as such, is a standard ritual feature that can be shifted and used in different ritual settings.<sup>26</sup> Note that the short verse above does not mention five elements (Chin. *wuda* 五大, Skt. *pañca mahābhūtāni*),<sup>27</sup> which constitute a standard group in mature Esoteric Buddhism, but only four, as is also the case in S. 6897V<sup>o</sup>.

A later and somewhat obscure work, the *Jingangding putixin lun lüejì* 金剛頂菩提心論略記 [Abbreviated Record of the Treatise on Bodhicitta according to the *Vajraśekhara*], features a discussion of the four elements and the four wisdoms as the unfolding of Vairocana's self-enlightenment, and states: "These four letters [(i.e., the seed syllables)] are the holy wisdoms deriving from Vairocana Buddha's self-enlightenment" (ZZ 777.46, 199c).<sup>28</sup> However, this source does not mention the elements' relationship with the Buddha's three bodies. One can not, therefore, argue that this scripture in itself could have inspired the visualisation text. What it does show, however, is that some of the

- 25 T. 848.18, 31a:  
 真言者圓壇      先置於自體  
 自足而至臍      成大金剛輪  
 從此而至心      當思惟水輪  
 水輪上火輪      火輪上風輪  
 次應念持地      而圖眾形像。

My translation differs on various points from that found in Rolf Giebel's translation. Cf. *The Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi Sutra*, trans. Rolf W. Giebel (Berkeley: Numata Center, 2005), 144.

- 26 Visualisation as used here means 'seeing with the inner eye', i.e., imagining or constructing a mental image in one's mind. Something which is at the core of almost all meditation practices in Esoteric Buddhism. Whether the mental vision is something one actually sees, or imagines to be there, is in fact irrelevant to the ritual's function and process. An inner image is created with which the meditator/practitioner relates and interacts.
- 27 For the five elements in Esoteric Buddhism, see FDC, vol. 2, 1056b–1057a.
- 28 It is said to have been transmitted by the monk Bianman (d.u., 遍滿), about whom little is otherwise known, and has only come down to us through a Japanese transmission. A colophon placed at the end of the scripture shows that it was in circulation in Japan during the late Heian Period (794–1185, 平安時代) (ZZ 777.46). In any case, it appears to be of a later date than the Dunhuang manuscript.

doctrinal and practice-related concepts that constitute the conceptual underpinning of the meditation process given in our manuscript were expounded in other Esoteric Buddhist contexts in East Asia during the same period or slightly after.

The visualisation practices involving the so-called seed syllables appear prominently in the *Mahāvairocanasūtra* (T. 848.18: 31a, 34b, 35b, 48c, etc.) and in the corpus of related scriptures and commentaries. The instructions on the visualisation of the letter *A* (Chin. *a zi men* 阿字門) may be especially important in this regard.<sup>29</sup> An extended discussion of seed syllable meditation, including on the letter *A*, is found in the *Tae Piroch'ana kyōng kongyang ch'adung pōp so* (*Da Piluzhena jing gongyang cidengfa shu*) 大毘盧遮那經供養次第法疏 [Outline of the Progressive Methods for Making Offerings According to the *Mahāvairocanasūtra*] (T. 1797.39: 799a–800a), authored by the Unified Silla (668–936, 新羅) monk Pulga Saui (fl. first half of 8th c., 不可思議), who was one of Śubhākarasiṃha's (637–735) Korean disciples.<sup>30</sup> Again, this reveals that this type of visualisation was central to mature Esoteric Buddhism in China and East Asia from the 8th century onwards. Moreover, the inherited lore surrounding both the Vajradhātu and Garbhadhātu *maṇḍalas* feature entire *maṇḍalas* made up of seed syllables only, indicating the exceptionally close relationship between divinity and the concept of sound that characterises this stage in the development of Esoteric Buddhism.<sup>31</sup>

None of the works mentioned above actually offers a close textual match with our text. However, there is one Esoteric Buddhist work that is very similar in its discussion and treatment of almost all the same major topics. This is the *Foding zunsheng xin po diyu lun yechang chu sanjie bimi sanshen foguo sanzhang*

29 The concerned visualisation practice is described in the *Mahāvairocanasūtra* (T. 848.18, 19bc). For more specific and detailed instructions, see Yixing's (673–727, 一行) *Wuwei sanzang chan yao* 無畏三藏禪要 [Tripiṭaka Master Śubhākarasiṃha's Meditation Essentials] (T. 917.18). For meditation on the seed syllable *A* in Japanese context, including a discussion of its Chinese background, see Richard K. Payne, "Ajikan: Ritual and Meditation in the Shingon Tradition," in *Re-visioning Kamakura Buddhism*, ed. Richard K. Payne (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998), 219–248.

30 For further details, see Henrik H. Sørensen, "Early Esoteric Buddhism in Korea," in EBTEA, ed. Charles D. Orzech, Henrik H. Sørensen, and Richard K. Payne (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2011), 575–592 (esp. 585–589).

31 For examples of such *bija maṇḍalas* from early pre-modern Japan, see Shingon: *Die Kunst des Geheimen Buddhismus in Japan*, ed. Roger Goepfer (Cologne: Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst der Stadt Köln, 1988), 156–157. No extant paintings of this kind have been identified so far in China, but *maṇḍalas* and spell disks consisting of Sanskrit seed syllables are known from both prints and stone carving, the former from Dunhuang and the latter from Fangshan (房山) in Hebei province.



*xidi zhenyan yigui* 佛頂尊勝心破地獄轉業障出三界祕密三身佛果三種悉地真言儀軌 [Ritual Proceedings of the Budoṣṇīṣavijaya's Heart for Destroying the Hells, Overturning Karmic Obstructions, and Escaping the Three-fold Worlds, the Secret Three Bodies' Buddha Fruits of Three Kinds of Siddhis with Mantras] (T. 906.18).<sup>32</sup> It is attributed to Śubhākarasiṃha (637–735, Chin. Shanwuwei 善無畏), but it is doubtful that he actually had anything to do with it. It is a ritual text like S. 6897V<sup>o</sup> that features a soteriological discourse on the elements—in this case, we have five of them, which is characteristic of mature Esoteric Buddhism's fully developed five buddhas template—including their respective seed syllables, their visualisation in a meditation, the wisdoms, the three bodies, etc. Furthermore, it also addresses the destruction of the hells and the metaphor of the divine sea of milk, although in a different manner than S. 6897V<sup>o</sup>. We can, therefore, say that while it retains the feel of an orthodox text, perhaps one that is more systematic in a formal sense, it is, nevertheless, a ritual text with a similarly oblique history and pedigree.

There are a number of other manuscripts from the Buddhist milieu of Dunhuang that feature seed syllable meditation and visualisation. A noteworthy one is the *Jingangzang pusa sanzai guanxiang* 金剛藏菩薩三字觀想 [Vajragarbha Bodhisattva's Contemplation of the Three Syllables], (P. 3835V<sup>o</sup>).<sup>33</sup> Vajragarbha's meditation text, or rather, a shortened version of it, is also included in the important Esoteric Buddhist ritual compendium, the *Altar Methods for Ritual Proceedings*, mentioned previously.<sup>34</sup> Another

32 Three closely related but variant versions of this ritual work exist (T. 905–907.18). However, they have all come down to us through Japanese copies. It is, therefore, difficult to verify whether Śubhākarasiṃha was indeed the author. He was probably not, as all three versions invoke the *Mahāvairocanaśūtra* and the *Vajraśekhara*, which makes it more likely that the text was composed towards the end of the 8th century, rather than during the first quarter of that century.

33 For a detailed study of the *Vajragarbha Bodhisattva's Contemplation of the Three Syllables*, refer to Amanda Goodman's chapter in this volume. The prevalence of the cult of Vajragarbha in Dunhuang is explored briefly in Ueyama Daishuin 上山大峻, "Tonkō shutsudo Chibetto bun mahāyōga bunken Kongōsatta mondō wayaku 敦煌出土チベット文マハーヨーガ 文献『金剛薩埵問答』和訳 [The Excavated Textual Material of the Mahāyōga Text, Vajrasattvas' Questions and Answers]," in *Zengaku kenkyū no shosō: Tanaka Ryōshō hakase koki kinen ronshū* 禅学研究の諸相: 田中良昭博士古稀記念論集 [Aspects of Zen Studies: Commemorative Volume of Essays for Professor Tanaka Ryōshō], ed. Tanaka Ryōshō hakase koki kinen ronshū kankō-kai 田中良昭博士古稀記念論集刊行会 (Tokyo: Daito shuppansa, 2003), 3–22.

34 Cf. ZWF 11, 135–136. In the course of her research on the *Altar Methods for Ritual Proceedings*, Goodman also came across a greatly abbreviated version of the text, and realised that it was a separate, but essentially unrelated, meditation text belonging to Esoteric Buddhism that had been grafted onto the compendium. Goodman, "The Ritual

Dunhuang manuscript featuring *bīja* visualisation is the *Dasheng si wuliang anxin rudao fayao lue* 大乘四無量安心入道法要略 [Abbreviated Dharma Essentials of the Four Immeasurable Calming States of the Mahāyāna for Entering the Way] (S. 522).

Another salient feature of mature Esoteric Buddhism is the practice of self-identification with the deity, in this case, Vairocana, as part of the process of effectuating universal salvation. Identification with the deity is found in several important Esoteric Buddhist scriptures, and again, the *Mahāvairocanasūtra* is probably the most important source for this. The *sūtra*'s twelfth chapter explains the results of the visualisation practice, which culminates in the union of the practitioner and Vairocana as the apex of Esoteric Buddhist cultivation and transcendence (T. 848.18: 31a). The model for the merger between practitioner and deity is found in a variety of ritual and meditation practices throughout mature Esoteric Buddhist Tang literature, and of course, after the 8th century, it appears in the practice of evocations (Skt. *sādhana*) of fully developed Indo-Tibetan Tantric Buddhism, where it is a standard element.<sup>35</sup>

Concepts from the Pure Land tradition abound in the text, which places its discourse of salvation in late medieval Chinese Buddhism. In this connection, mention can be made of the vision of the Pure Land Triad—Amitābha Buddha and the bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta—and the transformed beings born from lotuses in Sukhāvātī's ponds. All of this imagery clearly originated in the cycle of scriptures focusing on Amitābha Buddha's Western Pure Land.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, the only buddhas who actually appear in the text are Vairocana and Amitābha. Hence, it is clear that whoever composed the text had a good understanding of the Pure Land tradition in its own right. In spite of these features, the text should, in my view, only partly be taken as an example of Esoteric Buddhist and Pure Land integration. Although it does construct a soteriological discourse involving both forms of Buddhism,

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Instructions for Altar Methods," 73–76. However, she has failed to understand its relationship with the longer version of P. 2649V<sup>o</sup> or its place within local Esoteric Buddhism. For a discussion and translation of both texts, as they are found in the *Altar Methods for Ritual Proceedings*, see Henrik H. Sørensen, "The Meeting and Conflation of Chán and Esoteric Buddhism during the Táng," in *Chán Buddhism in the Northwestern Region—Dunhuang and Beyond: Manuscripts, Texts, and Contexts*, ed. Christoph Anderl and Christian Wittern (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2019), 329–362.

35 See Snellgrove, *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism*, 130, 184, 240–242, etc. Note that Snellgrove mainly relies on material that post-dates the 8th, and even 9th, centuries.

36 See *The Land of Bliss: The Paradise of the Buddha of Measureless Light—Sanskrit and Chinese Versions of the Sukhāvātīvyūhasūtras*, intro. and trans. Luis O. Gomez (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1996).

this essentially takes place under the doctrinal conceptions and practices of Esoteric Buddhism.

The text's description of the liberation of beings suffering in the hells represents a reduction of more developed scenarios into a conceptual formula or template, involving essentially the hot and cold hells only. The often-graphic descriptions of the suffering of the Buddhist hells that one encounters in many other sources from Dunhuang are largely absent. This abbreviated treatment of an otherwise popular topic in the Dunhuang material corresponds to the visualisation process described in the text. Hence, the whole idea of the divine ocean of milk discussed above, which alternately heats and cools the hells, is carefully matched with the process of salvation of beings in the hot and cold hells. Since the hot and cold hells stand centrally in the visualisation practice set forth in the text, it is clear that the hell theme is important to its overall conceptualisation.<sup>37</sup> On a more general level, the concept of liberating those suffering in hell relates to the same ideas as the literature on breaking (Chin. *po* 破) or emptying the hells (Chin. *kong diyu* 空地獄).<sup>38</sup> This text also has certain conceptual similarities with the various ritual texts for making food offerings (Chin. *shishi* 施食), including the *Foshuo jiuba yankou e'gui tuoluoni jing* 佛說救拔焰口餓鬼陀羅尼經 [Buddha Speaks the Scripture of the Dhāraṇī for Liberating the Burning Mouth Hungry Ghosts] (T. 1313.21), the *Shi zhu e'gui*

37 This is evident in numerous studies from the last three decades and earlier. See, for example, Stephen F. Teiser, *The Ghost Festival in Medieval China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); Stephen F. Teiser, *The Scripture of the Ten Kings and the Making of Purgatory in Medieval Chinese Buddhism* (Honolulu: Koruda Institute and University of Hawai'i Press, 1994); Françoise Wang-Toutain, *Le Bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha en Chine du Ve au XIII<sup>e</sup> Siècle* (Paris: Presses de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient, 1998); and more recently, Costantino Moretti, "The Thirty-six Categories of 'Hungry Ghosts' Described in the Sūtra of the Foundations of Mindfulness of the True Law," in *Fantômes dans l'Extrême-Orient d'hier et d'aujourd'hui. Ghosts in the Far East in the Past and Present*, ed. Vincent Durand-Dastès (Paris: INALCO, 2017), 43–69; and Costantino Moretti, "Picturing the Buddhist Hells in Dunhuang Murals: Iconic and Descriptive Scenes of the Netherworld in Sūtra Representations," unpublished paper given at the Dunhuang Studies Conference in Cambridge, April, 2019. For a discussion of the origins of the medieval concept of the netherworld in the Chinese cultural milieu, see Henrik H. Sørensen, "The Meeting of Daoist and Buddhist Spatial Imagination: The Construction of the Netherworld in Medieval China," in *Locating Religions: Contact, Diversity and Translocality*, ed. Reinhold F. Gleis and Nikolas Jaspert (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2017), 234–292.

38 For a discussion of the salvation of the hungry ghosts in the Esoteric Buddhist tradition of the Tang, see Charles D. Orzech, "Esoteric Buddhism and the Shishi in China," in *The Esoteric Buddhist Tradition. Selected Papers from the 1989 SBS Conference*, ed. Henrik H. Sørensen (Copenhagen, Aarhus: Seminar for Buddhist Studies, 1994), 51–72.

*yinshi ji shuifa* 施諸餓鬼飲食及水法 [Water Method for Providing All Hungry Ghosts Drink and Food] (T. 1315.21), and Amoghavajra's seminal *Yuqie ji jiu Anan tuoluoni yankou guiyi jing* 瑜伽集救阿難陀羅尼焰口軌儀經 [Scripture on the Ritual Proceedings of the Yoga for Saving Ānanda with the Dhāraṇī for the Burning Mouths] (T. 1318.21), all texts which typologically presage the later important Water and Land (Chin. *shuilu* 水陸) manuals of the Song Dynasty (960–1279, 宋).<sup>39</sup> It so happens that the *Water Method for Providing All Hungry Ghosts Drink and Food* appears among the Dunhuang manuscripts in a slightly variant form, under the title *Shi e'gui shi bing shui zhenyan yin fa* 施餓鬼食并水真言印法 [Method with Mantra and Mudrās for Feeding the Hungry Ghosts and [Giving them] Water] (S. 6897 (5), S. 2685, etc.).<sup>40</sup>

In terms of the specific doctrinal aspects of the text, it sets forth a relatively elaborate and integrated three bodies doctrine, which, as I read it, is a clear address to the Amoghavajra tradition of Esoteric Buddhism. The same is true for the theory of the four elements and the four wisdoms, mentioned above. All of these reflect developments in mature Esoteric Buddhism under the mid-Tang.

Although not of direct relevance to Buddhism in Dunhuang, the reference in the text to the painting of Vairocana in the Western Great Temple at Beiting is noteworthy information that adds to our knowledge of Uyghur Buddhism. This temple is located in present-day Jimsar county (吉木萨尔县) in present-day Northern Xinjiang and formed part of the Uyghur royal town of Beš Balık (Beiting), which was built at the site of an earlier Chinese settlement, the Beiting protectorate (北庭都護府), set up in Tingzhou during the

39 In recent years, scholarly attention has extended to the visual aspects of the rituals for water and land (Chin. *shuilu zhai* 水陸齋). For a masterful treatment of the subject, see Phillip E. Bloom, "Descent of the Deities: The Water-Land Retreat and the Transformation of the Visual Culture of Song-Dynasty (960–1279) Buddhism" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2013). Bloom's study also includes a lengthy review of the history of this ritual and the related literature.

40 For a detailed textual study of this material, see Wang Sanqing 王三慶, "Tonkō bunkan tōsō hon 7677 (夜 98): Ju shishi ichi mennen segaki inshi sui nō kenkyū 敦煌文獻北圖藏本 7677 (夜 98): 咒食施一切面然餓鬼飲食水法の研究 [A Study of Beijing Library Number 7677 (夜 98): The Method for Empowering the Food Offerings for all the Burning Faces Preta-s so that they May Eat the Food and Drink the Water]," in *Tōhō gaku kenkyū ronshū—Takata Tokio kyōju taikyū kinen* 東方學研究論集—高田時雄教授退休紀念 [East Asian Studies: Festschrift in Honor of the Retirement of Professor Takata Tokio], ed. Tōhō gaku kenkyū ronshū kankai 東方學研究論集刊行會 [Editorial Committee for Publishing Tōhō gaku kenkyū ronshū] (Kyoto: Seisaku rinsen shoten, 2014), 272–282.

reign of Empress Wu Zetian (685–704, 武則天).<sup>41</sup> The Western Great Temple at Beiting is documented in various historical records and appears to have been established when the Turfan region was still under Tang control, prior to the Uyghurs' arrival in the course of the 9th century.<sup>42</sup> The present ruins of the temple still feature remains of wall paintings that date from the time of the Western Uyghur Kingdom (second half 9th c. to 13th c.). A number of Buddhist painted clay images have also been found, most severely degraded by weathering. It is, of course, not possible to establish the date of the Vairocana wall painting mentioned in the S. 6897V<sup>o</sup> manuscript, but I am inclined to see it as having been made under the Uyghurs, given that all the extant Buddhist paintings *in situ* derive from their presence in the region.<sup>43</sup> The Dunhuang manuscript's reference to a major Buddhist temple and its religious art in the Western Uyghur Kingdom underscores the close relationship that existed between these two cultural centres. As such, it indirectly indicates that knowledge of religious art in other Central Asian regions and cultural nodes was commonly transferred between nodes along the Silk Road, in this case, knowledge regarding iconographical models and themes.

A final element of the text that relates to Esoteric Buddhist practice is the reference to a triangular altar (Chin. *sanjie tan* 三角壇). Altars of this kind are normally used for fire offerings, especially those of the destructive type (Skt. *ābhicāraka*), and in this case, it is visualised as part of the meditation process.<sup>44</sup> Although the text does not mention fire offerings *per se*, the reference

41 See *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書 [Old Book of the Tang Dynasty], accessed April 15, 2020. <https://web.archive.org/web/20050428130141/http://www.njmuseum.com/zh/book/esss/jiutangshu/044.html>.

42 The extant ruins reveal that this was a major temple of an impressive size. Today, the main structure of the temple has been placed under roof. The site of the Western Great Temple was first identified during the 1980s, and excavation got under way as late as the 1990s. It was only opened to the public in recent years. Unfortunately, there are no traces of the wall painting of Vairocana, as mentioned in the text. For a useful overview of the heavily restored site as it appears today, see “Beiting Xida si—Jimusaer xian—Xinjiang siyuan 北庭西大寺—吉木萨尔县—新疆寺院 [The Western Great Temple of Beiting—Jimsar County—Xinjiang's Temples and Monasteries],” compiled by Baolian Chan Temple 宝莲禅寺 (2013), accessed April 15, 2020. <http://www.fjdh.cn/ffzt/fjhy/ahsy2013/04/123341223666.html>.

43 Thanks to Hou Haoran for indicating the correct reading in this part of the manuscript and pointing out the significance of this reference. Personal communication, March 2020.

44 A plethora of examples of these destructive rites are described in considerable detail in the important ritual compendium, the *Susiddhikaramahātantra-sādhanaopāyikapaṭalasūtra* (T. 893.18) or *Two Esoteric Sutras*, trans. Rolf W. Giebel (Berkeley: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2001), 185–189, 309–310, etc.

to a triangular altar does indicate that altars of this kind were familiar to the Buddhist practitioners of Dunhuang during the late medieval period.

S. 6897V<sup>o</sup> (6) features a number of metaphors and tropes that link it with scriptures belonging to mature Esoteric Buddhism. I will not deal with all of these tropes and metaphors here, but will focus on a few of the most important ones. First, there is the ocean of milk, which occurs in a variety of discourses and contexts, most notably in the cycle of scriptures associated with the *Vajraśekharaśūtra* (or *Tattvasaṃgraha*), the primary source on Vairocana and the *vajra* realm (Skt. *vajradhātu*), which derives from mature Esoteric Buddhism in the mid-Tang.<sup>45</sup> In spite of this metaphor's relatively frequent appearance in *Vajraśekharaśūtra*, none of those contexts match how it is used in S. 6897V<sup>o</sup> (6) (or P. 2649V<sup>o</sup>).

## 5 Conclusion

It should be clear that S. 6897V<sup>o</sup> represents a point in the development of Esoteric Buddhist discourse and practice when the topic of universal salvation occupied an important position. Although the text in this case deals entirely with what may be called 'internal practice', it may be read as reflecting developments towards the later important Shuilu rituals that came to dominate Buddhist and Daoist rituals during the middle and later parts of the Song Dynasty.

S. 6897V<sup>o</sup> also represents a unique piece of Chinese Esoteric Buddhist literature. It bridges the categories of ritual performance and meditation, and belongs to a special category of ritual texts that have a strong meditative element and share many of the same soteriological and eschatological features,

45 Visualisation of the ocean of milk as an element in the meditative process is found in a number of Esoteric Buddhist scriptures in the Chinese canons from the first half of the 8th century up to the early 11th century, including the *Advayasamasatāvijayakalparāja* (T. 887.18, 515a, etc.), 金剛頂經瑜伽觀自在王如來修行法 (T. 932.19, 78a), the *Jingangding yuqie qingjing da bei wang Guanzizai niansong yigui* 金剛頂經瑜伽青頸大悲王觀自在念誦儀軌 [Ritual Proceedings for the Invocation of the Yoga of the Blue-Necked, Great, Compassionate King Avalokiteśvara according to the *Vajraśekhara*] (T. 1112.20, 494b), and the *Yanluo wang gong xingfa cideng* 焰羅王供行法次第 [Methods of Making Offerings to King Yama, etc.] (T. 1290.21, 375c). In the lengthy *Shiyi mian Guanzizai pusa xinmi yan yigui jing* 十一面觀自在菩薩心密言儀軌經 [Scripture on the Ritual Proceedings Regarding Ekādaśamukhāvalokiteśvara Heart Mantras], attributed to Amoghavajra, the visualised *maṇḍala* transforms into the ocean of milk (T. 1069.20, 144b).

including the attainment of buddhahood, the emptying or destruction of the hells, universal salvation, and rebirth in the Pure Land of Sukhāvātī. As the text prominently features the themes of ‘emptying the hells’ and ‘destroying the hells’ (Chin. *po diyu* 破地獄), it has a certain connection with the *shishi* and *yankou* literature of medieval Chinese Buddhism, on the conceptual level at least. As such, it links up rather well with a number of the central scriptures translated or produced by Amoghavajra.

Regarding the text’s relationship with Esoteric Buddhist practice in Dunhuang, it is clear that, although no identical copies of the text have been found, there are a fair number of similar or related texts. Thus, it is an example of a particular type of Buddhist ritual text of salvation. Here, I am primarily thinking of the numerous and varied ritual texts that have so far been identified in the manuscript hoard. It is not unlikely that this text was produced locally and that salient parts of it could, in principle, derive from other texts and scriptures. In other words, it may easily be seen as part of the large body of hybrid scriptures found at Dunhuang, many of which were composed of material lifted from other texts.

Given that there is no identical text in any of the Chinese canons available today, and the fact that, so far, this is the only known copy, one could speculate on the degree of its local importance. What is clear, however, is that S. 6897V<sup>o</sup> (or the original it was copied from) was the personal copy of a practitioner of Esoteric Buddhism, and that it most likely served as a guide to that person’s practice of meditation. Moreover, while it cannot be said to be fully representative of Amoghavajra’s tradition, it contains enough elements to point to mature Esoteric Buddhism of the Tang as its most likely inspiration.

The internal reference to Uyghur Buddhism at Beš Balık indicates that whoever compiled or wrote the text was reasonably knowledgeable of Buddhist developments in the regions to the west of Dunhuang during the 10th century. This also excludes the possibility that the type of meditation discussed in the manuscript originated in the context of Tibetan Buddhism or otherwise bears any direct references to it.

Finally, S. 6897V<sup>o</sup> gives an indication of the extent to which many important Buddhist scriptures were lost in the transition from manuscript culture to printed book culture around the turn of the 10th–11th centuries. While this uniforming development had a lasting impact on Buddhist scriptures in China, including the rich apocryphal literature, it is no exaggeration to see this as having had the most severe consequences for the transmission of ritual manuals and Esoteric Buddhist arcana more broadly defined, such as is represented by this text and other non-canonical Esoteric Buddhist scriptures and compilations from Dunhuang.

Appendix: Chinese Text (S. 6897V<sup>o</sup>)<sup>46</sup>

- (01) 若欲安置三千大千世界及十方世界者. 先入大乘无相<sup>47</sup>  
 (02) 相三摩地, 舉凡作聖四大.<sup>48</sup> 即於靜夜, 夜半三更. 睡足便起  
 (03) 端身正坐. 收攝六根, 六識. 唯留意識. 即此意識名妙觀  
 (04) 察智. 向下直看見虛空轉輪, 上安訶字為種子. 放黑  
 (05) 色, 黑光變成毗監猛風. 廣量無數. 厚十六落叉. 即此風  
 (06) 輪上想水輪. 中安縛字為種子. 白色, 白光變成水  
 (07) 輪. 深十一億二万逾繕那. 下留八落叉水. 餘成金輪. 金輪  
 (08) 中安阿字. 黃色, 黃光. 變成金輪. 金輪上至自身坐處  
 (09) 想自身坐金輪上, 自身坐地. 安置唵字為種子. 變成火  
 (10) 聚焚燒不淨四大. 剎那之間變成灰 [火] 燼一把淨 [骨]. 若見  
 (11) 自身, 身骨, 即念苦空常, 无我四行想. 觀見苦諦燒  
 (12) 四大時. 心識不須滅. 若滅心識, 妙觀察智慧亦隨滅.  
 (13) 識性滅故无能觀慧, 作事不成. 但如无色界. 有情  
 (14) 劫盡燒時, 火不能燒. 汝之心識亦復如是. 火中不  
 (15) 燒成所作事, 即此灰骨上安阿字為種子. 即此阿字  
 (16) 及自灰燼變成清淨法身毗盧遮那无想之體.  
 (17) 從是至膝安阿字為種子. 變成地大黃色, 黃光.  
 (18) 從膝至腰安縛字為種子. 變成水大白色白光.  
 (19) 從腰至肩安唵字為種子變成火大赤色, 赤光. 當  
 (20) 面至髮安娑縛二合字為種子. 變成風大紫  
 (21) 色, 紫光. 頂上安訶字為種子. 變成空大黑色, 黑光.  
 (22) 即此四大, 聖四大也. 大日世尊毗盧遮那法身之體  
 (23) 是也. 從此從頂至足支支, 節節皆安阿字為種子. 皆以  
 (24) 陀羅尼加持安置. 應云: 南无娑漫<sup>49</sup> 陁暮喃.<sup>50</sup> 阿  
 (25) 安至汝頂上成. 即頂髮及至足亦尔. 又自頂上用一切

46 The text of the manuscript features a number of minor oddities and what seem to be misspellings or mistakes. However, it is not entirely certain that this is really the case. One of the most common 'errors' is the use of *xiang* (相), i.e., mark or symbol, for *xiang* (想), 'to think, imagine, conceptualise,' etc., or, as the intent is here, 'visualisation.' Cf., e.g., the compound *xiangkan* (想看). One could well imagine that this apparent mix up was actually meant as shorthand and that the copyist knew very well what was intended in the text. That this was the case, seems confirmed by the fact that, towards the beginning of the manuscript, the formally correct character is actually used.

47 This is a duplication caused by scribal error.

48 P. 2649V<sup>o</sup> has this term inverted.

49 This is an abbreviated form of *man* (謾), which actually should be *man* (慢).

50 As a whole, the spell appears to be a corrupted form of *Namo samanta buddhanam* (南莫三滿多沒馱喃).



- (26) 如來心陀羅尼加持. 即此身成法也. 陀羅尼曰:[...]<sup>51</sup>
- (27) 以此陀羅尼加持頂上及兩肩各誦一遍. 又觀自身
- (28) 在廣圓滿月輪中坐. 月輪即是汝大圓鏡智. 即是
- (29) 照見三千大千世界在汝身中. 從頂至胸是色界二十八天.
- (30) 從胸至小腹想六欲天. 須彌山. 大海. 四洲. 從此至
- (31) 足想三惡道眾生也. 此北庭西寺壁上畫盧舍那
- (32) 那<sup>52</sup>佛等无有異. 三千大千世界安置已了. 即時
- (33) 心念口語. 應云:阿字莊嚴身故. 支支. 節節一切
- (34) 分身變成阿字為身. 阿字為體. 阿字為命.
- (35) 並持一切如來心加持力. 故吾今此身即是常
- (36) 身. 體同法界. 與諸佛法身等无有異. 煉八識成
- (37) 四智. 四智成三身清淨法身毗盧遮那无相<sup>53</sup>之體.
- (38) 光遍十方世界. 此定名首楞嚴三摩地. 報身
- (39) 住處. 在此定時. 若欲加福. 起四无量心. 光小腹想<sup>54</sup>
- (40) 一乳海. 海中想一阿字為種子. 從阿字想一金蓮花
- (41) 至臍.<sup>55</sup> 花中亦安阿字為圓滿壇. 壇安白色縛字
- (42) 為種子變. 成月輪大毗楞迦寶珠. 從月輪寶
- (43) 珠放千道清淨光注入乳海. 及注霜雪流入
- (44) 入乳海. 乳海即冷. 其冷乳六注八熱地獄炎火. 皆
- (45) 滅盡. 其乳又注入諸罪人口內. 其人悉皆飽
- (46) 滿. 一切苦具悉皆解脫. 又想<sup>56</sup>從身放千万道光. 照
- (47) 罪人身. 一切業障悉皆滅盡. 又一一光中想<sup>57</sup>一一
- (48) 化其罪人. 各各見一化人. 見此化人皆稱阿彌陀名.
- (49) 其人念佛力故. 從此捨命至彌陀國. 想<sup>58</sup>地獄皆
- (50) 空. 又心中想<sup>59</sup>一乳海. 海中想<sup>60</sup>一阿字為種子. 從阿
- (51) 字想<sup>61</sup>出一金蓮花. 花中亦[想]<sup>62</sup>一阿字為種子. 三角
- (52) 壇. 壇中想<sup>63</sup>一囉字為種子. 作成日輪寶珠. 從日輪寶

51 The text of the spell is missing from the text. It is also missing from P. 2649V<sup>o</sup>. This fact points to a relatively close relationship between the two manuscripts.

52 The character is duplicated.

53 The text incorrectly reads *xiang* (想).

54 The text has *xiang* (相) instead of *xiang* (想).

55 The text has *qi* (齊) instead of *qi* (臍).

56 The text has *xiang* (相) instead of *xiang* (想).

57 The text has *xiang* (相) instead of *xiang* (想).

58 The text has *xiang* (相) instead of *xiang* (想).

59 The text has *xiang* (相) instead of *xiang* (想).

60 The text has *xiang* (相) instead of *xiang* (想).

61 The text has *xiang* (相) instead of *xiang* (想).

62 The text has *xiang* (相) instead of *xiang* (想).

63 The text has *xiang* (相) instead of *xiang* (想).

- (53) 珠想<sup>64</sup>千万道光照此海乳即熱. 其熱乳降注八寒地  
 (54) 獄. 地獄冰山悉皆消盡. 又想<sup>65</sup>熱乳流注罪人口內. 一切  
 (55) 罪人悉皆飽滿. 離寒冰苦. 又放千道光照罪人身.  
 (56) 其光中各想一一化佛. 其眾多罪人, 各各見此化佛.  
 (57) 口稱阿彌陀. 各念佛力, 故皆往生極樂世界. 想<sup>66</sup>此  
 (58) 地獄悉皆空盡. 又其乳想<sup>67</sup>人道中流注至王, 臣,  
 (59) 下至貧富庶民等. 悉皆飽滿. 又放千万道光照貧富等  
 (60) 離苦解脫生極樂國. 想<sup>68</sup>人道遠道行人及重病. 見  
 (61) 口中亦放乳令飽滿. 病苦疼除生極樂國. 又 [想]<sup>69</sup>畜  
 (62) 生道中上至獅子,<sup>70</sup> 虎, 狼, 吸, 血虫, 獸, 牛, 驢, 馬等, 及蛇, 蝎,  
 (63) 蚊, 虻, 蟻子, 等類. 口中悉皆放乳飽滿. 又放千万道  
 (64) 光. 一一光中各一化人各度一一眾生樂. 生極樂國入  
 (65) 四无量定. 光頂上想<sup>71</sup>一阿字. 想<sup>72</sup>菩提樹. 樹中想西方  
 (66) 極樂世界想<sup>73</sup>阿彌陀佛. 想<sup>74</sup>觀音勢至菩薩<sup>75</sup>及千万  
 (67) 菩薩眾又池水中想<sup>76</sup>千万蓮花. 蓮花中想<sup>77</sup>千万化生童子.  
 (68) 汝自身亦化中. 想<sup>78</sup>目視阿彌陀佛. 後入四无量定也.  
 (69) 又配三千大千世界. 謂化身鏡智上所見名小千世界.  
 (70) 報身圓鏡智所見名中千世界. 若法身毗盧遮那  
 (71) 一大圓鏡智體上所見大千世界乃至東南西北四  
 (72) 維上下一切十方三千大千世界盡遍照之. 故名毗盧  
 (73) 遮那佛是梵音. 漢云: 遍照. 謂大圓鏡. 體郭周法界. 故  
 (74) 无所不照, 无所不遍. 後二身照而不遍也. 第三法身能  
 (75) 照能遍也. 若至捨位即住平等性智. 體有三平等.  
 (76) 一見生死際平等, 不入不出. 二見九聖平等, 无高无  
 (77) 下. 三見苦樂平等无取无捨. 即此平等性智體是汝自  
 (78) 他受用二種報身. 即如上所說定中意識名妙

- 64 The text has *xiang* (相) instead of *xiang* (想).  
 65 The text has *xiang* (相) instead of *xiang* (想).  
 66 The text has *xiang* (相) instead of *xiang* (想).  
 67 The text has *xiang* (相) instead of *xiang* (想).  
 68 The text has *xiang* (相) instead of *xiang* (想).  
 69 A character is missing.  
 70 This is consistently written *shi* (師) throughout the manuscript.  
 71 The text has *xiang* (相), which is a mistake for *xiang* (想).  
 72 The text has *xiang* (相), which is a mistake.  
 73 The text has *xiang* (相), which is a mistake.  
 74 The text has *xiang* (相), which is a mistake.  
 75 The original has an abbreviated character for 'bodhisattva.'  
 76 The text has *xiang* (相), which is a mistake.  
 77 The text has *xiang* (相), which is a mistake.  
 78 The text has *xiang* (相), which is a mistake.

- (79) 觀察智. 堅出定後說法化人等. 正心正見. 意所起不  
 (80) 亂見聞覺智菩薩, 六識相應慧<sup>79</sup>名成所作智. 即  
 (81) 是汝化身也. 此第是无價寶. 滿汝所願. 是  
 (82) 陀羅尼布種子字大乘觀門. 現身作佛方便. 勿使  
 (83) 說浪千金莫傳. 此是某甲常行要門也. 以四无  
 (84) 量心共合<sup>80</sup>修行前定是大智. 次四无量心是大悲  
 (85) 也. 悲智雙運急得佛道. 即是圓教大乘也.  
 (86) 若欲求佛果報身. 要奉平等自內心. 內心外心  
 (87) 俱平等更不要他三佛身也. 凡夫執有失涅槃.<sup>81</sup> 沉  
 (88) 輪生死不得解脫无有出期. 故有空就聲聞  
 (89) [執]. 空失生死入空涅槃<sup>82</sup>界. 永滅无生不得佛果.  
 (90) 故要就有等不執空有. 亦不離空有. 入不二門. 雖  
 (91) 在生死不染世法. 如蓮花處水. 雖得解而不求滅.  
 (92) 不捨悲願盡未來際利樂有情. 所以並不執空  
 (93) 有. 。 。 弟子法興

- 79 The original has *hui* (惠) for *hui* (慧).  
 80 This appears to be a mistake for *gonghe* (共和) (?).  
 81 The text uses the abbreviated character *ban* (𠄎).  
 82 The text uses the abbreviated character *ban* (𠄎).

# Beyond Spatial and Temporal Contingencies: Tantric Rituals in Eastern Central Asia under Tangut Rule, 11th–13th C.

*Carmen Meinert*

## 1 Introduction<sup>1</sup>

At the time of Tangut rule (ca. 1038–1227, in Chinese sources known as Xixia 西夏) over Eastern Central Asian lands, space—the physically tangible space, geographic reality, as well as the religiously imagined space including one's own body—had become thoroughly defined by Buddhist conceptualisations. A special feature of Tantric Buddhism is that one's own body is perceived as a sacred space. As I argue elsewhere that

the Tangut territory was as a sacred environment filled with pagodas, *stūpas*, monasteries, and caves. These elements were mediums through which the Buddhist divine was seen, visualised and experienced. They represent a thorough transformation that would not have been possible without extensive imperial patronage.<sup>2</sup>

Whereas in the publication quoted above, I investigate aspects of the creation of tantric sacred sites from the point of view of Tangut imperial patronage, here, I would like to move a step further and look at some of those sacred sites from the perspective of religious practice, especially from the perspective of tantric ritual practice. How did tantric practitioners in medieval Eastern

1 I am indebted to Henrik H. Sørensen, Knut Martin Stünkel, Dylan Esler, and an anonymous reviewer for very valuable suggestions on how to improve an earlier draft of this chapter. All remaining mistakes are my own.

2 Carmen Meinert, "Creation of Tantric Sacred Spaces in Eastern Central Asia," in *Buddhism in Central Asia I—Patronage, Legitimation, Sacred Space, Pilgrimage*, ed. Carmen Meinert and Henrik H. Sørensen (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2020), 246–247. [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](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). A map of the Tangut Empire and its territories around 1150 is in *ibid.*, 252–253 and on the website of the BuddhistRoad project at <https://buddhistroad.ceres.rub.de/en/visual-aids/>.

Central Asia perceive geographic reality and experience the world they lived in? How did they perceive themselves in relation to the world beyond or to a divine realm in particular? Is it possible to investigate this relationship on the basis of materials available to us today? This should be possible, at least to a certain degree. Of course, it would be presumptuous to argue that we are able to know exactly how medieval tantric practitioners perceived their physical environments and their bodies, how they perceived sacred spaces, and how they acted in those spaces. Nonetheless, I would like to propose a new reading of the sources by combining an analysis of material evidence with a close textual reading in order to come a step closer to asymptotic convergence of divine (space). Therefore, the aim of the present chapter is to show the movement from 'here-and-now' to 'there' in a Buddhist context, or to retrace the potential movement from immanence to transcendence. I take tantric ritual practices as an example, as evidenced in the archaeological, visual, and textual materials from Dunhuang (敦煌) and Karakhoto during the period in question and place emphasis on materials related to the cult of Vajravārāhī, a female deity whose cult enjoyed great popularity in the Tangut Empire. One specificity of tantric ritual practice is that not only the physical space becomes the locus of immanence and transcendence, but in this process, the human body changes status as well, and is perceived as part of both.<sup>3</sup> My analysis of ritual practice is primarily based on the definition of ritual developed in the Heidelberg research consortium *Ritual Dynamics*.<sup>4</sup> A ritual manual, or more precisely, the evocation rite (Skt. *sādhana*), such as is under investigation here, features a normative description of the divinity in her or his sacred space and an instruction on how to activate her or his divine presence in this world, as well as in one's own body, through a carefully choreographed performance. Rituals, in a narrower sense, are patterns for action and organisation, which are usually consciously created, following a certain set of rules. They remain relatively stable and are rich in their symbolism, yet may be continuously adjusted through performance and actualisation. Rituals reduce the unpredictability, uncertainty,

3 I show elsewhere, based on Chinese ritual manuals from Karakhoto related to the cult of Vajravārāhī, that in tantric ritual practice the transformation of one's own body into a divine body is a thoroughly sensual experience. See Carmen Meinert, "Embodying the Divine in Tantric Ritual Practice: Examples from the Chinese Karakhoto Manuscripts from the Tangut Empire (ca. 1038–1227)," *Revue d'Études Tibétaines* 50 (2019): 56–72.

4 The *Collaborative Research Center 619 "Ritual Dynamics" Socio-Cultural Processes from a Historical and Culturally Comparative Perspective* was funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) from 2002 to 2013. See the website at <http://www.ritualdynamik.de/index.php?id=1&L=1>, accessed June 12, 2020.

and contingency in human actions by prescribing generally accepted forms of practice and action.<sup>5</sup>

## 2 Transcendence–Immanence Distinction (TID)

The reader may ask why I choose to apply the concept of transcendence and immanence, developed in the context of mainly Christian studies, to refer to ‘here-and-now’ and ‘there’ when dealing with Central Asian materials and non-Christian religious traditions. What would the benefit be for such an endeavour? A rich body of material is available that documents religious life and meaning for medieval Buddhists from Eastern Central Asia. However, this material is rarely acknowledged outside a narrow academic field. Here, I attempt to make it available to a broader readership in religious studies and, thereby, to move a rather small discipline out of its niche existence. Framing this material within current discourses in religious studies is one step in this direction. Furthermore, narrower fields of research, such as my case study of tantric material from medieval Eastern Central Asia, may also benefit from such an approach that frames them in discussions on the transcendent–immanent distinction. I suggest that we are able to gain a more nuanced understanding of tantric rituals and the sources—beyond what a purely philological or art-historical or archaeological approach might be able to offer—namely, a meta-perspective. The latter allows explicating the steps in understanding religiously connotated materials and processes of generating religious meaning which otherwise would remain unnamed or merely in thoughts. It is an academic method for making decisions in the analysis of even the most transcendent, religiously connotated matters comprehensible; it allows for traceability in each single instance, while still remaining outside inner-religious discourses. Thus, such a meta-perspective as an academic method aims at asymptotic convergence to the religious experience of non-dualism, which is the very pivot of Tantric Buddhist practice.

So here, I follow the idea of Volkhard Krech, sociologist of religions and director of the Center for Religious Studies (CERES) in Bochum, of understanding the religious field as one element of the societal field that distinguishes itself from other fields by providing a *special way of addressing and coping with contingencies*, namely, through establishing the distinction of a transcendent dimension versus an immanent dimension:

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5 Christiane Brosius, Axel Michaels, and Paula Schrode, ed., *Ritual und Ritualdynamik. Schlüsselbegriffe, Theorien, Diskussionen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 15.

Religion provides the dimensions of the dialectic processes between the psychological and the social—knowledge, experience, actions and the relationship to the material (also already coded and psychologically represented in social communication)—with a specific transcendental meaning and thus is a special form of dealing with contingency. A surplus value is thus attached to social and cultural circumstances, which they otherwise do not enjoy in other forms of treatment. The way in which the transcendental sense is specifically symbolised (temporally, spatially, materially, in terms of shaping actions and cognitions) depends on cultural conditions and is defined in distinction from other rationalities.<sup>6</sup>

How does one go about approaching and coming to terms with a specific transcendental notion? When searching for a viable methodology, I was further inspired by discussions and research facilitated at CERES in the framework of the KHK *Dynamics in the History of Religions between Asia and Europe*,<sup>7</sup> which tested *tertium comparationis* in order to allow for comparative research in religious studies. During the academic year of 2016–2017, when we questioned how to operationalise the TID as a *tertium comparationis* in religious studies,<sup>8</sup> the following became clear: In order to be able to use the notion of transcendence in conceptualising religions, particularly non-Christian traditions, it is necessary to avoid “the fallacy of not taking the manifold gradual distinctions of the concept into consideration.”<sup>9</sup> Rather than focusing solely

6 Volkhard Krech, “Dynamics in the History of Religions—Preliminary Considerations on Aspects of a Research Programme,” in *Dynamics in the History of Religions between Asia and Europe. Encounters, Notions, and Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Volkhard Krech and Marion Steinicke (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2012), 22.

7 For information on this collaborative research project funded by the BMBF for 12 years, see the following website: <https://khk.ceres.rub.de/en/>.

8 A summary of the overarching topic of TID is provided in KHK, “Transcendence & Immanence,” accessed May 16, 2020. <https://khk.ceres.rub.de/en/research/overarching-topics/transcendence-immanence/>; and in Knut Stünkel, “KHK Working Paper Series: VII: Immanence/Transcendence,” last modified June 2017, accessed May 16, 2020. [https://static.ceres.rub.de/media/filer\\_public/3e/33/3e33ee48-f3e4-4eb3-a2e7-259bf6d8abb4/er-khk-7\\_transcendence\\_170628.pdf](https://static.ceres.rub.de/media/filer_public/3e/33/3e33ee48-f3e4-4eb3-a2e7-259bf6d8abb4/er-khk-7_transcendence_170628.pdf).

9 It is thanks to the efforts of my colleague Knut Martin Stünkel that the results of the KHK discussions that crystallised in a three-level model of TID will be published soon as Chapter v of his monograph; Knut Martin Stünkel, “TID: The Transcendence-Immanence Distinction: Religion as Contrast,” in *Key Concepts in the Study of Religions in Contact* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, forthcoming), 1. Many thanks go to Knut Stünkel for kindly allowing me to read the draft of his chapter and quote from it. Whenever I refer to page numbers of Chapter v on TID from his forthcoming monograph, it is to the yet-unpublished version of the chapter made available to me on June 13, 2020. This way, passages may be easily found later in the

on an absolute notion of any specific type of transcendence (e.g. God, Buddha, *nirvāṇa*), which is, as a relational notion, valid only in contrast to immanence, it is more helpful to identify a *transcending process*.<sup>10</sup> Thereby, it is possible to approach the question when a phenomenon potentially attributed with religious meaning, that is a religioid phenomenon, may, in fact, be identified as conveying a specific form of religious transcendence. Knut Martin Stünkel, my colleague at CERES who formulated the outcome of the year-long discussion of the interdisciplinary research consortium, introduced a three-level model of the TID (comprising basic, formal, and specific religious transcendence) as “a tool that may serve in the process of *comparison* of phenomena, or rather, that may be described as religious (or ‘*religioid*’) phenomena.”<sup>11</sup> *Basic transcendence*, according to Stünkel, refers to religioid material that bears the potential of developing into religious phenomena, but does not necessarily need to do so; it is, however, the liminal or transcending process that marks a shift in

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published version. In this chapter, Knut Stünkel also critically discusses the advantages and disadvantages of using TID as a *tertium comparationis* and carefully argues in favour of using a three-level TID model as an analytical tool in order to decipher more clearly when a specific religious transcendence is attributed to a religioid material per se. I discuss this further below. Knut Stünkel also refers to Niklas Luhmann and his system theory, where he claims that the specific code of religious systems is the primary code of transcendence–immanence distinction, which gives rise to religious communication. For a critical review of the applicability of Luhmann’s assumption for religious studies broadly speaking and for non-Christian traditions specifically, see Christoph Kleine, “Niklas Luhmann und die Religionswissenschaft: Geht das Zusammen?,” *Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft* 24.1 (2016): 47–82.

- 10 I should point out that in recent years, the notion of transcendence is discussed in buddhological scholarship as well. Two stimulating readings are: Dan Lee, “The Buddha and the Numen: Postmodern Spirituality and the Problem of Transcendence in Buddhism,” *International Journal of Dharma Studies* 4.14 (2016): 1–16; and Bruce M. Knauff, “Self-Possessed and Self-Governed: Transcendent Spirituality in Tibetan Tantric Buddhism,” *Ethnos* 84.4 (2017): 557–587. Lee argues that historical Buddhism does, in fact, contain transcendence, analysing it in relation to the new spirituality movement’s understanding of the term, thereby relying on Rudolph Otto’s early 20th century description of numen (transcendence) as *mysterium tremendum*. Compared to Lee who aims at proving the existence of transcendence in Early and Mahāyāna Buddhism, I am focusing on the *how* (a transcending process) rather than on the *what* (a specific notion of transcendence). More interesting for my study is Knauff who applies the ‘absorption hypothesis’ developed by Tanya Luhrmann and others in the context of Evangelical Christianity to Tibetan Tantric Buddhism. Interesting here is the idea that a transcendent reality is analysed as a viscerally experience, much in line of what I describe further below as ‘embodied mind’. See also Tanya M. Luhrmann, Howard Nusbaum, and Ronald Thisted, “The Absorption Hypothesis: Learning to Hear God in Evangelical Christianity,” *American Anthropologist* 112.1 (2010): 66–78, particularly 66–67.
- 11 Stünkel, “TID: The Transcendence-Immanence Distinction,” 2.



perspective, but with regard to essentially the same reality. As a concept, *formal transcendence* implies some type of self-reference or second-order observation that points beyond the everyday reality of 'here-and-now' to 'there'; on an object-language level, it is often performed by a reflecting individual, for example by a religious practitioner in the case of religious practice. *Specific religious transcendence* may be ascribed to a specific religious achievement (e.g. ascending to becoming an immortal, accomplishing buddhahood, etc.) accomplished by a religious performer; with regard to texts, linguistic markers are important in order to identify the turn from formal to specific religious transcendence.<sup>12</sup> In applying this three-level model as an analytical tool for deciphering a transcending process, it is crucial to bear in mind that:

[a]s usual, the three levels have to be considered as being mere analytical distinctions that do, in fact, interrelate in praxis (for example: certain object-language level expressions of basic transcendence might be interpreted in terms of specific transcendence (if there is an elaborated doctrinal theology)).<sup>13</sup>

Thus, the TID may serve as an interpretative paradigm to understand movements from 'here-and-now' to 'there' in religious perceptions of space and time, knowledge and practice.<sup>14</sup> However, as religion proper has to tackle the problem of observation of the unobservable or of how to express the

12 For a comprehensive discussion of the three-level model of transcendence, see Stünkel, "TID: The Transcendence-Immanence Distinction," 10–16. With reference to previous research in this area, Knut Stünkel further proposes the following notions: for basic transcendence, the deictic act of 'pointing at'; and for formal transcendence, the concepts of 'pointing out' and 'standing back and looking beyond'. I refrain from using these notions because I suggest, as is clear in my examples below, that the three-level model of transcendence might be applicable to concrete materials in a much broader sense. Although 'pointing at' and 'pointing out' are useful heuristic categories to approach the transcending process in general, they are too limiting in describing the dynamic process as such. As a result of our discussion, Knut Stünkel also reformulated this idea and stressed the deictic situation (*ibid.*, 18–20). Moreover, it should be noted that, at the end of his chapter on TID, Stünkel suggests that any type of binary opposition or contrast that is pointed at and reflected upon may serve as the most basic expression of TID. He does so in order to avoid explicit dichotomies (a and non-a) and to arrive at potential intermediate stages (e.g. aa) for a potential starting point of a transcending process. *Ibid.*, 68–70.

13 *Ibid.*, 17.

14 It should be noted that even the contrast 'here' and 'there' refers to basic transcendence, at least in the case of dealing with religioid material.

inexpressible transcendence, it has to present transcendence by immanent means.<sup>15</sup> My concrete examples from Tantric Buddhist rituals documented in Central Asian material show that the locus of immanence, may it be a physically tangible cave or one's own body, becomes the locus of transcendence, a sacred space or a divine body, which also results in a different notion of time. Transcendence as otherwise inaccessible space beyond the immediate reality, may, therefore, be localised. As it is associated with spatial metaphors and thus to processes of movement,<sup>16</sup> it is worthwhile to look for such indicators on the object-language level when analysing specific ritual procedures (see my analysis of tantric ritual texts further below).

In an attempt to reconstruct a potential religious context, a Tantric Buddhist context, for Eastern Central Asian Buddhist sites under Tangut rule, in the following, I first provide evidence of why and how the Mogao Caves (Chin. Mogao ku 莫高窟) in Dunhuang were most likely not solely sites for funerary rites, ancestry cults, and such—as suggested by Robert Sharf in his thought-provoking article *Art in the Dark: The Ritual Context of Buddhist Caves in Western China*<sup>17</sup>—but were, in fact, also places of Buddhist meditation, and

15 Volkhard Krech, *Wo bleibt die Religion?: Zur Ambivalenz des Religiösen in der modernen Gesellschaft* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2011), 41. See also, Stünkel, "TID: The Transcendence-Immanence Distinction," 5.

16 Krech, *Wo bleibt die Religion?*, 11.

17 Robert Sharf, "Art in the Dark: The Ritual Context of Buddhist Caves in Western China," in *Art of Merit: Studies in Buddhist Art and Its Conservation*, ed. Sharon Cather, David Park, and K. Wangmo (London: Archetype, 2013), 38–65. Particularly on page 60, Robert Sharf says: "In the end, there is little compelling evidence that the shrine caves [at Mogao] we see today were designed with meditating monks in mind." And "[...] with the exception of a few larger grottoes such as the colossal-image caves which were, in all likelihood, open as public places of worship, I have suggested that the majority of the shrine caves at Mogao functioned as private memorial chapels, and that the inner precincts of these chapels were entered only rarely."

The article by Robert Sharf is just one reaction to previous scholarship. The following publication paved the way for the hypothesis that the temporal concomitance between the spreading of Chan meditation practices and the erection of caves was not casual but rather causal: Liu Huida 劉慧達, "Beiwei shiku yu Chan 北魏石窟與禪 [Northern Wei Caves and Chan]," *Kaogu Xuebao* 考古學報 [Journal of Archaeology] 50.3 (1978): 338–339. The thesis was reviewed and improved by Stanley K. Abe, "Art and Practice in a Fifth-Century Chinese Buddhist Cave Temple," *Ars Orientalis* (1990): 1–31. It was eventually challenged in the above mentioned article by Robert Sharf which further triggered the scholarly discussion: Eric M. Greene, "Death in a Cave: Meditation, Deathbed Ritual, and Skeletal Imagery at Tape Shotor," *Artibus Asiae* 73.2 (2013): 265–91; Angela F. Howard, "On 'Art in the Dark' and Meditation in Central Asian Buddhist Caves," *The Eastern Buddhist* 46.2 (2015): 19–39. A useful summary of existing literature on this topic is provided in Greene, "Death in a Cave," 265–266, fn. 1.

more specifically, of tantric (ritual) practice, and thereby, scholars should interpret them as sacred spaces. Here, I further explore the arguments of my colleague Henrik H. Sørensen, who provides ample evidence for the use of caves as ritual spaces.<sup>18</sup> Second, as an example of tantric ritual practices that were also relevant in Tangut ruled Dunhuang, I suggest a new reading of ritual texts related to the female deity Vajravārāhī, as found in the Karakhoto collection of Chinese manuscripts, and analyse them with the analytical tool of the above-introduced three-level model of TID. As I suggest elsewhere, it is meaningful to consider materials from various locations in relation to each other, as well as from a network approach.<sup>19</sup> To avoid misunderstandings, I am not aiming at providing clear proof that a specific cult, such as Vajravārāhī, was practiced in one particular cave at the Mogao Cave complex; nonetheless, the Vajravārāhī cult, as one of the most popular in tantric circles during Tangut times, may exemplify tantric ritual practice in locales like Tangut ruled Dunhuang.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, I bring ritual texts into conversation with the archaeological and visual evidence from Dunhuang and Karakhoto in order to approach the question of time in a tantric ritual context. I thereby hope to offer a different understanding of space and time, as perceived by tantric practitioners in Eastern Central Asian lands under Tangut rule, from an academic perspective focused on the point of view of a religious practitioner and with reference to the TID.

18 Henrik H. Sørensen recently also published a response to Robert Sharf. He argues that it is false to conflate Sinitic funerary practice with Central Asian Buddhism. He strongly suggests, on the basis of information provided in Dunhuang manuscripts and *in situ* inscriptions in the Mogao Caves from the 9th and 10th centuries, that some caves were also used for meditation and ritual purposes, that lamps were, in fact, lit on certain festivities to enter the caves, and that ritual worship was performed in some caves. See Henrik H. Sørensen, “Light on Art in the Dark’: On Buddhist Practice and Worship in the Mogao Caves,” *BuddhistRoad Paper* 5,6 (2022). I suggest that we see a continuation of this use of the caves under Tangut rule in the 12th century as well.

19 Meinert, “Creation of Tantric Sacred Spaces in Eastern Central Asia,” 246. Much in line with my suggestion, Sam van Schaik argues that Tantric Buddhism, as documented in the Dunhuang manuscripts, developed into a flexible system for group formation that cut across boundaries of class, clan, and ethnicity, extending to various locations in the Central Asian Buddhist network. Sam van Schaik, “Tibetan Buddhism in Central Asia: Geopolitics and Group Dynamics,” in *Transfer of Buddhism across Central Asian Networks (7th to 13th Centuries)*, ed. Carmen Meinert (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2016), 57–81.

20 Weirong Shen points to the great popularity of the Vajravārāhī cult in the Tangut Empire. See Weirong Shen, “Reconstructing the History of Buddhism in Central Eurasia (11th–14th Centuries): An Interdisciplinary and Multilingual Approach to the Khara Khoto Texts,” in *Edition, éditions: l’écrit au Tibet, évolution et devenir*, ed. Anne Chayet et al. (Munich: Indus Verlag, 2010), 337–362, particularly 348. Only the Mahākāla cult seems to have been equally popular. See Haoran Hou’s chapter in this volume: “Mahākāla Literature Unearthed from Karakhoto”.

### 3 Evidence for Tantric Practice from the Tangut Empire

#### 3.1 *Material Evidence: Physical Space and Tangible Objects*

Among the 492 decorated caves in the Mogao Cave complex in Dunhuang, Cave 465 is the only cave featuring an elaborate Tantric Buddhist iconographic programme (fig. 10.1).<sup>21</sup> In a previous study, I suggest that the frescos in the cave were most likely produced under Tangut imperial patronage.<sup>22</sup> The central focus of the cave is the cult of Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhī, and in line with Toni Huber, I argue that:

Tibetans had followed the pilgrimage routes of the Indian Tantric *pīṭha* sites. Such sites were primarily understood as related to internal yoga practice meant to realise a *maṇḍala* of a given deity within one's own body, i.e. as a *vajra* body (Skt. *vajrakāya*), also manifested in the external world with certain deities presiding in the geographical 'vajra body'.<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, I suggest that this trend to relocate the superimposed *vajra* body onto its own geographical realm also occurred under Tangut rule, and that we may understand Mogao Cave 465 as an exquisite example of such a tantric ritual space. Here, I provide further evidence in support of my hypothesis that Cave 465 is, in fact, a tantric site in the *pīṭha* cultic circuit and is in the vicinity of charnel grounds. This is evident on the microcosmic level of depictions of deities within the cave, as well as on the macrocosmic level of the location of Cave 465 in a larger sacred space. Charnel grounds were preferred sites for

21 Detailed images of the whole cave are published in Yang Xiong 楊雄 and Wu Jian 吳健, ed., *Dunhuang shiku yishu. Mogao ku di siliuwu ku (Yuan) 敦煌石窟藝術·莫高窟第四六五窟(元)* [Art from the Caves of Dunhuang, Mogao Cave 465 (Yuan)] (Nanjing: Jiansu meishu chubanshe, 1996).

22 Meinert, "Creation of Tantric Sacred Spaces in Eastern Central Asia." Other scholars also suggest that Cave 465 was built under Tangut rule. See also, Xie Jisheng 谢继胜, "Mogao ku di 465 ku bihua hua yu Xixia kao 莫高窟第465窟壁画绘于西夏考 [Study of the Wall Paintings in Mogao Cave 465 from Tangut Times]," *Zhongguo zangxue 中国藏学 China Tibetology* 2 (2003): 69–79; Ruan Li 阮丽, "Mogao ku di 465 ku mandaluo zaikao 莫高窟第465窟曼荼罗再考 [Study of the Maṇḍala in Mogao Cave 465]," *Gugong bowuyuan yuankan 故宫博物院院刊 [Journal of the Museum of the Forbidden City]* 168 (2013): 61–83; see also the discussion of the recent pigments analysis in Cave 465 through imaging spectroscopy in Sotiria Kogou, "Investigation of the Complementary Use of Non-Invasive Techniques for the Holistic Analysis of Paintings and Automatic Analysis of Large Scale Spectral Imaging Data" (PhD diss., Nottingham Trent University, 2017), 99–145.

23 Quoted from Meinert, "Creation of Tantric Sacred Spaces in Eastern Central Asia," 250. See also, Toni Huber, "Where Exactly are Cāritra, Devikoṭa and Himavat? A Sacred Geography Controversy and the Development of Tantric Buddhist Pilgrimage Sites in Tibet," *Kailash* 16.3–4 (1990): 124–125.



FIGURE 10.1 Mogao Cave 465, Dunhuang, late 12th c. (?)  
 YANG AND WU, *DUNHUANG SHIKU YISHU. MOGAO KU DI SILIUWU KU*  
 (YUAN), PL. 3 (P. 34)

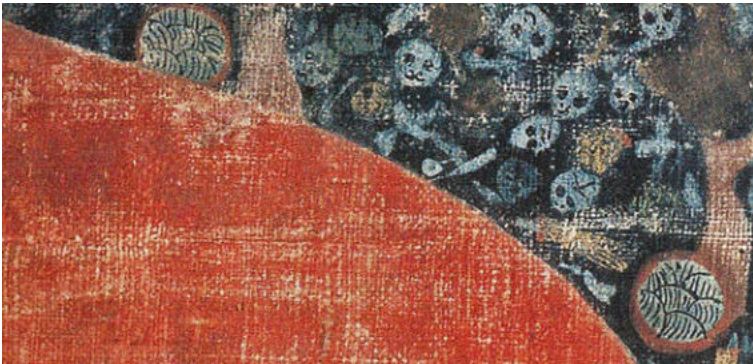
tantric meditative practice, and in tantric literature are often referred to as the eight cemeteries or eight charnel grounds (Skt. *aṣṭa śmaśāna*).<sup>24</sup>

In my previous study, I also suggest that in order to fully appreciate Cave 465, it needs to be understood in the context of other related sites and findings from the Tangut Empire, such as visual and textual findings from Karakhoto.<sup>25</sup> In related visual images, we find not only depictions of tantric deities, such as Vajravārāhī, but also information that is relevant to tantric ritual practice. As such, Karakhoto *thangka* x2388, which depicts Vajravārāhī as central deity,<sup>26</sup> vividly illustrates the place where her ritual practice is to be performed, namely, in charnel grounds (figs. 10.2–3). There are endless skulls and bones

24 For the mythological background and Buddhist appropriation of the eight charnel grounds, see Robert Beer, *The Encyclopedia of Tibetan Symbols and Motifs* (Boston: Shambhala, 1999), 250–251. An excellent study on skulls and associated charnel imagery, which are particularly found in the genre of the *Yoginī* Tantras, is in David B. Gray, “Skull Imagery and Skull Magic in the *Yoginī* Tantras,” *Pacific World: Third Series* 8 (2006): 21–39.

25 Meinert, “Creation of Tantric Sacred Spaces in Eastern Central Asia,” 246.

26 The image of Vajravārāhī (x2388) from Karakhoto is published in The State Hermitage Museum, Northwest University for Nationalities, and Shanghai Chinese Classics Publishing House, *Khara-Khoto Art Relics Collected in the State Hermitage Museum of Russia*, pl. 143. The image is also on the museum website: <https://www.hermitagemuseum.org/wps/portal/hermitage/digital-collection/25.+archaeological+artifacts/477192>, accessed May 20, 2020.



FIGURES 10.2–3 Vajravārāhī *thangka* and detail of a charnel ground surrounding the mandorla of the central deity. Karakhoto, late 12th/early 13th c. (?)  
X2388, THE STATE HERMITAGE MUSEUM, ST. PETERSBURG

surrounding her mandorla. A similar scene, though not as clearly discernible as x2388, is portrayed in Mogao Cave 465. In the eastern section of the northern wall, above the mandorla of Cakrasaṃvara, there is a meditator practising in a charnel ground (figs. 10.4–5).

Presumably, these depictions, although they represent a *topos* clearly transferred from the Indian cultural context that developed in the religious encounter with purity concepts of brahmanical traditions, do not simply refer to the basic Buddhist assumption of ‘existence as impermanent’ but were taken literally: charnel grounds *are* perfect sites for accomplishing tantric practice. They are ideal places for completely cutting through all attachments to mundane reality and seeing death, not as something impure (as in the brahmanical tradition in India), but as an opportunity for awakening, for accomplishing the Buddha’s *dharmakāya*, the ultimate body of truth, within a mundane context of immanent reality.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, it is worthwhile to look at the Mogao Cave complex as a whole, in order to better understand the specific location of an individual cave within a tantric iconographic programme, Cave 465; it is on the macrocosmic level of the sacred site of the Mogao Cave complex that Cave 465 forms part of the Northern Section of the Mogao Caves (Chin. Mogao ku beiqu 莫高窟北区). These caves partially function as burial sites and so present a somewhat similar situation to the charnel grounds, insofar as they are also associated with death and impermanence. Recent Chinese excavations at and scholarship on the site prove that the Northern Section, which stretches for about six hundred metres, mainly supported practical functions with caves used for habitation, meditation, and burial. Cave 465 is situated at its most northern end, far away from the much busier Southern Section (fig. 10.6). The Southern Section, which covers about 1000 m, was primarily used for worship at its temples and shrines.

In 2004, the Dunhuang Academy published three volumes dealing with just the Northern Section, the *Dunhuang Mogao ku beiqu shiku* 敦煌莫高窟北区石窟 [The Northern Section of Caves in the Mogao Caves at Dunhuang];<sup>28</sup> this publication is a great resource for investigating the exact location of Cave 465 and its immediate surroundings. The volumes list all locations with

27 Gray, “Skull Imagery and Skull Magic in the *Yoginī* Tantras,” 23–26.

28 Peng Jinchang 彭金章, Wang Jianjun 王建军, and Dunhuang Yanjiuyuan 敦煌研究院, ed., *Dunhuang Mogao ku beiqu shiku* 敦煌莫高窟北区石窟 [The Northern Section of Caves in the Mogao Caves at Dunhuang], 3 vols. (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2004). In vol. 2, following p. 12, there are two maps 3A and 3B. In there, the whole Northern Section is divided into five parts (part A to E), which are of various lengths. Figures 10.8 and 10.11 in this chapter are copies of these maps, to which I add dots to indicate the location of specific caves. I also provide distances of other caves in relation to Cave 465.



FIGURES 10.4–5 Cakrasamvara and detail of a meditator in the charnel grounds surrounding Cakrasamvara's mandorla. Mogao Cave 465, northern wall, eastern section, Dunhuang, late 12th c. (?) YANG AND WU, *DUNHUANG SHIKU YISHU. MOGAO KU DI SILIUWU KU (YUAN)*, PLS. 82, 84 (P. 113, 115)





FIGURE 10.6 Sketch of Southern Section (above) and Northern Section (below) of Mogao Cave complex near Dunhuang with location of Cave 465 (red dot added by author)

SHICHANG MA, "BUDDHIST CAVE-TEMPLES AND THE CAO FAMILY AT MOGAO KU, DUNHUANG," IN *WORLD ARCHAEOLOGY* 27.2 (1995): FIG. 3, 306–307

their associated findings, some of which include human bones. Altogether, the remains of 53 bodies, including skulls, were found, roughly dating to the period from the 7th to the 13th centuries.<sup>29</sup> Burial, most likely of Buddhist practitioners of some type, was an ongoing social practice. One can only speculate that it must have been a privilege to leave behind one's bodily remains in a location of high Buddhist prestige, such as the Mogao Caves. As a tantric ritual space, Cave 465 was, in fact, built on top of two burial caves: Cave B42 (entered to the right of the main entrance of Cave 465) and Cave B43 (entered to the left of the main entrance of Cave 465) (figs. 10.7–8).<sup>30</sup> Cave 465 was likely excavated by 839, according to a Tibetan inscription on the southern wall of the entrance to the main hall.<sup>31</sup> However, it was only decorated with the still-visible tantric iconographic programme more than 350 years later, most likely under Tangut rule in

29 Thanks to Henrik H. Sørensen who brought this useful list to my attention. See also Henrik H. Sørensen, "On Meditation Caves and Cave-Dwelling Ascetics in Dunhuang, 9th to 13th Centuries," *BuddhistRoad Paper* 5.1 (2020): 23.

30 According to C14 tests, some bones found in Cave B42—the burial cave below Cave 465—date to the year 664. See Peng, Wang, and Dunhuang Yanjiuyuan, *Dunhuang Mogao ku beiqu shiku*, vol. 1, 107.

The building of Buddhist monasteries at or near charnel complexes already had a long tradition in India. See Gregory Schopen, "Archaeology and Protestant Presuppositions in the Study of Indian Buddhism," *History of Religions* 31.1 (1991): 13–14.

31 Huo Wei discusses the authenticity of the Tibetan inscription, which reads, "Whole cave built in the 25th year of the Tibetan [reign]." Unfortunately, I do not have access to the Tibetan script. Huo Wei refers to previous scholarship by Jin Weinuo (金维诺), who calculated the year 839 on the basis of the treaties between Tibet and Tang China, where the year 821 is given as the seventh year of the Tibetan reign. Huo Wei 霍巍, "Dunhuang Mogao ku di 465 ku jianku shiji zaishen 敦煌莫高窟第 465 窟建窟史迹再探 [Exploration of the Building History of Mogao Cave 465 in Dunhuang]," *Zhongguo zangxue 中国藏学 China Tibetology* 3 (2009): 189. It should be mentioned, though, that the date is controversial for other scholars, because the cursive Tibetan script was only



FIGURE 10.7 Main entrance to Mogao Cave 465 on top of burial Cave B42 (to the right of the lower steps of the staircase) and Cave B43 (to the left of the lower steps of the staircase)

YANG AND WU, *DUNHUANG SHIKU YISHU. MOGAO KU DI SILIUWU KU (YUAN)*, 13, FIG. 3



FIGURE 10.8 Sketch of the northern-most end (part E) of the Northern Section of Mogao Cave complex near Dunhuang with the locations of Cave 465 (red dot) and burial Caves B42, B43, and B48 (yellow dots—all dots and references to four caves added by author)

PENG, WANG, AND DUNHUANG YANJIUYUAN, *DUNHUANG MOGAO KU BEIQU SHIKU*, VOL. 2, FOLLOWING P. 12, MAP 3B (PART E)

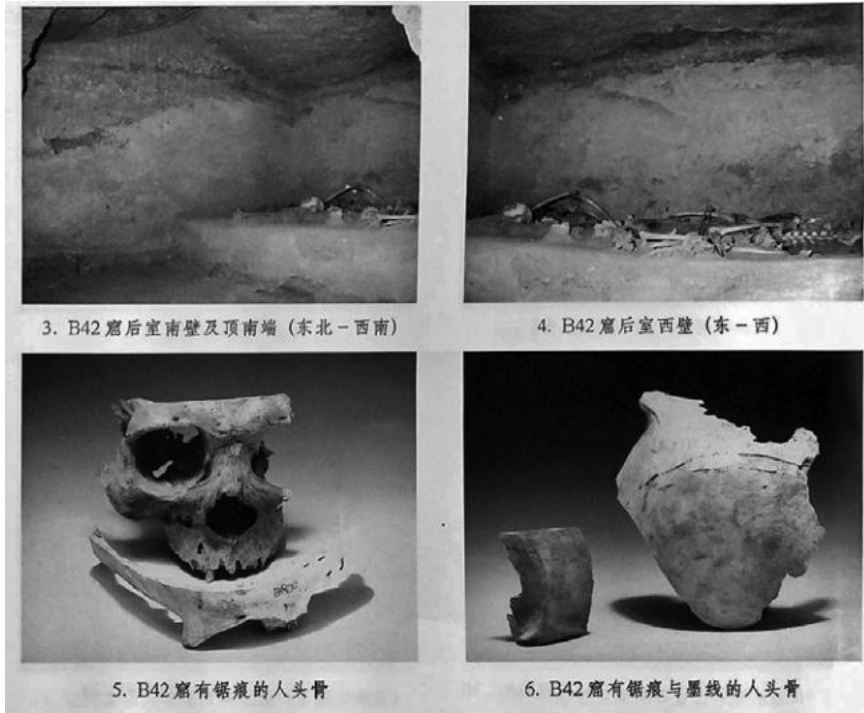


FIGURE 10.9 Interior of burial Cave B42 with the remains of a deliberately cut human skull  
 PENG, WANG, AND DUNHUANG YANJIUYUAN, *DUNHUANG MOGAO KU BEIQU SHIKU*, VOL. 1, PLS. 20.3–6

the late 12th century. We do not know how the cave was used between the time of excavation and decoration. However, given its immediate surroundings, I do not think it is surprising that Cave 465 was the site chosen for a tantric iconographic programme at a time when Tantric Buddhism enjoyed Tangut imperial patronage.

Apart from the fact that Cave 465 was created in conjunction with burial sites, we know that of the 53 bodily remains found in the Mogao Cave complex, 15 show traces indicating that the skulls were removed from the body or skeleton, and part of the skull was deliberately cut off; of these, 5 are found in Cave B42 (fig. 10.9), immediately below Cave 465, and 5 are found in Cave B48, also in the immediate vicinity of Cave 465, only about 15 metres to its left (fig. 10.8). That the skulls were, in fact, purposefully sawn off is more clearly visible in an example from burial Cave B109, a cave also located in the Northern

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popular much later than the 9th century, and because the date was not applied in the usual Tibetan way of naming years.



5.B109 窟 (1) 男性被切割颅骨 (侧面)

FIGURE 10.10 A deliberately sawn-off human skull and found in burial Cave B109  
 PENG, WANG, AND DUNHUANG YANJIUYUAN, *DUNHUANG MOGAO KU  
 BEIQU SHIKU*, VOL. 3, PL. 192.5

Section, about 480 metres to the left side of Cave 465 (fig. 10.10).<sup>32</sup> Since there is not yet a date available for when the skulls were sawn off, we can only gather additional information on the use of the skulls when interpreting them in the larger context.

Why would medieval Central Asian people—presumably Buddhists—at a sacred Buddhist site like the Mogao Caves and in the immediate vicinity of the sole Tantric Buddhist cave, cut off the upper part of a skull, if not for the purpose of ritual use?<sup>33</sup> In fact, in the Northern Section of the Mogao Cave

32 For the exact location of Cave 109 in part A of the Northern Section, see Peng, Wang, and Dunhuang Yanjiuyuan, *Dunhuang Mogao ku beiqu shiku*, vol. 2, line drawing of cliff with cave nos. following p. 12, fig. 3A.

33 Henrik H. Sørensen has already suggested this object was used in tantric ritual practice. Sørensen, “On Meditation Caves and Cave-Dwelling Ascetics in Dunhuang,” 28. It is worth to mention here the discussion between Eric Greene and Angela Howard mentioned further above. Howard, “On ‘Art in the Dark,’” 31 shows that Greene thinks skulls (objects or in paintings) in caves were generic depictions with no further specific bearing on the

complex in Cave B121 (fig. 10.11), about two hundred metres to the left of Cave 465, two objects were found: a stand and a neatly cut oval-shaped piece of the upper part of a skull (fig. 10.12), whose shape indicates it was likely used as a tantric ritual object—a skull cup (Skt. *kapāla*), which is a ritual object that is used as a libation vessel for practices related to many wrathful and protective deities.<sup>34</sup>

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function of the cave (Greene, “Death in a Cave,” 270–271), but on the other hand concludes that one of the usages of a cave with skull images or objects points to a specific use of the cave, namely for pre-death ritual practice (ibid., 292). However, contrary to Greene, my argument is that the specificity in the Mogao Caves in Dunhuang is that we do not simply have skulls (or images of skulls), but skulls of which are purposefully sawn off the upper parts. This is a fine but important difference. My argument is that we see a further use of existing skulls which were originally clearly linked to funerary rites: the sawn-off skulls were used for tantric ritual practice. Greene looks at a very different context, namely at Mahāyāna Buddhism, but not, as in my case, at Tantric Buddhism.

Moreover, Greene (ibid., 276, fn. 57 and 58) mentioned that “similar skulls have been found at sites around the Taklamakan Desert, and there is at least one example from Ajina-tepe in modern Tajikistan.” Unfortunately, at the time of revision of this article (and due to Covid-19 related restrictions) I was not able to check the photos as mentioned in the footnotes by Greene in the following publications: Louis Hambis, ed., *Toumchouq: Mission Paul Pelliot* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1961), vol. 1, figs. 193, 196, 291; Boris A. Litvinskij and Tarama I. Zejmal, *The Buddhist Monastery of Ajina Tepa, Tajikistan: History and Art of Buddhism in Central Asia* (Rome: Istituto italiano per l’Africa e l’Orinet, 2004), fig. 89.

- 34 One may wonder whether the oval object found together with the skull cup in Cave B121 served as a stand for a skull cup instead of as a lamp, as some Chinese scholars suggest (see figs. 10.12 and 10.17 for comparison). See my argument in favour of identifying it as a stand in the text below. Moreover, it would be useful to do a C14 test to date the object, in order to gain more information about this specific skull cup; the skull cup might even match one of the other cut skulls mentioned in this list? See, Peng, Wang, and Dunhuang Yanjiuyuan, *Dunhuang Mogao ku beiqu shiku*, vol. 3, 487. Unfortunately, the quality of the image (fig. 10.12) is not good enough to clearly see how many sutures the skull has. According to later Tibetan Buddhist tradition, the number of sutures has an influence on the potency of the skull cup; those with more than three may even be harmful. Kulturstiftung Ruhr Essen, ed., *Tibet: Klöster öffnen ihre Schatzkammern* (Munich: Hirmer, 2006), 518, cat. no. 116. This entry for a 19th-century skull cup from Tibet (cat. no. 116) also gives a classification of human skulls. It references a publication not available to me; Andrea S. Loseries-Leick, *Tibetische Knochenschnitzereien. Tradition und Praxis im Wandel der Zeit, eine Datenerhebung unter Berücksichtigung historisch-ethnographischer Quellenmaterials (10.–20. Jhd.)* (Graz, Vienna: unpublished PhD diss.). A thorough description of the meaning of skull cups in tantric ritual contexts is provided in Beer, *The Encyclopedia of Tibetan Symbols and Motifs*, 263–267. Skull cups are not only used as peripheral ritual implements, but also do play a central role in tantric rituals. They have a dual association with awakening and death, i.e., they are used to manifest the ultimate accomplishment of buddhahood and are also used to achieve mundane ends (e.g. in rites aimed at the destruction of an enemy). Moreover, charnel-ground imagery and practices were directed toward Hindu critics, most likely brahmins, who saw skull cups as impure

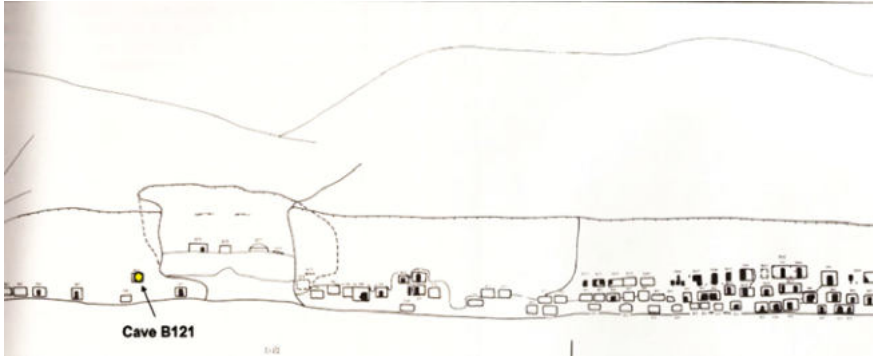
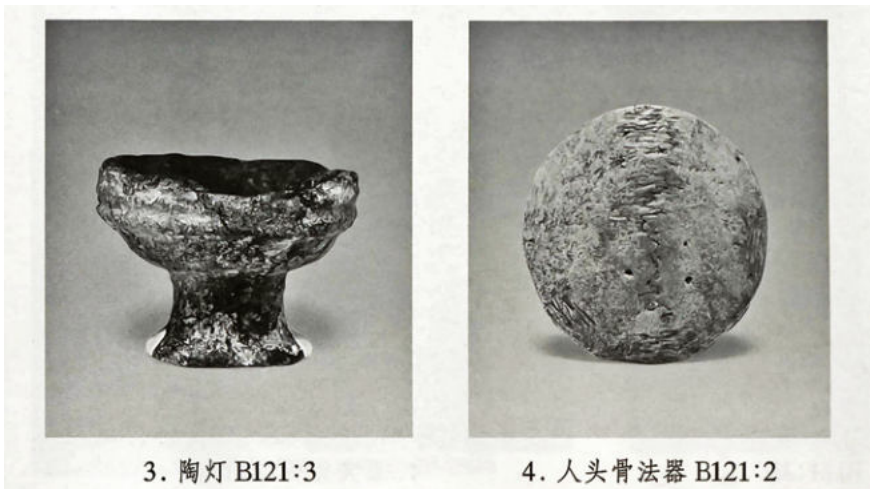


FIGURE 10.11 Sketch of part D of the Northern Section of the Mogao Cave complex near Dunhuang with the location of Cave B121 (yellow dot and reference to cave added by author)

PENG, WANG, AND DUNHUANG YANJIUYUAN, *DUNHUANG MOGAO KU BEIQU SHIKU*, VOL. 2, FOLLOWING P. 12, MAP 3B (PART E)



3. 陶灯 B121:3

4. 人头骨法器 B121:2

FIGURE 10.12 Ritual skull cup and lamp (or stand for a skull cup?) found in Cave B121  
PENG, WANG, AND DUNHUANG YANJIUYUAN, *DUNHUANG MOGAO KU BEIQU SHIKU*, VOL. 2, PLS. 62.3–4

A variety of paintings from Mogao Cave 465 and Karakhoto show the use of skull cups by tantric practitioners. In Cave 465, on the central section of the northern wall, there is a depiction of Hevajra in union with his consort and

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compared to conches, which they considered to be pure and were used in Vedic rituals. See Gray, "Skull Imagery and Skull Magic in the *Yogini* Tantras," 26, 29–32.

holding his defining attribute, skull cups; more relevant to our topic, to both sides of the lotus-flower base that the deities stand on, there are depictions of a local tantric master with a white hat and an Indian (?) master both having skull cups used as ritual offering vessels and placed in front of them (figs. 10.13–15). Furthermore, in another example of a Vajravārāhī *thangka* x2394 from Karakhoto, there is a figure of a tantric master in the lower-right corner of the *thangka*; he holds a *vajra* and bell in his hands, with a skull cup on a stand in front of him (figs. 10.16–17).<sup>35</sup> In fact, that stand looks exactly like the object found in Cave 121 (fig. 10.12, left image). Therefore, we may infer that the skull cup found in Cave B121 was, in fact, used as a ritual object in tantric practice.

Although scholars argue that Cave B121 was used as a burial cave,<sup>36</sup> I suggest that it was also used as a meditation cave, in which tantric practice was performed in a setting similar to a charnel ground. This is also supported by fragments of scriptures found in the cave, including 18 fragments of Tangut printed texts, provisionally referred to by Chinese scholars as *Zhu mizhou yaoyu* 諸密咒要語 [Essential Words of All Esoteric Spells].<sup>37</sup> Four of those fragments (B121: 18–1, 18–2, 18–12, 18–13) seem to be related to yogic dream practice, that is how to dream in a conscious manner,<sup>38</sup> a tantric meditation practice well-known in the region since Tangut rule, as, for example, evidenced in the Chinese Karakhoto manuscript A 15 *Menghuan shen yaomen* 夢幻身要門 [Quintessential Instruction on the Illusory Body of Dream].<sup>39</sup> In such a burial-meditation cave (see also Cave B42 in fig. 10.9), one could easily envision a meditator practising among bodily remains, just as it is depicted in a scene in Cave 465 (fig. 10.5).

35 The State Hermitage Museum, Russia, Northwest University for Nationalities, and Shanghai Chinese Classics Publishing House, *Khara-Khoto Art Relics Collected in the State Hermitage Museum of Russia*, pl. 144. The image can also be downloaded on the museum website; <https://www.hermitagemuseum.org/wps/portal/hermitage/digital-collection/25.+archaeological+artifacts/477198>, accessed May 26, 2020.

36 Peng, Wang, and Dunhuang Yanjiuyuan, *Dunhuang Mogao ku beiqiu shiku*, vol. 2, 146.

37 *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 140–141 and plates 54.3–59.4.

38 Haoran Hou kindly confirmed this information for me by looking into the Tangut fragments (May 7, 2020). A study of these fragments would shed more light on the actual meditation practice described in the texts.

39 Karakhoto manuscript A 15 is published in Shi Jinbo, Wei Tongxian, and E.I. Kychanov, ed., *Ecang Heishuicheng wenxian* 俄藏黑水城文獻 *Khara Khoto Texts Preserved in Russia* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1996–1998), vol. 5, 244–246, fol. 1–5. See also the following study of the text with an identification of the Tibetan equivalent; Weirong Shen, “Studies on Chinese Texts of the Yogic Practices of Tibetan Tantric Buddhism Found in Khara Khoto of Tangut Xia. Quintessential Instruction on the Illusory Body of Dream,” *Cahiers d’Extrême-Asie* 15 (2015): 187–230.



FIGURES 10.13–15

Hevajra and details of a local master with white ceremonial hat and skull cup (bottom left) and an Indian (?) tantric master with skull cup (bottom right). Mogao Cave 465, northern wall, central section, Dunhuang, late 12th c. (?)

YANG AND WU, *DUNHUANG SHIKU YISHU. MOGAO KU DI SILIUWU KU (YUAN)*, PLS. 91, 105–106 (PP. 122, 134–135)







FIGURES 10.16–17 Vajravārāhī *thangka* and detail of tantric master with a white skull cup on a stand. Karakhoto, late 12th/early 13th c. (?)  
X2394, THE STATE HERMITAGE MUSEUM, ST. PETERSBURG

Thus, Cave B121 is a rare case that allows us to understand the lived space of a cave in Mogao informed by our understanding of tantric practice. What can we say about this specific cave, and by inference, about other caves used for ritual purposes, with regard to the TID? If we apply the analytical tool of the three-level model of TID established by Knut Martin Stünkel, we may identify palimpsests of religious meaning attributed to physical space and material objects. Firstly, a cave excavated from a rock is simply a hole dug into a stone; however, it does have the potential of developing into a religious phenomenon because the very act of excavation is religiosified when it takes place in the context of an environment with a long-documented history of Buddhist activities. Thus, an excavated cave at the Mogao Cave complex fulfils the criterion of religioid material for *basic transcendence*. As Cave B121 has remains of objects, a skull cup and ritual texts, that were likely used by a religious practitioner—more precisely, a tantric practitioner meditating in a charnel ground—we have at least a hint to a reflecting individual, likely with some type of vision to move beyond the everyday reality of ‘here-and-now’ to ‘there’, which is a criterion for *formal transcendence*.

### 3.2 *Textual Evidence for Tantric Rituals in Relation to Physical Space*

In order to get a step further in our understanding of a practitioner’s perception of space, that is, in the transformation of a physical space into a sacred space, and thus, in analysing a potential *transcending process* leading to specific religious transcendence, we need to investigate specific tantric ritual procedures, which were also potentially practised in the Mogao Caves. So far, I have not come across any relevant texts anywhere in the Northern Section of the Mogao Caves—which does not mean that there are none—however, a ritual text from the Karakhoto collection describes in detail how and where to perform tantric rituals. As the female deity Vajravārāhī constitutes a main focus of Cave 465—Ruan Li suggests that a Vajravārāhī statue used to be enthroned on the central altar (fig. 10.1), which originally had five tiers<sup>40</sup>—it is necessary to look at Vajravārāhī ritual texts to investigate the potential uses of that cave. I suggest that, apart from any other usages, Cave 465 was most likely used for communal rites because of its large size and, by inference, that other burial-meditation caves—such as Cave B121 discussed above—were used for individual meditation practice, due to their smaller sizes.

40 Ruan Li, “Mogao ku di 465 ku mandaluo zaikao.” Paul Pelliot took a photo of the altar that shows five tiers before its destruction and incorrect reconstruction (the latter is still visible nowadays). See Monique Maillard ed., *Grottes de Touen-houang. Carnet de notes de Paul Pelliot: inscription et peintures murales. VI.—Grottes 146a à 182 et divers* (Paris: Collège de France, 1992), pl. 347.

An interesting example for our query into ritual practices related to Vajravārāhī is found in a Chinese ritual text from Karakhoto, A 14, *Jingang haimu jilun gongyang cidì lu* 金剛亥母集輪供養次第錄 [Stages of Making Offerings to and the Feast Gathering of Vajravārāhī] (fig. 10.19).<sup>41</sup> It is a rather detailed instruction on how to perform a communal offering to Vajravārāhī, in order to please the deity and, at the same time, to strengthen the cohesion of the tantric ritual community.<sup>42</sup> It is meant to be led by an accomplished ritual master. The structure of the ritual is as follows: firstly, the *maṇḍala*, which will serve as the seat of the deity, and offerings to the deity are prepared, and the community is purified through ritual bathing; secondly, the deity is invited into the *maṇḍala*, and eventually, the practitioner's self-identification with deity takes place—the union of the pledge deity (Skt. *samayadevatā*) and the wisdom deity (Skt. *jñānadevatā*);<sup>43</sup> thirdly, the divinity, that is, the wisdom deity, is sent back to her realm; and fourthly, the *maṇḍala* is dissolved and its components are discarded in a pure place.

Let us take a closer look at the first two sections of the ritual text: the preparations for the *maṇḍala*, establishing the *maṇḍala*, and self-identification with the deity. What are the prerequisites to evoke the divine presence during a communal feast offering? In order for the ritual to be performed correctly, and thus, efficaciously, the following criteria need to be met: (1) the right time, (2) the right place, (3) the right agents, (4) the right altar, and (5) the right offerings. In detail, these are as follows:

- 1) The right time: the ritual is to be performed on the “8th, 15th, 23rd, 25th, or 30th day of the month or on an auspicious day like a rising star, for three days, seven days, or one month, etc.,”<sup>44</sup>
- 2) The right place: the ritual is to be performed “at a feast offering palace such as a charnel ground [at which one] draws a *maṇḍala*,”<sup>45</sup>
- 3) The right agents: a master (Chin. *shi* 師), someone who holds the *samaya* to act as a ritual servant (Chin. *yi ju jiyuren, ling zuo xingren* 一具記句人, 令作行人), a community of practitioners (Chin. *zhu chanding ren* 諸禪定人), and “a ritual servant with a wrathful expression to guard the entrance

41 The Chinese Karakhoto manuscript A 14 is published in Shi, Wei, and Kychanov, *Ecang Heishuicheng wenxian*, vol. 5, 241–244, fol. 1–7.

42 I studied a different part of this ritual manual from the point of view of the meaning of senses in tantric ritual practice. Meinert, “Embodying the Divine in Tantric Ritual Practice,” 63, 67–68.

43 For a description of this part of the meditation practice, see below, n. 60.

44 A 14, fol. 1.1–3: 應於月八, 十五日, 二十三, 二十五, 月盡, 或勝星等吉祥之日, 作三日, 七日, 一月等.

45 A 14, fol. 1.3: 於屍堂林等處集輪宮內, 作一曼拏囉.

with a stick” (Chin. *xingren zuo fennu xiang, zhi zhang shou men* 行人作忿怒相, 執杖守門) to the charnel ground, which is the offering palace (A 14, fol. 1.9–14);

- 4) The right altar: a multi-, red- or white-coloured *maṇḍala* with an eight-petalled lotus and a source of *dharma* (Chin. *fasheng gong* 法生宮)<sup>46</sup> on top of it (A 14, fol. 1.4–6);
- 5) The right offerings: offerings of flowers, incense, butter lamps, perfume, fruits, and such, placed on the lotus flower; two offering plates with food; further victory banners, banners, and umbrellas (A 14, fol. 1.6–9).

If we compare the information given in this ritual text with the setting of Cave 465 in terms of (2) the right place, Cave 465 certainly fulfils the criteria of a ritual space built on a charnel ground; it has an (4) altar on which to place the deity’s *maṇḍala* with an eight-petalled lotus and a source of *dharma*; (5) offerings, such as flowers and banners, are even partly visible as decorations on the originally five-tiered altar (see fig. 10.1 above).<sup>47</sup>

Moreover, in the Karakhoto Collection, we find the fragment x2405 with an image of a *maṇḍala* with an eight-petalled lotus and a triangle, that is a source of *dharma* (fig. 10.18), just as it is described in the ritual text. The catalogue does not further identify fragment x2405, but simply refers to it as “Lotus Maṇḍala”, tentatively dated to the 13th/14th centuries (?).<sup>48</sup> However, given the overall context and related materials from Karakhoto and Dunhuang, I would tend to date x2405 to the late 12th to early 13th centuries. What we have here is, indeed, the basis for invoking Vajravārāhī: her seed syllable *BAM* (in the centre of the triangle) and her *mantra* *HA RI* (on the left side of the triangle), *NI* (on the right side of the triangle), and *SA* (not visible in this fragment, on the bottom of the triangle) are written in Tibetan script.<sup>49</sup> Given the size of the fragment (29.5 × 58 cm), could it not be that this silken image was used for a ritual purpose, such as during a feast offering like the one described in the ritual text *Stages of Making Offerings to and the Feast Gathering of Vajravārāhī*? There are

46 The meaning of the term ‘source of *dharma*’ is explained in the text below. See n. 50.

47 Cave 465 is the only cave in the Mogao Cave complex with such an altar. Moreover, we may assume that the altar was used for other Tantric ritual purposes as well, e.g. fire offerings (Chin. *shaoshi* 燒施, Skt. *homa*). A Tangut inscription on the southern wall in the front chamber mentions that such a rite was performed by a certain master. See Huo, “Dunhuang Mogao ku di 465 ku jianku shiii zaishen,” 191.

48 The State Hermitage Museum, Russia, Northwest University for Nationalities, and Shanghai Chinese Classics Publishing House, *Khara-Khoto Art Relics Collected in the State Hermitage Museum of Russia*, pl. 175. Moreover, the image is also on the museum website; <https://www.hermitagemuseum.org/wps/portal/hermitage/digital-collection/25.+archaeological+artifacts/477209>, accessed May 27, 2020.

49 Thanks to Jan-Ulrich Sobisch for confirming this information (May 2, 2020).



FIGURE 10.18 Fragment of *maṇḍala* with an eight-petalled lotus and a triangle at its centre with the seed syllables in Tibetan script to invoke Vajravārāhī. Karakhoto, late 12th/early 13th c. (?)

X2405, THE STATE HERMITAGE MUSEUM, ST. PETERSBURG

three vertical folds and one horizontal fold in the material, which indicate that the image was folded, and perhaps also that it was unfolded when being used, like during a ritual performance.

There is additional information in the ritual text *Stages of Making Offerings to and the Feast Gathering of Vajravārāhī* relevant to understanding Mogao Cave 465's potential use as a ritual space. If we look at (3) the agents mentioned in the ritual text, what are their roles in the main section (the second section) of the ritual, when the divine presence is actually invoked? The master clearly acts as the head of rite, as master of ceremonies. He establishes the *maṇḍala* and uses other ritual implements—two skull cups are used as offering vessels and another skull cup is used to place a mirror on top of it—to create the seat where Vajravārāhī and her retinue of the six buddha mothers are invited to manifest themselves in front of the ritual master and the community of practitioners. The relevant passage from this second section of the ritual text (see also fig. 10.19) reads as follows:

[fol. 2.11] In front of the master are two skull cups [(Chin. *touqi* 頭器)]<sup>50</sup>  
 [fol. 2.12] filled with alcohol [(Chin. *xuluo* 須囉, Skt. *sura*)] that is already

50 According to Robert Beer, the two skull cups, as polarity symbols are placed as offerings to the left and right of the main deity, who is visualised in the centre, and contain liquids that represent the white and red *bodhicitta* drops. The white *bodhicitta* drop, often male semen, is placed to the right side of the main deity (in the mother Tantras, such as

blessed according to a quintessential instruction. [fol. 2.13] On a mirror, smear alcohol mixed with vermilion powder [(Skt. *sindura*)]. [fol. 2.14] [Upon this], draw a source of *dharmā* [(Chin. *fasheng gong* 法生宮)],<sup>51</sup> and in its middle, draw the syllable *BAM* [(Chin. *bang* 邙)]. Around the *BAM*, [fol. 2.15] draw the *HA* [(Chin. *he* 合)] syllable *mantra* [*HA RI NI SA*]. In the triangle [(Chin. *sanjiao* 三角)], write [the seed syllables] *OM* [fol. 2.16] *ĀḤ HŪṀ* [(Chin. *an ya hong* 唵啞吽)<sup>52</sup>].<sup>53</sup> Outside the palace, in the four [cardinal] directions, draw four *svastikas* [(Chin. *yinglu* (*zong*) 應驢(騮))<sup>54</sup>]. In the *maṇḍala* [fol. 3.1], place a precious jewel. And on top of it, place a [nother] skull cup filled with blessed [fol. 3.2] alcohol. The [prepared] mirror is placed on top of [that skull cup]. The master [spreads] the blessed alcohol on [fol. 3.3] all the offerings, [so that] everything turns into ambrosia [(Chin. *ganlu* 甘露, Skt. *amṛta*)]. Then, the ritual servant offers flower garlands to the master and others [fol. 3.4], prostrates, and says [to the ritual community]:

[fol. 3.5] ‘*dākas* and *ḍākinīs*, please listen to me!

[We] pay homage to [all] *dākas* and *ḍākinīs*,

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Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhī), and the red *bodhicitta* drop, often uterine blood, is placed to the left side of the main deity. See Beer, *The Encyclopedia of Tibetan Symbols and Motifs*, 264. In the present ritual manual, however, both skull cups are filled with alcohol. Also see below for my discussion of *bodhicitta* drops within the body in internal meditation practice.

- 51 The Chinese term *fasheng gong* (法生宮) is a word-by-word translation of the Tibetan term *chos 'byung* (Skt. *dharmodayā*), source of *dharmā*. It can be represented as either a single triangle (as in Karakhoto *thangka* x2405, fig. 10.18) or two juxtaposed triangular shapes. Also see below for further explanation, including in my translation of the yogic exercise of the subtle body in ritual text A 19. In a nutshell, the source of *dharmā* signifies an absolute, pure space that can give rise to all phenomena.
- 52 The three syllables *OM ĀḤ HŪṀ* represent the purification of the body, speech, and mind. See Elizabeth English, *Vajrayoginī: Her Visualization, Rituals, and Forms* (Boston: Wisdom, 2002), 166.
- 53 In this ritual text, the *maṇḍala* of Vajravārāhī is drawn externally, whereas in ritual text A 19 (see my discussion below), it is visualised internally.
- 54 The Chinese text reads *yinglu* (應驢), which does not make sense. I suggest that the second character *lu* (驢)—which is hard to read and seems to be a simplified writing—is a spelling mistake for *zong* (騮), so that *yingzong* (應騮) should be read as a transliteration of the Tibetan term *yung drung*, meaning *svastika* (卍). See also my translation of a similar passage of ritual text A 19 fol. 2.3 below, and an image of a source of *dharmā* with bliss swirls (Skt. *nandyāvartaḥ*) instead of *svastikas* in the four cardinal directions in English, *Vajrayoginī*, 80, fig. 19. When *svastika* are turning very quickly, they appear to be rotating circles, so are called ‘bliss swirls’; the example English gives is of bliss swirls rotating anticlockwise.

[fol. 3.6] in order that [we] may eliminate obstacles and be filled with happiness.

May [we all] abide in the non-dual *samādhi*.

[fol. 3.7] *Samadi chiluo mahe* [(三摩底吃羅麻訶)]:

[fol. 3.8] After having requested like this, each [individual from the community of practitioners] visualises [(Chin. *jie* 解)] oneself as Vajravārāhī. The ritual assistant [fol. 3.9] places the incense mixed with the red flowers on the master's six places [i.e., his six *cakras*], namely, on the navel and so on.<sup>55</sup> [fol. 3.10] After every [practitioner] has entered into meditation and has recited 108 times the *mantra* [of the deity], [fol. 3.11] then they are allowed to move the hand drum [(Chin. *fagu* 法鼓, Skt. *damaru*)] and [ring] the bell in front of the master. At that time, at the navel [of each practitioner], the *BAM* syllable emanates lights and invites [fol. 3.12] into the natural palace [(Chin. *zixing gong* 自性宮)]<sup>56</sup> Vajravārāhī and [her retinue] of the six buddha mothers [(Chin. *liu jia fomu* 六甲仏母)] to come down [fol. 3.13] in the space in front of them. [The practitioners] prostrate, grant offerings to [the deities], and so on, and recite *JAḤ* [fol. 3.14] *HŪM BAM HOḤ* [(Chin. *zan hong jian he* 拶吽鑊和)]<sup>57</sup>. Then [the deities] dissolve into the mirror, the syllables and the *mantras* mingle together [fol. 3.15] as non-dual. After having visualised like this, do prostrations, offerings, and praises towards the mirror *maṇḍala*, the buddha mothers, and so on [fol. 3.16]—and [fol. 4.1] act according to your wishes.<sup>58</sup>

55 There are various *cakra* systems. Usually, if four places or *cakras* are mentioned, they are the navel, heart, throat, and crown. If six are mentioned, the two added are the secret place (genitals) and the centre: the place between the eyebrows, where the third eye is depicted in deities. See Beer, *The Encyclopedia of Tibetan Symbols and Motifs*, 144.

56 I wonder whether the Chinese term *zixing gong* (自性宮), natural palace, is either a synonym or a misspelling for the Chinese term *fasheng gong* (法生宮), source of *dharma*, already used above in the text. The meaning, however, seems to be similar and refers to the *maṇḍala* of the deity set up on the altar.

57 These syllables signify the union of the visualised pledge deity (Skt. *samayadevatā*) and invited wisdom deity (Skt. *jñānadevatā*). In detail, *JAḤ* refers to the summoning of the wisdom deity; *HŪM* causes its entry into the pledge deity; *BAM* represents the binding of both forms; and *HOḤ* expresses the gratification of the fused forms. See English, *Vajrayoginī*, 167–168. See also the quote in n. 60 below.

58 A 14, fol. 2.11–4.1: [fol. 2.11] 其師面前二頭 [fol. 2.12] 器內，滿盛須囉，依要門捺受已。於 [fol. 2.13] 一明鑿上塗須囉，疹須鷓囉已。 [fol. 2.14] 畫一法生宮，中央書一瑯字。瑯字 [fol. 2.15] 周圍，書合字咒。於三角內書唵 [fol. 2.16] 啞吽。宮外四方，畫四應驢 [=驢]。於曼拏 [fol. 3.1] 囉中，置一馬尼。上用一頭器盛捺受 [fol. 3.2] 者須囉，以鏡置上已。師用須囉洒 [fol. 3.3] 諸供養，皆盛甘露。方令行人於師 [fol. 3.4] 等處施花鬘，禮拜白云：

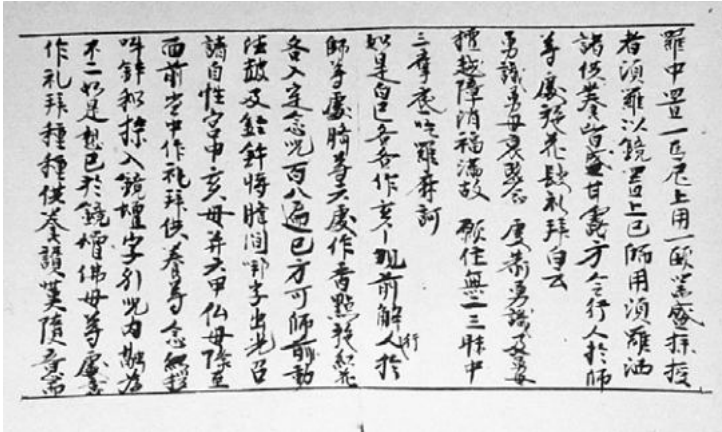


FIGURE 10.19 A 14. *Jingang haimu jilun gongyang cidu lu* 金剛亥母集輪  
 供養次第錄 [Stages of Making Offerings to and the Feast  
 Gathering of Vajravārāhi]. Karakhoto, late 12th/early 13th c. (?)  
 SHI, WEI, AND KYCHANOV, *ECANG HEISHUICHENG*  
 WENXIAN, VOL. 5, A 14, 242 (FOL. 3)

This ritual text describes the established altar as the frame for the divinity, which simultaneously gives authority to the ritual master, since he is able to gather and direct the powers of the divinity.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, we may gather from the text that the encounter with the divine presence in this specific context is not just a subjective event (of the master), but is also very much a social one—this ritual is *not* solely about a subjective inner experience, but it is about a *communal process*. The ritual master needs the community of practitioners in order to properly perform the rite, because in this special ritual, his role as mediator with a divine entity is recognised by the community—and only through this does he gain the necessary authority and power. Moreover, master and disciples are bound to each other through their tantric commitments

[fol. 3.5] 勇識勇母哀愍念

虔恭勇識及勇母

[fol. 3.6] 檀越障消福滿故

願住無二三昧中

[fol. 3.7] 三摩底吃羅麻訶

[fol. 3.8] 如是白已, 各各作亥母現前解。行人於 [fol. 3.9] 師等處, 躋等六處作香點, 施紅花。 [fol. 3.10] 各入定, 念咒百八遍已, 方可師前動 [fol. 3.11] 法鼓及鈴杵。時躋間瑯字出光, 召 [fol. 3.12] 請自性宮中亥母並六甲仙母降至 [fol. 3.13] 面前空中, 作禮拜供養等, 念拶 [fol. 3.14] 吽鑊和, 捺入鏡壇, 字引咒內, 融為 [fol. 3.15] 不二。如是想已, 於鏡壇佛母等處, 意 [fol. 3.16] 作禮拜, 種種供養讚嘆, 隨意而 [fol. 4.1] 作。

59 Robert Sharf, "On the Allure of Buddhist Relics," *Representations* 66 (1999): 84.



or pledges (Skt. *samaya*). It is this bond that ensures the efficacy of a tantric ritual, even for participants unable to engage in the complex visualisations. It is as if the link to the elite practitioners (i.e. the master and experienced meditators) through pledge is enough to guarantee the benefits (for the wider community) of participating in such a ritual. The communal event is, thereby, charged through a reciprocal effect.

In fact, the ritual master and the community fulfil two different functions in the ritual act. In his 1981 study *Man's Quest for Partnership*, the anthropologist Jan van Baal hypothesises that every ritual act of veneration has two basic aspects: one is turned to the realisation of contact and communication with the supernatural or divine, and the other to the expression of awe by the observance of a respectful distance.<sup>60</sup> Whereas in the Vajravārahī text's context, the initial contact, interaction, and immediate communication with the divinity is reserved for the ritual master, the community of practitioners express their respect and initial distance to the deity through preliminary rites of purification (ritual bathing), certain physical stances (prostrations), confessions, and the request that the deity may take care of them. Without the distance that is expressed by the community, the nearness of the ritual master to the divine sphere would not be possible for this specific rite. Both are two sides of the same coin and absolutely interdependent.

Let us return to the initial question of how to conceptualise the transformation of a physical space, such as Mogao Cave 465, into what I suggest was a sacred space, the question which led us to explore some details of a tantric ritual procedure described in the ritual text A 14 *Stages of Making Offerings to and the Feast Gathering of Vajravārahī*. Cave 465—built on top of burial Caves B42 and B43—provides the clearly defined ritual space of a charnel ground and an entrance that could be protected by a guard (A 14, fol. 1.14: “a ritual servant with a wrathful expression to guard with a stick the entrance”). Attention would be focused on the mirror *maṇḍala*, located in the charnel ground. When the ritual master summons the wisdom deity (Skt. *jñānadevatā*) from the sphere of emptiness perceived as luminous to merge with the pledge deity (Skt. *samayadevatā*) in that specific mirror *maṇḍala*, the physical space of such a cave on a charnel ground would be transformed as well and turn into the locale of a transcendent presence.<sup>61</sup>

60 Jan van Baal, *Man's Quest for Partnership: The Anthropological Foundations of Ethics and Religion* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1981), 163. I did not have access to this publication. It is quoted in John S. Strong, “Images: Veneration of Images,” in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade, vol. 7 (New York: MacMillan, 1987), 103.

61 For a description of this process, see Tadeusz Skorupski, *The Buddhist Forum*, Volume VI (Tring: The Institute of Buddhist Studies, 2001), 83: “In the first instance, one creates a mental image of the particular deity in conformity with its iconic representation as

If we apply Knut Martin Stünkel's three-level model of TID mentioned above, we are now able to identify an additional step in the analysis of the *transcending process*. A cave, as a place for religious practice, can be identified as a religioid phenomenon and thus as an indication of *basic transcendence*. Given the information presented about the ritual master from the ritual manual analysed above, we can now clearly identify a reflecting individual, who is able to move beyond the everyday reality of 'here-and-now' to 'there', which is a criterion for *formal transcendence*. Furthermore, the ritual master is skilled in actually summoning a divine presence into the ritual location—an accomplishment of a specific religious achievement that, in the terminology of Knut Martin Stünkel, would correspond to the accomplishment of *specific religious transcendence*. Thus, it is possible to apply Stünkel's three-level model of TID to identify specific steps in the transcending process, as it is prescribed in the ritual text.

I suggest that we read Cave 465 as a physical space that is transformed into a sacred ritual space through the performance of a rite, such as the above-described communal offering to Vajravārāhī, which is also through a transcending process (most likely, such a process was a certainty from the point of view of the religious practitioner). If Cave 465 was used in such a way, one may wonder whether the two burial caves B42 and B48 in its immediate vicinity—each of which contained five skulls with their upper parts deliberately cut off—functioned as the local supply for skull cups used in tantric ritual practices performed in Cave 465, or in local tantric rituals *per se*.

Last but not least, one iconographic detail connects the ritual text A 14 *Stages of Making Offerings to and the Feast Gathering of Vajravārāhī* to Cave 465. Through the ritual practice, "Vajravārāhī and [her retinue] of the six buddha mothers" (A 14, fol. 3.12) are summoned. From visual images, we know that at least two ritual systems related to Vajravārāhī were transmitted in the Tangut Empire: the fivefold *maṇḍala* of Vajravārāhī, composed of Vajravārāhī with a

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explained in its *sādhana* text. This image is called the pledge-being (*samaya-sattva*) or the pledge-deity (*samayadevatā*), and it represents a visionary mental representation of the deity, which is comparable to the eidetic images produced during the *kaśīṇa* meditation. Next, one recites the deity's seed syllable (*bīja* or *hṛdaya*) and summons the corresponding representation called the knowledge-being (*jñāna-sattva*) or the knowledge-deity (*jñānadevatā*) from the sphere of emptiness perceived as luminosity. The iconic appearance of the knowledge-being is identical to the mentally projected image of the pledge-being. However, it is not a mere vision, but essentially, so far as the meditator is concerned, a true and potent aspect of the deity. One welcomes the knowledge-being and then merges it with the pledge-being. Once the two beings are fused together into one indistinguishable union, which is often compared to water mixed with water, one is confronted with a fully perfected deity with whom one can interact in a variety of ways as specified in ritual and meditational texts."

retinue of four two-armed goddesses in each of the four cardinal directions<sup>62</sup> (e.g. Karakhoto *thangka* x2394, fig. 10.16 above; also in Karakhoto *thangka* x2388); and a sevenfold *maṇḍala* of Vajravārāhī, that is Vajravārāhī with a retinue of six four-armed goddesses.<sup>63</sup> It is the latter one that is described in the ritual manual, here referred to as the retinue of the six buddha mothers, and is, in fact, depicted in Mogao Cave 465 and Karakhoto *thangka* x2393 (figs. 10.20–22).<sup>64</sup> In Karakhoto *thangka* x2393, the attributes that the six goddesses within Vajravārāhī's flaming mandorla hold are clearly visible: a skull cup and a curved knife (Tib. *gri gug*, Skt. *katari*) in the lower hands and a tantric staff (Skt. *khaṭvāṅga*) and a hand drum (Skt. *damaru*) in the upper hands. Although the attributes held by the six goddesses within Vajravārāhī's mandorla in Mogao Cave 465 are not clearly discernible, they are visible in the upper register above the central image of Vajravārāhī, where the six goddesses appear a second time (fig. 10.21).

62 English lists the names of the four attending goddesses as “Dākinī in the east, Lāmā in the north, Khaṇḍarohā in the west, and Rūpiṇī in the south.” See English, *Vajrayoginī*, 183.

63 I was not yet able to identify the names of those six goddesses. Moreover, Skorupski mentions that Vajravārāhī “also presides over four *maṇḍalas* of her own and has some seven iconic representations as an individual deity.” See Skorupski, *The Buddhist Forum*, 65.

64 For Karakhoto *thangka* x2393, see The State Hermitage Museum, Russia, Northwest University for Nationalities, and Shanghai Chinese Classics Publishing House, *Khara-Khoto Art Relics Collected in the State Hermitage Museum of Russia*, pl. 142. The image is also on the museum website; <https://www.hermitagemuseum.org/wps/portal/hermitage/digital-collection/25.+archaeological+artifacts/477197>, accessed May 28, 2020.

Another visual example of Vajravārāhī with a retinue of six goddesses is a *thangka* from the Western Trans-Himalaya, which I discuss in a previous publication; Meinert, “Creation of Tantric Sacred Spaces in Eastern Central Asia,” fig. 10.13. That *thangka* was first published in Deborah E. Klimburg-Salter, *The Silk Route and the Diamond Path: Esoteric Buddhist Art on the Trans-Himalayan Trade Routes* (Los Angeles: UCLA Art Council, 1982), pl. 112. Interestingly enough, both *thangkas* (Karakhoto *thangka* x2393 and the one from the Western Trans-Himalaya) are identified as belonging to the same style, the Kadampa Style, associated with the Kadam school (Tib. *bka' gdams pa*), established by Dromtönpa Gyelwé Jungné (ca. 1005–1064, Tib. 'Brom ston pa rGyal ba'i 'byung gnas), the main disciple of Atiśa Dīpaṅkaraśrījñāna (982–1054, Tib. A ti sha Mar me mdzad dpal Ye shes) who arrived in Western Tibet in 1042. Despite both *thangkas'* stylistic similarity, Pratapaditya Pal suggests that the Karakhoto painting “was very likely meant for a Chinese patron as is indicated by the empty cartouches besides the monks and the *mahāsiddhas*.” Pratapaditya Pal, *Tibetan Paintings. A Study of Tibetan Thankas Eleventh to Nineteenth Centuries* (New Delhi: Bookwise, 2000), 29–45, quotation on p. 42. Although this is a careful observation, the possibility of Tangut patrons should not be ruled out, since they had assimilated many Sinitic cultural practices. For a discussion of the connections between Atiśa Dīpaṅkaraśrījñāna and the Tangut Empire, see also Iain Sinclair's chapter in this volume: “The Serlingpa Acala in Tibet and the Tangut Empire.”



FIGURES 10.20–21

Vajravārāhī with retinue of six goddesses within her mandorla (top) and a detail of one of the goddesses from the upper register, second to the left above the central deity (bottom). Mogao Cave 465, western wall, northern section, Dunhuang, late 12th c. (?)

YANG AND WU, *DUNHUANG SHIKU YISHU. MOGAO KU DI SILIUWU KU (YUAN)*, PL. 44 (P. 77) AND PL. 59 (P. 89)



FIGURE 10.22 Vajravārāhī *thangka* with retinue of six goddesses. Karakhoto, late 12th c. (?)

X2393, THE STATE HERMITAGE MUSEUM, ST. PETERSBURG

### 3.3 *Textual Evidence for Tantric Ritual Practice beyond Contingencies of Bodily Space and Time*

The analysis of the Karakhoto ritual text A 14 *Stages of Making Offerings to and the Feast Gathering of Vajravārāhī* allows for understanding the transformation of a physical space into a sacred space, or of 'here-and-now' into 'there'. The ritual text prescribes an external yogic practice, namely, drawing the *maṇḍala* of Vajravārāhī on the physical space of an altar at a charnel ground, during the process of a communal offering. On the other hand, the Karakhoto ritual text A 19 *Jingang haimu chanding* 金剛亥母禪定 [The Meditation on Vajravārāhī] also describes the transformation of one's own body into a divine body, and thus is an instruction for an individual's ritual practice. According to the prescription provided in the text, the divine presence, Vajravārāhī, is visualised internally in order to direct the powers of the divinity within one's own subtle body with the aim of accomplishing awakening within that very coarse, immanent body.<sup>65</sup> As I already discussed this ritual text from the point of view of the senses,<sup>66</sup> for the present context, I merely add some observations with regard to the TID and additional explanations based on related materials, in order to approach the question what makes any ritual text, or this particular religious text, convey a specific religious transcendence. As Stünkel suggests for the analysis of a transcending process,<sup>67</sup> in this ritual text, it is also possible to identify spatial metaphors on the object-language level and thus processes of movement that enable us to localise references to both immanence and transcendence, that is in downward (written in red) and upward (written in blue) movements respectively. The analysis of these movements allows one to make some conclusions about tantric ritual practice with regard to my understanding of the practitioner's perception of bodily space and time.

The structure of the ritual text is as follows: (1) preparatory actions (including taking refuge, generating *bodhicitta*, visualising the root teacher) (A 19, fol. 1.1–5), (2) description of the deity (A 19, fol. 1.5–fol. 2.2), (3) the main yogic exercise in two parts (A 19, fol. 2.3–11), (4) resting in a non-conceptual state

65 The Chinese Karakhoto manuscript A 19 is published in Shi, Wei, and Kychanov, *Ecang Heishuicheng wenxian*, vol. 5, 257–258, fol. 1–4.

66 Meinert, "Embodying the Divine in Tantric Ritual Practice," 64–66. As the publication is also available through open access, one may easily access lengthy translations of the ritual manual. See [http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/ret/pdf/ret\\_50\\_04.pdf](http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/ret/pdf/ret_50_04.pdf).

67 See the section on TID above and Stünkel, "TID: The Transcendence-Immanence Distinction," 11.

(A 19, fol. 2.11–15), and (5) results (A 19, fol. 2.16–fol. 3.2).<sup>68</sup> For my analysis of object-language markers of movement relevant to the transcending process, I provide examples from sections (2), (3A), and (5), and present my translation once more.

3.3.1 The Meditation on Vajravārāhī: (2) Description of the Deity  
Section (2), the description of the deity, reads as follows:

[One should visualise that one] immediately [fol. 1.6] turns into Vajravārāhī. She is naked, of red colour, has two faces, two arms, and each face has three eyes. [fol. 1.7] Her hair is hanging down loosely on the back. Her right one is a sow face and her left one is a wrathful face. [fol. 1.8] Her right sow face looks upwards [(Chin. *you Haimian qu shang* 右亥面覷上)], her left wrathful face looks downwards [(Chin. *zuo fennumian qu shang* 左忿怒面覷下)]. [fol. 1.9] On the forehead she wears a five-skull crown and bites the teeth together. The right hand holds a curved knife, and in her left hand she holds a skull cup filled with blood, and it seems as though she is drinking it. [fol. 1.10] Against her left [arm] she holds a tantric staff. Her crown ornament, an eight-spoked wheel, earrings, [fol. 1.11] necklace, bracelet, armband, belt, and so on are all made of human bones [(Chin. *rengu* 人骨)]. [fol. 1.12] The left leg is bent, the right is lifted, [which] looks like a dancing gesture. She is standing on a corpse and a sun disc.<sup>69</sup>

The very fact that Vajravārāhī has two faces (instead of the one face of ordinary beings) points to her ability to be present in both realms: in the ‘here-and-now’ immanent reality, expressed in the sow’s face, and in the transcendent realm of ‘there’, represented in the wrathful face. Similar ritual texts from the Tibetan tradition describe the two faces of Vajravārāhī as illustrating the two aspects of reality, that is, the relative (Tib. *kun rdzob*) and the absolute (Tib. *don dam*); the

68 For a full translation of a similar and very elaborate Vajravārāhī evocation see the appendix in my publication: Carmen Meinert, “Production of Tantric Buddhist Texts in the Tangut Empire (11th to 13th C.): Insights from Reading 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 Ritual Texts],” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 44 (2021).

69 A 19, fol. 1.5–12: 自身頓 [fol. 1.6] 成亥母, 裸形赤色, 二面二臂而各三目, [fol. 1.7] 散髮背披, 右亥面覷上, 左忿怒面覷 [fol. 1.8] 下。額嚴五骷髏。露牙齧齒。右手 [fol. 1.9] 執鉤鎌, 左手執滿血法鉢, [The character *gong* 鉢 is equivalent to the homonym 觥] 作喫飲 [fol. 1.10] 相。左抱闊章渴。頂嚴八輻輪, 耳璫, 項 [fol. 1.11] 瓔, 手腳腕釧, 腰帶等, 皆人骨所 [fol. 1.12] 成。拳左翹右, 如作舞勢, 死屍日輪上 [fol. 1.13] 立。

two faces are a pair, two sides of a coin, so that one cannot get the one without the other.<sup>70</sup> The eyes of the sow's face look from 'here-and-now' upwards to 'there', from the immanent to the transcendent realm; whereas the eyes of the wrathful face, illustrating the absolute, consequentially look down from the transcendent realm to immanent reality (the movement of the two faces is also visible in Karakhoto *thangka* x2393, see figs. 10.22 and 10.27).<sup>71</sup> Thus, there are not only two elements but four intertwined with each other; namely, two elements of movement between transcendence and immanence and two faces representing both aspects. Therefore, in the sentence in question from the ritual manual, we can mark the sow's face, representing the immanent aspect, in red, and the wrathful face, representing the transcendent aspect, in blue: "Her right **sow face** looks upwards, her left **wrathful face** looks downwards."

We may even go a step further to see that both sides of reality are, in fact, inherent in each single aspect, or in our case, in each face as well. Such an explanation of the two faces of Vajravārāhī is provided in the related Chinese Karakhoto manuscript TK 329 *Sizi kongxingmu jiwen juanshang* 四字空行母

70 I am grateful to Iain Sinclair for pointing out relevant Tibetan materials and for making his own unpublished work available to me (March 2020). In the transmission of Vajravārāhī/Vajrayoginī ritual texts in the Śābarapāda system, one of the main lineages transmitted from India to Tibet between the 8th and 12th centuries, the following two ritual texts provide the reference of the two faces as representing the relative (the sow's face) and the absolute (the wrathful face): (1) *Grub pa'i rdo rje rnal 'byor ma'i sgrub thabs* [Vajrayoginī Ritual Text of Accomplishment], Derge Tōhoku no. 1545, fol. 190a–192b, here fol. 191a: [...] *de yi g.yas ni phag dgong ste, de bzhin g.yon pa'i khro mo'i zhal, kun rdzob and ni don dam gnyis, zhal ni gnyis su rab tu brjod* [...]; (2) *dPal rdo rje rnal 'byor ma'i sgrub thabs* [Ritual Text of the Glorious Vajrayoginī], Derge Tōhoku no. 1550, fol. 197a–199a, here fol. 197b: [...] *de yi g.yas ni phag dgong ste, de bzhin g.yon pa khro mo nyid, kun rdzob don dam rang bzhin gyis, zhal gnyis su ni rab tu grabs* [...]. See also a translation of these passages in Iain Sinclair, "The Great Śābara's Process of Invocation of the Vajra Yoginī: Annotated Translation," unpublished draft, 2020, 10: "[She] has a sow's face on the right and a furious face to the left, the face pair illustrating the conditioned and the absolute." Sinclair also pointed out to me in a conversation that one has to imagine the deity dancing, continuously turning around her head(s), so that one sees the sow's face first, the conditioned/immanent one, and then the wrathful face, the absolute/transcendent one. For the problem of dating the Indian yogi Śābara, see English, *Vajrayoginī*, 10, 12–13, table 2.

71 Although the example of Vajravārāhī's two faces as representing relative and absolute truth or reality shows very well how the deity can be interpreted in terms of immanence and transcendence, it is, however, necessary to investigate this model further, since tantric deities come in all kinds of shapes, sizes, and number of heads. Could the model be equally applied to a deity with three or more heads? This question is beyond the scope of this chapter, but is a worthwhile query for future research. Thanks to Dylan Esler for pointing out this idea to me.



記文卷上 [Notes on the Four-Syllable Ḍākinī: Volume One],<sup>72</sup> a commentary on another, yet unidentified, Vajravārāhī (ritual) text.<sup>73</sup> The text describes itself as an “orally transmitted quintessential instruction of the practice of [Vajra]vārāhī” (Chin. *Haimu erchuan yixiu jimen* 亥母耳傳求修劑門) (TK 329, fol. 2.15). Here, we find the following explanations of the sow face: it is “true emptiness [that] represents non-conceptuality” (Chin. *zhenkong zhe, biao wu fenbie, ji Haimian ye* 真空者, 表無分別, 即亥面也); and of Vajravārāhī’s main face: “The compassion and loving kindness adorned with self-nature is the original wrathful appearance” (Chin. *yan cibei ju zixing zhe, ben fennu xian ye* 言慈悲具自性者, 本忿怒相也) with the additional description of it as “adorned with nine characteristics” (Chin. *ju jiu xiang ye* 具九相也)<sup>74</sup> (TK 329, fol. 4.19–20). Here, the fundamental binary structure (immanence–transcendence, relative–absolute) is inherent in each aspect: in the deity with two faces as a whole, as well as in each part, that is in each single face. Thus, although the sow’s face represents relative truth (as stated in the Tibetan materials), the

72 The Chinese Karakhoto manuscript TK 329 is published in Shi, Wei, and Kychanov, *Ecang Heishuicheng wenxian*, vol. 5, TK 329, 116–120 (fol. 1–9). Penghao Sun studies the text with regard to the transmission lineage, potentially going back to the Indian master Padampa Sanggyé (d. 1117, Tib. Pha dam pa Sangs rgyas), and provides an English translation of the relevant first paragraph (TK 329, fol. 1.1–12). See Penghao Sun, “Pha-dam-pa Sangs-rgyas in Tangut Xia: Notes on Khara-khoto Chinese Manuscript TK329,” in *Kōbeshi gaikokugo daigaku gaikokugaku kenkyū jo kenkyū nenpō* 神戸市外国語大学外国語研究所研究年報 *Current Issues and Progress in Tibetan Studies. Proceedings of the Third International Seminar of Young Tibetologists, Kobe 2012* 51 (2013): 505–521.

73 Thanks to Weirong Shen for reading and discussing this manuscript during his stay in Bochum in February 2018. The manuscript provides a Sanskrit equivalent of the title as *Śrīvajrayoginīsiddhi* (TK 329, fol. 4.7–8). As line eight reads, “Siddhi [(Chin. *xidi* 西底)] means practice [(Chin. *qixiu* 求修)],” Weirong Shen suggested that this is a mistake and that the characters *qixiu* are, in fact, the equivalent of Tibetan *sgrub thabs* (ritual text, Skt. *sādhana*), such that the title would be *Śrīvajrayoginīsādhana*.

Moreover, we discussed whether the Tibetan root text had a Tibetan commentary, such that this manuscript would be a translation of that Tibetan commentary (which is what Weirong Shen suggested). Alternatively, I suggest that this manuscript is a Chinese commentary produced in the Tangut Empire based on a Tibetan root text or a Chinese translation of the Tibetan root text (February 24, 2018).

The manuscript has question and answer sections, which remind me of a Tibetan genre (in Tibetan known as *zhus lan*) that could be an indicator for both our theories—either included in the text for didactic reasons or the recording of actual question and answer situations that occurred during an oral instruction, which was then later written down and edited, as can be seen in the interpolations.

74 The nine characteristics are mentioned in the ritual text at the centre of the discussion here, A 19 *The Meditation on Vajravārāhī*, with three of each pertaining to the deity’s body, speech, and mind. A 19, fol. 2.1–2. See my translation in Meinert, “Embodying the Divine in Tantric Ritual Practice,” 65.

absolute is inherent in it as well—just as if both sides of reality are within everything. This very fact is explicit in the description of the wrathful face, representing the absolute, in the TK 329 “self-nature”—meaning a reference to the emptiness aspect, the absolute/transcendence—and “compassion and loving kindness”—referring to the quality of inherent enlightened activity in the realm of the relative/immanence.<sup>75</sup>

### 3.3.2 The Meditation on Vajravārahī: (3) Yogic Exercise (A)

Let us return to the ritual text A 19 *The Meditation on Vajravārahī* to analyse a transcending process and thus to further identify spatial metaphors on the object-language level. The ritual text says that once the practitioner evokes the presence of Vajravārahī in herself or himself, she or he uses it for (3) the specific yogic practice (A) of the subtle body in order to direct the transcendental power of the deity within one’s own immanent body. The relevant instruction reads as follows:

Then, [in Vajravārahī’s navel, who is evoked in the practitioner, there is] a source of *dharma* [(Chin. *fasheng gong* 法生宮)] [fol. 2.3] [and four anticlockwise-turning bliss swirls in the four cardinal directions surrounding the triangle (?)].<sup>76</sup> On the triangle [(Chin. *sanjiao* 三角)], visualise [fol. 2.4] the three syllables *OM ĀḤ HŪḤ* [(Chin. *an ya hong* 唵啞吽)] and, on their left side,<sup>77</sup> the syllable *BAM* [(Chin. *bang* 邦), surrounded anticlockwise by the *HA* [(Chin. *he* 合)] syllable *mantra*, [i.e. *HA RI NI SA*].<sup>78</sup> [fol. 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)],<sup>79</sup>

75 Although I resolved the tension between the two different descriptions of Vajravārahī’s two faces presented in the quoted texts, it should be mentioned that it could also simply be that we are dealing with different commentarial traditions that explain the symbolism of the faces in different ways. Thanks to Dylan Esler for pointing this out to me.

76 There are about eleven (?) characters crossed out or highlighted (on purpose?), that are illegible. This reading is simply a guess on the basis of a similar passage in another Vajravārahī ritual text. See English, *Vajrayoginī*, 80. On the same page (fig. 19), there is also an image with a source of *dharma* with *mantra* syllables and bliss swirls. See also n. 53 above for a similar passage in my translation of Karakhoto text A 14.

77 The three characters *zuo yan you* (左嚴有) are smaller interpolations between lines 3 and 4.

78 This refers again to the *mantra* of Vajravārahī, just as in the above-translated passage of the Karakhoto text A 14.

79 There are about seven (?) characters are crossed out or highlighted that are illegible. The following four characters *shi dong fasheng* (時動法生) are written on the left side of the crossed out or highlighted passage between lines 4 and 5.

then swiftly turn the source of *dharma* [in the navel] [fol. 2.6] anticlockwise. Because of the power of turning, the surrounding *mantra*<sup>80</sup> syllables emanate red lights.<sup>81</sup> These touch the syllable *BAM* [(Chin. *bang* 瑯)], then from the syllable *BAM*, red [lights] emanate emanate also.<sup>82</sup>

[between fol. 2.6–7] United in the central channel [(Chin. *dimai* 帝脈, Skt. *avadhūti*)], [the lights] go upwards and touch the great bliss *cakra* [i.e. the crown *cakra*] *HAM* [(Chin. *hang* 頤)]<sup>83</sup> syllable. Then a drop of white and cool *bodhicitta* [(Chin. *pu(ti) xin* 菩(提) 心)]<sup>84</sup> melts down, [fol. 2.8] and immediately, one visualises<sup>85</sup> the emptiness and great bliss [experience of union].<sup>86</sup>

Twice in this section, there are object-language markers of movement relevant for the transcending process. Firstly, it says that the practitioner should hold up the energy of the lower *cakra* and close down the breathing from the upper part; it is thus an exercise of breath control. Secondly, and more importantly, the closing of the upper and lower parts of the lateral channels<sup>87</sup> of the subtle body allows for the movement of energy in the central channel, with red lights moving upwards and a drop of white *bodhicitta*, that is of vital essence (Tib. *thig le*), melting down. A practitioner who is able to engage in the yogic exercise prescribed here would be familiar with the tantric physiology of the subtle

80 The four characters *zhouwei zhou zi* (周圍咒字) are an interpolation between lines 5 and 6.

81 There are about four (?) characters crossed out or highlighted that are illegible.

82 The eleven characters *chu zhu bang zi*, *bang zi yi chuguang*, *er guang* (觸著瑯字, 瑯字亦出光, 二光) are an interpolation between lines 5 and 6, and the writing goes beyond the frame.

83 In my previous translation in Meinert, “Embodying the Divine in Tantric Ritual Practice,” 66, n. 35, I incorrectly used the pronunciation *HŪM* (Chin. *hong*) instead of *HAM* (Chin. *hang*) for the character 頤.

84 There are about six (?) characters at the end of line 7. About seven (?) characters in the beginning of line 8 are crossed out or highlighted and thus are illegible.

85 The eight characters *yu guangxiang chan er xia dun fa* (與光相纏而下頓發) are an interpolation between lines 7 and 8, next to the passage that is crossed out or highlighted.

86 A 19, fol. 2.2–8 (a □ indicates a crossed out or highlighted character that is thus illegible; characters in **bold** are interpolations between the respective lines): 次法生 [fol. 2.3] 宮□□□□□□□□□□□□□□三角上, 想唵 [fol. 2.4] 阿吽三字, 左嚴有一瑯字, 以合字咒左繞. 輕 [fol. 2.5] 提下部, 閉上氣□□□□□□□□□□時, 動法生宮, 左 [fol. 2.6] 急旋轉. 旋轉力故, 周圍咒字, 出赤光色, □□□□觸著瑯字, 瑯字亦出光, 二光 [fol. 2.7] 相纏, 入都帝脈內, 上衝, 觸著大樂輪頤字時, 冥消落白色涼冷菩[提] 心 □□□□□□, [fol. 2.8] □□□□□□與光相纏而下, 頓發空樂想.

87 For a description of the central and lateral channels, see below. The upper ends of the two lateral channels are the right and left nostrils. This is why it is said to stop breathing through the nose helps with centring one's energy in the central channel only (fig. 10. 24).

body, or the *vajra* body (Skt. *vajrakāya*), to be able to realise the coarse body as a divine palace or temple and thus as the locale for awakening. However, the description of this most crucial passage in the ritual text is very terse and needs further explication in order to be fully comprehended in the context of the transcendence–immanence distinction.

So far, I have not come across a detailed description of the subtle body within the Karakhoto materials; nonetheless, given the description in this ritual text, we can assume that knowledge of the subtle body was present in Tangut times as well. Therefore, for additional explanation of the tantric subtle body, I will refer to a 13th-century Tibetan source, the *rDo rje lus kyi sbas bshad* [Hidden Description of the Vajra Body], by the Tibetan master Yangönpa Gyeltsen Pelzang (1213–1258, Tib. Yang dgon pa rGyal mtshan dPal bzang) of the Drukpa Kagyü school (Tib. *'brug pa bka' brgyud pa*). This is the closest source I could find, with regard to sectarian affiliation and chronology, that discusses the awakened mind not in abstract terms but, just as in the ritual text, as “embodied mind.”<sup>88</sup>

In order to properly navigate the energy within the body, according to the Karakhoto ritual text A 19 *The Meditation on Vajravārāhī*, one has to have knowledge of the subtle body. From the outset, tantric physiology is intricately linked to conceptions of how a mind undergoing rebirth blends with semen and ovum.<sup>89</sup> Accordingly, the physiology of the subtle body is believed to develop around the third week of conception. As the embryo grows, the first energy centre, the navel *cakra*, emerges. The channels originate from this, first the upward and downward central channel, then the two lateral channels, and

88 This term was coined by Elio Guarisco, who not only translates the *Hidden Description of the Vajra Body* by Yangönpa, but also gives an excellent introduction to the knowledge of the subtle body at the advent of the Mongol conquest of Tibet and the Eurasian continent. See Gyalwa Yangönpa, *Secret Map of the Body: Visions of the Human Energy Structure*, ed. Judith Chasnoff, trans. Elio Guarisco (Arcidosso: Shang Shung Publications, 2015), 42–47. The original Tibetan text is available on the BDRRC website; Gyalwa Yangönpa, “rDo rje lus kyi sbas bshad [Hidden Description of the Vajra Body],” in *Collected Works*, vol. 2 (Thimphu: Kunsang Tobgey, 1976), 397–497, accessed June 17, 2020. <https://www.tbrc.org/#!rid=W1KG17449>. I quote from this translation and particularly, from Guarisco's very lucid and comprehensive introduction.

The idea of ‘embodied mind’ is comparable to transcendence viscerally experienced in Evangelical Christianity. See the articles mentioned above: Knauff, “Self-possessed and Self-governed,” 557 and Luhmann, et al., “The Absorption Hypothesis,” 66–67.

89 For an excellent book on the Tibetan medical system, see Janet Gyatso, *Being Human in a Buddhist World: An Intellectual History of Medicine in Early Modern Tibet* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015). In “Part II: Bones of Contention” (*ibid.*, 143–286) Janet Gyatso also explores the relationship between the tantric subtle body and human anatomy, including conflicting understandings of the heart from both perspectives.

then all the other *cakras* at the places where the lateral channels are entwined and form knots (for an illustration of the subtle body structure, also used in the Tibetan medical tradition, see fig. 10.23). Since the mind is completely embodied through the channels, it can, therefore, be affected by yogic exercises focusing on the body. The central channel, representing non-dual reality, is the main focus of yogic practice. The central channel represents non-dual reality, whereas the lateral channels represent duality—a split occurring when reality is not perceived but misperceived as subject and object duality. Thus, one's energy has to be brought from the lateral channels to the central channel by closing down the lateral channels. When mind is inserted into the central channel, non-dual reality—the true nature of things, an emptiness inseparable from bliss—is said to be realised.<sup>90</sup> Moreover, according to tantric physiology, all energies or vital essences in the channels are subsumed under white and red constituents (vital essences or *bodhicitta*), which derive from the intermingling of the father's semen (white constituent) and mother's ovum (red constituent). These are said to be united in the navel *cakra* until birth. Once the umbilical cord is cut, the white constituent is said to ascend to the crown *cakra*, held in the shape of the inverted seed syllable *HAM*, whereas the red constituent is said to descend to the lower end of the central channel, just below the navel *cakra* (fig. 10.24).<sup>91</sup> These two locations in the subtle body, crown *cakra* and navel *cakra*, as the seats of the white male constituent or *bodhicitta* and the red female constituent or *bodhicitta* respectively, are commonly depicted in ritual practice as polarity symbols in two skull cups placed as offering vessels to the deity on the altar—just as it is prescribed in the above-translated passage of ritual text A 14 *Stages of Making Offerings to and the Feast Gathering of Vajravārāhī* (A 14, fol. 2.11).<sup>92</sup>

The description of the yogic exercise given in the Karakhoto ritual text A 19 *The Meditation on Vajravārāhī* hints at a meditative process through which the event just described—the separation of the red and white constituents in the central channel—is, in fact, reversed and non-duality (once again) experienced on a bodily level. After visualising oneself as the deity, the practitioner directs Vajravārāhī's powers, which are located in the source of *dharma* in the navel *cakra*.<sup>93</sup> The purpose of the yogic exercise is to bring the energy from the

90 Here, I follow the description of tantric physiology given in Guarisco's introduction to and translation of Yangönpa's *Hidden Description of the Vajra Body*. See Yangönpa, *Secret Map of the Body*, 42–47, 234–241.

91 *Ibid.*, 90–91.

92 See also, Beer, *The Encyclopedia of Tibetan Symbols and Motifs*, 264.

93 Yangönpa describes the shape of the navel *cakra* as triangular, just like the source of *dharma*, which is visualised as the seat of the deity and mentioned in both of the

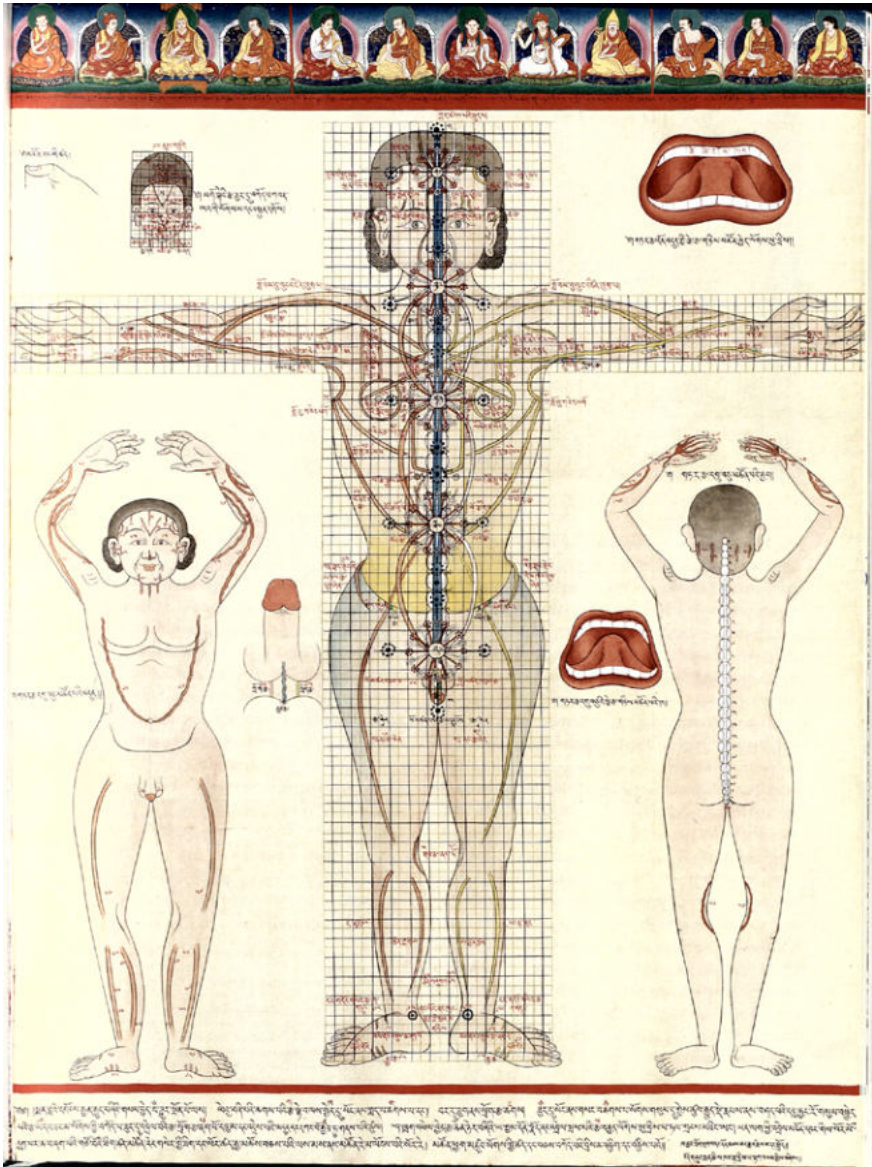
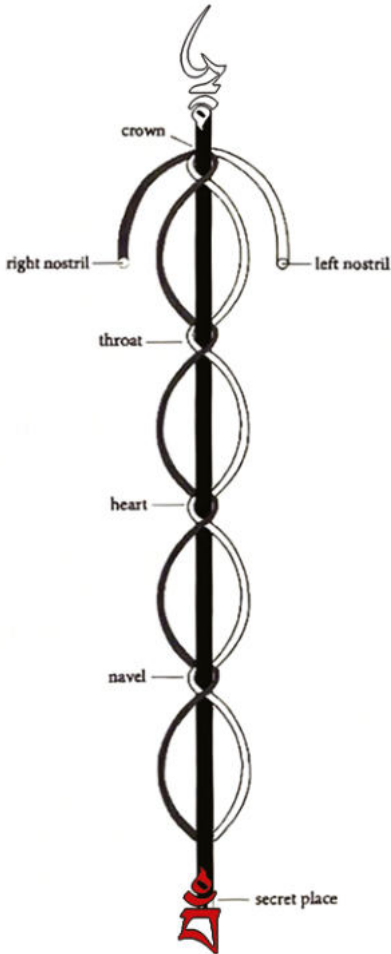


FIGURE 10.23 Tibetan medical *thangka* from the Blue Beryl. Tibet, 18th c. HAR 81836, RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK. [HTTPS://WWW.HIMALAYANART.ORG/ITEMS/81836](https://www.himalayanart.org/items/81836)



### THREE PRINCIPAL CHANNELS

FIGURE 10.24 Central and two lateral channels of the subtle body with the position of the seed syllables red *BAM* and white inverted *HAM* (added by author) in the central channel

THE THIRD KARMAPA  
RANGJUNG DORJE, *THE  
PROFOUND INNER PRINCIPLES*,  
TRANS. ELIZABETH M.  
CALLAHAN (BOSTON, LONDON:  
SNOW LION, 2014), 185, SKETCH  
THREE PRINCIPAL CHANNELS

outer channels into the central channel. Then, an inner heat is generated in the central channel through activation of the source of *dharmā*, here resulting in the upward movement of red light. Through the heat of the red constituent, the white constituent, located in the form of the seed syllable *HAM* at the crown *cakra*, melts down, and as it does, it flows down, blissfully pervading the other *cakras*, and resulting in the union of red and white constituents in the heart centre—according to tantric views, the re-establishing of the human condition before the umbilical cord was cut, is experienced as the union of emptiness and great bliss.<sup>94</sup> The latter already points to the results of the meditative practice; I will discuss these further below.

What enables the upward and downward movements in the central channel—object-language markers of movement to allow one to identify a transcending process—is the activation of the source of *dharmā*; it gives rise to the divinity and all unconditioned phenomena. In her excellent study of the deity Vajrayoginī, Elizabeth English provides the following description of the source of *dharmā* (Skt. *dharmodayā*):

The triangle is the “origin of existents” (*dharmodayā*) or “source of [all purified] *dharmas*” (*dharmodayaḥ*), a spatial and visual metaphor for the unoriginated, transcendental plane of reality. Terms such as the Dharma body (*dharmakāyaḥ*), suchness (*tathatā*), and the sphere of Dharma (*dharmadhātuḥ*) are also applied to the *dharmodayā*, and it is often said to “have the nature of the *dharmadhātu*” (*dharmadhātusvabhāva*) or to be “one with the *dharmadhātu*” (*dharmadhātumaya*). As a “source” or “origin,” the *dharmodayā* is also equated with the female sex organ or womb (*bhagaḥ, yoniḥ*). This imagery is highlighted by its inverted triangular shape (▽), which is a simulacrum of the pubis.<sup>95</sup>

Thus, transcendence is visualised within this very immanent body.<sup>96</sup> Much in line with this description, textual and visual materials from Karakhoto show

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Karakhoto ritual texts (A 14, A 19) analysed in this chapter. It is comparable to the *maṇḍala* from Karakhoto *thangka* x2405 (fig. 10.18), which has an eight-petalled lotus and a triangle at its centre with the seed syllables in Tibetan script to invoke Vajravārāhī. Moreover, Yangönpa says: “At the lower tip of this [central] channel is the so-called ‘vital essence of Vārāhī,’ or ‘mare’s face fire-crystal,’ which is the support for the fire-accompanying [wind] in the shape of the syllable A [...]” See *ibid.*, 253.

See my discussion of the source of *dharmā* below.

94 See also English, *Vajrayoginī*, 175.

95 English, *Vajrayoginī*, 149.

96 Here, we have, in fact, proof of the assumption I mention above—in my discussion of the TID (part 2) with reference to Volkhard Krech—that religion proper has to tackle the



the transmission of this knowledge in the Tangut Empire as well. It is illustrated in the Vajravārāhī *thangka* x2391, which depicts the deity standing on a corpse in the centre of a source of *dharma* (fig. 10.25).<sup>97</sup>

Moreover, the Chinese Karakhoto manuscript TK 329 *Notes on the Four-Syllable Dākinī* quoted above, provides the following description of the *vajra* body:

The so-called original body of the three realms [(Chin. *sanjie* 三界)] means that because the [fol. 5.21] three deeds [of body, speech, and mind] are pure, therefore, it is the original body of the three realms.

The purity of body means [fol. 5.22] that it is an excellent and marvelous palace [(Chin. *shengmiao gong* 勝妙宮)]; it is the original body of the realm of desire [Chin. *yushi* 欲界]. Why is this? Because it is born within the source of *dharma* [(Chin. *fasheng gong* 法生宮)].

[fol. 5.23] The purity of speech means to recite the *mantra* of the [four-] syllable *dākinī*. The characteristics of form come and go and increase; they are the original body of the realm of form [(Chin. *sejie* 色界)].

[fol. 5.24] The purity of mind means that thoughts about the body of Vajravārāhī represent that appearance is emptiness [(Chin. *xiang gui kong* 相歸空)].

Vajravārāhī is non-conceptual and identical to the [fol. 5.22] *dharmakāya* [i.e. the ultimate body of truth]. Thus, it is the original body of the realm of formlessness [(Chin. *wusejie* 无色界)].<sup>98</sup>

This passage elucidates the transfigured experience of bodily space of a practitioner. To accomplish Vajravārāhī's presence within one's own coarse body is

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problem of expressing the inexpressible transcendence; it has to present transcendence by immanent means. Krech, *Wo bleibt die Religion?*, 41.

97 For Karakhoto *thangka* x2391, see The State Hermitage Museum, Russia, Northwest University for Nationalities, and Shanghai Chinese Classics Publishing House, *Kharakhoto Art Relics Collected in the State Hermitage Museum of Russia*, pl.148. The image is also on the museum website; <https://www.hermitagemuseum.org/wps/portal/hermitage/digital-collection/25.+archaeological+artifacts/477196>, accessed June 7, 2020. However, on the website, the *thangka* is referred to as x2392. Other Karakhoto *thangkas* showing Vajravārāhī arising from a source of *dharma* are x2390 and x2392 (according to the numbering in the book publication).

98 TK 329, fol. 5.20–25 (characters in **bold** are interpolations): [fol. 5.20] 言三世界之本躰者, 即指 [fol. 5.21] 三業清淨, 故是三界之本躰也。身清淨故, 即 [fol. 5.22] 勝妙宮, 是欲界本躰。何故。法生宮內所出生故。[fol. 5.23] 語清淨者, 誦咒字母, 色相出入增長, 是色界本躰也, [fol. 5.24] 意清淨者, 想亥母身, 表相歸空, 亥母无分別, 同 [fol. 5.24] 法身故, 是无色界本躰也。



FIGURE 10.25 Vajravārāhī *thangka* with deity depicted in the centre of a source of *dharma*. Karakhoto, late 12th c. (?)

X2391, THE STATE HERMITAGE MUSEUM, ST. PETERSBURG

explained as leading to the experience of the deity's *vajra* body, speech, and mind, which represent the purity of the three realms of *saṃsāra*. Here, we have another example in which the body becomes a divine body, transcending the boundaries of ordinary conceptions and limitations.

Moreover, earlier in the text quoted above, all of Vajravārāhī's qualities are described, providing an excellent explanation of how Vajravārāhī got her name.

[fol. 2.22] Because she has no attachments, often appears [in union with] bliss and emptiness, and is born without attachment to time [(Chin. *buzhao shifen er chusheng* 不着時分而出生)], therefore, she is named [fol. 2.23] sow [(Chin. Hai 亥)]. She is called mother [(Chin. mu 母)] in order to express the appearance of wisdom and the principle of *dharma* nature. Because she is able to give birth, [fol. 2.24] empty and without obstructions, she is able to benefit sentient beings. She can give birth to all phenomena, which are in accordance with the principle. [fol. 2.25] [All this] is in accordance with the meaning of nurturing and growing of sentient beings. This is the temporary explanation.

The ultimate explanation concerns the emptiness of the body of the central channel [(Skt. *avadhūti*)]. [fol. 2.26] It is the channel that gives birth to *nirvāṇa* and *saṃsāra*, and possesses the appearance of the four *cakras*, gives birth to various channels, and nurtures the body. [fol. 3.7] All born in this world and beyond this world are born from the central channel; that is why she is called [fol. 3.8] mother. Because she possesses incomparable, extraordinary merits, that is why she is called the sow mother [(Chin. Haimu 亥母)].<sup>99</sup>

With regard to observations concerning the transcendence–immanence distinction (TID), we may draw the following conclusions for the perception of bodily space and time. Firstly, according to the ritual text A 19 *The Meditation on Vajravārāhī*, the visualised deity within the coarse body of the practitioner has at its centre a source of *dharma* representing unoriginated, transcendent

99 TK 329, fol. 2.21–3.8 (characters in **bold** are interpolations): [fol. 2.22] 以无執着，空樂常顯，不着時分而出生故，故名 [fol. 2.23] 亥也。言母者，表現勝惠之相，法性之理，具出生 [fol. 2.24] 故，空无質碍，能利有情，出生諸法，內契於理 [fol. 2.25] 內合眾生長養義故。望增義說也究竟說則中脈體空，[fol. 2.26] 能生涅槃生死之脈，具四輪相，轉生諸脈，長養身 [On folio 3, there is an overlap with some lines from the previous page. As the text is a scroll, the text continues on fol. 3.7.] 軀[ (= 軀) ]，所生世出間世 [ (= 世間) ] 皆從阿瓦息帝而出生故，故名 [fol. 3.8] 母也。有此无比具勝德故，故名亥母也。

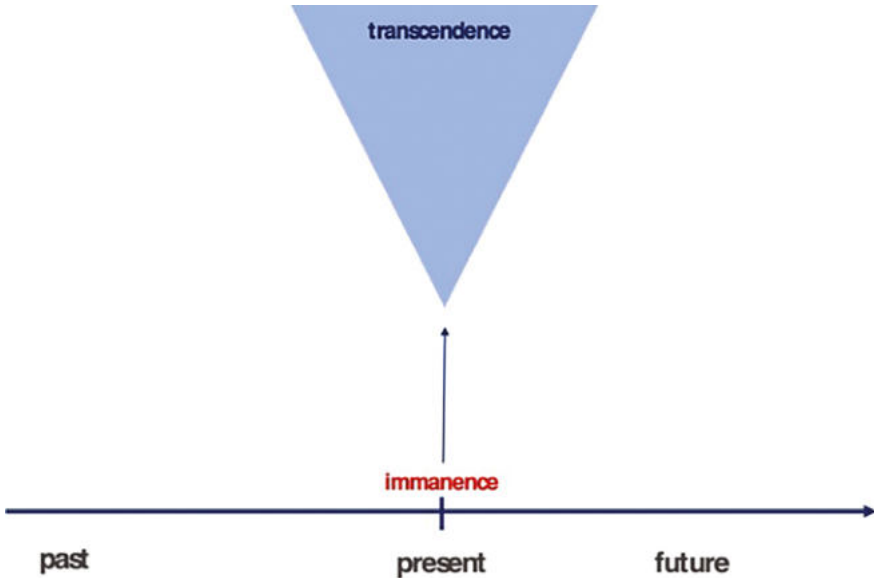


FIGURE 10.26 Perception of three times in the immanent plane of reality  
SKETCH BY CARMEN MEINERT

reality. Connected to it is the central channel, equally representing non-dual reality. When a “drop of white and cool *bodhicitta* melts down” (A 19, between fol. 2.6–7) in the central channel, the process of separation that was initiated at the time the umbilical cord was cut, and gave rise to the perception of duality within an immanent coarse body, is said to reverse to the perception of non-duality within a transcendent subtle body; a drop of transcendence melts down. This is an interesting intersection between concept and physicality. Secondly, a different understanding of time is also related to this perception of a transcendent body. In the commentary TK 329 *Notes on the Four-Syllable Dākinī*, Vajravārāhī is also described as being “born without attachment to time” (TK, fol. 2.22). Therefore, I suggest that the yogic exercise (A), as prescribed in ritual text A 19 *The Meditation on Vajravārāhī*, also allows the practitioner to overcome temporal contingencies, that is, the perception of the three times of past, present, and future, which are the conditions of immanence (fig. 10.26), and to reach a perception of time without beginning or end, a transcendent time—or even more precisely: a time beyond the concepts of immanence and transcendence. Thus, the experience prescribed in the text is the transcendence that, within this very coarse body, manifest in immanent reality (fig. 10.27). I am not able to come to a definite conclusion yet, as to whether we may infer that transcending spatial contingencies has priority

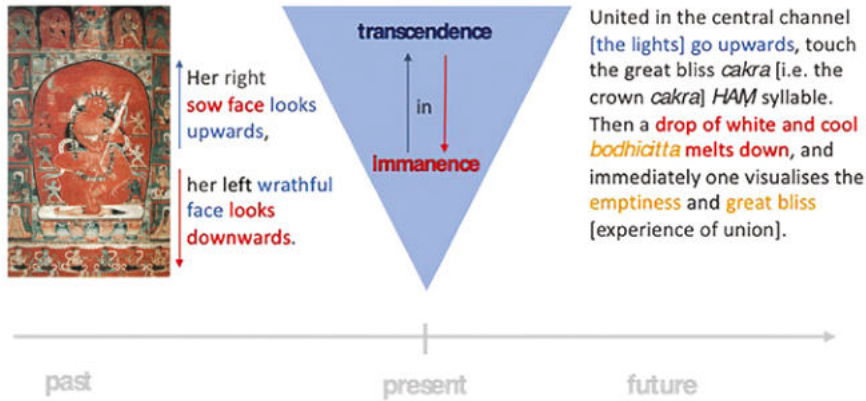


FIGURE 10.27 Perception beyond temporal contingency in bodily experience of transcendence in immanence  
SKETCH BY CARMEN MEINERT

over transcending temporal contingencies—that the former is a precondition for the latter—or whether both aspects emerge simultaneously. I suggest that the second option is more in line with doctrinal positions. However, this question should be dealt with in a separate study.

3.3.3 The Meditation on Vajravārāhī: (5) Results of Yogic Practice  
Finally, I would like to return to the question raised at the beginning of this subsection (3.3), namely, the question of what makes a ritual text such as A 19 *The Meditation on Vajravārāhī*, in fact, a specific religious text, conveying—in the terminology of Stünkel—a case of specific religious transcendence. I suggest that, on an object-language level, the tipping point in the transcending process can be identified in the following sentence: “Then a drop of white and cool *bodhicitta* melts down, and immediately one visualises the emptiness and great bliss [experience of union]” (A 19, fol. between fol. 2.6–7). It is here that specific Buddhist terminologies are used, namely, *bodhicitta*, emptiness and great bliss (written in green and in orange in figure 10.27). And it is here, when applying Stünkel’s three-level model of TID, that *formal transcendence* turns into a *specific religious transcendence*. The ritual text, in fact, continues to use such terminology (written in green) in the following description of the results of the yogic exercise:

If one [fol. 3.1] is practising like this, one will obtain the two kinds of accomplishments [(Chin. *erzhong baoguo* 二種果報, Tib. *dnegos grub gnyis*)]. Firstly, the ordinary accomplishments [(Chin. *huabao* 化報, Tib. *thun mong gi dnegos grub*)], [fol. 3.2] namely, to obtain the eight

accomplishments [(Chin. *bagong* 八功, Tib. *thun mong gi dngos grub brgyad*)]<sup>100</sup> and the five aspects [of awakening]<sup>101</sup> [(Chin. *wuyan* 五驗, Tib. *mngon byang lnga*)]. Secondly, the supreme accomplishments [(Chin. *guobao* 果報, Tib. *mchog gi dngos grub*)], to obtain the three bodies [of a buddha] [(Chin. *sanshen* 三身, Tib. *sku gsum*)]<sup>102</sup> and the five wisdoms [(Chin. *wuzhi* 五智, Tib. *ye shes lnga*)]<sup>103</sup>.<sup>104</sup>

Finally, the accomplishments of the prescribed yogic practice may be summarised as the attainment of the specific religious transcendence, namely, of the three bodies of a buddha accompanied by the realisation of all buddha qualities, such as omniscience and non-conceptuality, allowing the religious performer to move beyond ordinary perceptions and spatial and temporal contingencies.

#### 4 Conclusion

With this new reading of material, visual, and textual sources from Tangut ruled Eastern Central Asian Buddhist sites, I suggest understanding the caves in the Northern Section of the Mogao Cave complex—particularly Cave 465, with its exquisitely decorated tantric iconographic programme, and burial-meditation caves, such as B121—as sites for tantric ritual practice and, thereby, as sacred sites. I see Cave 465 as a temple-like structure that would have allowed gatherings of a small Tantric Buddhist community (similar to the way certain halls in Tibetan temples are used for specific ritual purposes). Burial-meditation caves, on the other hand, would have served as retreat

100 The eight ordinary accomplishments are the accomplishment of celestial realm, sword, pill, fleet-footedness, vase, *yakṣa*, elixir, and the balm of magic sight.

101 The two characters *wuyan* (五驗) are an interpolation between lines 1 and 2. The Chinese term *wuyan* (literally, five experiences) seems to render the Tibetan term *mngon par byang chub lnga*, meaning the Five Aspects of Awakening. These refer to the five aspects of the visualisation of a deity in the development stage (Tib. *bskyed rim*)—namely, the moon disc, sun disc, seed syllable, symbolic attribute, and complete form of the deity.

102 These three bodies of a buddha are the *nirmāṇakāya* (Chin. *huashen* 化身), the emanational body; the *sambhogakāya* (Chin. *baoshen* 報身), the enjoyment body; and the *dharmakāya* (Chin. *fashen* 法身), the body of truth.

103 The five wisdoms are the *dharmadhātu* wisdom, mirror-like wisdom, wisdom of equality, discriminating wisdom, and all-accomplishing wisdom.

104 A 19, fol. 2.16–3.2 (The characters in **bold** are interpolations between the respective lines.): 若如 [fol. 3.1] 是修定者, 得二種果報. 一化報而 [fol. 3.2] 獲八功**五驗**. 二果報, 證得三身**五智**.

places for individual tantric practitioners (similar to the ways Tibetan Buddhists withdraw to hermitages or caves for prolonged periods of retreat). The analysis of two Chinese Karakhoto ritual texts (A 14 *Stages of Making Offerings to and the Feast Gathering of Vajravārāhī* and A 19 *The Meditation on Vajravārāhī*) gives us a glimpse into the types of ritual practices that might have been performed by groups or individual tantric practitioners at that Mogao Caves.

As I previously argued, I suggest that Cave 465 was decorated under the patronage of the Tangut imperial court.<sup>105</sup> Tangut rule over Dunhuang came to an end with the Mongol conquest in 1227, which meant the end of Tangut imperial patronage. However, this does not rule out the fact that Tantric Buddhist communities continued to live at and in the vicinity of the Mogao Caves. An inscription on the eastern wall of the front chamber of Cave 465 mentions that, in Mongol times, in the year 1335, the site was referred to as a secret temple (Chin. *mimi si* 秘密寺), a reference also found in Yulin Cave 29 (Chin. Yulin ku 榆林窟), which was produced in Tangut times.<sup>106</sup> We do not know exactly when ritual objects like the stand with a skull cup found in burial-meditation Cave B121 (fig. 10.12) were in use—whether during Tangut dominion over Dunhuang or after. Nonetheless, I suggest that the late 12th to early 13th century is the time when Tantric Buddhist communities would have been present at the Mogao Caves, a hypothesis that is corroborated by Karakhoto visual images (figs. 10.16–17).

My application of the three-level model of the TID, established by Stükel, to the two just-mentioned ritual manuals proves that it is possible to identify a *process of transcending* on the object-language level of the ritual texts. Thereby, we are able to explicate and identify a transformation from an ordinary perception of immanent reality to a divine, transcendent perception of space, both of physical as well as of bodily space. Or in other words: Applying the TID model to tantric rituals and spaces we are able to explicate *how* religious meaning is generated in detail. It is an academic method for making decisions in the analysis of even the most transcendent, religiously connotated matters

105 Meinert, “Creation of Tantric Sacred Spaces in Eastern Central Asia.”

106 See Huo, “Dunhuang Mogao ku di 465 ku jianku shiii zaishen,” 193; Peng, Wang, and Dunhuang Yanjiuyuan, *Dunhuang Mogao ku beiqiu shiku*, vol. 2, 224. The fragmentary inscription in six lines reads: 昌府□塔寺僧人 [...] 遼吉祥秦州僧 [...] 吉祥山丹□ [...] 于元統三年 [1335] [...] 八日到此秘密寺 [...] 紀耳. According to Huo, the term for the description of Yulin Cave 29 is Secret Hall (Chin. *mimi tang* 秘密堂). For Yulin Cave 29 in relation to Mogao Cave 465, see Meinert, “Creation of Tantric Sacred Spaces in Eastern Central Asia,” 254. For the location of Yulin in relation to Dunhuang, see *ibid.*, 252–253, map 10.1.

comprehensible; it allows for traceability in each single instance, while still remaining outside inner-religious discourses. Thus, such a meta-perspective as an academic method aims at asymptotic convergence to the religious experience of non-dualism, which is the very pivot of Tantric Buddhist practice.

Moreover, it is not the case that anything divine always immediately evaporates (back) into transcendence. On the contrary, the presence of a divine being is a process that needs to be regulated: it is confirmed through ritual performance. And due to the very stereotype of rituals, the repeatability of the path from immanence to transcendence is particularly well possible. Ritual is a constant symbolic mediation between immanence and transcendence. It stands not only for itself but also for something else; this is what ritual does in ritual performance. Thus, my examples illustrate a Buddhist solution to the problem of how to express the inexpressible transcendence by means of immanence.<sup>107</sup> Last, but not least, a transcendent perception of space also allows a different perception of time, a time beyond contingencies, a timeless or transcendent time.

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<sup>107</sup> Krech, *Wo Bleibt die Religion?*, 41. See also, Stünkel, "TID: The Transcendence-Immanence Distinction," 5.



# The Serlingpa Acala in Tibet and the Tangut Empire

*Iain Sinclair*

## 1 Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The transmission of ‘Golden Isles’ Acala praxis from Maritime Southeast Asia to the Himalayan Plateau and thereon to Central Asia was a singular event in the premodern world. This trail, once blazed, seems to have been never followed again, and this raises doubts about whether it existed at all. The task of tracing the Serlingpa Acala back to its nominal source then begins by clarifying the position of the Golden Isles. The Sumatran highlands, long renowned for being rich in alluvial gold, are a natural referent of the term ‘golden earth’ (Skt. *suvarṇabhūmi*). Over time this term was applied, by extension or appropriation, to gold-trading emporia located around the Malacca Strait and the wider Southeast Asian region. The related term ‘Golden Isles’ (Skt. *Suvarṇadvīpa*, Tib. gSer gling) is linguistically applicable not only to Sumatra and its surrounding islands, but also to the Malay Peninsula. While there is no scope to review every possible referent of *Suvarṇadvīpa* and *Suvarṇabhūmi* here, it can be understood that both terms refer primarily to the Malay Archipelago, and secondarily to the South-East Asian mainland.<sup>2</sup>

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- 1 This chapter was written with support from a Käte Hamburger Kolleg fellowship at CERES, Ruhr-University Bochum. I thank the editors—Yukiyo Kasai, Henrik H. Sørensen, and Carmen Meinert—for encouragement to publish and for help with locating relevant sources. I also thank Gudrun Bühnemann, David Templeman and other colleagues, who are credited individually in the footnotes, for their comments on earlier drafts; all errors are, however, mine alone. This chapter is a companion piece to the author’s “Dharmakīrti of Kedah: His Life, Work and Troubled Times,” Temasek History Research Centre Working Paper 2 (Singapore: ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute, 2021). Transcriptions of Tangut use acute diacritics to denote rising tones and otherwise conform to Marc Miyake, “Tangut Phonetic Database Version 1.0,” 2015, accessed October 22, 2020, <http://www.amritas.com/Tangut/tangutdb-1-0.pdf>.
  - 2 Peter Skilling, “Many Lands of Gold,” in *The Golden Land Suvarṇabhūmi: The New Finding for Suvarṇabhūmi Terra Incognita*, ed. Ian Glover et al. (Bangkok: GISTDA and BIA, 2019), 198, asserts that “The quest to localize *Suvarṇabhūmi* as a single static site or nation state goes against the logic of history.” However, the self-understanding of one region as the Golden Land/Isles is well attested in the period of interest, particularly in the well-known Sumatran highlands inscriptions of the Tantric Buddhist rulers Kṛtanagara and Ādityavarman, dated 1286 and 1356 respectively.

Within the broad region of Suvarṇadvīpa, it is Kedah, on Malaysia's western coast, that can be pinpointed with most confidence as the base of the Serlingpa guru. In the Sanskritic world he was known by the name Dharmakīrti, and for the *Durbodhālokā* [Light on the Hard-to-Illuminate], a major work of Prajñāpāramitā exegesis. The colophon to the *Durbodhālokā*, as conveyed in its Tibetan translation, states that it was completed in the 10th regnal year of King Cūḍāmaṇivarman (d. 1006, Tib. rGyal po dPal ldan gTsug nor bu).<sup>3</sup> Cūḍāmaṇivarman is otherwise known as the ruler of Kedah (Skt. Kaṭāha), which was one of the Malay world's prime entrepôts during his reign. The primacy of Kedah has been revealed by the discovery, ongoing since the mid-twentieth century, of dozens of period sites in the present-day Lembah Bujang region.

The *Durbodhālokā*, which is preserved in Sanskrit,<sup>4</sup> confirms that its author was called Dharmakīrti. He has previously been given the artificial name \*Dharmakīrtīśrī, a back-translation from Tibetan *Chos kyi grags dpal* used in secondary literature, which is not attested in Sanskrit texts. There would, of course, have been no need for the qualifier 'Serlingpa' (Skt. Suvarṇadvīpiya) if the author's name had been clearly distinct from that of the famous 7th-century logician Dharmakīrti, who is quoted throughout the *Durbodhāloka*.<sup>5</sup> Although the *Durbodhālokā* is wholly scholastic in orientation, its author certainly knows about Buddhist *tantras*<sup>6</sup> and could well have written about Tantric Buddhist figures such as Acala. The most renowned students of Serlingpa

3 Peter Skilling, "Dharmakīrti's *Durbodhāloka* and the Literature of Śrīvijaya," *Journal of the Siam Society* 85.1–2 (1997): 191–192, refers to Derge 3794, 254a.

4 Francesco Sferra, "Sanskrit Manuscripts and Photographs of Sanskrit Manuscripts in Giuseppe Tucci's Collection," in *Sanskrit Texts from Giuseppe Tucci's Collection Part I*, ed. Francesco Sferra (Roma: ISIAO, 2008), 51 n. 83, documents one manuscript kept in Tibet. The first three chapters have been edited by Guan Di 关迪, "*Xianguan zhuangyan lun Ming yi shi yu Jin zhou shu*: Jiyu xin Fanwen xieben de yanjiu 《现观庄严论明义释》与《金洲疏》—基于新梵文写本的研究 [*Abhisamayālaṅkāravivṛti* and Its Commentary *Durbodhālokā* by Dharmakīrti of Suvarṇadvīpa: A Study on the Basis of Newly Identified Sanskrit Manuscripts]" (PhD diss., Peking University, 2019).

5 Quotations in the Tibetan translation of the *Durbodhālokā* have been listed and traced by Isoda, Hirofumi 磯田熙文, "*Durbodhāloka* ni tsuite 『*Durbodhāloka*』 について [On the *Durbodhāloka*]," *Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies* 37.1 (1988). Isoda's unidentified quotation 8–4 (Derge 3794, 252a) is from the *Pramāṇavarttikā* of Dharmakīrti the logician, Derge 4210, 110b.

6 The quarter-verse *pañcakāyātmako buddhaḥ* is quoted from *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* 6.18a by name in the *Durbodhālokā* (Isoda, "On the *Durbodhāloka*," 103, no. 8–2; Derge 3794, 251a), and there follows a reference to the \*Yogatantra (Tib. *rnal 'byor pa'i rgyud*).

Dharmakīrti,<sup>7</sup> including Ratnākaraśānti (ca. 970–1045) and Dīpaṃkara, wrote several works on tantric and non-tantric topics.

The Serlingpa Acala comes into view in the wake of Dīpaṃkara's journey to the Golden Isles (1013–1025) and subsequent mission to Tibet (1042–1055). Nearly all of the extant literary and artistic sources for this form of Acala are end products of this transfer process. The Serlingpa vision is supposed to have been involved in this transmission from the outset. Dīpaṃkara calls upon “Acalanātha endowed with the gang of ten furies” together with “thou, the Dharma King guru”<sup>8</sup> to overcome obstacles on his troubled sea journey to the Golden Isles. This episode, as told by Dīpaṃkara to his main disciple Dromtönpa Gyelwé Jungné (ca. 1005–1064, Tib. 'Brom ston pa rGyal ba'i 'byung gnas), appears to bring in Dīpaṃkara's prospective teacher and *āryācalayogin* Serlingpa Dharmakīrti ahead of their meeting in the Golden Isles. The role of Acala glimpsed here—to stand firm against the arising of obstacles—represents a typical scenario of use, according to classical Buddhist texts.

## 2 Acala's Roots in South and Southeast Asian Buddhism

Among the scriptural sources for Acala, it is the 7th-century *Vairocanābhisambodhi* that provides the most definite inspiration for the Serlingpa tradition. Acala is described in the *Vairocanābhisambodhi* as holding a sword and noose and having a single hair braid and one (open) eye. He is situated in a halo of primal light, with a fierce disposition and youthful body.<sup>9</sup> Much of this description is paralleled in and probably based on a prose passage

7 For further background see Sinclair, “Dharmakīrti of Kedah,” 5.

8 'Brom-ston rGyal ba'i 'byung gnas, *Jo bo rje lha gcig dpal ldan A ti sha'i nam thar bla ma'i yon tan* [Merit of His Eminence, the Singular Deva Majesty Atiśa, Liberation guru] (Zi ling: mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1994), 30: *mi g.yo mgon po khro bo bcu yi tshogs bcas dang/ [...] chos rgyal bla ma khyed kyī dpung gis bzlog tu gsol*. For an alternative translation see, among others, Hubert Decler, “Atiśa's Journey to Sumatra,” in *Buddhism in Practice*, ed. Donald S. Lopez Jr (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 536.

9 The relevant passage, not known to be extant in Sanskrit, has been conveyed both in Tibetan (Derge 494, 166a) and in Chinese (T. 848.18, 7b), with small differences in content. For translations into English, see, respectively, Stephen Hodge, *The Mahā-Vairocana-Abhisambodhi Tantra, with Buddhaguhya's Commentary* (Richmond: Curzon, 2003), 113; Rolf W. Giebel, *The Vairocanābhisambodhi Sutra. Translated from the Chinese (Taishō Volume 18, Number 848)* (Moraga: BDK America, 2005), 31. In Sanskrit texts this scripture has the title *Vairocanābhisambodhi* and it is usually designated a *tantra*. The title \**Mahāvairocanasūtra* is a back-translation of Chin. *Dari jing* 大日經.

in the *Trisamayārāja*, a predecessor of the *Vairocanābhisambodhi*.<sup>10</sup> Both of these early tantric scriptures were known to Dīpaṃkara,<sup>11</sup> but his short hymn to Acala—examined further on—follows the verse description in the *Vairocanābhisambodhi* almost word for word.<sup>12</sup> It should be emphasised here, as Dīpaṃkara does in his writings, that Acala is integral to salvation-oriented praxis and does not personify ferocity alone. Acala's role is to ward off 'obstacles' (Skt. *vighna*) to the thought of awakening (Skt. *bodhicitta*), which manifest externally as vexatious gods and internally as disturbances in meditation.<sup>13</sup>

### 2.1 South Asian Acalas in the Tradition of the *Vairocanābhisambodhi*

A variety of forms of Acala accompanies the transmission of the *Vairocanābhisambodhi* praxis tradition throughout Asia. The depiction of Acala can vary depending on the interpretation of the statement that he 'stays' or 'is stationed' (Skt. \*-*stha*, Tib. 'dug, Chin. *zhu zai* 住在) on a rock. This statement can refer to a sitting or a standing posture. Both sitting and standing forms were transmitted in East Asia,<sup>14</sup> the former being predominant and perhaps also more scripturally grounded, given that the word *acala* also means 'rock' or 'mountain'.<sup>15</sup> However, the Serlingpa and Dīpaṃkara visions of Acala,

10 Derge 502, 219a: *de'i 'og tu mi g.yo ba mig gcig pa zhes bya ba bgegs tshar gcod pa/ rin po che'i brag la bzhugs pa mig dmar po gcig yod pa/ kun nas 'bar bas bskor ba nag cing ljang ba/ khros shing 'khrugs pa/ gzhon nu ral pa gcig yod pa/ lag pa na ral gri dang/ zhags pa thogs pa bri bar bya'o*. On the priority of this text over the *Vairocanābhisambodhi*, see Tanaka, Kimiaki 田中公明, "Trisamayārāja-tantra josetsu no mandara ni tsuite (*Trisamayārāja-tantra* 所説の曼荼羅について) [The Maṇḍala of the *Trisamayārājatantra*]," *Journal of Esoteric Buddhism* 243 (2019).

11 Dīpaṃkara refers to the *Vairocanābhisambodhi* as a representative *caryātantra* (Tib. *spyod pa'i rgyud*) and to the *Trisamayārāja* as a *kalpa* (Tib. *rtog pa'i rgyud*) in his \**Bodhipathapradīpapañjikā* (Tib. *Byang chub lam gyi sgron ma'i dka' 'grel*, Derge 3948, 287a–b).

12 Derge 3060, 116a, verses 1–2c, parallel the *Vairocanābhisambodhi*, Derge 494, 166a: *mi g.yo zhes bya'i khro bo ni/ [...] /byis pa'i gzugs can 'gying bag can*.

13 See also Rob Linrothe, *Ruthless Compassion: Wrathful Deities in Early Indo-Tibetan Esoteric Buddhist Art* (Boston: Shambhala and Serindia, 1999), 152.

14 Standing Acalas portrayed in Japanese iconographic compendia are referenced in Lokesh Chandra, *Dictionary of Buddhist Iconography*, vol. 1 (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture and Aditya Prakashan, 1999), 41.

15 The aforementioned Tibetan translation of the *Trisamayārāja*, Derge 502, refers to Acala "seated on a jewelled mountain" (Tib. *rin po che'i brag la bzhugs pa*). Acala is said to have a seated pose elsewhere in the *Vairocanābhisambodhi*; see e.g. Hodge, *Mahā-Vairocana-Abhisambodhi*, 228; Giebel, *Vairocanābhisambodhi*, 97.

in which the main figure stands with one leg bent, are more aligned with the South Asian visual tradition, which will be discussed in what follows.<sup>16</sup>

The only Indian depiction of Acala that is linked unambiguously to the scriptural tradition of the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi* is a stone sculpture in Ratnagiri Temple 4 in Odisha. Acala is positioned here to the left of and underneath Mahāvairocana,<sup>17</sup> standing with the right leg bent and the sword swung back. This is one of the few known South Asian representations of any form of Acala. There are also three Acala statues from Licchavi-era (ca. 450–ca. 750) Nepal that are consistent with the directives of the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi*, apart from the loss of their swords. One such statue depicts Acala sitting on a rock (Himalayan Art Resources, hereafter HAR, 58341). Another two statues feature left-leaning standing poses (Los Angeles County Museum of Art, hereafter LACMA, AC1995.39.1, and Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, hereafter MMoA, 1982.220.13, fig. 11.1). One of the last representations produced in the heartland is a miniature in an illuminated manuscript (MMoA 1985.400.10) of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*. This manuscript, presumed to have been produced in Bengal at a relatively late 12th-century date, has not been preserved in full, and accordingly, its iconographic program and relationship to the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi*—which may be no more than vestigial—remain undetermined. It likewise depicts a standing Acala, who in this case leans to the right.

On the basis of the small number of South Asian depictions, standing Acalas can be seen to be the norm on the subcontinent. This pose finds agreement in the extant Sanskrit corpus, although much of the early tantric literature, in which Acala is most often discussed, is lost in Sanskrit. In a ritual of sympathetic magic set out in Ānandagarbha's (fl. 8th c.) *Sarvavajrodāya*, the *āryācalayogin* visualises himself standing with left knee bent on the head of an effigy of the 'obstacle.' Then,

16 In addition to the Acala images from Odisha, Nepal, and Kashmir referred to in this chapter, at least four others in Eastern India should be noted. See Thomas E. Donaldson, *Iconography of the Buddhist sculpture of Orissa* (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 2001), vol. 11, figs. 76 (crouching), 95 (crouching), 344 (standing). I thank Samuel Grimes for bringing the former and latter to my attention. A statue of Acala(?) in crouching posture is kept in the State Archaeological Museum, Kolkata, accession number S249 (Rob Linrothe Image Collection, Northwestern University Libraries, ark:/81985/n2z89476x, accessed July 26, 2021).

17 The Ratnagiri guardian figure is positioned in effect to the southwest (Tib. *bden bral gyi ni*, Chin. *nielidi* 涅哩底) of Mahāvairocana, just as the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi* mandates. See M.J. Sindhu, "Acala, the 'Krodharaja' of Tantric Buddhism in the Sculptural Art of Ratnagiri, Odisha," *Heritage* 3 (2015): 438–439. See also Donaldson, *Iconography*, vol. 2, fig. 95.



FIGURE 11.1 Two standing Acalas with lost swords and nooses that otherwise conform to the directions of the *Vairocanābhisambodhi*. Nepal, 7th–10th c.  
LEFT: LACMA AC1995.39.1. RIGHT: MMOA 1982.220.13

as he scorches [the effigy] with fire, or smears [it with poison,] no doubt he soon burns even Brahmā or Śakra at that moment.<sup>18</sup>

Acala also appears as a retinue figure in miscellanies compiled long after the heyday of the *Vairocanābhisambodhi*. Within this literature, two *Uṣṇīṣavijayā-sādhanas* stand out for their relatively archaic vision of Acala as a sword-and-noose-wielding door guardian (Skt. *dvārapāla*) posed in the

18 *Sarvavajrodaya* of Ānandagarbha, ed. Mikkyō Seiten Kenkyūkai 密教聖典研究会, “Vajradhātumahāmaṇḍalopāyika-Sarvavajrodaya—Bonbun tekisuto to Wayaku—(II) kan,” *Annual of the Institute for Comprehensive Studies of Buddhism, Taisho University* 9 (1987): 42–44: *tāpitas tv agnīnā sa hi lepitaś ca na saṃśayaḥ | api brāhmāpi śakro vā kṣipraṃ dahyati tatkṣaṇam*; see also Derge 2516, 29b. This Sanskrit verse from the *Vairocanābhisambodhi*—not identified as such in the aforementioned publication—is translated in Derge 494, 176b; T, 848.18, 13c. See likewise Hodge, *Mahā-Vairocana-Abhisambodhi*, 156; Giebel, *Vairocanābhisambodhi*, 56.

right-knee-bent (Skt. *pratyālīḍha*) stance.<sup>19</sup> Many of the extant artworks related to these *Uṣṇīṣavijayā-sādhanas* are, incidentally, products of the Tangut Empire and show close visual affinities with Serlingpa–Dīpaṅkara Acala images created there.<sup>20</sup>

Distinctive features of the Serlingpa vision of Acala, such as the surrounding ten furies and the figure(s) trampled underfoot, have not been found in the art of the subcontinent. However, one figurine assigned to tenth-century Kashmir, catalogued as Vighnāntaka in a recent publication,<sup>21</sup> strongly resembles the Serlingpa Acala, complete with the trampled Gaṇapati. This extraordinary sculpture depicts a muscular, sword-wielding figure struggling with his right foot to control a bulky, squirming, cowering, elephantine deity with four arms. The graphic depiction of Gaṇapati's torment—rarely seen in India even in Tantric Buddhist art—may reflect unusually strong levels of adversarial sentiment in Kashmir.<sup>22</sup> Portable metal sculptures such as these are, however, difficult to locate in place and time on the basis of style alone. Other figurines of Acala trampling Gaṇapati that have been classified as South Asian (e.g. Alain Bordier Foundation ABS 035<sup>23</sup>) are not readily distinguished from artworks coming out of Western Tibet.

The South Asian repertoire of Acalas includes a posture in which a knee is planted on the ground, with the sword swung as though attacking an enemy in battle.<sup>24</sup> However, this precarious pose is neither specified in nor sanctioned by the *Vairocanābhisambodhi*. Kneeling figures are instead identified with the name and form of Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa, who represents a divergent tradition consolidated in the *Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇatantra*. This *tantra* preserves elements such as *mantras* from the prior Acala cultus, while departing radically from it

19 Marie-Thérèse de Mallmann, "Notes d'icographie tâtrique: III—A propos du «Fudō bleu»,” *Arts Asiatiques* 9.1–2 (1962): 76, in this regard notices Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, ed., *Sādhanamālā* (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1925), I, 418–420, nos. 211, 212.

20 For examples see Carmen Meinert, "Creation of Tantric Sacred Spaces in Eastern Central Asia," in *Buddhism in Central Asia I*, ed. Carmen Meinert and Henrik H. Sørensen (Leiden, Boston: Brill), 254–260.

21 Jan van Alphen, *Cast for Eternity. Bronze Masterworks from India and the Himalayas in Belgian and Dutch Collections* (Antwerp: Ethnographic Museum, 2005), 74–75, no. 16. The text itself states: "This bronze represents Acala." See also HAR 35924.

22 Instances of 'Hinduisation' and their Buddhist counterreactions—often regarded as primarily Nepalese developments—are discussed with reference to precedents in Kashmir by Iain Sinclair, "The Appearance of Tantric Monasticism in Nepal," (PhD diss., Monash University, 2016), 119–120, 157.

23 "Nila-Acala or "Blue Acala"—the "Immovable One", Late Pala Style," accessed July 26, 2020. <https://tibetmuseum.app/index.php?w=coll&cat=S&id=234>.

24 See e.g. Sindhu, "Acala, the 'Krodharaja,'" 438, fig. 1.

by recommending transgressive sexual praxis. In Tibetan nomenclature, however, *Caṅdamahāroṣaṇa* is still referred to as the Unwavering (Tib. Mi g.yo ba) in some contexts.<sup>25</sup> This has led to widespread confusion of two separate figures that have quite different origins and scriptural bases. The *Caṅdamahāroṣaṇatantra* itself only reached Tibet at the end of the period of interest, in the 13th century, and this late tantric tradition needs no further discussion here.

## 2.2 *The Maritime Southeast Asian Acalas*

It can be assumed from Tibetan sources that the form of Acala taught by the Golden Isles guru was also known in the Golden Isles *per se*.<sup>26</sup> But has any figure resembling Acala been found there? In present-day Malaysia, there is a paucity of precolonial Buddhist artefacts, whereas in neighbouring Indonesia, there are abundant remains but few attempts at systematic study and identification with reference to primary sources. Helena A. van Bommel's 1994 survey of Indonesian door guardian statues identified no images of Acala in Java and Bali. Yet several sword-bearing statues counted in this survey bear strong resemblances to Acala.<sup>27</sup> These statues, all from East Java, are much later than the period of interest, but could have been based on old models. The text of the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi* is known to have reached Java by about the 9th century, as several of its verses—drawn from the second chapter, which includes the classical description of Acala—had by then been incorporated

25 Terms such as \*Caṅdācala (Tib. gTum mo mi g.yo ba) and \*Yoganiruttara-Acala (Tib. Mi g.yo ba rnal 'byor bla na med pa) refer more or less clearly to *Caṅdamahāroṣaṇa*, but the designations Two-Armed Acala (Tib. Mi g.yo ba pPyag gnyis pa) and Blue Acala (Tib. Mi g.yo ba sngon po) are ambiguous.

26 Helmut Eimer, "Life and Activities of Atiśa Dīpaṅkaraśrījñāna: A Survey of Investigations Undertaken," *Journal of the Asiatic Society* 27.4 (1985): 8, infers from these sources that Dīpaṅkara first met the Serlingpa Guru at Bodhgaya, yet "all extensive biographies speak about a sea voyage to [...] Suvarṇadvīpa and his stay there for twelve years," where any significant teaching would have taken place.

27 Helena A. van Bommel, *Dvārapālas in Indonesia: Temple Guardians and Acculturation* (Rotterdam, Brookfield: A.A. Balkema, 1994), figs. 53, 89, and 101, display strong resemblances. A tacit suggestion that the Indonesian door guardian repertoire may include depictions of Acala was offered by Ito Naoko 伊藤奈保子, "Indoneshia ni okeru shumonzō no genzai sakurei ni tsuite インドネシアにおける守門像の現存作例について [On the Extant Examples of Door Guardians in Indonesia]," in *Mandara no shosō to bunka: Yoritomi Motohiro hakushi kanreki kinen ronbunshū, Jō* マンダラの諸相と文化: 頼富本宏博士還暦記念論文集・上 [Professor Yoritomi Motohiro's Felicitation Volume. Volume 1], ed. The Committee for Professor Yoritomi Motohiro's Felicitation Volume (Kyoto: Hozokan, 2005), 641 n. 37.



into the Sanskrit–Old Javanese *Sang Hyang Kamahāyānikan Mantranaya* [Holy Mantra Way of the Mahāyāna].<sup>28</sup>

Of particular interest is a Malaysian statue of a standing, sword-bearing figure unearthed at Batu Lintang in the heart of old Kedah. This defaced, weathered stone sculpture has been variously identified as a door guardian, Durgā or ‘dancing man’, but it may well depict Acala (fig. 11.2).<sup>29</sup> It displays a blazing halo and youthful body, and it resembles the MMoA Nepalese Acala (fig. 11.1) in its overall appearance. This statue may bring us as close as we can now get to confirming the existence of Acala worship in Suvarṇadvīpīya Dharmakīrti’s homeland. Other period sculptures from the same region, now too deteriorated to identify, could have depicted Acala.<sup>30</sup>

### 3 The Conception of the Serlingpa–Dīpaṅkara Acalasādhanas

#### 3.1 *The Serlingpa Sādhana* (Derge 3059)

The primary sources for the Serlingpa vision of Acala are connected to the Kadam (Tib. bKa’ gdams pa) teaching tradition originating with Dīpaṅkara and Dromtön. The main authority for this vision is the \**Āryācala-sādhana* (Tib. *’Phags pa mi g.yo ba’i sgrub thabs*, Derge 3059), hereafter referred to as the *Serlingpa sādhana*. Its colophon attributes it to ‘the Golden Isles Guru’, a moniker that presumably refers to Suvarṇadvīpīya Dharmakīrti, but which the author himself is unlikely to have used. The translation is co-credited to Dīpaṅkara and Gönpawa Wangchuk Gyeltsen (1016–1083, Tib. dGon pa ba

28 For details see Ishii Kazuko 石井和子, “*San hyan kamahāyānikan* (Shōdaijōron) ni miru ko Jawa no mikkyō 『サン・ヒアン・カマハーヤーニカン(聖大乘論)』にみる古ジャワの密教 [Old Javanese Esoteric Buddhism as Seen in the *Sang Hyang Kamahāyānikan*],” *Japanese Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 27.1 (1989): 61.

29 Michael Sullivan, “Excavations in Kedah and Province Wellesley, 1957,” *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 31.1 (1958). Regarding more recent scholarship on the “objek seperti lelaki yang sedang menari,” see Adnan Jusoh and Zuliskandar Ramli, “Makara di Lembah Bujang dan kaitannya dengan sosiobudaya masyarakat Nusantara [The Makara in Lembah Bujang and Its Relation with the Nusantara Sociocultural Community],” in *Seminar Antarabangsa: Sejarah Lisan dalam Perspektif Warisan dan Budaya Malaysia-Satun* [International Seminar: Oral History in Cultural Perspective and Malaysia-Satun Heritage] (Satun: Persatuan Sejarah Lisan Malaysia, University Utara Malaysia and University Teknologi Mara, 2015), 5, 12.

30 See, for instance, Nasha Rodziadi Khaw, Mokhtar Saidin, and Zuliskandar Ramli, “Tinjauan Umum Berkenaan Penemuan Arca Agama Di Kedah Tua [General Overview on Findings of Religious Sculptures in Kedah Tua],” *Jurnal Arkeologi Malaysia* [Malaysia Journal of Archaeology] 31.2 (2018): 64, Foto 1, for a stone sculpture in which only a head and sword-like shape can now be discerned.



FIGURE 11.2 Figure identifiable as Acala. Stone, Batu Litang, Malaysia, 8th–10th c., displayed at Muzium Arkeologi Lembah Bujang  
PHOTOGRAPH: 'BUJANG VALLEY MUSEUM,' MARUFISH, CC BY-SA 2.0

dBang phyug rgyal mtshan). The *Serlingpa sādhana* comprises fifty verses on the process of invoking Acala, which includes fifteen Sanskrit *mantras*. It is meant for a regular meditation routine or for use in contingent scenarios, such as the quelling of disasters. It is Acala's physical appearance that is of interest here, as well as the question of the *sādhana*'s authorship.

In the *Serlingpa sādhana*, Acala is visualised manifesting out of a sun disc on top of Gaṇapati on top of a universal lotus. He has the spotless body of a youth and a black complexion. His bound orange hair hangs down and he stands with the right leg bent and the left leg almost fully outstretched. He has three moon-in-sun-like eyes, looking up and down in the ten directions. His sharp, bright white teeth are clenched. His tongue darts like a flash of lightning. His brow is concentrated in a deep frown. He holds a sword and serpent noose. He is adorned with a tiger pelt and serpent ornaments and a diadem incorporating Akṣobhya and the rest of the buddha pentad. Furious figures emanate from Acala's body, surrounding him at the meditator's whim.<sup>31</sup> The names—tentatively reconstructed in Sanskrit<sup>32</sup>—and iconographic features of these ten kings of fury (Skt. *krodharāja*) are summarised in table 11.1. In short, Acala's appearance in the *Serlingpa sādhana* fleshes out the brief of the *Vairocanābhisambodhi* in considerable detail.

Suvarṇadvīpīya Dharmakīrti was active at a time when authors of literary and philosophical works were paying more attention to tantric practice. The contents of the *Serlingpa sādhana* show some consistency with the *oeuvre* of the Golden Isles Dharmakīrti, the author of the *Durbodhālokā* and specialist in the works of Śāntideva (fl. mid. 8th c.). The *Durbodhālokā* opens with a statement to the effect that those interested in scripture start by honouring their

31 Derge 3059, 113a, with readings silently adopted from Peking 3883 130ab: /de 'og gaṃ spros tshogs bdag ste/ /paṃ spros sna tshogs padmar blta/ /de steng raṃ las rta bdun pa/ [...] /dri ma med pa gzhon nu'i sku/ [...] /gzhon zhing sku rgyas sku mdog gnag/ /od kyis nam mkha' ma lus 'gengs/ /dbu skra dmar ser bcings shing 'phyang/ [...] /g.yon brkyang g.yas ni cung zad bskum/ [...] /spyan gsum nyi zla bzhin du dmar/ /steng 'og phyogs bcur blta bar mdzad/ /mche ba rno dkar rab tu gtsigs/ /ljags ni glog ltar rab tu 'gyu/ /smin ma khro gnyer rab tu bsdu/ /phyag gnyis ral gri sbrul zhags bsnams/ /stag dang sbrul gyi rgyan gyis brgyan/ /mi bskyod la sogs dbu rgyan can/ [...] /khro rgyal sna tshogs sku las spro/ /ji ltar 'dod pas yongs su bskor/.

32 This set of ten is not known to be attested in Sanskrit texts. Its classical locus, the long *Āryācala nāma dhāraṇī* (Derge 631), which is now available only in Tibetan translation, is discussed in the following section. Some of the furies' names resemble those of *vajra* deities in the *maṇḍala* of the *Trisamayārāja* (cf. Tanaka, "Trisamayārāja-tantra," 118): Vegāvajra, Caṇḍāvajra, etc.

TABLE 11.1 The ten furies in the *Serlingpa sādhana*: names in Tibetan and reconstructed Sanskrit, colours, and weapons

(1)	rDo rje shugs can	*Vajravega	black	wheel
(2)	rDo rje chags chen	*Vajrakāma	red	bow and arrow
(3)	rDo rje rnon po	*Vajratikṣṇa	green	hook
(4)	rDo rje 'bar ba	*Vajrajvāla	white	boulder
(5)	rDo rje khro bo	*Vajrakrodha	yellow	sword
(6)	rDo rje gtum po	*Vajracanḍa	dark green	noose
(7)	rDo rje thabs bdag (rDo rje thab bdag?)	*Vajropāya (Vajrakunḍalin?)	grey	two-headed drum
(8)	rDo rje stobs chen	*Vajramahābala	blue	meteoric iron wheel
(9)	rDo rje rgyu stobs	*Vajrahetubala	dark red	club
(10)	rDo rje rab byed	*Vajraprakāra	variegated	single-pronged <i>vajra</i>

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personal deities in order to quell obstacles.<sup>33</sup> A key term here, “quelling of obstacles” (Skt. *vighnopaśānti*, Tib. *gegs med par bya ba*), is clearly tantric in nature; it occurs shortly after the Acala ritual set out in the *Sarvavajrodaya*. The *sādhana* also transmits a *mantra* that is also given in Śāntideva’s *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, where it is called the *Acalahrdaya*.<sup>34</sup> Its stated use is to purify food eaten with the hands. Throughout the known textual corpus, only the *Śikṣāsamuccaya* has a complete parallel for the *mantra* in the *Serlingpa sādhana*; other textual traditions transmit the first part of the *mantra* separately from the last part. This is an indication that the *Serlingpa sādhana* is the work of someone who was familiar with Śāntideva’s teaching, as the *Suvarṇadvīpiya Dharmakīrti* is said to have been.

The classical connection between the will to awaken and the invocation of Acala as its protector is also preserved in the *Serlingpa sādhana*. It is dedicated to “Acala the protector, king of fury, manifested from the minds of all

33 Guan, “*Abhisamayālaṅkāravivṛti* and Its Commentary *Durbodhālokā*,” 94: *śrūtādipravṛttānāṃ ca vighnopaśāntaye sveṣṭadevatān namaskaroti*; cf. Derge 3794, 140b.

34 *Śikṣāsamuccaya* 7, ed. Cecil Bendall, *Çikshāsamuccaya: A Compendium of Buddhist Teaching Compiled by Çāntideva* (St. Petersburg: Académie Impériale des Sciences, 1902), 141, with readings silently adopted from Derge 3940, 79b (Chin. T. 1636. 32, 102a, omits *bhrāmaya hūṃ*): *namaḥ samantavajrāṅgāṃ trāṭa | amogha caṅḍamahāroṣaṇa sphoṭaya hūṃ | bhrāmaya [bhrāmaya] hūṃ | trāṭ hūṃ [hām] māṃ | oṃ balaṃ dade tejomālini svāhā*. For the *mantra* in the *Serlingpa sādhana* see Derge 3059, 114b–115a. Regarding the variant *balin dade* see Giebel, *Vairocanābhisambodhi*, 260 n. 162.

buddhas of the three times”; it exhorts the practitioner to increase the flow of *bodhicitta*.<sup>35</sup> The altruism of the bodhisattva—a topic treated at length in the *Śikṣāsamuccaya*—is to be cultivated by the practitioner in the preliminary phase.<sup>36</sup> These bodhisattva preliminaries appear to be common elements of procedure from the perspective of mature *sādhana* praxis, but they may have been more unusual and distinctive when the *Serlingpa sādhana* was composed, especially in view of the emphasis placed on bodhisattva religiosity in Kadam transmission narratives.

### 3.2 *Ratnaśrījñāna’s Acalasādhana (Peking 4895)*

The *Serlingpa sādhana* states that it was written on the basis of “*tantra* and the guru’s advice.”<sup>37</sup> This raises the question of who taught the praxis of Acala to the Golden Isles teacher. The early biographical account of Dīpaṅkara conveyed in the *rNam thar gyas pa* [Extensive Life-story] states that he and Serlingpa Dharmakīrti were taught *mantra* and philosophy by two persons called Ku su lu (supposedly Skt. \*Kuśalin, or \*Bhusuku).<sup>38</sup> However, little is known about these teachers and their teaching outside the Tibetan lineage literature. An *ācārya* who is said to have met Serlingpa Dharmakīrti at Bodhgaya, and to have later given him his name, is referred to in the *Extensive Life-story* as \*Mahāśrīratna and Rinchenpel (Tib. Rin chen dpal).<sup>39</sup> He can be identified with the Sinhalese literatus and *mahāpaṇḍita* Ratnaśrījñāna (fl. ca. 900–980) in part on the basis that he not only had the same effective name—Rinchenpel being equivalent to Ratnaśrī—but was also active at the right place and time to have been in contact with Serlingpa Dharmakīrti.<sup>40</sup> The Sinhalese Ratnaśrī is distinct from the Ratnaśrīs of the Indian subcontinent who collaborated with

35 Derge 3059, 13b: /*dus gsum sangs rgyas kun gyi bdag/ /thugs sprul khro rgyal mi g.yo mgon/ [...]/bsam gtan ting ’dzin mos pa bya/ /byang chub sems kyi rgyun spel phyr/*. The term \**bodhicittadhārā* (Tib. *byang chub sems kyi rgyun*) is suggestive of, though not definitively aligned with, non-celibate Tantrism.

36 Derge 3059, 13b: /*byams dang snying rje dga’ ba dang/ /btang snyoms tshad med rnam pas ni/ /tshangs pa’i gnas bzhi bsgom par bya/*.

37 Derge 3059, 13ab: /*rgyud dang bla ma’i man ngag la/ [...]/khro rgyal mi g.yo’i sgrub thabs [’]bri/*.

38 *rNam thar gyas pa*, §§19–21, 24, 41, 44, 57, summarised and edited by Helmut Eimer, *Rnam thar rgyas pa: Materialien zu einer Biographie des Atiśa (Dīpaṅkaraśrījñāna)* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1979), I, 158–160, 164–165, 169; II, 11–14, 16, 28–29, 38. It is far from certain that *kuśalin* is the word underlying *ku su lu*, which, as David Templeman has communicated (July 26, 2021), refers to an ‘eater, defecator and sleeper’, a layabout, i.e. *bhusuku*. See also Herbert Guenther, *The Life and Teaching of Nāropa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 34, n. 1.

39 Eimer, *Rnam thar rgyas pa*, §§52–55, I, 167–168; II, 38.

40 Sinclair, “Dharmakīrti of Kedah,” 4.

Tibetans on translations of tantric texts in the early second millennium.<sup>41</sup> One Ratnaśrījñāna “extracted”<sup>42</sup> a short *Acalasādhana* preserved in Tibetan translation (Tib. *Khro bo mi g.yo mgon gyi sgrub thabs*, Peking 4895). The identity of its author and the possibility of it informing the Serlingpa tradition have not yet been explored.

Ratnaśrījñāna describes Acala’s form in a few words: “Acalanātha, dark grey, is one-faced, two-handed; a sword is in the right [hand], the left holds a blood-filled skull.”<sup>43</sup> The reference to the skull is odd, and may have resulted from a misreading (e.g. of Skt. \**khaḍgakaṃ pāśaṃ* as \**khaḍga-kapālaṃ*). The skull-carrying Acala is likewise a rare sight in the artistic corpus. There is a depiction in the frescoes of Cave 463 of the Mogao Caves (Chin. Mogao ku 莫高窟).<sup>44</sup> Here a black Acala sits crouching with a knee raised, holding a sword and skull, flanking one side of a doorway that has a four-armed Mahākāla painted on the other side. Perhaps Ratnaśrījñāna’s directions are being followed in this depiction. However, the fresco is painted in a naïve style, which raises suspicions that the artist simply miscopied an iconographically regular model of Acala.

The information in the *Acalasādhana* of Ratnaśrījñāna is too limited to resolve the question of whether it is part of the overall trajectory of Serlingpa Acala praxis. It teaches a simple procedure of sympathetic magic, which is arguably more germane to mid-tenth-century Sri Lanka than to the advanced tantric yoga known to the later Ratnaśrīs. Non-tantric writings of the Sinhalese Ratnaśrījñāna are known to have reached Tibet, although they were not translated into Tibetan.<sup>45</sup> The possibility that Acala was worshipped in Sri Lanka during the 10th century, when the Sinhalese Ratnaśrījñāna was active, is concretely indicated by a statuette excavated from the Jetavanavihāra of Anurādhapura. Previously identified as a “Form of Vajrapāṇi or Dharmapāla,”<sup>46</sup>

41 Jean Naudou, *Buddhists of Kaśmīr* (Delhi: Agam Kala Prakashan, 1980), 169–170 n. 42, discusses these later Ratnaśrīs.

42 Peking 4895, 248b: *paṇḍi ta chen po* [...] *rad na shrī dznyānas phyung ba rdzogs so*.

43 Peking 4895, 248a, with glosses omitted: *mi g.yo mgon po* [...] *sku mdog* [...] *dud kha zhal gcig phyag gnyis pa g.yas ral gri g.yon na thod khrag bsnams pa*.

44 Peng Jinzhang 彭金章, Wang Jianjun 王建军, Dunhuang yanjiuyuan 敦煌研究院, ed., *Dunhuang Mogao ku beiqu shiku* 敦煌莫高窟北区石窟 [The Northern Section of Caves in the Mogao Caves at Dunhuang] (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2004), vol. 3, pl. 13.

45 Dimitrov, *Legacy of the Jewel Mind*, 7–8, 555 n. 178, points out that at least two manuscripts of the *Cāndravyākaraṇapañjikā* attributed to Ratnamati *alias* Ratnaśrījñāna have been preserved in Tibet. The existence of this *pañjikā* and its author Rinchen Lōdrö (Tib. Rin chen blo gros) was known to Tibetan scholars.

46 Ulrich von Schroeder, *Buddhist Sculptures in Sri Lanka* (Hong Kong: Visual Dharma Publications, 1990), 298–299, pl. 84E, reproduced with the kind permission of Ulrich von Schroeder in Sinclair, “Dharmakīrti of Kedah,” 17, fig. 8.

it probably depicts Acala. The statuette displays attributes that are consistent with the Serlingpa visualisation: plumed hair, standing posture with right leg bent, a long weapon (a sword or club) swung back with the right hand, and a bundled rope in the left hand. Compelling though these circumstantial associations may be, they are not enough to establish that the Sinhalese Ratnaśrījñāna worshipped Acala and passed on his technique to Serlingpa Dharmakīrti, in view of the fact that the *Acalasādhanas* of the two authors represent quite different forms of praxis.

### 3.3 *Dīpaṃkara's Acala Treatises (Derge 3060, 3061, Peking 4892)*

Three works on Acala—two hymns and one invocation text (Skt. *sādhana*)—are ascribed to Dīpaṃkara in the Tibetan canon.<sup>47</sup> The two hymns have the same title, *Khro bo'i rgyal po 'phags pa mi g.yo ba la bstod pa* [Hymn to King of Fury, Noble Acala] (Derge 3060 and 3061), but different lengths and contents. They are formulated in the same metre and are complementary works. The former, Derge 3060, a hymn in twelve stanzas, is concerned primarily with Acala's appearance.<sup>48</sup> The opening stanzas draw on the description of Acala in the *Vairocanābhisambodhi*, as has already been mentioned. Other stanzas of this hymn echo the wording of the *Serlingpa sādhana*.<sup>49</sup> The second hymn, Derge 3061, is nineteen stanzas long and focuses on the ten furies surrounding Acala. This distinctive set of ten furies is the same as that of the *Serlingpa sādhana*.

Dīpaṃkara's Acala invocation manual is the *\*Krodharājācalasādhana* (Tib. *Khro bo'i rgyal po mi g.yo ba'i bsrub pa'i thabs*, Peking 4892). Its evocation procedure and *mantra* repertoire is quite different from that of the *Serlingpa sādhana*. In the latter Acala is invoked using a dedicated *mantra* set; Dīpaṃkara, by contrast, employs the generic yogic procedures of higher tantric praxis. There are also slight differences in the appearance of Acala. According to

47 The praxis of the *\*Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇaparamārthasādhana* (Peking 4896), purportedly written by Dīpaṃkara (*slob dpon chen po bhangga la'i mkhas pa dī pangka ra shri dznyā nas mdzad pa*), involves subtle yoga and overt sexuality and generally shows no sign of connection to the Serlingpa tradition. Its authenticity should be examined in connection with other works translated into or otherwise created in Tibetan by *bla ma* Tāranātha (1575–1634) in conjunction with his *paṇḍita* Nirvāṇaśrī (fl. 1596–?).

48 The bulk of the text has been translated by Amy Heller, "On the Development of the Iconography of Acala and Vighnantaka in Tibet," in *Embodying Wisdom: Art, Text and Interpretation in the History of Esoteric Buddhism*, ed. Robert N. Linrothe and Henrik H. Sørensen (Copenhagen: Seminar for East Asian Studies, 2001), 215–216. Verse 7d on the furies was not translated; see Derge 3060, 116b: */sprul pa'i khro rgyal sna tshogs sku las 'phro/*.

49 Derge 3060, 116a, v.5b, parallels the *Serlingpa sādhana*, Derge 3059, 114a: */stag dang sbrul gyi rgyan gyis mam par brgyan/ [...]/mi bskyod la sogs rigs lngas dbul brgyan/*.

Dīpaṃkara, Acala has two eyes, but the *Serlingpa sādhana* specifies three eyes. These appear to be different interpretations of the Acala of ‘one eye’ described in the *Vairocanābhisambodhi*. Whereas the *Serlingpa sādhana* requires Acala to be visualised “on top of Gaṇapati,” Dīpaṃkara’s *sādhana* has Acala “trampling the Wicked-Māra-obstacle-horde (Skt. \**duṣṭamāravighnagaṇa*).”<sup>50</sup> Dīpaṃkara’s directive tends to be interpreted in art as two different figures: Māra and an Obstacle deity, namely, Gaṇapati.<sup>51</sup> Dīpaṃkara’s *sādhana* also includes the distinctive Serlingpa feature of the furies emerging from the halo<sup>52</sup> but does not specify their number or attributes. This information is relegated to the abovementioned second hymn, Derge 3061.

Dīpaṃkara’s Acala treatises together refashion the Serlingpa invocation process into a more systematic, doctrinaire presentation. These works are solid examples of Indic shastric and literary form, but they appear to have been created for Tibetan consumption. Both the Serlingpa and the Dīpaṃkara writings on Acala are only accessible today as canonical Tibetan texts, and no trace of them has been found in the Sanskrit Buddhist corpus. Likewise, there is little awareness of the Serlingpa Acala tradition in works by South Asian authors. The Acala surrounded by ten furies is briefly described by Mitrayogin (fl. ca. 1180–1197) in an entry in his iconographic compendium, the \**Abhisamayamuktāmālā* (Tib. *Mngon par rtogs pa mu tig gi phreng ba*, Peking 5022). Mitrayogin may have relied on his Tibetan associates for information about Acala,<sup>53</sup> as he refers to the retinue of ten furies but gives no information about them, in contrast to his other, more elaborate descriptions in the same compendium.<sup>54</sup> This leaves the impression that Mitrayogin’s account of Acala drew on informants or visual models rather than a literate South Asian tradition.

50 Derge 4892, 245a: *gtum pa'i bdud dang bgegs kyi tshogs du ma 'og du mnan pa*.

51 In the 19th century Tibetan *Rin lhan* [Jewel Manual] Acala is to be visualised standing on two figures described as Maheśvara—this identification is not warranted in the Serlingpa-Dīpaṃkara tradition—and Gaṇapati. See Martin Willson and Martin Brauen, *Deities of Tibetan Buddhism: The Zürich Paintings of the Icons Worthwhile to See* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2000), 282–283, no. 174.

52 Peking 4892, 240ab: [...] *rang lus 'bar ba'i sgo nas 'byung ba'i khro bo'i rgyal po ma lus pa phyag mtshan bsnams pa sna tshogs pa thogs pa'i tshogs* [...] *nam par bsgom par bya'o*.

53 Siglinde Dietz, *Die Buddhistische Briefliteratur Indiens. Nach dem tibetischen Tanjur herausgegeben, übersetzt und erläutert* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1984), 72, gives some of Mitrayogin’s dates and Tibetan connections.

54 On these descriptions see Masahide Mori 森雅秀, “*Abisamaya-mukutā-mārā* shosetsu no hyappachi mandara アビサマヤ、ムクター、マーラー所説の 108 マンダラ [108 Maṇḍalas Taught in the *Abhisamayamuktāmālā*],” *Bulletin of the Research Institute of Esoteric Buddhist Culture* 12 (1999): 1–93. Acala’s ‘maṇḍala’ is no. 82 in Mori’s numbering.



### 3.4 *The Ten Furies Surrounding Acala and the \*Āryācala nāma dhāraṇī*

The Serlingpa and Dīpaṃkara visualisations of Acala are distinguished by the assembly of ten armed figures in the halo. This feature has some precedent in earlier traditions. In one arrangement transmitted in East Asia from the eighth century onwards, but most likely of South Asian provenance, Acala is surrounded by the eight youths Matijvala, Matisādhu and so on.<sup>55</sup> They personify the eight syllables *na, maḥ, sa, maṇ, ta, va, jrā,* and *nāṃ,* which together form a formulaic prefix to the *mantras* of ferocious Buddhist deities: “homage to all *vajras* [...]”. Independent Acala *maṇḍalas* such as these fill out the *Vairocanābhisambodhi*’s requirement for Acala to be visualised in his “own *maṇḍala*,”<sup>56</sup> which Dīpaṃkara reiterates in his first hymn.<sup>57</sup>

There are also resonances between the Serlingpa tradition and the imagery of ferocious Trailokyavijaya. A “frowning, protruding-fanged, big-headed, tantric follower (Skt. *vajrānucara*) emerges in blazing light” from Trailokyavijaya’s foot to force the trampled Maheśvara to obey, as described in an oft-cited passage of the *Sarvatathāgatātattvasaṃgraha*.<sup>58</sup> This passage

55 Their classical source is the *Sheng wudong zun yizi wusheng da tongzi mi yao fa pin* 聖無動尊一字出生八大童子祕要法品 [Chapter on the Secret Essentials of the Eight Great Youths Born of the Single Syllable of Āryācala] (T. 1204.21), also known as Jap. *Hachi dai dōji ki* 八大童子軌 [Manual on the Eight Great Youths]. The individual *kumāramantras* are conveyed both in Siddham script and in Chinese transcription. It is an open question as to whether this is the *Kumārakalpa* mentioned in *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* 27; see T. Gaṇapati Sāstrī ed., *Āryamañjuśrīmūlakalpaḥ* (Trivandrum: Government Press, 1922) II, 301. For some related Japanese art see Lokesh Chandra, *Dictionary of Buddhist Iconography*, 34–38.

56 On the *svamaṇḍala* directive see Linrothe, *Ruthless Compassion*, 153; Giebel, *Vairocanābhisambodhi*, 56.

57 D 3060, 116a, verse 1d: *rang gi dkyil 'khor 'od la bzhugs*. See also Heller, “Acala and Vighnantaka.”

58 *Sarvatathāgatātattvasaṃgraha* 6, ed. Horiuchi Kanjin 堀内寛仁, *Bon-Zō-Kan taishō Shoe Kongōchōkyō no kenkyū: Bonpon kōtei hen (jō). Kongōkai bon, Gōzanze bon* 梵藏漢对照初會金剛頂經の研究: 梵本校訂篇(上) [Studies in the Collated Sanskrit-Tibetan-Chinese First Assembly of the *Diamond Summit Scripture: Critical Edition of the Sanskrit Manuscript, Vol. I*] (Kōya-machi: Mikkyō Bunka Kenkyūjo, 1983), 345: *atha bhagavantaḥ caraṇatalāt samantajvālāgarbhaḥ kṛtabhrukuṭi-damṣṭrākārāla-mahāvaktro vajrānucaro \*viniḥṣṭya* (Chin. *xian* 現, Tib. *byung nas*) *vajrapāṇeh purataḥ sthivājñāṃ mārgayām āsa*; cf. Derge 479, 52b–53a, T. 882.18, 372a. See also Linrothe, *Ruthless Compassion*, 156, 185. The Shingon (真言) monk Gōhō (1306–1362, 杲寶) identifies the *vajrānucara* (Chin. *jīngang anouzuoluo* 金剛阿耨左囉) in this passage as Acala (Chin. Budong, Jap. Fudō 不動); see Takahiko Kameya, “Medieval Shingon Buddhist Monks’ Acceptance of the Esoteric Buddhist Scriptures Translated in the Song Dynasty,” *Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies* 65.3 (2017): 1313–1314.

was ritually reenacted<sup>59</sup> and there is at least one surviving depiction of it in Indian art, in which the upper bodies of ‘tantric follower’ figures are visible in Trailokyavijaya’s halo.<sup>60</sup> This distinctive visual convention is also seen in a clay seal depiction of the Serlingpa Acala found at Tholing Monastery<sup>61</sup> (Tib. Mtho lding mgon pa, Chin. Tuolin si 托林寺) in Western Tibet. In this sealing the ten furies are portrayed from the waist up, their lower bodies submerged in flames in the manner of *vajrānucara* depictions. Dīpaṅkara stayed at Tholing Monastery,<sup>62</sup> and the sealing may be one of the first Tibetan portrayals of Acala together with the ten furies.

The ten furious figures of the Serlingpa vision are peculiar, as a set, to the worship of Acala. They are different from the well-known group of ten aligned with the *Guhyasamāja*, *Māyājāla* and other *tantras* of their ilk, whose members include not only Yamāntaka, Prajñāntaka, et al. but also Acala himself. The names, complexions and weapons of the ten furies emanated by Acala are a distinct set specified in the *Serlingpa sādhana* (Derge 3059, verses 20–24) and with more detail in Dīpaṅkara’s second hymn (Derge 3061, verses 9–18). Some of the ten names occur in other scripture—above all in the *Sarvatathāgatattvasaṃgraha*—but as a set they are not part of the tantric tradition stemming from the *Guhyasamāja*.

The classical locus for the ten furies of the Serlingpa tradition is identified here as the third chapter of the long \**Āryācala nāma dhāraṇī*, which is preserved in a Tibetan translation, *Phags pa mi g.yo ba zhes bya ba’i gzungs* [Mnemonic of Noble Acala] (Derge 631). This work in nine chapters—it is sometimes referred to as such (Tib. *gzungs le’u dgu pa*)—is the longer of two canonical Tibetan translations with the same Sanskrit title. The shorter work,

59 The *mantra* *Oṃ pādākarṣaṇa vajra hūṃ* uttered during the trampling of Maheśvara is in the repertoire of the *Shingon Jūhachidō* 十八道 [Eighteen Ways]. See Horiuchi, *Bon-Zō-Kan taishō Shoe Kongōchōkyō*.

60 Linrothe, *Ruthless Compassion*, 205–207, identifies two figures in the halo of the Nālandā Museum Trailokyavijaya (Archæological Survey of India, accession number 00002; “Ghostly warrior-attendant near the proper left foot of damaged Trailokyavijaya. Detail,” Rob Linrothe Image Collection, accessed July 26, 2021) as Sumbha and Nisumbha. Mori Masahide 森雅秀, *Indo mikkyō no hotoketachi* インド密教の仏たち [Buddhas of Indian Tantric Buddhism] (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 2001), however, identifies them as *vajrānucara* figures.

61 For a photograph see Li Yizhi 李逸之, “Xizang Aliqidu zaoqi caca Guge yizhi: 10–12 shiji mo zhi ni fo zao xiang 西藏阿里地区早期擦擦—古格遗址 10–12 世纪模制泥佛造像 [Tibet, Ngari, Early Period *tsa tsa*: Guge Ruins’ 10th–12th Centuries Seal-moulded Clay Buddha Likenesses],” *Xizang minsu* 西藏民俗 [Tibetan Folklore] 2 (2005).

62 Eimer, *Rnam thar rgyas pa*, §§259–267, I, 249–266.

Derge 963, has no information on the ten furies.<sup>63</sup> Comparing the Serlingpa specification of the ten furies with the parallel passage from the long \**Āryācala nāma dhāraṇī*, it is clear from a few examples that the *sādhana* shares most of its wording with the *dhāraṇī*:

*Serlingpa sādhana*  
(Derge 3059, 114a)

*/khro bo rdo rje shugs can ni/  
/sku mdog nag po 'khor lo 'dzin/  
  
/rdo rje chags chen sku mdog dmar/  
/chags par byed pa'i mda' gzhu 'dzin/  
  
/rdo rje rnon po ljang gu ste/  
/'dzin pa'i bdag nyid lcags kyu 'dzin/ [...]*

*'Phags pa mi g.yo ba zhes bya ba'i  
gzungs [Mnemonic of Noble Acala]  
(Derge 631, 9b)  
sprul pa'i khro bo rdo rje shugs can ni/  
kha dog shīn tu nag pa ste/ nga dang  
nga yir 'dzin pa'i bdag nyid gnam  
lcags kyi 'khor lo bsnams pa'o//  
rdo rje chags chen ni/ mdog dmar po  
chags pa dang chags par byed pa'i  
bzhin gyi mda' gzhu'o//  
rdo rje rnon po ni/ ljang khu ste/ 'dzin  
cing yongs su 'dzin pa'i bdag nyid  
lcags kyu 'dzin pa'o// [...]*

This part of the *Serlingpa sādhana* appears to have been redacted from the long *Mnemonic of Noble Acala*—that is, from the Tibetan translation itself. Again, the question is raised of how exactly the *Serlingpa sādhana* was conveyed into the Tibetan language, and whether the text ever had an existence independent of *Dīpaṅkara*, its redactor and prime mover.

The long \**Āryācala nāma dhāraṇī*, now identified as the source for the visualisation of the ten furies, reveals other potential connections with the Serlingpa tradition. The description of Acala's form in the second chapter, which expands on a description that opens the short *dhāraṇī*, is iconographically consistent with that of the *Serlingpa sādhana*. It is rich in similes that evoke the natural environment of Maritime Asia:

Space in its entirety is filled everywhere with light [from Acala's body] like an island similarly permeated by sunrays. The hair on the head is bound up in one [coiffure] and hanging like the follicle of the crown

63 The Tibetan translation of the shorter *dhāraṇī* text was edited and translated into Japanese by Nakayama Shyorei 中山照玲, “*Sei Fudō fundo (son) no darani (shōhon) Zōbun Wayaku* 『聖不動忿怒[尊]の陀羅尼』(小本) 藏文和訳 [Japanese Translation of Tibetan Text of the *Āryācala nāma dhāraṇī*],” *Journal of Naritatan Institute for Buddhist Studies* 35 (2012). I thank Sabine Klein-Schwind for helpfully locating this article.

flower tree [(Skt. *alāka*, Lat. *Calotropis gigantea*)]. He is squat yet swaying like an earth-rooted wishing tree [(Skt. *kalpavṛkṣa*)]. He stands with one leg outstretched and one drawn in, like a strongman. He has three eyes, bright red like the flower petals of a flame-of-the-forest tree [(Skt. *palāśa*, Lat. *Butea monosperma*)]. His eyes look up and down to burn obstacles above and below, like an *asura* [looking to] eat a tribute-offering. His bared fangs are half[-moon]-like. His tongue appears to dart quickly, like a flash of lightning in the sky. His brow is furrowed like the veins of the leaf of a white fig tree [(Skt. *plakṣī*, Lat. *Ficus virens*)]. His right hand carries a sword [glinting] like the rays cast by a great star. On the left he brandishes a serpent-noose [whirling] like the centre of an ocean maelstrom.<sup>64</sup>

The flora referred to here are distributed throughout both South and Southeast Asia. The likening of Acala's splendour to islands in the sun, and his noose to "an ocean maelstrom"—or whatever may be meant by Tib. *rgya mtsho'i mchिंग*<sup>65</sup>—are expressions that clearly pertain to a maritime region. As for the short \**Āryācala nāma dhāraṇī*, it prescribes a magic salve concocted from various spices, many of which are common in Southeast Asia: nutmeg, cloves, cardamom, long pepper and camphor.<sup>66</sup> These are potential indications that the \**Āryācala nāma dhāraṇī* literature circulated in Maritime Southeast Asia or a closely connected part of the world. They add weight to the proposition that the *Serlingpa sādhana*, a derived work, was not only taught in the Golden Isles but also originated there.

64 Derge 631, 70b (silently emended): *nam mkha' ma lus pa thams cad du 'od kyis 'gengs pa ni dper na rta bdun pa'i 'od kyis gling kun tu khyab pa bzhin no/ /dbu skra gcig tu bcings shing 'phyang ba ni dper na shing a la ka'i 'bras bu bzhin no/ /sku cung zhig 'gying ba dang g.yo ba ni dper na dpag bsam gyi shing yongs 'du sa brtol bzhin no/ /zhabs brkyang bskum du bzhugs pa ni dper na gyad kyi 'gros bzhin no/ /spyan gsum shin tu dmar ba ni dper na pa la sha'i me tog bzhin no/ /spyan steng 'og tu blta ba ni steng 'og gi bgegs bsreg pa ste/ dper na lha ma yin gyi bya gtor ma za ba bzhin no/ /mche ba gtsigs pa ni dper na zla ba phyed pa bzhin no/ /ljags shin tu 'khyug pa ni dper na nam mkha'i glog bzhin no/ /smin ma khro gnyer du bsdus pa ni dper na shing pa la kṣī lo ma bzhin no/ /phyug g.yas na ral gri bsams pa ni dper na gza' chen po'i 'od lhung ba bzhin no/ /sbrul gyi zhags pa g.yon na bsams pa ni dper na rgya mtsho'i mchिंग bzhin no. I thank Dylan Esler for some emendations to the text and for suggestions taken up in the translation.*

65 The expression *rgya mtsho'i mchिंग* is paraphrased by Dipamkara as *brgya mtsho'i dba' rlab* in his hymn, Derge 3061, 117a. In the view of David Templeman (personal communication, July 26, 2021) it should mean "the 'eye' of the whirlpool."

66 Derge 931, 58a: *dzā ti pha la dang / [...] / li shi dang / sug smel dang / [...] / kakko la dang / [...] / ga bur rnam* [...]. Each spice in this assortment has been identified and discussed by Nakayama, "Sei Fudō fundo (son) no darani," 64–67.

#### 4 The Serlingpa Acala as a Kadam Icon

Dīpaṅkara taught the praxis of Acala to several Tibetans during his lifetime, according to the *Extensive Life-story*.<sup>67</sup> Dīpaṅkara's Tibetan successors institutionalised it, such that Acala joined Tārā, Avalokiteśvara, and Śākyamuni in the group of Four Kadam Deities (Tib. bKa' gdams lha bzhi).<sup>68</sup> This form of Acala then came to be propagated as a sectarian deity, that is, in connection with a certain cohort of teaching traditions and institutions. Sectarian affiliation in this context does not necessarily entail exclusivity, and the possibility of transmission occurring without the accompanying sectarian framework is reflected in late Tibetan *sādhana* compendia, in which Acala is just one of hundreds of independently transmissible objects of veneration.<sup>69</sup> The designation 'Kadam Acala' will then be applied to any figure that displays the distinctive traits of the Serlingpa or the Dīpaṅkara vision, as described in the texts of the 'Jowo Acala protocol' (Tib. *Jo bo mi g.yo ba'i cho ga*),<sup>70</sup> namely, the above-mentioned *sādhana*s and hymns.

Tibetan Buddhism produced a large number of depictions of the Kadam Acala; only a few artworks, deemed representative of the whole, can be discussed here. Over sixty sculptures in bronze, brass or copper display the deity trampling gods; they are therefore identifiable as either Serlingpa or Dīpaṅkara Acalas. The majority are dated to the 12th or 13th centuries. Most are shorter than thirty centimetres in height and would have served as private objects of meditation. The proliferation of these statuettes points to the presence of a widespread, almost grassroots praxis tradition in Tibet during this period.

Some Tibetan depictions were directly informed by the visual sensibilities of the subcontinent. At least one 'Indian' depiction of Acala is said to have accompanied Dīpaṅkara's journey in Tibet.<sup>71</sup> And one early painting of Acala,

67 Eimer, *Rnam thar rgyas pa*, §§369, 376, I, 274–275, 276–277; II, 313, 318.

68 These four are said to have been Dīpaṅkara's primary (exoteric) *yidams*; Eimer, *Rnam thar rgyas pa*, §7, I, 153, II, 5. On their systematised *sādhana*s, see Willson and Brauen, *Deities of Tibetan Buddhism*, nos. 174, 133, 103, 39, respectively.

69 The entry on Acala in the *sNar thang brgya rtsa* [Narthatang Hundred] of Chim Namkha Drakpa (ca. 1210–1285, Tib. mChims Nam mkha' grags pa) is consistent with the *Serlingpa sādhana* in particular; see Jeff Watt, "Item: Achala (Buddhist Deity)—Blue, Standing," *HAR*, 2019. The Kadam Acalanātha (Tib. Mi g.yo ba sngon po bka' gdam lugs) described in the 19th-century *Jewel Manual* follows the Dīpaṅkara tradition (Tib. *jo lugs*); see Willson and Brauen, *Deities of Tibetan Buddhism*, 282–283.

70 Eimer, *Rnam thar rgyas pa*, I, 336; II, 318.

71 Eimer, *Rnam thar rgyas pa*, I, 293; Per K. Sørensen and Guntram Hazod, *Rulers on the Celestial Plain: Ecclesiastic and Secular Hegemony in Medieval Tibet* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2007), II: 375 n. 23\*.

currently in a private collection, is outstanding for its richness, accuracy and apparent close connection to Dīpaṃkara's circle. This painting was dated by Pratapaditya Pal—with the assistance of carbon dating—to an interval centred on the mid-11th century.<sup>72</sup> Its donor portrait is understood to represent Dromtön. The main subject is not, as Pal states, Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa, but the Acala described by Dīpaṃkara. Likewise, the figures surrounding Acala are not the eight subsidiary deities of the *Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇatantra* (Śvetācala, Pītācala et al.<sup>73</sup>) but the ten furies of the *Kadam Acalasādhanas*. Another early painting that can be regarded as a companion piece—because the proportions and bearing of the central figure are almost identical—depicts the Serlingpa Acala, complete with third eye and single trampled figure (Rubin Museum of Art, hereafter RMA, P1996.20.30, HAR 594).

A common convention in the artistic corpus is the use of fewer than ten figures to represent the group of ten furies. This convention is condoned in the *Serlingpa sādhanas*' requirement to diffuse the furies 'at a whim.' It is often seen where space for detail is limited. In two paintings in which Acala is not the sole focus,<sup>74</sup> Acala is portrayed surrounded by four furies. One clay seal mould, from which several impressions were struck,<sup>75</sup> depicts Acala together with hook-wielding \*Vajratikṣṇa (Tib. rDo rje snon po) to his left (fig. 11.3). In cases such as these, the smaller single figure or figures metonymically stand for the whole array of ten furies. An arrangement of this kind, which adds a donor portrait on Acala's right, is fashioned on a plaque affixed to a manuscript cover (MMoA 2005.436.1b, fig. 11.4). Some space-restricted depictions, however, managed to cram in all ten furies, as seen on a wooden manuscript cover (The Walters Museum W.896) and the abovementioned clay sealing from Tholing.

72 Pratapaditya Pal, "An Early Tibetan Mandala of Ekallavira Achala in a Private Collection: An Art Historical Analysis." *Asian Art*, 09.09.2013, accessed May 3, 2020. <https://www.asianart.com/articles/achala/index.html>.

73 There is certainly a striking visual similarity between the Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa surrounded by eight figures, as described in the eponymous *tantra*, and the Serlingpa-Dīpaṃkara Acala surrounded by ten furies. The possibility that the former vision draws on the latter—the opportunities for direct contact would have been limited—needs separate study.

74 See HAR 69454 (Asian Art Museum of San Francisco 1997.2), a *thangka* dated "approx. 1300–1400" but probably of the 12th century, and HAR 77196 (Musée Guimet, accession number unknown), reproduced in Linrothe, *Ruthless Compassion*, pl. 3.

75 Other sealings made from the same mould as LACMA AC1993.239.12 include HAR 44376, 65512 and HAR 65513 (RMA accession numbers unknown), Sothebys sale HK1038 lot 6056, a sealing in a private collection in Australia, and a sealing photographed by Rob Linrothe in Langmi, Zanskar (ark:/81985/n2f76823r).



FIGURE 11.3  
Serlingpa Acala with  
\*Vajratikṣṇa, encircled by  
Sanskrit *ye dharmāḥ* formula.  
Clay seal impression, Tibet,  
11th–12th c.  
LACMA AC1993.239.12



FIGURE 11.4 Kadam Acala flanked by a *krodharāja* and a donor figure and surrounded by the seven gems of a Wheel-Turning King (Skt. *cakravartin*) and a Buddha. Plaque on wooden manuscript cover (detail), Tibet, 12th–13th c. MMOA 2005.436.1B

## 5 Tangut Depictions of Acala

### 5.1 *Kadam and 'Golden Isles' Teaching in the Tangut Empire*

The transfer of Kadam religiosity to the Tangut Empire, which has long been evident in the artistic corpus, is becoming clearer from studies of historical and hagiographic documents. The Kadam seat at Reting (Tib. Rwa sgreng), founded by Dromtön in 1057, prospered under the patronage of a Tangut emperor identified as Renzong (r. 1139–1193, 仁宗).<sup>76</sup> Tangut support is evidenced not only by the Kadam treatises in Tibetan unearthed from Tangut strongholds such as Karakhoto,<sup>77</sup> but also by works in Tangut that transmit or recall the teaching of Dīpaṃkara (Tang. Chhiwpakarar 娑婆羅髻). A rich account of the teaching transmitted from Dīpaṃkara to Tangut teachers is the so-called *Lyr ghá mý nga jon tshi ngwu* 頌啟教藏教藏 [Quintessential Instruction of the Forty Banners of Emptiness (*sic*<sup>78</sup>)]. The Tangut Buddhist corpus includes works on subjects of interest to Kadam teachers, such as rousing the *bodhicitta* (Tang. *poten ne show* 顯教辯龍).<sup>79</sup>

Information about Dīpaṃkara's sojourn in Southeast Asia was conveyed in the Tangut language. The Tangut translation of his *Satyadvayāvātāra* (Tang. *Ny khan ghá ó she* 禰麻毘謨羅, Tib. *Bden pa gnyis la 'jug pa*) preserves the colophon of its Tibetan source stating that it was originally composed for the "Golden Isles guru, King (Dharma)pāla" (Tang. Ki lhé kurúr Palá né 禰羅絳新絳緩席).<sup>80</sup> Also recorded in the colophon is the first teaching of the treatise in

76 Maho Iuchi, "A Note on the Relationship between the Bka' gdams pa School and Mi nyag/Xixia," *Journal of Tibetology* 8 (2012): 60.

77 Tsuguhito Takeuchi and Maho Iuchi, *Tibetan Texts from Khara-Khoto in the Stein Collection of the British Library* (Tokyo: The Toyo Bunko, 2016), 11–13. Karakhoto has also yielded Tibetan translations of works authoritative for the Kadam school: the *Bodhicāryāvātāra* (ibid. 129, no. 253), Dīpaṃkara's *\*Bodhipathapradīpa* (ibid. 56, no. 80, Derge 3947) and *pañjikā* (ibid. 90, no. 153, Derge 3948), and the *Bodhisattvasaṃvaravimśikā pañjikā* of Dīpaṃkara's teacher Bodhibhadra (ibid. 121, no. 234, Derge 4083).

78 Kirill Solonin, "Dīpaṃkara in the Tangut Context. An Inquiry into the Systematic Nature of Tibetan Buddhism in Xixia (Part 2)," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 69.1 (2016): 20, states that the title is "relatively easy to reconstruct as *\*stong nyid rgyal mtshan bzhi bcu'i rnam pa'i man ngag*." However, Tang. *jon* (教) should be understood as rendering Tib. *mtshan* in an expression such as *stong pa nyid kyi mtshan nyid*, Skt. *\*śūnyatālakṣaṇa*, rather than "banner, flag" (Tib. *rgyal mtshan*, Chin. *chuang* 幢). The title should be understood in its source idiom as *Forty Oral Teachings that are Markers of Emptiness*.

79 See e.g. Nishida Tatsuo 西田龍雄, ed., *Seikabun Kegongyō* 西夏文華嚴經 [The Tangut *Avatamsakasūtra*] (Kyoto: Faculty of Letters, Kyoto University, 1977), 111, 57, nos. 295, 296, etc.

80 Derge 4467, 6b: *gser gling rgyal po gu ru pha la yis*. This phrase is taken to mean 'Golden Isles *rāja*guru Dharmapāla' by Jan A. Schoterman, "Traces of Indonesian Influences in Tibet," in *Esoteric Buddhism in Mediaeval Maritime Asia*, ed. Andrea Aciri (Singapore:





probably produced in the few decades between Renzong's patronage of Reting Monastery and the destruction of the Tangut Empire. During this interval Acala appears to have found a state-protection niche alongside war-magical Buddhist deities such as Mahākāla,<sup>84</sup> as seen in the abovementioned Cave 463 at Mogao. Acala's nascent role as protector of the state underlies an extraordinary transnational project: a Tibetan translation of a work on Acala "[produced] on the command of the Tangut king, enunciated by the Indian preceptor Upāśamarakṣita and translated by the monk Darma Lodrö," and based "on a Sanskrit manuscript obtained at Vikramaśīla Monastery."<sup>85</sup> As the veneration of Acala became intertwined with the needs of the Tangut state together with the teachings of Kadam masters, its popularity rose and fell accordingly. After monks were massacred by Mongol troops at Kadam monasteries—including Reting—in 1230 or 1240,<sup>86</sup> there was a sudden and lasting drop in the production of new Serlingpa–Dīpaṃkara Acala icons.

## 5.2 *Iconographically Atypical Kadam Acalas in the Tangut Empire*

A ferocious deity surrounded by ten furies, depicted in a xylograph from Karakhoto now kept at The State Hermitage Museum (x2537)—and often discussed and reproduced in scholarly literature<sup>87</sup>—resembles the Serlingpa

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at Yulin (榆林) Cave 29, on which see Xie Jisheng 谢继胜, *Xixia Zangchuan huihua: Heishuicheng chu tu Xixia tangka yanjiu* 西夏藏传绘画：黑水城出土西夏唐卡研究 [Tibet-tradition Paintings in the Tangut Empire: Studies of Tangut *thangkas* excavated from Karakhoto] (Shijiazhuang Shi: Hebei jiao yu chubanshe, 2001), pl. 126.

- 84 On the transmission of Mahākāla worship into the Tangut Empire and its association with war magic during the life of Ga Lotsāwa Zhönnupel (1105/1110–1198/1202, Tib. rGwa lo tsā ba gZhon nu dpal), see Haoran Hou's contribution to the present volume. The pairing with Acala has some basis in the passing mention of Mahākāla in the *Serlingpa sādhana* (Derge 3059, 116a).
- 85 Derge 495, 322a: *me nyag rgyal po'i bka' lung gis/ rgya gar gyi mkhan po u pa sha ma rakṣi ta'i zhal snga nas lotstsha ba glan dge slong dar ma blo gros kyis bsgyur cing zhus te [...]* *bi kra ma la shī la'i gtsug lag gi rgya dpe la gtugs nas.*
- 86 Maho Iuchi, "The Bka' gdams chos 'byung Genre and the Newly Published Ye shes rtse mo's Bka' gdams chos 'byung," in *The Historical Development of Tibeto-Himalayan Civilization*, ed. Iwao Kazushi and Ikeda Takumi (Kyoto: Institute for Research in Humanities, Kyoto University, 2018), 349–351.
- 87 See e.g. Heller, "On the Development of the Iconography of Acala and Vighnantaka"; Kira F. Samosyuk, *Buddhist Painting from Karakhoto, XII–XIVth Centuries, Between China and Tibet. P. K. Kozlov's Collection* (St. Petersburg: The State Hermitage Publishers, 2006), 295, cat. no. 129; Grigory Semenov and Jin Yasheng, ed., *Eluosi guo li Aiermitashi bowuguan cang Heishui cheng yishu pin* 俄罗斯国立艾尔米塔什博物馆藏黑水城艺术品 [Karakhoto Art Relics Collected in the State Hermitage Museum in Russia] (Shanghai: Shanghai Chinese Classics Publishing House, 2012) pl. 129; Karl Debreczeny, "Faith and Empire: An Overview," in *Faith and Empire: Art and Politics in Tibetan Buddhism*, ed. Karl

Acala in most respects. The main subject of the xylograph has been repeatedly identified as ‘Acala or Vighnāntaka,’ as it lacks Acala’s characteristic sword and noose. The iconography of the central figure does conform to that of Vighnāntaka, as described in a dedicated *sādhana* text: “single-faced, two-armed, blue-black-coloured, [holding] a noose with the threatening gesture in the left and, a *vajra* high with the right hand, fearsome, orange hair upraised.”<sup>88</sup> Vighnāntaka was also an independently depicted figure in Tangut art.<sup>89</sup> However, no known source for Vighnāntaka’s iconography describes a halo with ten furies.

The subject of the xylograph can be recognised as the Serlingpa Acala, copied in a graphically confused way that omits the characteristic sword and noose. In many depictions of this form, Acala’s sword is posed swung back behind the head, the blade obscured by his plume of hair. Here the artist seems to have only noticed the hilt of the sword and rendered it as a *vajra*. The thin outline of the noose could likewise have been lost against the busy background of flames. There may be another factor in this accident: several early statues of Acala, as noticed above, have lost their fragile sword and noose elements due to wear and tear, and some Buddhist paintings were ‘portraits’ of pre-existing physical objects.<sup>90</sup> These same irregularities, the missing sword and noose, are also seen in the Tangut painting x2376 of the Hermitage collection,<sup>91</sup> which likewise depicts a figure identifiable as a Kadam Acala, with furies in the halo and trampled Gaṇapati.

There is no doubt that the central figure of the Hermitage xylograph was meant to represent Acala. In the header section Acala’s signature *mantra* *Om caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa hūm phaṭ* is given in Rañjanā script. It is also conveyed just below in Chinese transcription: *an zanda mohe langzhana hong bada*

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Debreczeny, Ronald M. Davidson, and Brandon Dotson (New York: Rubin Museum of Art, 2019), 29, fig. 1.6. In lieu of providing another reproduction here it can be accessed online under the title ‘Achala or Vignantaka’: <https://www.hermitagemuseum.org/wps/portal/hermitage/explore/collections/col-search/>.

88 *Vighnāntakasādhana, Sāghanamālā*, ed. Bhattacharyya, vol. 11, 558, no. 281: *vighnāntakaṃ [...] ekamukhaṃ dvibhujam nilavarṇam vāmakareṇa tarjanikāpāśam dakṣiṇakareṇodyatavajram bhayānakaṃ pīṅgalordhvakeśam*; cf. Derge 3633, 250a; Derge 3363, 41a.

89 The State Hermitage Museum paintings x2378 and x2378 (Samosyuk, *Buddhist Painting*, 333, cat. nos. 162, 163; Semenov and Jin et al., *Eluosi guoli Aiermitashi*, pls. 162, 163, respectively, may depict this form of Vighnāntaka.

90 On the distinction between a physical ‘likeness’ (Skt. *pratimā*) and a ‘painted cloth’ (Skt. *paṭa*), see Sinclair, “The Appearance of Tantric Monasticism,” 259–260.

91 Samosyuk, *Buddhist Painting*, 331, cat. no. 160; Semenov and Jin et al., *Eluosi guoli Aiermitashi*, pl. 160.

(唵 贊怛摩曷 唵捺 吽 發怛). This *mantra* is given in the *Serlingpa sādhana* but not Dīpaṅkara's *sādhana*. Likewise, the central figure has three eyes and stands on a single Gaṇapati—features that belong to the Serlingpa rather than the Dīpaṅkara tradition. The *Serlingpa sādhana* can then be pinpointed as the ultimate inspiration for the main subject of the xylograph.

The *mantra* of Acala in the xylograph's header is flanked by two phrases: "Long live the emperor" (Chin. *huangdi wansui* 皇帝萬歲) and "the nation flourishes, the people are at peace" (Chin. *guotai min'an* 國泰民安). With these phrases Acala is framed explicitly as a protector of the state. This is a role already anticipated in the *Serlingpa sādhana*, which advises that Acala's sword, "meant to protect the practitioner's yoga, can also protect a country."<sup>92</sup> The xylograph was apparently meant to appeal to the Chinese-speaking populace among the Tanguts, even as it centred on a striking Sanskrit, tantric figure. The overt focus on state protection, combined with bold and exotic imagery, allow this xylograph to be seen as one of the earliest propaganda posters in existence. It is, nonetheless, iconographically faulty, and therefore inauspicious and self-defeating in the context of a state protection project.

Another atypical depiction of Acala is the Hermitage Museum painting x2376.<sup>93</sup> It displays some Kadam features, such as furies in the halo, but the main figure is kneeling in the dynamic pose. The iconography of this painting most likely absorbed the imagery of the kneeling form, Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa, which Tangut tapestry workshops had begun to produce at a relatively late stage.

### 5.3 *Tangut Silk Tapestry Depictions of Acala*

Several fine silk tapestries depicting Acala were produced in the Tangut Empire. There is a large secondary literature on these tapestries, to which just a few observations are added here. Firstly, it is clear that three of the four tapestries, for which various identifications have been offered,<sup>94</sup> all portray the Dīpaṅkara form of Acala. The two-eyed face and the two different figures trampled underfoot identify it as such, as do the other common features of the

92 Derge 3059, 116a: /*rnal 'byor bsrung phyir ral gris bzlog/ /yul khams bsrung dang* [...].

93 Xie, *Tibet-tradition Paintings in Xixia*, fig. 37; Samosyuk, *Buddhist Painting from Kharakhoto*, 159, cat. no. 159; Semenov and Jin et al., *Eluosi guo li Aiermitashi bowuguan*, pl. 159.

94 For instance, Jisheng Xie, "Tibetan Buddhism and Tibetan Buddhist Art in the Xixia Kingdom," in *Faith and Empire*, ed. Karl Debreczeny et al. (New York: RMA, 2019), 94, connects the Cleveland tapestry to the Five Great Vidyārājas (Chin. Wu da mingwang 五大明王), which pertain to Tang-tradition rather than Tangut Buddhism. It was correctly identified by Heller, "Acala and Vighnantaka."

Kadam Acalas. The three Tangut tapestry portrayals comprise the most accessible work, Cleveland Museum of Art 1992.72 (HAR 59257, fig. 11.5), and two works kept for a time in the Potala Palace (Tib. Pho brang Po ta la, Chin. Budala gong 布達拉宮) in Lhasa.<sup>95</sup> Secondly, in each tapestry, the arrangements of the furies and trampled deities, as well as key details of the main figure, vary noticeably. Iconographic fidelity to the Dīpaṃkara vision is preserved in each case. The weavers hand-crafted the design of each tapestry with a consistent understanding of iconographic requirements, but without strictly following one visual model. These Acala tapestries appear to be products of a literate tradition.

The patent skill of the Tangut textile workshops may have been a factor in attracting the patronage of the fourth tapestry (HAR 99102) depicting Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa. This well-known tapestry, created for the Sakyapa hierarch Jetsün Drakpa Gyaltsen (1147–1216, Tib. rje btsun grags pa rgyal mtshan) in around the year 1210<sup>96</sup> and currently in the Potala collections, is often touted as an exemplary “Tangut commodity,”<sup>97</sup> although its subject is a late outlier in the mainstream of Tangut Acala worship.

#### 5.4 *Kadam Acalas in Tangut Cakrasaṃvara–Vajravārāhī Paintings*

Paintings that feature Acala and Cakrasaṃvara–Vajravārāhī as retinue figures, or with the former in the retinue of the latter, have been found at a number of sites connected with the Tangut Empire. The erotically charged Cakrasaṃvara tantric system is associated much more with the Kagyü School (Tib. bKa’ brgyud pa) than the Kadampas, and although this tantric system was well known to Dīpaṃkara, it was not prominent in his Tibetan teaching career. The historical information encoded in the composition and portraiture of these paintings needs extensive unpacking; just a few remarks will be offered here. A superb painting recovered from the western Baisigou Square *stūpa* (Chin. Baisigou fangta 拜寺沟方塔), close to the former Tangut capital (in present-day Ningxia

95 See James C.Y. Watt et al., *When Silk was Gold: Central Asian and Chinese Textiles* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997), 91, pl. 24, for the Cleveland tapestry, and 93, fig. 35, for the first Potala tapestry; both are misidentified as Vighnāntaka. For the second Potala tapestry (HAR 9157), now in the Tibet Museum, see Bernadette Broeskamp, “Lasa Xizang bowuguan yisi Budong jingang tangka zhi duandai 拉萨西藏博物馆绎丝不动金刚唐卡之断代 [Dating the *kesi-thangka* of Acala in the Tibet Museum, Lhasa],” *Gugong bowuyuan yuankan 故宫博物院院刊 Palace Museum Journal* 133.5 (2007): 47, fig. 7.

96 Tsangwang Gendun Tenpa, “Tibetan Buddhism and Art in the Mongol Empire According to Tibetan Sources,” in *Faith and Empire*, ed. Karl Debreczeny et al. (New York: RMA, 2019), 106. However, Broeskamp, “Lasa Xizang bowuguan yisi Budong jingang tangka zhi duandai,” understands this particular work to be a Yuan-era copy.

97 Sørensen and Hazod, *Rulers on the Celestial Plain*, II, 375, n. 23.



FIGURE 11.5 Dīpaṅkara tradition (Tib. Jo lugs) Acala. Silk tapestry, Tangut make, 12th–13th c., detail (with digital colour enhancement). CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART 1992.72

province),<sup>98</sup> places Acala together with two other guardian deities and two unidentified monastic donors beneath the naked Dvibhuja-saṃvara and his consort (fig. 11.6). The most elaborate paintings of this kind are rendered in the house style of Taklung Monastery (Tib. sTag lung), which was briefly a Kadam seat. Some portraits of one of its abbots, Kuyelwa Rinchenḡon (1191–1236, Tib. sKu yal ba Rin chen mḡon), who counted Dīpaṅkara as a spiritual

98 The painting was first noticed by Fanwen Li, “The Influence of Tibetan Buddhism on Xixia,” in *Tibetan Studies. Proceedings of the 7th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Graz 1995. Volume II*, ed. Helmut Krasser et al. (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1997), 571, pl. 6.



FIGURE 11.6 Two-armed Cakrasamvara–Vajravārāhī with five retinue figures including the Kadam Acala (middle, lower register). Painting (detail), Baisigou Square *stūpa*, 12th–13th c.

FACULTY COLLECTIONS, NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES, ROB LINROTHE IMAGE COLLECTION, ACCESSED JULY 26, 2021. ARK:/81985/N2TM73VIM

forebear, are noteworthy for featuring Acala, Dīpaṃkara and Dromtön alongside Cakrasamvara and Vajravārāhī in their busy tableaux.<sup>99</sup>

Most remarkable are the couplings of Acala—stalwart of the chaste Buddhist Tantrism advocated by Dīpaṃkara<sup>100</sup>—with Vajravārāhī, naked goddess of erotic tantric praxis propitiated by the Kagyü school. In a Karakhoto fragment of a Tangut painting that is presumed to have depicted Vajravārāhī or Vajrayoginī (x3550),<sup>101</sup> the Serlingpa Acala is placed in the upper corner, a

99 See HAR 30914, which depicts Dīpaṃkara and Dromtön in the upper left corner, the related work HAR 10203/36447, and HAR 8069 and 61324.

100 Sinclair, “The Appearance of Tantric Monasticism,” 219–220.

101 Samosyuk, *Buddhist Painting from Karakhoto*, 325, cat. no. 150; Semenov and Jin et al., *Eluosi guo li Aiermitashi bowuquan*, pl. 150. The fragment preserves part of a red goddess

position of high respect.<sup>102</sup> Another Vajravārāhī painting, probably of Tangut origin (HAR 35845), places Dīpaṃkara and Dromtön above the main subject and Acala in the lower register. To put this unusual pairing in context, it can be noted that one Vajravārāhī praxis lineage in the Tangut Empire claimed to have inherited teachings on the goddess from Dīpaṃkara via Dromtön. This lineage accepts the well-known story of Dīpaṃkara coming to Tibet to atone for expelling a Vajrayoginī/Vajravārāhī devotee from Vikramaśīla monastery. Tibetan sources identify this devotee as Maitrīpā (Advayavajra). But the Tangut transmission adds a twist: it was a manifestation of Vajrayoginī that encouraged Dīpaṃkara to go on his journey across the Himalayas. In this way Dīpaṃkara was repositioned as progenitor of a sensuous religious practice which, by all other accounts, he had opposed at Vikramaśīla.<sup>103</sup>

The Tangut recipients of Dīpaṃkara's lineage also claimed to have inherited instruction on the Cakrasaṃvara-system *Dākinī of the Four Syllables* (Skt. *akṣaracatuṣṭaya*) stemming from a South Indian yogin who wandered throughout Central Asia in the 11th century. He is referred to in Tangut, Tibetan and Chinese hagiographies<sup>104</sup> by various names: Padampa Sangyé (fl. mid-late 11th c., Tib. Pha dam pa sangs rgyas), Kṛṣṇapāda the younger (Tang. Tsy na réwr tsen 續禪繼緒, Chin. Xiao heizu 小黑足 = Tib. Nag chung, Chin. Na j zhong 捺几鍾) and deutero-Kamalaśīla (Tang. Kamalāsīlá 龔耀纒纒纒, Chin.

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who occupies a corresponding position in Tangut Vajrayoginī paintings such as x2388 (HAR 18089) and x2394 (HAR 18112) from The State Hermitage Museum.

102 On the significance of this area of the composition, see Sinclair, "The Appearance of Tantric Monasticism," 261.

103 Here I rely on Solonin, "Dīpaṃkara in the Tangut Context (Part 2)," 18–20, for this information from a Tangut commentary on Dīpaṃkara's *Satyadvayāvātāra*, the *Mýr mja e vó phí la* 禪禪禪禪禪. The aforementioned Tangut text *Quintessential Instruction of the Forty Banners of Emptiness* gives the usual story in which Dīpaṃkara's meditational deity (Tib. *yi dam*) Tārā advises him to go to Tibet. Tibetan sources for this episode, starting with the *Extensive Life-story* (*Rnam thar rgyas pa*) §§195–196, were examined by Haruki Shizuka, "Expulsion of Maitripa from the Monastery and Atiśa's Participation," *Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies* 63.3 (2015).

104 These names are taken from the Tang *Gu ma nu de l* 龔耀纒龔 [Vajravārāhī Aural Transmission] (MS: Nishida, *The Hsia-Hsia Avatamsaka*, III, 38, no. 172), ed. Sun Bojun 孙伯君, "Xixia wen Haimu er zhuanji kaoshi 西夏文《亥母耳传记》考释 [A Textual Study on the Tangut Version *Śrīvajrayoginisiddhi*]," in *Daxile yu dayuanman* 大喜乐与大圆满 [Supreme Bliss and Great Perfection], ed. Shen Weirong 沈卫荣 (Beijing: China Tibetology Publishing House, 2014), 145–180. The Chinese terms are from the *Sizi kongxingmu jiwén juanshang* 四字空行母記文卷上 [Notes on the Four-syllable Dākinī: Volume One], TK 329, independently studied by Penghao Sun, "Pha-dam-pa Sangs-rgyas in Tangut Xia: Notes on Khara-khoto Chinese Manuscript TK329," *Journal of Research Institute: Historical Development of the Tibetan Languages* 51 (2014). For a further contextualisation of the Chinese Karakhoto manuscript TK 329 see also the chapter by Carmen Meinert in this volume.



Gemalashila 葛麻刺石刺). He claimed to have been taught by Maitrīpā (Tang. Metyirva 禪刻糞芟, Chin. Mingdeliwa 銘得哩瓦)—the same yogin expelled by Dīpaṃkara—and to have separately received bodhisattva vows from the Serlingpa guru.<sup>105</sup> Accordingly, artworks from this milieu honoured multiple lineages; a set of nine small paintings commissioned in ca. 1273 depicts Padampa Sangyé together with eight other figures including the Serlingpa Acala and Sangyé Ōn Rinpoche (1251–1296, Tib. Sangs rgyas dBon), who served for two years as abbot of Taklung monastery.<sup>106</sup> Nonetheless, there are no indications that the Tangut masters who received these two streams of Cakrasaṃvara practice recognised that the Golden Isles guru formed one of their common links. In any case, as there was at least one Tangut “Buddhist centre which maintained a combination of *Bka’ gdams*/*Bka’ rgyud* traditions,”<sup>107</sup> the conditions had been created for the praxis of Acala to be brought, far from the Malay Archipelago, into an eclectic Tangut religious field alongside Vajravārāhī.

## 6 Conclusions

The ascription of a certain form of Acala to a teacher from the ‘Golden Isles,’ Serlingpa Dharmakīrti, is supported by several indications in artistic and textual corpora. Images identifiable as Acala are extant in present-day Malaysia and Indonesia; their classical source, the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi*, is known to have been studied there. The source for the ten furies invoked in the *Serlingpa sādhana*, the *\*Āryācala nāma dhāraṇī*, shows signs of being composed in Southeast Asia or some other maritime region. The praxis of the Serlingpa Acala also has faint connections with the religiosity of the bodhisattva taught by Śāntideva, which the Golden Isles guru is said to have mastered. There is not yet enough information to determine whether Ratnaśrījñāna’s short *Acalasādhana* (Peking 4895) is the work of the Ratnaśrī who taught the Golden Isles guru. The evidence accompanying the transfer of Serlingpa Acala worship to the Tibetan Plateau is, overall, consistent with the claims that are made about the origins of this tradition in Tibetan writings.

The praxis of the Serlingpa Acala was amplified and reworked by Atiśa Dīpaṃkara during its transmission to Tibet, resulting in minor variations.

105 Dan Martin, “Padampa Sangye: A History of Representation of a South Indian Siddha in Tibet,” in *Holy Madness: Portraits of Tantric Siddhas*, ed. Robert N. Linrothe (New York: RMA, 2006), 25.

106 David Templeman, *Aesthetic Path: Buddhist Art Collections* (Hong Kong: Hollywood Galleries, 2019), 50–57, no. 20.

107 Solonin, “Dīpaṃkara in the Tangut Context (Part 2),” 11.

Acala is visualised, by means of a more systematic invocation protocol, with two eyes instead of three, and two different figures underfoot instead of one. Acala's classical role as a suppressor of 'obstacles' in the sense of hindrances to awakening was emphasised, and the sense of suppressing the 'obstacle' of Hindu competition de-emphasised, even as vivid depictions of Acala trampling Gaṇapati proliferated in Central Asia. When the worship of the Serlingpa Acala spread from Tibet into the Tangut Empire, its literate bases receded from view, but the continuation of a learned tradition is still visible in productions such as the iconographically precise Tangut tapestries.

The Golden Isles Acala experienced a late rise to prominence in the Hexi Corridor—well after the deity fell out of view in South and Southeast Asian Buddhism—and a subsequent rapid decline at the start of the Mongol era. Having made the jump into the Sino-Tibetosphere in the mid-11th century, the deity's fortunes were tied to those of the Kadam sectarian tradition, which upheld the legacy of the Golden Isles guru and Dīpaṅkara. However, this form of Acala also was also accepted briefly among Kagyūpas who were in close contact with the Kadam tradition. In future explorations of the Golden Isles Acala's journey, there is room for more comprehensive art-historical analysis, and for further work on the primary sources, which would benefit from the understanding that the deity's prime movers belonged to a transregional Sanskrit world, which was larger and more diverse than 'Indian' or even 'Indo-Tibetan' Buddhism.

# Mahākāla Literature Unearthed from Karakhoto

*Haoran Hou*

## 1 Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Over the past two decades, scholars have come to realise the important role the Tangut Empire (ca. 1038–1227, in Chinese sources known as Xixia 西夏) played in spreading Buddhism in Central Asia. The Tangut Empire was located on the border of the Khitan Empire (907–1125, in Chinese sources known as Liao 遼), China and Tibet, and became a place where different Buddhist traditions converged, communicated, and interacted.<sup>2</sup> With the demise of the Northern Song (960–1126, 北宋) and the revival of Buddhism in Tibet, the Tangut rulers turned westward in search of spiritual guidance and sent a stream of messengers with a large number of gifts to invite Tibetan Buddhist masters from Tibet.<sup>3</sup> Many Tibetan Buddhist masters responded positively to the enthusiasm of the Tangut rulers. A number of Tibetan monks came to the Tangut Empire to preach and held important positions at the Tangut royal court.<sup>4</sup> There are

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- 1 I am grateful to Dr. Carmen Meinert and Dr. Weirong Shen for offering valuable advice on the structure of the article. In addition, I thank Dr. Iain Sinclair and Dr. Dylan Esler for reading the initial draft of my article and providing helpful comments. Needless to say, any errors that remain are mine alone.
  - 2 Carmen Meinert, “Introduction—Dynamics of Buddhist Transfer in Central Asia,” in *Transfer of Buddhism Across Central Asian Networks (7th to 13th Centuries)*, ed. Carmen Meinert (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2016), 1–16. See also, Weirong Shen, “Reconstructing the History of Buddhism in Central Eurasia (11th–14th Centuries): An Interdisciplinary and Multilingual Approach to the Karakhoto Texts,” in *Edition, éditions: l’écrit au Tibet, évolution et devenir*, ed. Anne Chayet, Cristina Scherrer-Schaub, Françoise Robin, and Jean-Luc Achard (Munich: Indus Verlag, 2010), 337–362; Kirill Solonin, “The ‘Perfect Teaching’ and Liao Sources of Tangut Chan Buddhism: A Study of ‘Jiexing zhaoxin tu,’” *Asia Major* 26.1 (2013): 79–120.
  - 3 Sam van Schaik, “Tibetan Buddhism in Central Asia: Geopolitics and Group Dynamics,” in *Transfer of Buddhism Across Central Asian Networks (7th to 13th Centuries)*, ed. Carmen Meinert (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2016), 57–81. See also, Karl Debreczeny, “Faith and Empire: An Overview,” in *Faith and Empire: Art and Politics in Tibetan Buddhism*, ed. Karl Debreczeny (New York: Rubin Museum of Art, 2019), 28–29.
  - 4 Elliot Sperling, “Lama to the King of Hsia,” *Journal of the Tibet Society* 7 (1987): 31–50; Maho Iuchi 井内真帆, “A Note on the Relationship between the bKa’-gdams-pa School and Mi-nyag/ Xia,” *Zangxue qikan 藏学期刊 Journal of Tibetology* 8 (2013): 58–62; Carmen Meinert, “Creation of Tantric Sacred Spaces in Eastern Central Asia,” in *Buddhism in Central Asia I—Patronage*,

a number of possible reasons the Tangut emperors sought Tibetan Buddhist masters, but one of the more important ones is that the Tibetan monks were known for being adept at utilising their Tantric power to benefit their patrons in mundane matters.<sup>5</sup> During a tumultuous time, being constantly drawn into warfare with their mighty neighbours, the Tangut rulers fervently hoped to solicit the protection of the divine power by relying on Tibetan Tantric adepts, and showed great interest in the wrathful rites associated with Mahākāla, the Great Black One. This deity typically appears in wrathful manifestations that eliminate obstacles and destroy enemies. In Tibetan Buddhism, he is one of the most potent *dharma* protectors. The Mahākāla cult became one of the most remarkable characteristics of Tangut imperial involvement with Tibetan Buddhism.<sup>6</sup>

Most scholarship on the Mahākāla cult in the Tangut Empire relies on Tibetan canonical sources and hagiographical writings. There has not been much research on the Mahākāla literature unearthed from Karakhoto. These materials are evidence that the teachings and practices of Mahākāla once circulated in the Karakhoto area. The decipherment of these texts will certainly contribute to our understanding of the Mahākāla cult in the Tangut Empire. However, to date these texts have not received much scholarly attention. To remedy this deficiency, this paper will provide a comprehensive overview of the Mahākāla literature from Karakhoto and discuss a range of issues surrounding its dissemination and translation.

## 2 Previous Studies

Elliot Sperling first raised the topic of the Tangut imperial engagement with the Mahākāla cult in two articles. In his first article, he researched the life and works of Tsami Lotsaba Sangyé Drakpa (fl. 12th c., Tib. rTswa mi lo tsā ba Sangs rgyas grags pa). He focused on Tsami Lotsaba's travels in India and the question of his identity—whether he was a Tangut or a Tibetan—as well as on Tsami Lotsaba's translated works related to Mahākāla. Sperling also explored his role

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*Legitimation, Sacred Space, and Pilgrimage*, ed. Carmen Meinert and Henrik H. Sørensen (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2020), 244–271, 271. [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004417731\\_012](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004417731_012).

5 For Tibetan Tantric Buddhism at the Tangut court, see Ruth W. Dunnell, “Esoteric Buddhism under the Xixia (1038–1227),” in *Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras in East Asia*, ed. Charles D. Orzech, Henrik H. Sørensen, and Richard K. Payne (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 465–477.

6 Jisheng Xie, “Tibetan Buddhism and Tibetan Buddhist Art in the Xixia Kingdom,” in *Faith and Empire: Art and Politics in Tibetan Buddhism*, ed. Karl Debreczeny (New York: Rubin Museum of Art, 2019), 83–103.

in the development of Tangut imperial interest in the Mahākāla cult.<sup>7</sup> In his second article, he investigated the career of a prominent monk of the Barom Kagyü school (Tib. 'Ba' rom bKa' brgyud pa), addressed as Tishi Repa Shérap Senge (1164/65–1236, Tib. Ti shri Ras pa Shes rab seng ge), who served as the imperial preceptor (Chin. *dishi* 帝師) at the Tangut court and was instrumental in propagating the Mahākāla instructions and practices that derived from Tsami Lotsaba.<sup>8</sup> Most importantly, Sperling pointed out the continuity of the Mahākāla cult between the Tangut Empire and the Yuan Dynasty (1279–1368, 元朝).<sup>9</sup> After the demise of the Tangut Empire in 1227, the land of the Tanguts came under the rule of the Mongol Prince Godan Khan (1206–1251), and became an important centre of Mongol-Tibetan interactions. The Mongols learned many aspects of Tibetan Buddhism from the Tanguts.<sup>10</sup>

Since the publication of Sperling's research, a large amount of Buddhist literature has been recovered from Karakhoto, providing new sources for further study. In a study of the Karakhoto documents, the Chinese scholar Shen Weirong drew attention to five Chinese texts associated with Mahākāla. For

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- 7 Elliot Sperling, "Rtsa-mi lo-tsā-ba Sangs-rgyas grags-pa and the Tangut Background of Early Mongol-Tibetan Relations," in *Tibetan Studies, Proceedings of the 6th International Association for Tibetan Studies*, vol. 3, ed. Per Kvaerne (Oslo: The Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture, 1994), 801–825.
- 8 Elliot Sperling, "Further Remarks Apropos of the 'Ba' rom pa and the Tanguts," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 57.1 (2004): 1–26. In his study, Sperling mentions that the literature he found at that time was written with reference to an autobiography of Tishi Repa. At the time, however, this text had not been discovered. To the surprise of all, the autobiography of Tishi Repa referred to by Sperling recently emerged. See Minyak Repa Karpo (Mi nyag Ras pa dkar po, 1198–1262), "*Bla ma rin po che 'gro ba'i mgon po ti shri ras pa'i nram par thar pa* [The Biography of the Precious Teacher, the Protector of All Sentient Beings, Namely Tishi Repa]," in *Lo pañ nram thar phyogs bsgrigs* [Collection of Biographies of the Buddhist Translators and Pañḍitas], vol. 7 (Beijing: Krung go'i Shes rig dPe skrun khang, 2018), 255–365. This new material is full of detailed information about Tishi Repa's activities in the Tangut Empire. For more details of this biography, see Haoran Hou, "War Magic: The Mongol's Conquest of the Tangut Empire, as Seen Through the Eyes of Tishi Repa (1164/65–1236, Tib. Ti shri Shes reb seng ge)," *BuddhistRoad Paper* 2.3 (forthcoming).
- 9 For the Mahākāla cult in the Yuan Dynasty, see Herbert Franke, "Tan-pa, a Tibetan Lama at the Court of the Great Khans," in *Orientalia Venetiana I*, ed. Merio Sabatini (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1984), 157–180. See also, Weirong Shen, "Magic Power, Sorcery and Evil Spirit: The Image of Tibetan Lamas in Chinese Literature during the Yuan Dynasty (1260–1366)," in *The Relationship Between Religion and State (chos srid zung 'brel) in Traditional Tibet*, ed. Christoph Cüppers (Lumbini, Nepal: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2004), 151–186.
- 10 Yury Kokholov, "The Xi Xia Legacy in Sino-Tibetan Art of the Yuan Dynasty," accessed June 28, 2019. <http://www.asianart.com/articles/xi-xia/>. See also, Christopher P. Atwood, "The First Mongol Contacts with the Tibetans," *Revue d'Études Tibétaines* 31 (2015): 21–45.

one of them, a hymn dedicated to Mahākāla, titled *Jixiang Dahei bazuzan* 吉祥大黑八足讚 [Hymn to Śrī Mahākāla in Eight Stanzas], he determined its Tibetan original and conducted a comparative study of its bilingual versions.<sup>11</sup> This study was groundbreaking. Since Sperling's studies rely mostly on Tibetan canonical works and the collective writings of Tibetan masters, Shen's discovery of the Mahākāla texts in the Karakhoto documents undoubtedly provides more definite evidence for the spread of the Mahākāla cult in the Tangut Empire.

Alexander Zorin published some major studies on the Mahākāla documents from Karakhoto in Tibetan. The most important of these is his monograph on a long Tibetan scroll labeled Dx 178 kept at St. Petersburg, which was published in 2015.<sup>12</sup> The scroll is a collection of Tibetan tantric ritual texts, consisting mainly of thirteen texts on various forms of Mahākāla, plus other texts related to Narasimha, Vajrapāṇi, etc. In this scroll, some of the Mahākāla texts are identified as passed down from Tsami Lotsaba and one of his most prominent disciples, namely, Ga Lotsaba Zhönupel. Zorin translated these texts from Tibetan into Russian and reproduced photographs of the complete scroll. These efforts greatly facilitated the research of later scholars.<sup>13</sup>

So far, there is a large amount of literature related to Mahākāla from Karakhoto in both the Chinese and Tibetan languages. It is a pity, however, that neither Shen nor Zorin commented upon material in other languages. The Chinese and Tibetan Mahākāla manuscripts date to the same period, from the late 12th to the 14th century. We may assume that these bilingual texts were simultaneously taught, practised, and circulated in the Karakhoto region. A comparative study of the material in both languages is much needed.<sup>14</sup>

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- 11 Shen Weirong 沈卫荣, "Xixia mengyuan shidai de dahei tianshen chongbai yu heishu-icheng wenxian—yi hanyi longshu shengshi zao 'jixiang dahei bazu zan' wei zhongxin 西夏蒙元时代的大黑天神崇拜与黑水城文献—以汉译龙树圣师造〈吉祥大黑八足赞〉为中心 [The Worship of Mahākāla during the Tangut and Mongol Yuan Periods and the Karakhoto Documents Related to It: Centering on *The Hymn to Śrī Mahākāla in Eight Stanzas* by Ārya Nāgārjuna]," in *Xizang lishi he fojiao yuwenxue yanjiu* 西藏历史和佛教的語文學研究 [Philological Studies of Tibetan History and Buddhism], ed. Shen Weirong 沈卫荣 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2010), 418–459.
- 12 Alexander Zorin, *Buddhyskie ritualnye teksty. Po tibetskoy rukopisi XIII v.* [Buddhist Ritual Texts Based on a Tibetan Manuscript in the 13th Century] (Nauka: Vostochnaya literature, 2015).
- 13 A selection of his research is also published in English. See Alexander Zorin, "A Collection of Tantric Ritual Texts from an Ancient Tibetan Scroll Kept at the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences," *Journal of the International College for Postgraduate Buddhist Studies* 17 (2013): 118–171.
- 14 Chinese scholar Huang Jiehua studied the Chinese Mahākāla documents excavated from Karakhoto as his doctoral dissertation. His research is mainly based on the Chinese

### 3 Chinese and Tibetan Manuscripts of Mahākāla from Karakhoto

After the fall of the Tibetan Empire, the Tibetan language continued to be used as an international *lingua franca* by non-Tibetan peoples, and Tibetan Buddhism kept flourishing in Central Asia from the 10th to the 14th centuries.<sup>15</sup> The Mahākāla literature from Karakhoto was created in such a large environment, whether imported or produced locally.

This section provides an overview of the Mahākāla literature from Karakhoto and addresses the following questions: What kind of Mahākāla teachings and practices were disseminated? Are there any differences between the Tibetan and Chinese versions of the same ritual text? If so, what are they, and how did they occur?

#### 3.1 Chinese Manuscript TK 262

The Chinese manuscript TK 262<sup>16</sup> was manufactured in the Tangut period. It is extant in seven and a half pages, bound with a pamphlet stitch. The paper is lined. A page is 20 cm high, and the half page is 12.3 cm wide. The text is arranged vertically in columns from right to left. The calligraphic style is regular script (Chin. *kaishu* 楷书). The column is 14.2 cm high; the head margin is 3.2 cm high, and the foot margin is 2.5 cm high. Each half page has nine lines of seventeen to nineteen characters each.<sup>17</sup> For the sake of convenience, I divide the text into seven sections, from A to G, presented section by section below.

##### 3.1.1 Section A

The manuscript begins: “If the practitioner wants to make the offering cake [...]”.<sup>18</sup> Then, it gives instruction on how to make offerings to invoke Mahākāla, followed by the phonetic transliteration of the *Dahei genben*

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sources, and his main contribution is the transcription and collation of the Chinese literature related to Mahākāla. See Huang Jiehua 黄杰华, *Hanzang baoman hufa daheitian xinyang yanjiu* 汉藏宝鬘：护法大黑天信仰研究 [Sino-Tibetan Precious Garland: A Study on the Cult of the Dharmapāla Mahākāla] (PhD diss., Minzu University, Beijing, 2011).

- 15 Takeuchi, Tsuguhito, and Maho Iuchi, *Tibetan Texts from Khara-khoto in The Stein Collection of the British Library: Studies in Old Tibetan Texts from Central Asia* (Tokyo: The Toyo Bunko, 2016), 3–15.
- 16 Shi Jinbo 史金波, Wei Tongxian 魏同贤, and E.I. Kychanov, ed., *Ecang Heishuicheng wenxian* 俄藏黑水城文献. *Khara Khoto Texts Preserved in Russia* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1996–1998), vol. 4, 331–335.
- 17 A manuscript description is in Shi, Wei, and Kychanov, *Ecang Heishuicheng wenxian*, vol. 6, 31–32.
- 18 Shi, Wei, and Kychanov, *Ecang Heishuicheng wenxian*, vol. 4, 331: 夫修习[者]欲放施食 [...].

*mingzhou* 大黑根本命呪 [Root-life Mantra of Mahākāla] that the practitioner shall recite. Then it gives some instructions on how to meditate on the protective deities, how to chant this *mantra*, and how to pray for fulfilment. The offering process may also incorporate a fire offering (Chin. *shaoshi* 燒施), since an altar of fire (Chin. *huotan* 火壇) is mentioned several times.

### 3.1.2 Section B

This section continues to describe offerings: “If the practitioner wishes to present an offering cake, he shall fill a vessel with flesh and blood, reciting the three-character *mantra* (Chin. *sanzi zhou* 三字呪) to transform it into ambrosia (Chin. *ganlu* 甘露), and then put the palms together to chant the *mantra* [of offering] [...].”<sup>19</sup> The spell is omitted here. He shall chant the *mantra* three times and state what he asks of Mahākāla, who comes to enjoy the offerings. After receiving the pledge from Mahākāla, he shall send the deity away.

### 3.1.3 Section C

This section consists of multiple *mantras*, comprising the *Mingzhou* 命呪 [Life Mantra] of Mahākāla and the six *mantras* of six different peaceful and wrathful female divinities. Their names indicate that they are associated with different purposes of ritual performance. Each *mantra* is headed by a title and begins with the seed syllable (Skt. *bīja*, Chin. *zhongzi zi* 種子字) oṃ (Chin. *an* 唵).

### 3.1.4 Section D

The next section is a praise titled *Zantanji* 讚嘆偈 [Verses of Praise], dedicated to Mahākāla. Zorin’s publication of the Tibetan scroll Dx 178 provided more Mahākāla material in Tibetan than Shen had access to. In light of this new material, *Verses of Praise* is a word-for-word translation of Tibetan text no. 6, *Ka* in Dx 178.<sup>20</sup> Due to space constraints, I do not undertake a detailed survey of the Chinese and Tibetan texts here, rather, I analyse some of the significant differences between the two versions. The Tibetan version opens with:

When the great *dPal rGa lo* [that is Ga Lotsaba] abided at the great charnel ground *Śītavana*, he manifestly saw of Vajra Mahākāla and at the same moment praised him with this king of hymns.<sup>21</sup>

19 Shi, Wei, and Kychanov, *Ecang Heishuicheng wenxian*, vol. 4: 夫修習者欲放施食, 則用法椀滿盛血肉, 誦三字呪變成甘露, 合掌應誦呪曰 [...].

20 Zorin, “A Collection of Tantric Ritual Texts,” 150–153.

21 The English translation is quoted from Zorin, “A Collection of Tantric Ritual Texts,” 150. Zorin provides the Tibetan transcription on the same page: *dur khrod chen po bsil ba yi 'tshal zhes bya ba na/ dpal chen po rga lo bzhugs pa'i tshe/ rdo rje nag po chen po zhal mngon sum du gzigs nas/ de nyid kyi tshe bstod pa'i brgyal po 'dis bstod do*.



The Chinese version leaves out the prayer to Ga Lotsaba and starts directly with the praise: “HŪM! At the great charnel ground Śītavana [...]”<sup>22</sup> In addition, the last three verses and the colophon, which names Ga Lotsaba as the author of the hymn in Tibetan<sup>23</sup> are also lost in the Chinese version. Thus, the name of the author disappears in the translation.

Zorin identifies the “great dPal rGa lo” as Ga Lotsaba Zhönupel. He travelled to India and met Tsami Lotsaba at the Vajrāsana Monastery and submitted to the latter’s tutelage.<sup>24</sup> During this sojourn in India, Ga Lotsaba engaged in a nine-month retreat at the cemetery Śītavana and subdued the Raven-headed Mahākāla (Chin. Juwu Daheizun 具烏大黑尊) during meditation.<sup>25</sup> In Tibetan Buddhist tradition, Ga Lotsaba is regarded as the subduer of Raven-headed Mahākāla and the most important transmitter of the teaching lineage associated with this deity. This was inextricably linked to his experience while conducting the retreat at Śītavana in Bodhgaya. In the biographical record of Ga Lotsaba and in the opening verses of the hymn in Tibetan, he visualises the divine manifestation of Raven-headed Mahākāla and writes the hymn to praise the deity while residing in the cemetery.

### 3.1.5 Section E

This section is a *maṇḍala* sketch. The diagram is marked with information on the direction, shape, colour, and size of the different elements of the *maṇḍala*, and where the tribute shall be placed. The names of some of the tributes given in section A are written here. The sketch is meant to be used to guide the practitioner in meditation and to set up the *maṇḍala* during the offering process. The below discussed booklet F. 191: W103, Text E is a teaching on establishing a *maṇḍala* in order to make an offering to Mahākāla. There are some similarities between the two that deserve a more detailed study in the future.

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- 22 Shi, Wei, and Kychanov, *Ecang Heishuicheng wenxian*, vol. 4, 332: 廣大寒林墓地中 [...].
- 23 “Hymn to the Raven-headed Mahākāla composed by the great Pel Ga Lo at the great charnel ground Śītavana is complete (Tib. *dpal chen po rga los la//nag po chen po bya rog gi mying can la bstod pa//dur khrod chen po bsil ba'i mtshal du' mdzad pa' rdzogs s+ho//*).” See Zorin, “A Collection of Tantric Ritual Texts,” 153.
- 24 Sperling, “Rtsa-mi lo-tsa-ba Sangs-rgyas grags-pa,” 814.
- 25 Carl Yamamoto, *Vision and Violence: Lama Zhang and the Politics of Charisma in Twelfth Century Tibet* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2012), 227.

### 3.1.6 Backside of Section E

Usually, the text is on one side of the paper and the back is left blank. The backside of this diagram is an exception, with a line of what looks like scrawled Tangut characters. The handwriting is not very clear in some places. The modern collators give it an ambiguous name, *Jiaozi yu zhaxie* 校字與雜寫 [Correcting Characters and Miscellaneous Writing].<sup>26</sup> Scholars have also overlooked this line, as none have tried to figure out exactly what it is. The line begins with the seed syllable *oM* in the Lantsha script, followed by the Tangut text (Tang. 𑖑𑖓𑖔𑖕𑖖𑖗𑖘𑖙). I tentatively translate it as: “*oM!* True Buddha and holy sages, door, three.” That is all this line literally means.

This line is either related to the text on the front of the manuscript, or it is not. If it is related, then given that the seed syllable *oM* appears at the beginning of various *mantras* in this manuscript (as described in section C), perhaps the person who wrote this line intended to emphasize the significance of that seed syllable in the *mantra* recitation and ritual performance. If it is unrelated, perhaps the scribe casually wrote down a line of notes or intended to write a new text but stopped before continuing it. But in either case, we can be sure that the text is of a Buddhist nature and that the scribe was familiar with the Tangut script. Given this, the person who scribbled this line was most probably a Tangut Buddhist practitioner. This is evidence that supports the argument that these Chinese Mahākāla texts were accessible to Tangut practitioners.

### 3.1.7 Section F

This section is a long *mantra* that is entitled *Daheitian genben mingzhou* 大黑天根本命呪 [The Root-Life Mantra of Mahākāla]. This *mantra* appears several times in the Chinese Mahākāla texts from Karakhoto and plays a vital role in the Mahākāla cult.<sup>27</sup> After the title, there is a two- or three-character space, followed by script indicating the end of the text: complete (Chin. *jing* 竟).

### 3.1.8 Section G

This section is a hymn to Raven-headed Mahākāla, titled *Dahei zan* 大黑讚 [Hymn to Mahākāla]. Shen transcribed and edited the Chinese text. He remarks that there are three hymns to Mahākāla in Chinese among the Karakhoto

26 Shi, Wei, and Kychanov, *Ecang Heishuicheng wenxian*, vol. 4, 333.

27 The importance of the *Root-Life mantra* to the worship of Mahākāla in the Tangut Empire is presented in Megan Bryson, “Between China and Tibet: Mahākāla Worship and Esoteric Buddhism in the Dali Kingdom,” in *Chinese and Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism*, ed. Yael Bentor and Meir Sahar (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2017), 409–415.

documents, including *Hymn to Mahākāla*.<sup>28</sup> This hymn focuses on the manifest visualisation (Tib. *mngon rtogs*) and contributes a canonical description of Raven-headed Mahākāla.<sup>29</sup>

Thanks to the efforts of the Rubin Museum of Art, a large collection of *thangka* paintings of Mahākāla are available online, including those of Four-armed Mahākāla and Raven-headed Mahākāla. A portrait of Ga Lotsaba Zhönupel appears in some of the *thangka* paintings of Four-armed Mahākāla.<sup>30</sup> Also, in some paintings, the appellation ‘Ga Lo’ or ‘Ga Lotsaba’ appears in inscriptions of the transmission lineage of Mahākāla, especially in relation to Four-armed Mahākāla. Some scholars mistakenly identify the name Ga Lo or Ga Lotsaba in these transmission lineages as Ga Lotsaba Namgyel Dorje (1203–1282, Tib. rGwa lo tsā ba rNam rgyal rdo rje), an important master in the transmission lineage of the Vajrabhairava teachings born in the Rong area of Amdo.<sup>31</sup> The two Ga Lotsabas are often confused, and this issue has been unclear for years. For example, Khamtrül Sönam Döndrup (Tib. Khams sprul bSod nams don grub) appears to be confused about how to identify one such name and even questions whether Minyak Ga Lotsaba (Zhönupel) and Rongpo Ga Lotsaba (Namgyel Dorje) are the same person.<sup>32</sup>

### 3.2 Chinese Manuscript F. 191: W103

The booklet F. 191: W103 was acquired by the Inner Mongolia Institute of Culture Relics and Archaeology during excavations in the Karakhoto area in 1983 and 1984. The manuscript was written roughly in the Yuan Dynasty.

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- 28 Shen, “The Worship of Mahākāla during the Tangut and Mongol Yuan Periods,” 425.
- 29 The hymn is transcribed and translated in Zorin, “A Collection of Tantric Ritual Texts,” 150–153. In some ways, Peking 2642/Derge 1776, *rje btsun dpal nag po chen po la bstod pa* [Praise to the Lord Śrī Mahākāla], composed by Tsami Lotsaba, is a text dedicated to the Raven-headed Mahākāla. The text is included in the canon, even though it is attributed to a Tibetan author.
- 30 For a portrait of Ga Lotsaba as depicted in an 18th-century *thangka* painting of the Drukpa Kagyü school, see Himalayan Art Resources, “Item no. 453,” accessed June 28, 2020. <https://www.himalayanart.org/items/453>.
- 31 For one such example, see Himalayan Art Resources, “Item no. 35880,” accessed June 28, 2020. <https://www.himalayanart.org/items/35880>. According to Jeff Watt’s entry, the transmission lineage of the Four-armed Mahākāla is as follows: “Vajradhara, Bodhisattva Mati, Nagarjuna, Aryadeva, Acharyavira, Du Shap Greater and Younger, Vajrasana the Greater, Abhayakaragupta, Tsami Sangye Shap, Gva Lotsawa Namgyal Dorje, Khampa Aseng, Pagmodrupa, Drigung Jigten Gompo, etc.” ‘Gva Lotsawa Namgyal Dorje’ is a mistake. It should be Ga Lotsaba Zhönupel.
- 32 Khamtrül Sönam Döndrup, *Gangs can mi sna grags can gyi ’khrungs ’das lo tshigs re’u mig* [Chronological Table of Famous Tibetans in the Past] (Pe chin: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2006), 132.

A total of twenty-seven pages of the booklet are preserved. The page size is 14.1 cm in width and 22.8 cm in length. Each page is written on one side, with seven lines of text, and is arranged from left to right, top to bottom. The characters are in black, but some added marks of punctuations and section division are in red. The calligraphic features suggest that at least two scribes may have been involved in writing this manuscript.<sup>33</sup> The booklet is a collection of five Chinese texts related to Mahākāla in a variety of literature genres. As the manuscript is incomplete, it is possible that there were more than five texts in the original. This group of five texts is numbered from A to E. In the following, I introduce and examine them one by one.

### 3.2.1 Text A

Text A is entitled *Jixiang Dahei xiufa* 吉祥大黑修法 [Practices of Śrī Mahākāla] and covers eight pages. The front part of the manuscript is damaged. The original name is missing. The title *Practices of Śrī Mahākāla* was invented by later collators. The main body of the text is divided into five sections, each with a subheading. The first section, *Sanshui ji* 三水偈 [Stanza of Three Waters], is mainly about how the practitioner prepares himself to pray for Mahākāla, how to bathe his hands, face, and feet with blood, poison, etc. The second section is the *Jingli ji* 敬礼偈 [Stanza of Homage]. It instructs the practitioner to praise the following characteristics of Mahākāla, such as his solemn appearance, deep voice, equipoised and immovable mind, and compassionate heart. The next section is the *Anzuo ji* 安坐偈 [Stanza of Comfortably Sitting]. The practitioner is required to visualise the symbolic image of Mahākāla and invite him to reside on top of a lotus and sun disc in the practitioner's presence. As for the textual form, the first three sections are classified as stanza (Chin. *ji* 偈, an abbreviated form of Chin. *jituo* 偈陀, Skt. *gāthā*), a genre of metre. Each section is a short hymn with seven or nine characters in one verse and ends with Sanskrit *mantras* transcribed in Chinese.

The section that follows is called the *Feng wugongshi* 奉五供食 [Five Offerings of Food], which primary focus is how to offer praise, incense, lamps, food, music, and so on, to delight the five senses of Mahākāla: the eyes, ears,

33 Regarding this archaeological excavation, see *Heicheng chutu wenshu* (*hanwen wenshu juan*) 黑城出土文書 (汉文文书卷) [The Documents Excavated from Karakhoto (Chinese Documents)], ed. Li Yiyou 李逸友 (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 1991), 3–10, and a transcription of the manuscript F. 191: W103 is in *ibid.*, 217–218. For digital images, see *Zhongguo cang Heishuicheng hanwen wenxian* 中國藏黑水城漢文文獻 [Karakhoto Documents Preserved in China], ed. Ta La 塔拉, Du Jianlu 杜建錄, Gao Guoxiang 高國祥, Nei Menggu Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo 內蒙古考古研究所 (Beijing: Guojia Tushuguan chubanshe, 2008), vol. 8, 1667–1692.

nose, tongue, and body. This procedure is essentially how to establish contact with the deity. The text then moves on to the *Zhaoqing ji* 召請偈 [Stanza of Invocation]. The practitioner repeatedly calls for Lord Śrī Mahākāla (Chin. *Jixiang daheizun* 吉祥大黑尊) to descend. According to the ritual text, his retinue is, foremost, a hundred-thousand Rite-Protectors Raven-headed Mahākālas (Chin. *Xingzun Dahei ju wumian* 行尊大黑具烏面, Tib. *Las mgon bya rog gdong can*),<sup>34</sup> followed by the Black Flesh-eater with the Head of a Lion (Chin. *Danrou ju dashizimian* 噉肉具大獅子面, Tib. *Sha za nag po bDud mgon seng gdong*),<sup>35</sup> numbering tens of billions, and then ten million *dākinīs* led by the Great Mother-goddess of Yin Caṇḍikā (Chin. *Dayin Tianmu Zandige* 大陰天母讚帝葛).<sup>36</sup> In terms of iconography, the Rite-Protector Raven-headed Mahākāla, the Black Flesh-eater, and Caṇḍikā belong to the retinues of the Four-armed Mahākāla according to Ga Lotsaba's style (Tib. *Ye shes mgon po phyag bzhi pa rGwa lo'i lugs*).<sup>37</sup>

In the course of the invocation, the ritual performer repeatedly invites Mahākāla to descend, along with his retinue, and ends each invocation with the following sentence: "You are invited to [dwell in] this place. May you come!"<sup>38</sup> The invocations are accompanied by offerings of specific substances, including oils, fats, alcohol, and the five ambrosias (Skt. *pañcāmṛta*, Chin. *wuganlu* 五甘露, Tib. *bdud rtsi lnga*), etc. After making the offering to Mahākāla, the ritual performer states before him the "divine action that I invoke you to do."<sup>39</sup> In this context, divine action (Chin. *faxing zhe* 法行者) means that at the behest of the ritual performer, Mahākāla shall tame or eliminate those who endanger Buddhism, disturb sentient beings, and inflict harm on themselves. This text concludes with six verses that express sincere wishes for the success of the ritual and dedicate the merit to oneself and all other sentient beings. In form and function, the final verses are, in fact, a Stanza of Transferring Merit (Skt. *pariṇāmana*, Chin. *huixiang ji* 回向偈).

Text A is emphasised here because it provides insight into the entire process of a ritual performance for Mahākāla. Accordingly, the procedure is organised

34 For the iconography of the Rite-Protector Raven-headed Mahākāla, see René Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *Oracles and Demons of Tibet. The Cult and Iconography of the Tibetan Protective Deities* (Delhi: Book Faith India, 1996), 48–49.

35 For the iconography of the Black Flesh-eater, see Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *Oracles and Demons of Tibet*, 65.

36 For a brief description of Caṇḍikā, see *ibid.*, 46.

37 For the iconography of the Four-armed Mahākāla and his retinues according to the style of Ga Lotsaba, see *ibid.*, 46–47.

38 Ta, Du and Gao, *Zhongguo cang Heishuicheng hanwen wenxian*, vol. 8, 1673: 此處召請願降臨。

39 *Ibid.*, 1675: 汝處所委法行者。

into five stages: (1) preparatory practice, (2) visualising and seating the deity, (3) making praise and offering to the deity, (4) invoking the deity to perform the divine action, and (5) transferring the merit. The text provides a framework for performing the relevant rituals of Mahākāla and gives guidance to the practitioner in each phase. Thus, it can be categorised as an evocation (Skt. *sādhana*, Chin. *chengjiu fa* 成就法, Tib. *sgrub thabs*), a literary genre of Tantric Buddhism.<sup>40</sup>

### 3.2.2 Text B

The next three texts, B, C, and D are all hymns. Text B is the *Zhizun Dahei badaozan* 智尊大黑八道贊 [Hymn to the Lord of Wisdom Mahākāla in Eight Stanzas].<sup>41</sup> The text consists of two parts. The first is a hymn to the Lord of Wisdom Mahākāla (Chin. *Zhizu Dahei* 智尊大黑, Tib. *Ye shes mgon po nag po chen po*) and gives a brief description of this form of Mahākāla as having one face and four arms. In the text, this form is addressed as 'Raven-headed Mahākāla' (Chin. *Juwu Dahezun* 具烏大黑尊). The end part of Text B is titled *Zhesana ji* 折薩捺偈 [Stanza of Toṣana]. It primarily teaches one how to feed Mahākāla with an offering of specific substances in a skull cup (Skt. *kapāla*, Tib. *thod pa*).

### 3.2.3 Text C

Text C is entitled *Jixiang Dahei bazuzan* 吉祥大黑八足贊 [Hymn to Śrī Mahākāla in Eight Stanzas], composed by Ārya Nāgārjuna. Shen conducted a comparative study and identified the text's Tibetan original.<sup>42</sup> According to his research, the Tibetan original is titled *dPal nag po chen po'i bstod pa rkang pa brygad pa zhes bya ba* (Skt. *Śrīmahākālāstaka*). Three different Tibetan translations of this text are preserved in the *Tengyur* (Tib. *bsTan 'gyur*) (Peking. 2639, 2644 and 2645). The Chinese text *Hymn to Śrī Mahākāla in Eight Stanzas* corresponds to text VII of the Tibetan scroll Dx 178, which Zorin studied and translated.<sup>43</sup>

40 For the literary genre of *sādhana*, see Daniel Cozort, "Sādhana (sGrub thabs): Means of Achievement for Deity Yoga," in *Tibetan Literature: Studies in Genre*, ed. José Ignacio Cabezon and Roger R. Jackson (Boulder: Snow Lion, 1996), 331–343.

41 For a translation of the literature of *The Eight-Stanza Hymn to Mahākāla* in Tibet from a later period, see Pieter Cornelis Verhagen, "Notes Apropos to the Oeuvre of Si tu Pan chen Chos kyi 'byung gnas (1699?–1774) (5)—The 'Eight-Stanza Hymn to Mahākāla': A Glimpse of the Translator at Work," *Revue des Études Tardo-antiques* 39 (2017): 166–228.

42 Shen, "The Worship of Mahākāla during the Tangut and Mongol Yuan Periods," 430–439.

43 Zorin, *Buddiyskie ritualnye teksty*, 86–93.

### 3.2.4 Text D

Text D is titled *Shifang hushen zan* 十方護神贊 [Hymn to the Protective Deities of the Ten Directions]. The text lists eleven names of the deities of the ten directions that the praise addresses, headed by Śakra (Chin. Dishitian 帝釋天), Agni (Chin. Huoshen 火神), and Yama (Chin. Yudi 獄帝). In Buddhism, these deities are ranked among the various heavens (Chin. *zhutian* 諸天) and their number varies. The text then moves on to the main subject, a hymn to Mahākāla.

Despite the title, the *Hymn to Protective Deities of the Ten Directions*, the text devotes a great deal of space to the praise of Mahākāla. In the stanzas, he is honoured as the meditational deity (Chin. *xiuxi zunzhu* 修習尊主, Skt. *iṣṭadevatā*, Tib. *yi dam*). After the praise of Mahākāla, the text adds a eulogy for his female consort Mahākālī (Chin. Daheimu 大黑母),<sup>44</sup> which is not often seen in other hymns dedicated to Mahākāla. Elsewhere, the *Tengyur* contains some independent hymns to Mahākālī.<sup>45</sup> Mahākāla is often depicted in images in sexual union (Tib. *yab yum*, Skt. *yuganddha*) with his secret consort (Tib. *gsang yum*, Skt. *guhyaśakti*) Mahākālī. The purpose of her union with the Great Heaven (Skt. Mahādeva, Chin. Datian 大天) is explained in Text D: “In order to pacify all the women, she sits [covering] over half of the body of the Great Heaven”.<sup>46</sup> The term *roushan* (柔善) translates ‘to pacify’ referring the action of removing evil and calamities.<sup>47</sup>

The praise that follows is related to the practitioner’s mundane concerns and worldly benefits: “You know what diseases people suffer from. In your proximity, they become fearless!”<sup>48</sup> This suggests that this ritual may be connected to healing illness. After that, the practitioner is to pay homage to two

44 For the iconography of Mahākālī, see Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *Oracles and Demons*, 45.

45 An example is a hymn authored by Vararuci (Tib. mChog sred), titled *dPal lha mo nag mo chen mo la bstod pa bryad pa shes bya ba* (Skt. *Śrīmahākālastotrapadāṣṭakānāma*, Chin. 吉祥大黑天女讚八句, Peking 2643) [Hymn to Śrī Mahākālī in Eight Stanzas], in *Tengyur* (Peking edition), vol. 59, 297a6–298a4.

46 Ta, Du and Gao, *Zhongguo cang Heishuicheng hanwen wenxian*, vol. 8, 1688: 柔善一切女人故, 大天身半而安住.

47 In the manuscript *Dahei qiuxiu bing zuofa* 大黑求修並作法 [The Ritual Texts on the Evocation and Practice of Mahākāla] (B 59), *roushan* appears along with three other terms to describe the four types of the *dharma* activities: (1) pacifying (Chin. *roushan* 柔善, Skt. *sāntika* Tib. *zhi ba'i las*); (2) increasing or prospering (Chin. *yuanman* 圓滿, Skt. *pauṣṭika*, Tib. *rgyas pa'i las*); (3) dominating (Chin. *zizai* 自在, Skt. *vaśikaraṇa*, Tib. *dbang gi las*), and (4) destroying or killing (Chin. *xiangfu* 降伏, Skt. *māraṇa*, Tib. *dras po'i las*) Shi, Wei, and Kychanov, *Ecang Heishuicheng hanwen wenxian*, vol. 6, 55.

48 Ta, Du and Gao, *Zhongguo cang Heishuicheng hanwen wenxian*, vol. 8, 1688: 人何疾病汝能知, 彼處能令无怖畏.

female divinities: Yamī, the sister of Yama, who is the Lord of Death (Chin. Yudi Jiemei Mowangmu 獄帝姐妹魔王母) and Kāmeśvarī, the Goddess of Erotic Pleasure (Chin. Yujie Zizaimu 欲界自在母) who is a form of Śrīdēvī.<sup>49</sup>

The next part is a long phonetic *mantra* of Mahākāla. This Chinese version is probably transcribed from the Tibetan transcription of the Sanskrit *mantra*. I am not able to reconstruct the *mantra*. At a glance, there are some changes, deletions, and additions in the manuscript. There are circular markings to the right of each line, perhaps meant to punctuate the successively written transliteration or to make the practitioner pause in the right place while reciting the *mantra*. These marks indicate that these ritual texts were, indeed, practiced.<sup>50</sup>

### 3.2.5 Text E

This text is titled *Dahei Changzhou* 大黑長咒 [The Long Mantra of Mahākāla]. The first part is a long *mantra* in transcription, which may be the reason for the name of the text. The next part is a lecture on how to obtain the bliss of Mahākāla by establishing the *maṇḍala* and making a cake offering (Chin. *shishi* 施食). These two parts are written by different hands. A cake offering is one item given as ‘tribute’ to Mahākāla, which is intended to prevent the recipient from attacking the ‘tribute’ giver.

### 3.3 Chinese Manuscript A 7

The Chinese manuscript A 7 is titled *Ciwu Dahei yaomen* 慈烏大黑要門 [Quintessential Instructions of the Raven-headed Mahākāla]<sup>51</sup> and was written in the Yuan Dynasty. The manuscript has a pamphlet stitch and holds eighteen pages in total. The paper is hemp. The page is 9.3 cm high, and half a page is 9.3 wide. The text is written vertically in regular script, from right to left. Each half page has seven lines, and each line consists of nine to ten characters. The front text is written in black ink with vermilion markings.<sup>52</sup> The title *Quintessential Instructions of the Raven-headed Mahākāla* is given

49 For Śrīdēvī and the twin brother and sister Yama and Yamī, see Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *Oracles and Demons*, 22–37, 81–87. For the Goddess Kāmeśvarī, see Anna A. Golovkova, “Kāmeśvarī: Visualizing the Goddess of Desire,” in *A Garland of Forgotten Goddesses: Tales of the Feminine Divine from India and Beyond*, ed. Michael Slouber (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2021).

50 Carmen Meinert indicates a case of a ritual manual in use from the Karakhoto documents, see Carmen Meinert, “Embodying the Divine in Tantric Ritual Practice: Examples from the Chinese Karakhoto Manuscripts from the Tangut Empire (ca. 1038–1227),” *Revue d’Études Tibétaines* 50 (2019): 67.

51 Shi, Wei, and Kychanov, *Ecang Heishuicheng wenxian*, vol. 5, 180–189.

52 A manuscript description of A 7 is in Shi, Wei, and Kychanov, *Ecang Heishuicheng wenxian*, vol. 6, 39.



in the manuscript and precedes the main body of the text. The manuscript consists of eighteen pages: the first fourteen are text, and the last four are diagrams and sketches. The structure of the text is: (1) visualising the Four-armed Mahākāla and the Raven-headed Mahākāla; (2) a series of *mantras* chanted for different purposes (judging from the titles), headed by *Dahei genbenzhou* 大黑根本咒 [The Root Mantra of Mahākāla]; (3) rituals for making human effigies to kill enemies; (4) two *mantras*: *Wugongyang zhenyan* 五供養真言 [The Mantra of the Five-fold Offering] and *Simian zhou* 四面呪 [The Mantra of Four Directions]; (5) intoning the names of the five *tathāgatas*, each prefixed with ‘pay homage to’ (Chin. *nanwu* 南无). The remaining four pages are diagrams and graffiti: (6) on the right side is an illustration of a human effigy related to the preceding ritual text, and on the left side is a seed syllable *HŪM*; (7) a seed syllable *HŪM* with a sketch of a bird; (8) the last two pages are damaged and chaotic, with Sanskrit seed syllables overlaid on Chinese writing that seems like it is not related to the ritual.

The Chinese scholar Huang Jiehua transcribed and edited manuscript A 7.<sup>53</sup> He makes a conjectural reading of the opening part and provides a brief account of the transmission of the teaching. Based on the Chinese transcription, he takes the last master’s name as Ga Lotsaba Zhönupel, and thus considers him to be the transmitter of this text. However, this conclusion is not conclusively proven, and whether the text can be attributed to Ga Lotsaba is open to further discussion.

### 3.4 Chinese Manuscript B 59 and Tibetan Scroll Dx 178

The Chinese manuscript titled *Dahei qiuxiu bing zuofa* 大黑求修並作法 [The Ritual Texts on the Evocation and Practice of Mahākāla],<sup>54</sup> designated B 59, is a Yuan Dynasty manuscript. The paper is made of hemp. Each page is 23 cm high and half a page 14 cm wide. The text is written by a single hand in a regular script, with eleven lines per half page and seventeen characters per line. Apart from the main body of the text, a number of annotations in small characters are visible in the manuscript. The document contains a text followed by the sentence: “I am afraid the master’s teaching will be misrepresented, so I write it down.”<sup>55</sup> This indicates that the purpose of writing down the teaching for the first time was to ensure its purity and to be able to properly convey the message

53 Huang Jiehua 黄杰华, “Heishuicheng chutu zangchuan shixiu wenshu ‘Ciwu Dahei yao-men’ shishi 黑水城出土藏传实修文书〈慈乌大黑要门〉试释 [A Tentative Interpretation of the Tibetan Ritual Text: *Quintessential Instructions of the Raven-headed Mahākāla*],” *Xixia xue* 西夏学 [Tangut Studies] 4 (2009): 70–77.

54 Shi, Wei, and Kychanov, *Ecang Heishuicheng wenxian*, vol. 6, 42–59.

55 Shi, Wei, and Kychanov, *Ecang Heishuicheng wenxian*, vol. 6, 49: 上師所傳法恐妄故書寫。

of the teacher. At the same time, it reflects a process of changing the medium of the teaching, from oral to written. We cannot determine whether this teaching was first put down in this particular manuscript or if it was copied by the scribe from another source. The manuscript is not complete. The beginning section is mutilated, and the end part is fragmentary. It comprises a total of thirty-four full pages and two half pages.<sup>56</sup>

Dx 178 is a long scroll consisting of eight separated leaves. The text is written on both sides in Tibetan cursive script. This copy was sent to St. Petersburg in 1913 and has been considered a Dunhuang scroll ever since, before being re-examined by Zorin and identified as a Karakhoto document. Zorin dated the scroll to the 12th to 13th centuries. He further provided a detailed codicological and palaeographical description of the Tibetan scroll and an introduction to its structure and content.<sup>57</sup> It is therefore not repeated here. The following discussion revolves around B 59 and the connection between it and Dx 178.

### 3.4.1 Structure and Content of B 59 and Its Equivalent Parts in Dx 178

The Chinese manuscript B 59 is by far the largest collection of Chinese Mahākāla texts recovered from Karakhoto and contains some twenty-three ritual texts of varying length. These texts do not seem to be particularly organised and are rather miscellaneous. It is not possible to go through all the texts of B 59 in this paper, but only a few preliminary findings from the current study. In terms of content, B 59 contains a considerable number of the Four-armed Mahākāla and the Raven-headed Mahākāla-centered rituals and practices. The same holds true for Dx 178. Another notable feature is that a number of texts in B 59 refer to the use of human effigies.<sup>58</sup> In Chinese, this kind of ritual is called *Yuanren lie xing* 冤人哩哦行 [Ritual of Making Use of Human Effigies].<sup>59</sup> A preliminary comparison of some of the ritual text in Tibetan and Chinese indicates that *yuanren* (冤人) is used to translate the Tibetan word *bsgrub bya*, ‘the object of the ritual’, referring to the ritually targeted person or spirit. The

56 For a description of manuscript B 59, see Shi, Wei, and Kychanov, *Ecang Heishuicheng wenxian*, vol. 6, 44.

57 Zorin, “A Collection of Tantric Ritual Texts,” 119–121.

58 For the iconography and ritual use of human effigies in Tibet, see Bryan J. Cuevas, “Illustrations of Human Effigies in Tibetan Ritual Texts: With Remarks on Specific Anatomical Figures and Their Possible Iconographic Source,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Third series 21.1 (2011): 73–97.

59 For a study of the ritual of making human effigies based on Chinese sources, see Shen Weirong 沈衛榮, “Lun Xixia fojiao zhi hanzang yu xianmi yuanrong 論西夏佛教之漢藏與顯密圓融 [Discussing Tangut Buddhism’s Synthesis of Sino-Tibetan Traditions and Exoteric and Esoteric Doctrines],” *Zhonghua wenshi luncong* 中華文史論叢 *Journal of Chinese Literature and History* 1 (2020): 265–309.

Chinese word *lǐe* (哩哦) is transcribed from the Tibetan term *ling ga*, a phonetic transliteration of the Sanskrit term *liṅga*, literally meaning mark or sign, which is interpreted as ‘substitute effigy’ in the Tantric ritual context. Another Tibetan word for *liṅga* is *ngar mi*. The Chinese term *lǐe* is also alternatively written as *lin’ge* (蘭葛), as found in the Karakhoto documents.<sup>60</sup> The effigies from these Mahākāla texts from Karakhoto come in a variety of forms, two or three dimensional, drawn on paper or on cloth from the cemetery, and moulded in dough, earth, clay, or other materials. These rituals are usually performed with the purpose of suppressing, subduing, maddening, or killing the object of the ritual.<sup>61</sup>

By comparing the Chinese and Tibetan Mahākāla materials from Karakhoto, six Chinese texts in B 59 are found to have a corresponding Tibetan text or paragraph in Dx 178. Although the six Chinese texts are silent as to their authors, translators and transmitters, we find through their Tibetan counterparts that two of them are derived from Ga Lotsaba. Recall that Dx 178 includes the *Hymn to the Raven-headed Mahākāla*, composed by Ga Lotsaba during his retreat at the great charnel ground Śītavana, and its Chinese version is found in another Karakhoto manuscript TK 262, section D, titled *Verses of Praise* (see section 3.1.4). Undoubtedly, Ga Lotsaba occupies an important place in the Chinese and Tibetan Mahākāla literature unearthed at Karakhoto. His name also appears on a passage in B 59 on the transmission of the Mahākāla teachings, which will be discussed below.

### 3.4.2 The Transmission Lineage of The Quintessential Instruction for Self-Apprehension in B 59

The Chinese manuscript B 59 contains a text entitled *Zisheshou Jimen* 自攝受齋門 [The Quintessential Instruction for Self-apprehension]. The first section is corrupted. The end part preserves a record of the teaching lineage:

The sequence of the transmission of the quintessential instruction is: Dharma Master Lingchu passed it on to Master Xianjue, the latter to Dharma Master Jingangzuo, then to Amiegaluo’ebaheng Caotouluti’e,

60 Shen, “Lun Xixia fojiao,” 298, no. 2.

61 In a lecture given by Dr. Iain Sinclair, he points out that Mahākāla eats ‘bad’ people. Thus, Mahākāla’s ‘tribute’ potentially involves the human sacrifice of victims who harm Buddhism. In Karakhoto, it seems that effigies were the usual substitute for live sacrifice. Iain Sinclair, “Whose Heads did Mahākāla Hunt? Interreligious Contacts among Forgotten Kingdoms in Sumatra,” (paper presented at the workshop “Interreligious Relations in Early Southeast Asia: Encountering Buddhists, Brahmins and Indigenous Religions,” CERES Ruhr University Bochum, January 16–17, 2020).

then to Dajixiang, then to Master A, then to Master Langbu, then to Alang Zuozhu, then to Master Ka. From that teacher, the purified and devout disciples receive this teaching. It cannot be passed on to those who do not believe in it. *The Quintessential Instruction for Self-apprehension* ends.<sup>62</sup>

Based only on their names, some masters in this account appear to be of Indian and Tibetan origins. Documenting the transmission lineage of a teaching is a means of maintaining its orthodoxy. But beyond its religious significance, it also has historical value, chronicling how the teaching is believed to have spread from India through Tibet to the Tangut Empire. I here describe this transmission lineage drawing on previous studies.<sup>63</sup>

The Mahākāla teaching lineage ultimately goes back to the a-historical deity Vajradhara. But our text is silent on this. The first name on the transmission lineage, namely, Dharma Master Lingchu (鈴杵法師), refers to the Indian adept Ghaṅṭāpāda (*alias* Vajraghaṅṭāpāda). He is an important teacher in the lineage of the Four-armed Mahākāla. Ghaṅṭāpa passed this teaching to Master Xianjue (賢覺師). Xianjue is a Chinese translation of the name of the Indian master Bhadrabodhi (ca. 10th c.), often referred to as Bodhibhadra, who bestowed the *bodhisattva* precepts on Atiśa Dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna (982–1054, Tib. A ti sha Mar me mdzad dpal Ye shes) at Nālandā. Xianjue passed it on to Dharma Master Jin'gangzuo (金剛座法師), that is, Vajrāsana (Tib. rDo rje gdan pa). Zeng reconstructs the names of the next four masters in the lineage in Tibetan and Sanskrit. Accordingly, the next two names on the lineage are transcribed: Amiegaluo'ebaheng (阿滅葛囉萼八恆) and Caotouluoti'e (草頭路替訛), that is, Abhayākara Gupta and Tsami Lotsaba Sangyé drakpa. The word *lut'i'e* (路替訛) is a phonetic transcription of the term *lo tsā ba* 'translator.' The name Caotouluoti'e is alternatively written as Caotou Yishi (草頭譯師). Yishi is a semantic translation of *lo tsā ba*, the 'translator.' Both names are associated with Tsami Lotsaba Sangyé drakpa. The next is Dajixiang (大吉祥) 'Great Auspiciousness.' This name translates to Tibetan as Pelchenpo (Tib. dPal chen po). In the literature related to Mahākāla, this name is often used to refer to Ga Lotsaba, namely, Pelchenpo Ga Lotsaba Zhönupel. Regarding the next person in the lineage, Ashi (阿師) 'Master A,' Zeng points out that Master A probably refers to A Sengé Wangchuk (Tib. A Seng ge dbang phyug), whose name

62 Shi, Wei, and Kychanov, *Ecang Heishuicheng wenxian*, vol. 6, 43: 彼剂门相襲次第者：鈴杵法師傳賢覺師，彼師傳金剛座法師，彼師傳阿滅葛囉萼八恆草頭路替訛，彼師傳大吉祥，彼師傳阿師，彼師傳浪布師，彼師傳阿浪座主，彼師處傳替上師，彼師處淨信弟子授得此法。无信人勿傳者矣，自攝受劑門也。

63 The most important study on the record of the Mahākāla teaching lineage in B 59 is Zeng, "Xixia Daheitian chuancheng chutan," 151–158.

follows Ga Lotsaba's in the transmission lineage preserved in the *History of the Lord of Wisdom Mahākāla*. She further notes that A Sengé Wangchuk was also known as Lama A Seng (Tib. Bla ma A seng) and Khampa A Seng (Tib. Khams pa A seng). Lama A Seng resided with Ga Lotsaba at Gyel Lhakhang (Tib. rGyal lHa khang) and gave the teachings of the Raven-headed Mahākāla to the First Karmapa Düsum Khyenpa (1110–1193, Tib. Dus gsum mkhyen pa).<sup>64</sup> The next few masters in this lineage are not yet identified. In the name Alang Zuozhu (阿浪座主), Alang is probably part of the master's *dharma* name, or his surname, but is otherwise unidentified. The word *zuozhu* literally means 'the lord or owner of the seat', corresponding to the Tibetan word *densapa* (Tib. *gdan sa pa*), meaning 'abbot' or 'throne-holder.'

#### 4 Ga Lotsaba Zhönupel and His Role in the Spread of the Mahākāla Cult from India to the Tangut Empire

In his study of Tsami Lotsaba Sangyé Drakpa, Sperling makes use of an early biography of Ga Lotsaba by Lama Zhang. This text contains a detailed account of Ga Lotsaba's meeting with Tsami Lotsaba in India and his submission to the latter's tutelage.<sup>65</sup> Ga Lotsaba was one of Lama Zhang's root teachers. Thus, this text also sheds light on Lama Zhang's life. Carl Yamamoto utilises it to study the social and religious activities of Lama Zhang.<sup>66</sup> In discussing the teaching lineages Lama Zhang received, Yamamoto points out that the version of the Mahākāla teachings he adopted is primarily for the Raven-headed Mahākāla derived from Ga Lotsaba. He further states that the Ga Lotsaba was a specialist in the Raven-headed Mahākāla and subdued this wrathful deity while meditating on Cakrasaṃvara at the great charnel ground Śitavana in the vicinity of Bodhgaya.

Sperling and Yamamoto's studies focus on Tsami Lotsaba and Lama Zhang respectively, while Ga Lotsaba has never been given sufficient attention. The latter's biography,<sup>67</sup> written by Lama Zhang Yudrakpa Tsöndrū Drakpa (1123–1193, Tib. Zhang gYü brag pa brTson 'grus grags pa), the founder of the Tselpa

64 For the phonetic reconstruction of these names into the Tibetan or Sanskrit language and their identification, see Zeng, "Xixia Daheitian chuancheng chutan," 151–152, 156–157.

65 For Ga Lotsaba's study with Tsami Lotsaba in India, see Sperling, "Rtsa-mi Lo-tsa-bā Sangs-rgyas Grags-pa," 801, 809–811.

66 Yamamoto, *Vision and Violence*, 39–40.

67 Lama Zhang Yudrakpa Tsöndrū Drakpa, "dPal chen rGwa lo'i rnam thar byang chub sems 'byongs ma [The Biography of Ga Lotsaba]," in *dPal ldan tshal pa bka' brgyud kyi bstan pa'i mnga' bdag zhang g.yu brag pa brtson 'grus grags pa'i gsung 'bum rin po che* [Collected

Kagyü school (Tib. Tshal pa bKa' brgyud pa), bears witness to the history of the spread of the Tantric teachings and practices from India to Tibet and its surrounding areas.<sup>68</sup> In an effort to clarify Ga Lotsaba's role in the early transmission of the Mahākāla cult, the following study delves into his biography to collect relevant information.

#### 4.1 *Taming Raven-Headed Mahākāla: Ga Lotsaba's Retreat at the Great Charnel Ground Śītavana*

According to Ga Lotsaba's biography, during the retreat at the great charnel ground Śītavana of Bodhgaya, he dwelled in a 'meditation cave called Bodhi Tree' (Tib. Shing nya gro ta'i phug) in the middle of the cemetery. Risen corpses (Tib. *ro langs*), flesh-eaters (Tib. *sha za*), and jackals (Tib. *lce spyang*) live around the dwelling. After making a feast offering and a cake offering, he settles down. At the beginning, he is constantly disturbed by Raven-headed Mahākāla and is not able to enter meditative absorption (Skr. *samādhi*, Tib. *ting nge'i 'dzin*). As he has never seen this thrilling demonic creature before, he does not know who he is or where he comes from, addressing him as the Lord of Destruction (Tib. 'Jig pa'i bdag po). After subduing Mahākāla in meditation, he makes a breakthrough in his practice and gained many spiritual attainments, including having visions of the Cakrasaṃvara *maṇḍala* and being visited by wisdom *ḍākinīs*.<sup>69</sup> The text goes on to recount Ga Lotsaba's miracles and accomplishments during his retreat, and how he interacts with the local rulers and other practitioners.

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Works of Lord of the Teachings of the Tselpa Kagyü School, Lama Zhang Yudrakpa Tsöndrū Drakpa], vol. 1 (Kathmandu: Gam po pa Library, 2004), 181–222.

68 In a study of Tibetans who visited the Indian monastery Vajrāsana, Roberto Vitali presents a synopsis of Ga Lotsaba's biography written by Lama Zhang. Roberto Vitali, "In the Presence of the 'Diamond Throne': Tibetans at rDo rje gdan (Last Quarter of the 12th Century to Year 1300)," *The Tibet Journal* 34.3–35.2, Special Issue: The Earth Ox Papers (2009–2010): 201–204. For the ritual texts involving the use of human effigies, see Haoran Hou, "The Ritual Use of Human Effigies in the Esoteric Buddhist Literature from Karakhoto," *BuddhistRoad Paper* 2.8 (forthcoming).

69 Lama Zhang, *rGwa lo'i rnam thar*, 190.1–191.2. For reference, another source addressed *dPal Ye shes mgon po'i lo rgyus* [History of the Lord of Wisdom Mahākāla] gives a more detailed account of Ga Lotsaba's meeting with the Raven-headed Mahākāla and his requesting for the ritual text of evocation from the divinity at the great charnel ground Śītavana. See Phakmo Drukpa Dorjé gyelpo, "dPal Ye shes mgon po'i lo rgyus [History of the Lord of Wisdom Mahākāla]," in *Dus gsum sangs rgyas thams cad kyi thugs rje'i rnam rol dpal ldan phag gru rdo rje rgyal po mchog gi gsung 'bum rin po che* [Collective Works by Phakmo Drukpa Dorjé Gyelpo] (Kathmandu: Khenpo Shedrub tenzin and Lama Thinley namgyal), vol. 7, 273.3–275.3.

Accordingly, the retreat culminated in a war-magical battle:

A boisterous noise was coming from the sky. All the heretics showed up and led their army to the Lama [Ga Lotsaba]. The latter went into meditative absorption. By doing so, he transformed into the Three-eyed Heruka before the soldiers, who were terrified and fled back. Following this, he meditated in front of a Buddhist image of Āryāvalokiteśvara to the left of the *bodhi* tree. He had a vision of Avalokiteśvara sitting in the semi-cross-legged posture [...] after seeing the goddess Mārīcī, he asked her for spiritual instructions. In front of the self-arisen stone image [(Tib. *rdo sku rang byon*)] of Mahākāla, he made a cake offering and sat down. Consequently, he saw the Two-armed [Mahākāla] up in the sky and wrote a hymn of him that began with: ‘*HŪṂ!* From the great charnel ground Śītavana [...]’. Next, he set his sights on the Four-armed [Mahākāla] on the earth and asked him for the vital-heart *mantras* and the evocation [of Mahākāla]. Later, when the evocation texts previously written by Lama Minyak and the revised version [by him] were [compared], it was said that there was no distinction between the *mantras* and the manifest realisation [(Tib. *mngon rtogs*)]. There was also not a fixed structure to the text [...].<sup>70</sup>

The following points are worth noting in relation to this account. First, Ga Lotsaba is described as transforming into a three-eyed Heruka in a meditative state and repulsing the heretic military forces.<sup>71</sup> Second, the account mentions that Ga Lotsaba wrote a hymn for the Two-armed [Mahākāla] after seeing him. It is a hymn dedicated to the Raven-headed Mahākāla. The hymn appears in the excavated literature of Karakhoto in both Tibetan and Chinese (see section 3.1.4). Third, the end part of the cited paragraph is not clear, and

<sup>70</sup> Lama Zhang, *rGwa lo'i rnam thar*, 195.2–196.2: *nam mkha' la 'ur sgra chen po dang/ mu stegs pa'i mi thams cad kyang der byung ste/ bla ma la dmag drangs pa dang/ bla ma ting nge'i 'dzin la bzhugs pas dmag thams cad kyis he ru ka spyan gsum par mthong nas bro so/ /de nas yang nya gro ta'i g.yon phyogs na sangs rgyas pa'i rten 'phags pa spyan ras gzigs yod pa'i drung du bsgoms te spyan ras gzigs phyed skyil du bzhugs pa'i zhal mthong/[...]/ lha mo 'od zer cad mthong nas gdams ngag zhus/ dpal nag po chen po'i rdo sku rang byon gyi drung du gtor ma mdzad nas bzhugs pas/ nam mkha' la phyag gnyis pa zhal mthong ste/ hūm/ bsil ba'i tshal gyi dur khrod nas/ zhes pa'i bstod pa mdzad/ de nas sa la phyag bzhi pa'i zhal gzigs te/ srog snying dang sgrub thabs la sogs pa dngos su zhus/ / phyis bla ma me nyag gi sgrub thabs snga ma dang/ zhu thug mdzad pas sngags rnam dang mngon rtogs la khyad par ma byung zer/ go rim cag cag po'i nges pa ni ma byung bar 'dug.*

<sup>71</sup> Regarding war magic in Tantric Buddhism, see Iain Sinclair, “War Magic and Just War in Indian Tantric Buddhism,” *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Anthropology* 58.1 (2014): 149–164.

my translation is rather tentative. It gives a clue as to the role of Ga Lotsaba in the formation of the Mahākāla literature: he received the teaching from the divine author Mahākāla and engaging in editing the work of his teacher Lama Minyak. In the text, Lama Minyak, literally meaning the ‘Tangut Lama,’ refers to Tsami Lotsaba Sangyé Drakpa, who is associated with five texts on Raven-headed Mahākāla.<sup>72</sup> One of them is described as passed down from Tsami Lotsaba to Ga Lotsaba.<sup>73</sup>

Tsami Lotsaba was not the only (human-form) teacher from whom Ga Lotsaba received the Raven-headed Mahākāla teachings. The Tibetan canon contains a ritual text titled *dPal mgon po bya rog ma'i bskangs kyi cho ga'i rim pa* [The Sequence of the Ceremony of Fulfilling the Glorious Lord the Raven-headed Mahākāla] (Skt. *Śrīnāthakākayonitarpaṇavidhikrama*, Peking 4960), authored by Abhayakāra and translated by Ga Lotsaba. Tsami Lotsaba also worked with the Indian master Abhayakāra to translate many texts associated with Mahākāla. Abhayakāra and Tsami Lotsaba served as Ga Lotsaba's most important teachers in India. The three names Abhayakāra, Tsami Lotsaba, and Ga Lotsaba often appear together in the Mahākāla teaching lineages.

#### 4.2 *Rainmaking and the Tangut Emperor's 'Drum of the Law': Ga Lotsaba's Activities in Eastern Tibet and His Connection to the Tangut Royal Court*

After learning about the early transmission of the Raven-headed Mahākāla in India, the next question is: how did this deity come to the Tangut Empire? Sperling emphasizes the crucial role Tsami Lotsaba and Tishi Repa played in spreading the Mahākāla teachings in the Tangut realm. In contrast to his teacher and disciple, Ga Lotsaba's importance in this regard has been

72 The two terms ‘*me nyag*’ and ‘*mi nyag*’ are alternatively present in Tibetan sources. For Tsami Lotsaba's involvement in the Mahākāla literature, Sperling lists all the available Mahākāla works connected with Tsami Lotsaba. Sperling, “Rtsa-mi Lo-tsa-bā Sangs-rgyas Grags-pa,” 813–818. The five texts are preserved in *Bya rog ma bstan srung bcas kyi chos tshan pod lnga bzhugs pa las mgon po'i rgyud dang sgrub thbs man ngag skor* [Collected Tantras and Related Texts Concerned with the Propitiation of Mahākāla and his Retinue] (Palampur: Sungrab nyamso gyunphel parkhang [Tibetan Craft Community], 1973–1979). This collection also contains a number of Ga Lotsaba's translations of Indian texts and self-written works related to Mahākāla of the raven-headed and other forms. Owing to paragraph limitations, I shall not attempt to list all these texts here. It should be noted that this Mahākāla anthology of the Pakmo Drupa School (Tib. Phag mo gru pa) is one of the most important collections of Tibetan Mahākāla literature in addition to the Tibetan Buddhist Canon.

73 Zorin, *Buddiyskie ritualnye teksty*, 111–118.



overlooked. His role needs to be studied more closely, especially because a number of Mahākāla texts related to Ga Lotsaba were excavated at Karakhoto.

Ga Lotsaba's biography narrates his activities after his return to Tibet from India and provides a window to his connection to the Tangut Empire. At the age of thirty, he went to India, studied there for almost fourteen years, and then returned to Tibet. After spending several years in Central Tibet, he left for Eastern Tibet around the late 1140s. He spent seven years in Eastern Tibet. During this time, he returned to his birthplace, Teuchung (Tib. The'u chung) in the Tsongkha (Tib. Tsong kha) area of Amdo and found that his parents were no longer alive. He stayed there for fewer than ten days and received an invitation from the Emperor of China (Tib. *rgya nag gi rgyal po*). Reluctant to go forward, he fled back to Kham, where he engaged in restoring monasteries, subduing heretics, and preaching the *dharma*. In this period, he was also active in the Sok region (Tib. *sog*) of Nyak River (Tib. Nyag chu). Biographical accounts of Ga Lotsaba in Eastern Tibet portray him as a ritualist who specialised in water management and rainmaking. At the Nyak River (Tib. Nyag chu), he went into meditation, demonstrating the miracle of splitting the water asunder and establishing a narrow path through the gorges. This made no one dare to make an enemy of him. He used his super knowledge (Tib. *mngon shes*) to help his donor find some lost horses. Thereafter, he was perceived by the donor as a man displaying magical power.<sup>74</sup> In the mid-1150s he left Eastern Tibet for Central Tibet, passing through the place Drak of the Gor region (Tib. *'gor rdzong gi brag*),<sup>75</sup> where he stayed for several months. An interesting account of his experiences in this place is given in his biography:

The local inhabitants of Drak of the Gor region begged him [Ga Lotsaba] to pray for rain. At first, he did not accede to this request. But after their repeated pleas, he bestowed upon them the drum of the law (Tib. *khriṃs mnga*) that was said to belong to the Tangut emperor and instructed: 'Wherever there is need of rain, strike this drum there. Wear a raincoat such as a felt garment before you go, because the rain comes down right away [at the stroke of the drum]. What happened next was exactly what he said it would be.'<sup>76</sup>

74 Lama Zhang, *rGwa lo'i rnam thar*, 206.2–208.5.

75 The location of Gor dzong drak is not clear. Vitali assumed this place is in Latö (Tib. La stod) in Central Tibet, where Ga Lotsaba had sojourned for a while upon his return from India. See Vitali, "In the Presence of the 'Diamond Throne,'" 203.

76 Vitali, "In the Presence of the 'Diamond Throne,'" 209.3–5: *'gor rdzong gi brag la yul mi mams kyis char dbab par zhu ba phul bas dang po ma gnang nan drag po bskyed pa'o phyi da la/ me nyag rgyal po'i khriṃs mnga rin zer ba'i mnga zhig bskur nas/ char gar dgos pa'i sa*

The miracle of making the rain fall is a narrative plot device common in the Tibetan hagiographical writings.<sup>77</sup> What is curious here is the reference to the ‘drum of the law.’ Fernanda Pirie discusses this term, its various symbolic meanings, and its development in Tibetan Culture, mentioning the early section of *rLangs kyi po ti bse ru rgyas pa* [The History of the Lang Family] (ca. 14th c.) that records the sage Jangchub Drékol’s (ca. 11th c., Tib. Byang chub ’dre bkol) travel to Eastern Tibet in search of his destined disciples.<sup>78</sup> When the sage arrived at Mt. Wutai, the ruler Ling Gesar (Tib. gLing Ge sar) approached him and asked for magical powers. In return, the ruler offered him various gifts, including the ‘great drum of the law, the glorious subjugator’ (Tib. *khirms kyi rnga ma che zil gnon*), the ‘black banner of the law, the conqueror of the enemy’ (Tib. *khirms dar nag po dgra ’dul*), and other devices.<sup>79</sup> Here again we see the drum of the law. Pirie considers the genealogy of the Lang (Tib. rLangs) clan to be of a semi-mythical nature and is, therefore, inclined to think that the word refers to a symbolic shamanic object. She also mentions that the drum of the law also appears in the *Pad ma bka’ thang* [Chronicles of Pema] written by Orgyen Lingpa (1323–ca.1360, Tib. O rgyan gling pa) in 1352 in a description of

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*thams cad la rnga ’di brdungs dang char ’babs kyi/ phyng pa la sogs pa char khebs gon la song/ de ma thag tu ’babs yin no gsungs pa la de kho na bzhin du byung/.*

- 77 For water control and rainmaking in the Buddhist context, see Per K. Sørensen, “Lhasa Diluvium: Sacred Environment at Stake: The Birth of Flood Control Politics, the Question of Natural Disaster Management and Their Importance for the Hegemony over a National Monument in Tibet,” *Lungta* 16 (2003): 85–134, and Robert DeCaroli, “Snakes and Gutters: Nāga Imagery, Water Management, and Buddhist Rainmaking Rituals in Early South Asia,” *Archives of Asian Art* 69.1 (2019): 1–19.
- 78 In her blog post, Fernanda Pirie has an interesting discussion of how the meaning of the drum of the law has shifted in Tibetan historical and religious writings. She makes the hypothesis that in the early Tibetan literature, the term was primarily used symbolically, implying the shamanic power. Later, as Tibetan society became more and more secularised, the term was gradually used more straightforwardly to denote political authority, military power, or law justice. She also suggests that there is also a possibility that the shift is in an opposite direction. But the materials she uses are much later, 14th and 15th century sources. The biography of Ga Lotsaba written by Lama Zhang is a 12th century text. In it we see a dualism presented in the description of the drum of the law: the coexistence of secular authority and shamanic power. See Fernanda Pirie, “The Drum of the Law: Symbol of Shamanic Power, Warfare, or Justice?” July 24, 2018, accessed June 28, 2020. <http://tibet.anlaw.org/node/56>.
- 79 Regarding Jangchub Drékol of the Lang clan and his encounter with Ling Gesar, see Olaf Czaja, *Medieval Rule in Tibet: The Rlangs Clan and the Political and Religious History of the Ruling House of Phag mo gru pa. With a Study of the Monastic Art of Gdan sa mthil* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2014), 65–68.

Khubilai Khan's (r. 1260–1294) attack on Sakya monastery in the 1280s.<sup>80</sup> She assumes that the usage of the term here is more prosaic, indicating the army with the imperial authority. She further points out that these two texts likely draw on earlier literature.

*The History of the Lang Family* and *Chronicles of Pema* were both written down in the 14th century. In contrast, Lama Zhang's biography of Ga Lotsaba dates from the 12th century. It provides a much earlier use of this terminology, 'drum of the law.' There are some interesting similarities in the plots concerning the 'drum of the law' in *The History of the Lang Family* and the biography of Ga Lotsaba. First, both Jangchub Drekol and Ga Lotsaba were offered the drum during their travels in Eastern Tibet. And, secondly, the persons who gave them the drums were secular rulers, either of a legendary or historical character. The latter point needs further analysis. Ga Lotsaba's biography claims that his drum was once possessed by a Tangut imperial ruler. Of course, the stated source of this drum may be fabricated. But, in terms of a narrative pattern, the term 'drum of the law' is associated with a historical figure of the Tangut emperor in Ga Lotsaba's biography, much earlier than it is association with Khubilai Khan in the *Chronicles of Pema*. Of even greater interest is that Ga Lotsaba's biography indicates how he used the drum. In that tantric context, the drum is transformed into a religious implement and plays a mediating role in rainmaking. By striking it, the worldly authority derived from the drum's initial owner is transformed into a tantric or shamanic power that brings down the rain. This is a fascinating incident, where we see political authority, musical performance, and ritual action all intertwined in one drum.<sup>81</sup>

#### 4.3 *Ga Lotsaba's Network(s) in Eastern Tibet and Other Possible Routes for Mahākāla's Transmission to the Tangut Empire*

Ga Lotsaba and his teacher Tsami Lotsaba were both born in Amdo.<sup>82</sup> However, while his teacher is often addressed as Lama Minyak, the 'Tangut teacher,' Ga

80 For this incident, see Per K. Sørensen and Guntram Hazod, *Rulers on the Celestial Plain: Ecclesiastic and Secular Hegemony in Medieval Tibet* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2007), 185–187.

81 In her blog, Pirie refers to Arthur Mark Trewin's doctoral dissertation, which points out that the drum is a means by which kings entered the transcendental world and gained legitimacy as such. For the role the drum played in ritual and political activities in the Kingdom of Ladakh, see Arthur Mark Trewin, "Rhythms of the Gods: The Musical Symbolics of Power and Authority in the Tibetan Buddhist Kingdom of Ladakh" (PhD diss., City University, London, 1995).

82 Lama Zhang, *rGwa lo'i rnam thar*, 181. 4–5. The text describes Ga Lotsaba's birthplace: "The place called Teuchung [(Tib. The'u chung)] in Tsongkha [(Tib. Tshong kha, the Tibetan text reads 'gtsang ka')], in the southern part of Yar mo thang [(Tib. dByar mo thang)]

Lotsaba is called 'Kham pa,' that is, 'a person from Kham.' His clan name Ga was presumably extracted from the regional place name Minyak Ga (Tib. Mi nyag Gha).<sup>83</sup> This may be due to Ga Lotsaba's vigorous missionary activities in Kham. He arrived in Kham in the late 1140s and stayed there for seven years, until the mid-1150s. In roughly 1149, Lama Zhang went to see Ga Lotsaba, who was residing at Nakshö (Tib. Nags shod) in Western Kham. He then spent six years there studying with Ga Lotsaba and accompanied him when he returned to Central Tibet in the mid-1150s. In the meantime, Ga Lotsaba gave Lama Zhang many instructions and initiations, including rituals for the Six Yogas of Nāropa, Cakrasaṃvara, Kālacakra, and Mahākāla. The practices of Mahākāla that Lama Zhang received from Ga Lotsaba were mainly related to Raven-headed Mahākāla.<sup>84</sup> According to the tradition of Ga Lotsaba, Raven-headed Mahākāla serves in the retinue of Four-armed Mahākāla; thus, they are propagated jointly. These two forms of Mahākāla played an important role in Lama Zhang's political and military activities.<sup>85</sup>

Sperling suggests that the Mahākāla teachings reached the Tangut Empire through transmissions from Tsami Lotsaba to Ga Lotsaba, then to Lama Zhang, and finally to Tishi Repa. He stresses the important role that Tishi Repa played in this transmission. Tishi Repa arrived in the Tangut Empire in the second half of the 1190s and remained there until its demise in 1226. During the last three decades of the Tangut Empire, Tishi Repa was active at the Tangut royal court, where he expelled the Mongols and other invaders using the magic of Mahākāla.<sup>86</sup> Sperling's studies were groundbreaking for the study of Tibetan Buddhism in the Tangut Empire and provided some very important discoveries. Ongoing research into the Karakhoto documents uncovers Mahākāla texts

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in Amdo, on the border of the two [lands] China and Tibet" (Tib. *rgya bod gnyis kyi sa mtshams/ mdo smad kyi dbyar mo thang gi lho phyogs gtsang ka'i the'u chung zhes bya ba*). The location of Teuchung has not been identified. Yar mo thang is a famous place in the history of Sino-Tibetan relations, where the Sino-Tibetan peace treaty of 730 was concluded. Previously, scholars were divided as to where the place was. A recent study shows that it is located in present-day Yatang (牙塘) of Hezheng Country (和政縣) of Linxia Autonomous Prefecture (臨夏州) in the central part of Gansu Province (甘肅省). See Xie Guangdian 謝光典, "Yemotang wei Daxiachuan Buzheng 野摩塘 (dByar mo thang) 為大夏川補證 A Study of the Historical Place Name of dByar Mo Thang," in *Xiyu lishi yuyan jikan 西域歷史語言集刊 Historical and Philological Studies of China's Western Regions*, vol. 7, ed. Shen Weirong 沈卫荣 (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 2014), no. 7, 535–547.

83 Vitali, "In the Presence of the 'Diamond Throne,'" 201.

84 For Lama Zhang's meeting with Ga Lotsaba and his study with the latter in Kham, see Yamamoto, *Vision and Violence*, 56–59.

85 Ibid., 228.

86 Sperling, "Further Remarks," 1–26.

associated with Ga Lotsaba. His biography refers to the symbolic expression ‘drum of the law of the Tangut emperor’, implying some kind of connection to the Tangut royal court. Based on this, we should re-evaluate the role Ga Lotsaba played in propagating Mahākāla teachings in the Tangut Empire.

According to Ga Lotsaba’s biography, he spent seven years in Eastern Tibet, where Lama Zhang studied the Mahākāla and other teachings under him. There were likely also students from local and surrounding areas who studied with him. At the end of the biography, Lama Zhang lists important disciples from different areas who gathered around Ga Lotsaba. He mentions that Ga Lotsaba had eight disciples or spiritual sons from the Kham area but does not specify their names.<sup>87</sup> One of them is noted as ‘the bestower of his full ordination’ (Tib. *khong rang gi mkhan po*), and the other seven are said to be from Dri lung (Tib. ’Bri klung).<sup>88</sup> The record of Ga Lotsaba’s early years in his homeland notes that he took the full ordination at the age of twenty. The monk who gave him full ordination was a disciple of Geshe Ngok Lotsaba called Wangton (Tib. dBang ston). Geshe Ngok Lotsaba most likely refers to Ngok Zhedang Dorjé (1090–1166, Tib. rNgog Zhe sdang rdo rje).<sup>89</sup> Ga Lotsaba studied Vinaya, Madhyamaka and Pramāṇa with Wangton, after which he left for India at the age of 30, not meeting Wangton again until nearly two decades later in the early 1150s. During his stay in Kham, he returned once to his hometown in Amdo, where he came across Wangton. For ten days, he imparted empowerments and instructions to Wangton. This is how his ‘bestower of full ordination’ later became his student. However, the biography does not specify the names of the teachings that he gave to Wangton, and there is not sufficient relevant information about Wangton to identify him.

As the Chinese scholar Zeng Hanchen indicates, the *History of the Lord of Wisdom Mahākāla* has a teaching lineage for the Raven-headed Mahākāla. It

87 Lama Zhang, *rGwa lo'i rnam thar*, 222. 2–3: *de yang thugs rje che/ mdo khams su byon pa'i sras ni/ khong rang gi mkhan po dang/ 'bri klung na snga dro re re'i ting nge 'dzin mnga' ba bdun bzhugs pa de rnams lags te.*

88 Dri lung is a place in Kham, in present-day Yushu Prefecture (玉树), Qinghai Province (青海省).

89 Much of the Tangut commentarial material on the *Samputatantra* found at Baisigou Square *stūpa* (Chin. Baisigou fangta 拜寺沟方塔) close to the Tangut capital in the Helan Mountain Range (賀蘭山) is translated from the works of Ngok Zhedang Doje. See Haoran Hou, “Notes on the Translation and Transmission of the *Samputa* and *Cakrasaṃvara Tantras* in the Xixia Period,” in *Chinese and Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism*, ed. Yael Bentor and Meir Sahar (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2017), 355–376; for Baisigou see also Meinert, “Creation of Tantric Sacred Spaces in Eastern Central Asia,” 250, 255 and the map of the Tangut Empire here [https://static.ceres.rub.de/media/filer\\_public/5b/ea/5bea3720-dffa-4669-9564-33d63a2633ab/buddhistroad\\_map\\_3.jpg](https://static.ceres.rub.de/media/filer_public/5b/ea/5bea3720-dffa-4669-9564-33d63a2633ab/buddhistroad_map_3.jpg).

mentions a Cokro Chökyi Wangchuk as having directly received this ritual text from Ga Lotsaba. Zeng doubts this Cokro Chökyi Wangchuk is the same person as Cokro Chökyi Gyeltsen (1108–1176, Tib. Cog ro Chos kyi rgyal mtshan). She speculates further that, perhaps because Cokro Chökyi Gyeltsen's most important teacher is called Marpa Dopa Chökyi Wangchuk (1042–1136, Tib. Mar pa Do ba Chos kyi dbang phyug), the author of the text confuses Cokro Chökyi Gyeltsen's name with that of his teacher.<sup>90</sup> Little is known about the life of Cokro Chökyi Gyeltsen. He was born in Amdo and served as a figure crucial to the spread of the Cakrasaṃvara teachings in the Tangut Empire.<sup>91</sup> From the available textual evidence, it appears that he had studied the teachings of Mahākāla under Ga Lotsaba. In the *mGon po'i rgyud skor* [The Tantric Cycle of Mahākāla], there is a text entitled *dPal chen po rGwa lo'i slob ma Cog ro Chos rgyal gyis mdzad pa'i gtor chen* [The Great Offering of Cake Written by Cokro Chökyi Gyeltsen, the Disciple of the Glorious Ga Lotsaba].<sup>92</sup> This text is concerned with the cake offering according to the system of Cokro Chökyi Gyeltsen. The full title explicitly labels Cokro Chökyi Gyeltsen as a disciple of Ga Lotsaba. In the same volume, there are two other texts related to Cokro Chökyi Gyeltsen. One is entitled *rGwa los mdzad pa'i gSang sgrub kyi zhal gdams: Cog ro'i lugs* [Instructions of the Secret Evocation Composed by Ga Lotsaba: The System of Cokro]<sup>93</sup> and the other is *Cog ro' lugs: Sum dril gyia*

90 For the confusion between the two names, Cokro Chökyi Gyeltsen and Cokro Chökyi Wangchuk, see Zeng Hanchen 曾汉臣, "Xixia Daheitian chuancheng chutan yi Heishuicheng wenshu *Daheitian qixiu bing zuofa wei zhongxin* 西夏大黑天传承初探以黑水城文书〈大黑求修并作法〉为中心 [A Preliminary Study of the Teaching Lineage of Mahākāla during the Tangut Period: Centering on *The Ritual Texts on the Invocation and Practice of Mahākāla*]," *Zhongguo zangxue* 中国藏学 *China Tibetology* 1 (2014): 158.

91 Cokro Chökyi Gyeltsen's commentary on the *Cakrasaṃvara* (originally named *Herukābhidhāna*) was lauded by Butön Rinchen drup (1290–1364, Tib. Bu ston Rin chen grub) as one of the best of its kind in the Tibetan literature but it has been lost in Tibetan. However, a Chinese translation of this work from the Tangut era was recently discovered. For a study of the Chinese version of Cokro's commentary on the *Cakrasaṃvara*, see Wei Wen 魏文, "Shiyi dao shisi shiji shangle jiaofa zai Xizang he Xixia de chuanbo: Yi liang-pian Xixia hanyi mijiao wenshu he zangwen jiaofashi wei zhongxin 十一到十二世紀上樂教法在西藏和西夏的傳播：以兩篇西夏漢譯密教文書和藏文教法史為中心 [The Spread of the *Cakrasaṃvara* in Tibet and the Tangut Empire in the 11th and 12th Centuries: A Study Centering on Two Chinese Translated Tantric Texts in the Tangut Era and the Dharma History of the *Cakrasaṃvara* Teachings in the Tibetan Language]" (Ph.D. diss., Renmin University, Beijing, 2013). In a previous publication, I examine Cokro Chökyi Gyeltsen and the transmission of his commentary on the *Cakrasaṃvara* in the Tangut Empire. See Hou, "Notes on the Translation and Transmission," 355–376.

92 *Bya rog ma bstan srung bcas kyi chos tshan*, vol. 3, 169–175.

93 *Ibid.*, 157–160.

*can zhes bya ba dpal bya rog ma'i gsang sgrub* [The System of Cokro: The Secret Evocation of the Raven-headed Mahākāla Titled 'Three Combined and Sealed'].<sup>94</sup> It is clear from the titles of these texts that Cokro Chökyi Gyeltsen, a contemporary of Ga Lotsaba, received the teachings on Mahākāla, in particular the teachings on the Raven-headed Mahākāla, from the latter. He may have made a special contribution to the development of Ga Lotsaba's Mahākāla teachings, hence his passed-down system is specially called the system of Cokro (Tib. *Cog ro'i lugs*). What is special about Cokro Chökyi Gyeltsen's transmission? This needs to be clarified by future research.

## 5 Conclusion

This paper surveys an under-explored area of discovery in the Tangut Empire of Central Asia: The Mahākāla literature. It has two main focuses. The first is to introduce the Chinese Mahākāla documents excavated at Karakhoto, which have not yet received sufficient attention from scholars, and analyses their structure and content from the perspective of Tibetan Buddhist literature. In doing so it hopes to bring these Chinese texts back into the context of Tibetan Tantric Buddhism and highlight their value for a better understanding of the Mahākāla cult in its early stage. The cult of Mahākāla is essentially a complex of tantric teachings and practices. An effective approach to investigating the cult would be to return to the religious context and scrutinize the surviving ritual texts, which gave rise to it.

Another focus of the paper is to explore how the Mahākāla literature was transmitted to the Tangut Empire. To this end, the paper delves into the hagiography of Ga Lotsaba, whose name appears several times in the Karakhoto documents, analysing his missionary activities in Eastern Tibet and uncovering the lineage of masters and disciples that formed around him. Knowing that it may not be possible to reconstruct the complex networks of the spread of the Mahākāla cult through the hagiography of a single master, this paper simply seeks to spotlight the role of Eastern Tibetan monks in the spread of Tibetan Buddhism in the Tangut Empire.

Research on the Mahākāla literature from Karakhoto is still in progress. The next step will be to carry out a complete transcription and translation of these excavated texts described above. More importantly, a comparative study between the Chinese and Tibetan language texts will be undertaken to find the

94 *Bya ro ma bstan srung bcas kyi chos tshan*, vol. 3, 147–149.

original Tibetan versions for more Chinese texts. At the same time, the study will look for parallels to the Tibetan texts excavated at Karakhoto from the canonical sources, thereby exploring the internal connections between these two bodies of literature. By doing so, the study hopes to provide greater insight into the formation, dissemination and development of the Mahākāla literature in the Tangut Empire.



# Practice and Rituals in Uyghur Buddhist Texts: A Preliminary Appraisal

*Jens Wilkens*

## 1 Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The topic of practice and ritual in Uyghur Buddhism is a vast field with various layers and complex interconnections that is not well understood in its entirety.<sup>2</sup> Eyewitness accounts of ritual practice, such as the one Faxian

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- 1 I would like to express my thanks to Jens-Uwe Hartmann (Munich) for his response to my paper during the *BuddhistRoad* Mid-project Conference in Bochum.
  - 2 Some important aspects of practice and ritual have been addressed before. The practice of giving, merit making, and merit transfer is a central concept within Uyghur Buddhism that remains an important issue from the early phase of Uyghur Buddhism until the late period (14th c.). Merit transfer was a ritual means to strengthen the power of certain protective deities who would thus be equipped with further strength in order to protect the country of the Uyghurs. On merit transfer, especially in a group of unrelated Old Uyghur colophons, see Peter Zieme, “The West Uigur Kingdom: Views from Inside,” *Horizons* 5.1 (2014): 6, 10–11. Pilgrimage is another issue that has become an important object of study. For an overview of pilgrimage, see Tibor Porció, “Some Peculiarities of the Uyghur Buddhist Pilgrim Inscriptions,” in *Searching for the Dharma, Finding Salvation: Buddhist Pilgrimage in Time and Space*, ed. Christoph Cueppers and Max Deeg (Lumbini: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2014), 157–178. Very important new materials from the Dunhuang region, i.e. the Yulin Caves (Chin. Yulin ku 榆林窟) and Mogao Caves (Chin. Mogao ku 莫高窟), etc., are collected in Matsui Dai 松井太, “Tonkō sekkutsu uigurugo mongorugo, daiki meibun shūsei 敦煌石窟ウイグル語. モンゴル語題記銘文集成 Uighur and Mongolian Wall Inscriptions of the Dunhuang Grottoes,” in *Tonkō sekkutsu tagengo shiryō shūsei 敦煌石窟多言語資料集成. Multilingual Source Materials of the Dunhuang Grottoes*, ed. Matsui Dai 松井太 and Arakawa Shintaro 荒川慎太郎 (Tokyo: Tōkyō gaikokugo daigaku Ajia Afurika gengo bunka kenkyūjo, 2017), 1–161. See also Simone-Christiane Raschmann’s recent paper, Simone-Christiane Raschmann, “Pilgrims in Old Uyghur Inscriptions: A Glimpse Behind their Records,” in *Buddhism in Central Asia I: Patronage, Legitimation, Sacred Space, and Pilgrimage*, ed. Carmen Meinert and Henrik H. Sørensen (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2020), 204–229. Sometimes certain wall paintings have apparently inspired visitors of Buddhist caves to leave a record of their pilgrimage and to put down their thoughts. For instance, pilgrims added a whole group of inscriptions and scribbles to a *brāhmaṇa* painting from Bezeklik. See the analysis in Peter Zieme, “A Brāhmaṇa Painting from Bāzāklik in the Hermitage of St. Petersburg and Its Inscriptions,” in *Unknown Treasures of the Altaic World in Libraries, Archives and Museums: 53rd Annual Meeting of the Permanent International Altaistic Conference, Institute of Oriental*

(ca. 340–before 423, 法顯) provides for processions and festivals in Khotan/Yutian (于闐) or Jiecha (竭叉),<sup>3</sup> are lacking.<sup>4</sup> Instead of dealing with a single aspect of the topic of practice and ritual in Uyghur Buddhism, I will, therefore, delimit my endeavour to a very basic overview of related issues, mostly based on an evaluation of textual materials. For the early phase of Uyghur Buddhist literature (2nd half of the 9th–early 11th c.),<sup>5</sup> practice and ritual are somewhat difficult to grasp. The Uyghurs were clearly interested in literature of ritual and apotropaic content from the earliest phase of their conversion to Buddhism. The scroll of the *Säkiz Yügmäk Yaruk* [Brilliance of the Eight Accumulations] from London that was found in Dunhuang (敦煌) (Or. 8212/104) is one of the most archaic examples of a Buddhist text in Old Uyghur.<sup>6</sup> It is a very early translation from a Chinese original, the *Foshuo tiandi bayang shenzhou jing* 佛說天地八陽神咒經 [Mantrasūtra of the Eight Principles of Heaven and Earth as Spoken by the Buddha] (T. 2897).

It is possible that the focus of early Buddhist literature in Old Uyghur was different, on the one hand, in Dunhuang, where texts were translated mainly from Chinese and, on the other, in Turfan and in the Hami region, where the first phase of translation activity centered on works in Tocharian A.<sup>7</sup> As for apotropaic literature, there is evidence that the narrative cycle of stories called *Daśakarmapathāvadānamālā* [Garland of Legends Pertaining to

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*Manuscripts*, RAS St. Petersburg, July 25–30, 2010, ed. Tatiana Pang, Simone-Christiane Raschmann, and Gerd Winkelhane (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 2013), 181–195.

- 3 See Max Deeg, *Das Gaoseng-Faxian-Zhuan als religionsgeschichtliche Quelle: Der älteste Bericht eines chinesischen buddhistischen Pilgermönchs über seine Reise nach Indien mit Übersetzung des Textes* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005), 511–516; and Giuliana Martini, “Bodhisattva Texts, Ideologies and Rituals in Khotan in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries,” in *Multilingualism and the History of Knowledge, Vol. I: Buddhism Among the Iranian Peoples of Central Asia*, ed. Matteo de Chiara, Mauro Maggi, and Giuliana Martini (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2013), 13–69.
- 4 As to processions and rituals, some chapters of the Old Uyghur translation of the biography of Xuanzang (600/602–664, 玄奘) are rich in detail, but the text is secondary and cannot be used as a source for the study of Uyghur rituals. However, the terminology used therein is important.
- 5 See Johan Elverskog, *Uyghur Buddhist Literature* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997).
- 6 See the analysis of orthographic features of this particular scroll in Jens Peter Laut, *Der frühe türkische Buddhismus und seine literarischen Denkmäler* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1986), 78–88. A complete facsimile is provided in volume two of James Hamilton, *Manuscripts ouïgours du ix<sup>e</sup>–x<sup>e</sup> siècle de Touen-Houang* (Paris: Peeters, 1986), 331–350. For a comprehensive edition of various manuscripts and a translation of this important text, which is extant in different recensions, see BT XXXIII. It gives a list of manuscripts and prints in other languages. *Ibid.*, 284–286.
- 7 This assumption would only be valid if it could be ascertained that the London scroll of the *Säkiz Yügmäk Sudur* was actually produced in the Dunhuang region.

the Ten Courses of Action]—the Old Uyghur version is a translation from Tocharian A—made use of some sources with an affinity to the *raḡṣā* genre.<sup>8</sup> The *Maitrisimit* [Meeting with Maitreya]—one of the earliest specimens of Uyghur Buddhist literature and also a translation from Tocharian A—is not only a kind of compendium of Buddhist knowledge and a biography of the future Buddha Maitreya, but also a text that possibly relates to visualisation techniques. The stock phrase at the beginning of each chapter that ‘one has to understand’ the scene treated therein and which replaces ‘stage directions’ depending on the (semi-)theatrical character of the Tocharian original could mean that the reader has to ‘imagine’ or ‘visualise’ the locality in his mind. Lists of the 32 marks of the Buddha (Skt. *lakṣaṇa*) or the very detailed scenes in the chapters dedicated to the description of the major and minor hells might also point to such an understanding. Other passages are likely only literary themes, such as the reference to the festival commemorating Bodhisattva Maitreya cutting off his hair knot (Skt. *cūḍāmaha*) in Chapter 13.<sup>9</sup> This event is, in any case, envisioned for the future.

Some Turkologists proposed that the *Maitrisimit* was performed for public entertainment during a specific feast, in the wake of which Buddha Maitreya would manifest himself during the performance of the very same spectacle.<sup>10</sup> This assumption turned out to be groundless.<sup>11</sup> The misunderstanding followed from an erroneous interpretation of the key term *yaŋı kün*, which literally means ‘new day’, but really shows a semantic spectrum ranging from ‘festival, feast’ and ‘ceremony, rite’ to ‘spectacle, wonder’.<sup>12</sup> Georges-Jean Pinault recently presented a detailed study of its Tocharian A equivalent *opṣäly* together with the Tocharian B cognate *ekṣalye*, in which he proves that the same semantic range applies for the two Tocharian terms, and that “the notion is not related to

8 BT XXXVII, vol. 1, 68.

9 Geng Shimin, Hans-Joachim Klimkeit, and Jens Peter Laut, “Die Weltflucht des Bodhisattva’: Das 13. Kapitel der Hami-Handschrift der *Maitrisimit*,” *Altorientalische Forschungen* 18 (1991): 283.

10 See especially Geng Shimin and Hans-Joachim Klimkeit, *Das Zusammentreffen mit Maitreya: Die ersten fünf Kapitel der Hami-Version der Maitrisimit*, vol. 1 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1988), 7.

11 Jens Wilkens, “Der ‘Neutag’ und die *Maitrisimit*—Probleme der zentralasiatischen Religionsgeschichte,” in *Die Erforschung des Tocharischen und die alttürkische Maitrisimit: Symposium anlässlich des 100. Jahrestages der Entzifferung des Tocharischen Berlin, 3. und 4. April 2008*, ed. Yukiyo Kasai, Abdurishid Yakup, and Desmond Durkin-Meisterernst (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 375–401.

12 Wilkens, “Der ‘Neutag’ und die *Maitrisimit*,” 375–401.

any special Buddhist festivity or ritual".<sup>13</sup> The Old Uyghur and Tocharian terms can thus apply to any kind of feast, ritual, ceremony, spectacle, or wonder. A specific Maitreya festival with alleged Iranian antecedents—as Geng and Klimkeit surmise<sup>14</sup>—is out of the question.

It is difficult to tell which Buddhist festivals really had practical importance within Uyghur Buddhism. This topic needs further research. There is, for instance, very scarce evidence for the quinquennial festival (Skr. *pañcavārṣika*).<sup>15</sup> Besides a fragmentary reference in the *Maitrisimit*,<sup>16</sup> there is one mention of the term in an *avadāna* collection.<sup>17</sup> In both texts, we find a connection with alms-giving. The festival is, in all likelihood, only a literary motif without any historical significance.<sup>18</sup> Further examples are found in a Sanskrit-Old Uyghur bilingual manuscript in Brāhmī script<sup>19</sup> and in an alliterative poem, where the term is used as a substantive and as an adjective respectively.<sup>20</sup> The bilingual text and the first instance of the term in the poem combine the Sanskrit term *pañcav(a)rṣik* with the Chinese term *taičuy*, which is also recorded in the spelling *taičō*.<sup>21</sup> This last term and its adjectival derivative occur every now and then in Old Uyghur, for instance, in the translation of the biography of Xuanzang, (*Da Tang da C'ensi sanzang fashi zhuan* 大唐大慈恩寺三藏法師傳 [The Biography of the Tripiṭaka Master of the Great C'ien

13 Georges-Jean Pinault, "The Tocharian Background of Old Turkic *yaŋı kün*," in *Kutadgu Nom Bitig: Festschrift für Jens Peter Laut zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Elisabetta Ragagnin and Jens Wilkens with the assistance of Gökhan Şilfeler (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2015), 399.

14 Geng and Klimkeit, *Das Zusammentreffen mit Maitreya*, vol. 1, 7.

15 See especially Max Deeg, "Origins and Developments of the Buddhist *Pañcavārṣika*—Part I: India and Central Asia," *Nagoya Studies in Indian Culture and Buddhism: Saṃbhāṣā* 16 (1995): 67–90.

16 BT IX, vol. 1, 215.

17 BT XXXVII, vol. 2, 522 (line 05691).

18 As Deeg observes, in the legend of Aśoka (r. ca. 268–232 BCE) and especially in the *Avadānaśataka* (T. 200.4), the term *pañcavārṣika* "[...] lost its connection to the historical facts and was only understood as an event of donations to the *saṅgha* by a donator—not even necessarily a king." Deeg, "Origins and Developments," 74. This observation is true for other specimens of *avadāna* literature, where the term is used without any reference to Aśoka or the legend pertaining to him.

19 Dieter Maue and Klaus Röhrborn, "Ein zweisprachiges Fragment aus Turfan," *Central Asiatic Journal* 20 (1976): 213 (line recto 5).

20 Aydar Mirkamal 阿依达尔·米尔卡马力, *Huihuwen shiti zhushu he xin faxian dunhuang ben yunwen yanjiu* 回鹘文诗体注疏和新发现敦煌本韵文研究. *Alliterative Verse Commentaries in Old Uyghur and Newly Unearthed Verses from Dunhuang* (Shanghai: Shanghai Chinese Classics Publishing House, 2015), 185 (line 70), 209 (line 19).

21 On Chinese phonetic transcriptions of the Sanskrit term, see Deeg, "Origins and Developments," 68.

Monastery of the Great Tang Dynasty], T. 2053.50)<sup>22</sup> and in a late *avadāna* text, in which it is used in connection with a banquet or feast to be offered to Buddha Maitreya and his entourage in future times.<sup>23</sup> The precise etymology of the term has not been established yet. Judging from the context in which the term *pañcavārṣika* appears in the Old Uyghur sources, the festival itself seems to be a mere literary motif. Although the monthly gatherings in Liang Wudi's (r. 502–549, 梁武帝) palace chapel are known to have represented the Buddhist *pañcavārṣika* festival,<sup>24</sup> there is, so far, no evidence that a similar institution existed in Uyghur Buddhism, even though the emperor was held in high esteem by Uyghur Buddhists.

Other texts relate to a ceremony that was actually performed, the *pravāraṇā*,<sup>25</sup> the ceremony concluding the annual monastic retreat during the rainy season.<sup>26</sup> The most peculiar textual specimen is the *Insadisūtra*, a late composite text in cursive script, the title of which is, so far, unexplained.<sup>27</sup> The second part of the text refers directly to the *pravāraṇā* and contains Chinese characters that correspond to Chinese versions of the *Pravāraṇāsūtra*.<sup>28</sup> It is conceivable that the Uyghurs used a Sanskrit text to perform the ritual itself, because the *pravāraṇā* is a monastic ceremony. A confirmation of this assumption could be found in two manuscripts in Uyghur script in which the corresponding Sanskrit parts are given in Brāhmī script.<sup>29</sup> A letter containing

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- 22 In the fifth chapter, the festival is mentioned in connection with King Śīlāditya (= Harṣa). See Siglinde Dietz, Mehmet Ölmez, and Klaus Röhrborn, *Die alttürkische Xuanzang-Biographie V, nach der Handschrift von Paris und St. Petersburg sowie nach dem Transkript von Annemarie v. Gabain ediert, übersetzt und kommentiert* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2015), 126 (line 1012). In chapter four, the term is likewise used with reference to King Śīlāditya. See John Peter Claver Toalster, "Die uigurische Xuan-Zang-Biographie: 4. Kapitel mit Übersetzung und Kommentar" (PhD diss., University of Gießen, 1977), 90 (line 854).
- 23 Masahiro Shōgaito, "Drei zum *Avalokiteśvara-sūtra* passende *Avadānas*," in *Der türkische Buddhismus in der japanischen Forschung*, ed. Jens Peter Laut and Klaus Röhrborn (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1988), 90 and 98, lines 234–235, 333; *taičunlug tapıgın tapınup udunup* "regaling and feasting with a *pañcavārṣika* regalement"
- 24 Chen Jinhua, "Pañcavārṣika Assemblies in Liang Wudi's Buddhist Palace Chapel," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 66.1 (2006): 45.
- 25 See Jin-Il Chung, *Die Pravāraṇā in den kanonischen Vinaya-Texten der Mūlasarvāstivādin und der Sarvāstivādin* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1998).
- 26 See the study by Peter Zieme, "Das Pravāraṇā-Sūtra in alttürkischer Überlieferung," in *Barg-i sabz—A Green Leaf: Papers in Honour of Jes P. Asmussen*, ed. Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin, Fereyduñ Vahman, and Werner Sundermann (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 445–453.
- 27 The edition and translation are in BT III.
- 28 Zieme, "Das Pravāraṇā-Sūtra," 446.
- 29 These manuscripts are dealt with in Zieme, "Das Pravāraṇā-Sūtra". See also the enlarged edition in BT XXXVIII, 89–109.

instructions to carry out Buddhist ceremonies mentions also the recitation of the *Pravāraṇāsūtra*.<sup>30</sup> Recently, a bilingual text (Sanskrit and Old Uyghur) in Uyghur script related to the *pravāraṇā* ritual was also discovered.<sup>31</sup> The liturgical formulas are in Sanskrit, whereas the ritual instructions are in Old Uyghur.

The *poṣadha* ~ *posatha* day was of particular importance for Buddhist practice. One can deduce from various dated sources that this day was considered as especially auspicious and was chosen deliberately by practitioners who commissioned the printing or writing of a text<sup>32</sup> or by pilgrims who left an inscription on the walls of Buddhist caves.<sup>33</sup> Perhaps the day was considered auspicious for making a pilgrimage or a visit to Buddhist shrines. An otherwise unknown scholar named Nomkul Šabi K(1)ya checked the meanings of the terms in ten volumes of the Old Uyghur translation of the *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya* on this day.<sup>34</sup> A remarkable colophon to a block-printed collection of *sūtras*<sup>35</sup>—containing, among others, the *Vajracchedikāpraññāpāramitāsūtra* [Diamond Sūtra] and the *Prajñāpāramitāhṛdayasūtra* (Chin. *Xinjīng* 心經) [Heart Sūtra], as well as some texts related to mature Tantric Buddhism—mentions a certain Bodhidhvaja Śīla (fl. 14th c.) as the sponsor of the edition, which definitely served ritual purposes. The printing was effected on the 15th day of the seventh month, presumably of the year 1347. The colophon calls this day *agir ulug poṣad bačag kün* “the very great *poṣadha* fast day”. It is possible that the date might also indicate that Uyghurs celebrated the ghost

30 Simone-Christiane Raschmann and Osman Fikri Sertkaya, *Alltürkische Handschriften Teil 20: Alltürkische Texte aus der Berliner Turfansammlung im Nachlass Reşid Rahmeti Arat* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2016), 101–102 (cat. no. 063).

31 Jens Wilkens, “Buddhist Monastic Life in Central Asia—A Bilingual Text in Sanskrit and Old Uyghur Relating to the *Pravāraṇā* Ceremony,” *International Journal of Old Uyghur Studies* 2.2 (2020): 137–152.

32 BT VII, 66 (lines 105–108) = BT XXVI, 209 (No. 11b line 1); BT XIII, 124 (lines 46–48) = BT XXVI, 56 (line 1); BT XIII, 164 (lines 2–3) = BT XXVI, 240 (line 1); BT XXIII, 148 (lines G324–325) = BT XXVI, 132 (lines 4–5); BT XIII, 161 (lines 1–3) = BT XXIII, 148 (line G337) = BT XXVI, 133 (line 1). Peter Zieme, “Donor and Colophon of an Uighur Blockprint,” *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 4 (1995/96): 412 (section C); reedited in BT XXVI, 245 (lines 7–8).

33 For the Yulin Caves, see Matsui, “Tonkō sekkutsu uigurugo mongorugo,” 88, 89, 102.

34 BT XXVI, 136 (lines 2–4). This statement made by Nomkul Šabi K(1)ya refers apparently to a revision of the translation in which he was involved.

35 Edited in BT XIII, 163–170 (text 46). Reedited in BT XXVI, 239–243 as text 129.

festival (Chin. *yulan pen* 盂蘭盆),<sup>36</sup> because it always fell on the 15th day of the seventh month.<sup>37</sup>

Another aspect of Uyghur Buddhism related to practice has to be mentioned here. Annemarie von Gabain provides a rather detailed description of a Buddhist festival held on the 15th day of the first month of the year. She mentions confessions, material offerings, spiritual gifts, symbolic gifts, liturgical ceremonies for the benefit of the departed, readings of edifying tales, pictures on display, and performative arts.<sup>38</sup> However, an analysis of von Gabain's method reveals that this particular festival is nothing but her fictional construct, in which she combines observations based on texts from different periods and totally unrelated contexts.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, some scholars take her fictitious account for granted.

## 2 Practice and Rituals as Mirrored in Old Uyghur Texts

### 2.1 Blessings

Blessing texts are a genre connected with practice and ritual.<sup>40</sup> One example of this type of literature is the *Diśāstvustik* (Skt. \**Diśāsāvāstika*) [Blessing of the Cardinal Points] from the Krotkov Collection in the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences, in which the legend of the merchants Trapuṣa and Bhallika provides the narrative frame.<sup>41</sup> The incomplete text—apparently from the late classical period of Old Uyghur (ca. 12th c.)—is a booklet in European style and—on account of its rather small

36 I argue this in Jens Wilkens, "Hatten die alten Uiguren einen buddhistischen Kanon?" in *Kanonisierung und Kanonbildung in der asiatischen Religionsgeschichte*, ed. Max Deeg, Oliver Freiberger, and Christoph Kleine (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2011), 366.

37 Stephen F. Teiser, *The Ghost Festival in Medieval China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

38 Annemarie von Gabain, *Das uigurische Königreich von Chotscho 850–1250* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1961), 73–74.

39 Jens Wilkens, "Performanz vs. Perspektive: Narratologische Anmerkungen zu einer altuigurischen Erzählungssammlung," *Türk Dilleri Araştırmaları. Researches in Turkic Languages* 24.2 (2019): 281–304.

40 On this literary genre, see Zieme, "The West Uigur Kingdom," 11–12.

41 This text is edited and translated in Abdurishid Yakup, *Diśāstvustik: Eine altuigurische Bearbeitung einer Legende aus dem Catuspariṣat-sūtra* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006). Parallel passages in Sanskrit and Chinese texts are listed on pp. 10–28. See also the survey of the different versions of this legend in Mark Allon, "A Gāndhārī Version of the Story of the Merchants Tappusa and Bhallika," *Bulletin of the Asia Institute New Series* 23 (2009): 9–19, here: 10–11.

format—probably intended for personal use. The glosses in Brāhmī script are unusual for a manuscript. In essence, the text is a blessing of the cardinal points with copious names of *yakṣas* and minor female divinities and interspersed with *dhāraṇīs*. The text is also supposed to offer basic protection. The whole setting is Indian, and Central Asian place names are not mentioned.

In Old Uyghur literature, there are additional examples of blessing texts that are likely native Uyghur compositions rather than translations, for example, extant texts include two New Year's blessings,<sup>42</sup> two harvest blessings,<sup>43</sup> and a blessing of a sacrifice, which mentions it is intended to heal several ailments and ward off demonic beings.<sup>44</sup> The formulas used are, in part, spell-like.

The harvest blessings in particular reflect a local form of Buddhism. I will discuss briefly the two extant examples of harvest blessing texts. The first includes a lengthy description of agricultural activities, mentions a libation of wheat beer (OU *sorma*) to the god of wealth (Skt. *dhanyadeva*), Kubera.<sup>45</sup> It also mentions the sacrifice of a he-goat and a pig in order to prepare a banquet.<sup>46</sup> The goal of the rituals referred to in the text is to produce an outstanding crop yield.<sup>47</sup> The last part of the harvest blessing is a detailed depiction of an evil spirit with certain animal characteristics, whom one intends to ban by means of the text.<sup>48</sup> The second text is on the whole quite similar. A blessing for a vineyard, which has not been edited yet, is reported in a catalogue description.<sup>49</sup>

42 For the first text, see the first edition in Peter Zieme, "Zur Verwendung der Brāhmī-Schrift bei den Uiguren," *Altorientalische Forschungen* 11.2 (1984): 331–346. It is reedited with additional fragments in BT XXXVIII, 192–203. For the second text, see Peter Zieme, "Māngi bulzun! Ein weiterer Neujahrssegen," in *Dr. Emel Esin'e Armağan*, ed. Şükrü Elçin (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi, 1976), 131–139. This fragment is combined with a prayer for forgiveness. In its final part, the prayer evokes images from nature to strengthen the efficacy of the liturgy.

43 For editions and translations of the two texts, see Peter Zieme, "Ein uigurischer Erntesegegen," *Altorientalische Forschungen* 3 (1975): 109–143 (pls. 19–20); and Ádám Molnár and Peter Zieme, "Ein weiterer uigurischer Erntesegegen," *Altorientalische Forschungen* 16.1 (1989): 140–152 (pl. 1).

44 Zieme, Peter, "Ein fast vollständiger altuigurischer Opfer-Segegen," February 2015, accessed January 29, 2020. [https://www.academia.edu/11093961/Ein\\_fast\\_vollst%C3%A4ndiger\\_altuigurischer\\_Opfersegegen](https://www.academia.edu/11093961/Ein_fast_vollst%C3%A4ndiger_altuigurischer_Opfersegegen).

45 Zieme, "Ein uigurischer Erntesegegen," 118.

46 *Ibid.*, 118.

47 For a recent edition of a very elaborate ritual manual on agriculture, see Gergely Hidas, *A Buddhist Ritual Manual on Agriculture: Vajratuṇḍasamayakalparāja—Critical Edition* (Berlin, Munich, Boston: de Gruyter, 2019).

48 Zieme, "Ein uigurischer Erntesegegen," 119.

49 Raschmann and Sertkaya, *Altürkische Handschriften Teil 20*, 232–233 (cat. no. 250).



## 2.2 Confessions

One of the most striking features of Uyghur Buddhism and, one may add, one of its enigmas, is the popularity of confession texts intended to be used by lay disciples. Despite several studies, the possibility of a historical connection with a Manichaean pattern is still unclear.<sup>50</sup> While confessions often have a preparatory and cathartic function within the wider context of complex Buddhist rituals, especially of the esoteric type, the work known as the *Kṣanti kulmak atl(ı)g nom bitig* [The Book Called Making a Confession] is self-contained. Although many manuscripts are extant, the title of this text is preserved in only a few of them.<sup>51</sup> *The Book Called Making a Confession* is either a group of similar texts with sets of matching lines or, in fact, only one work that was open to additions and alterations, depending on the specific requirements of the sponsors. We have examples of manuscript copies of the text, typically in the form of scrolls but also in the Indian *pustaka* format, characterised in this case by long vertically oriented folios with string holes.<sup>52</sup> It is certainly not by sheer accident that the majority of the manuscripts were found at Yarkhoto. The rather short text, consisting of only one scroll, was intended for lay people who were in need of a text dealing with their various offences. The names of these people are recorded in the manuscripts. Ritual formulas and merit making are important in this text. It was particularly important that the work consisted of only one scroll, so that ordering a copy was not as expensive as copying works in many fascicles. While what Willi Bang and Annemarie von Gabain refer to as Part A and Part B in their edited text seem to belong to the Śrāvākayāna tradition—since they name as addressees of the confession Maitreya and several *koṭis* of *arhats*—the first scroll that Friedrich Wilhelm Karl Müller

50 See especially Claudia Weber, *Buddhistische Beichten in Indien und bei den Uiguren unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der uigurischen Laienbeichte und ihrer Beziehung zum Manichäismus* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1999).

51 Willi Bang and Annemarie von Gabain, “Türkische Turfan-Texte IV. Ein neues uigurisches Sündenbekenntnis,” *Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse* 24 (1930): 444 (text B, lines 67–68). The title of this work in the scroll Masahiro Shōgaito edited is *tsui ayıg kulmčlarıg öküniüp boşunup kṣanti kulmak* [Making a Confession by Regretting the Misdeeds and Asking for Forgiveness]. Masahiro Shōgaito, “Ein uigurisches Fragment eines Beichttextes,” in *Scholia: Beiträge zur Turkologie und Zentralasienkunde Annemarie von Gabain zum 80. Geburtstag am 4. Juli 1981 dargebracht von Kollegen, Freunden und Schülern*, ed. Klaus Röhrborn and Horst Wilfrid Brands (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1981), 163–169. The colophon was reedited in BT XXVI, 227–228.

52 See, e.g., the copy edited in Peter Zieme, “Ein uigurisches Sündenbekenntnis,” *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 22.1 (1969): 107–121.

edited,<sup>53</sup> (*The Confession of the Lay Female Buddhist Üdrät*)<sup>54</sup> is directed to the 496 Bodhisattvas of the fortunate aeon (Skt. *bhadra kalpa*) beginning with Maitreya.<sup>55</sup> The second scroll Müller edited<sup>56</sup> also mentions the 496 bodhisattvas and Maitreya, but at the end, the lay woman Kutlug mentions that she commissioned not only the confession text in one scroll but also the *Zun sheng jing* 尊勝經 [Sūtra of the Victorious One with the Uṣṇīṣa] (Skt. *Uṣṇīṣavijayā*) in one scroll and the Avalokiteśvara chapter of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarikasūtra* [Lotus Sūtra] one scroll.<sup>57</sup> The ritual context of copying the confession text is different in this particular case, on account of the idiosyncrasies and religious goals of the female lay person acting as a benefactor.

One of the most relevant chapters of the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa sūtra* [Sūtra of Golden Light] in terms of practice and ritual is certainly the fifth chapter, dedicated to confession.<sup>58</sup> In Old Uyghur, this section is also rendered as a separate text on its own in poetical form, and as such, is an independent reworking in strophic alliteration. It is preserved in handwritten and block-printed form.<sup>59</sup> An independent prose version of this chapter was also recently identified in the fragment U 2585.<sup>60</sup> Over the course of centuries, the text of the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa sūtra* grew more and more. Nobel observes that the *dhāraṇī* portions in particular were added.<sup>61</sup> Gradually, the literary character trans-

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- 53 Müller's edition (see the next footnote) comprises several texts. Nos. 7 and 8 are both confession texts of lay female Buddhists in the form of scrolls. The first one was commissioned and used for her own spiritual benefit by a certain Üdrät, the second by a woman named Kutlug.
- 54 The edition and translation are in Friedrich Wilhelm Karl Müller, *Uigurica II* (Berlin: Verlag der Königlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1911), 76–81. The colophon was reedited in BT XXVI, 224. The scroll that was reported to be lost in World War II was rediscovered. Nikolai Pchelina and Simone-Christiane Raschmann, "Turfan Manuscripts in the State Hermitage," *Written Monuments of the Orient* 2.2 (2016): 11–12.
- 55 In the scroll edited in Shōgaito, the goal is for the relatives to whom merit is transferred to achieve rebirth in Tuṣita heaven. Shōgaito, "Ein uigurisches Fragment eines Beichttextes".
- 56 The edition and translation are in Müller, *Uigurica II*, 84–89. The colophon was reedited in BT XXVI, 247.
- 57 The correct reading is in BT XXVI, 247.
- 58 For a slightly outdated edition and translation of the Old Uyghur version of this section, see Willi Bang and Annemarie von Gabain, "Uigurische Studien," *Ungarische Jahrbücher* 10 (1930): 194–207.
- 59 The standard edition and translation are found in BT XIII, 86–103, which supersedes Bang and von Gabain "Uigurische Studien," 208–210. Zieme was the first scholar who correctly identified the text as a versification of the fifth chapter of the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa sūtra*.
- 60 Simone-Christiane Raschmann, "What Do We Know About the Use of Manuscripts among the Old Uighurs in the Turfan Region?," *Eurasian Studies* 12 (2014): 526.
- 61 Johannes Nobel, *Suvarṇaprabhāsottama-Sūtra: Das Goldglanz-Sūtra, ein Sanskrit-Text des Mahāyāna-Buddhismus; I-Tsing's chinesische Version und ihre tibetische Übersetzung*.

formed into a typical specimen of an Esoteric Buddhist text.<sup>62</sup> The Old Uyghur version contains several independent texts in the preface, one of which is a ritual offering to the four Great Kings (Skt. *mahārāja*), which is most likely based on a Tibetan model, because the term *torma* (Tib. *gtor ma*) is one of the key words in the manual.<sup>63</sup>

The most important ritual work in Old Uyghur, judging from the great number of manuscripts identified so far, is the *Kṣanti kulguluk nom bitig* [The Book on How One Should Practice Confessions],<sup>64</sup> a translation from the Chinese *Cibei daochang chanfa* 慈悲道場懺法 [The Dharma of the Ritual of Repentance at the Bodhimaṇḍa of the Compassionate One] (T. 1909.45). This native Chinese work in forty chapters is an elaborate repentance ritual in which the invocation of the names of the buddhas of the fortunate aeon and of several bodhisattvas plays an essential part. One objective is to provide help for the beings living in unfortunate existences, especially for members of one's own family. Röhrborn surmises that the text was used during funerary ceremonies and functioned as a kind of 'funeral requiem'.<sup>65</sup> It was definitely performed in congregation,<sup>66</sup> which is underlined by the recurrent expression relating to the practitioners: '[persons] possessing the same kind of activity' (ou *bir išdäš*). Stylistically the *The Book on How One Should Practice Confessions* is characterised by many repetitions and formulaic expressions,

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*Erster Band: I-Tsing's chinesische Version übersetzt, eingeleitet, erläutert und mit einem photomechanischen Nachdruck des chinesischen Textes versehen* (Leiden: Brill, 1958), xx. Nobel even surmises that, originally, the text did not contain *dhāraṇīs* at all.

62 Except for the narrative of the hungry tigress, the chapters with marked ritual content are represented most often in the Chinese fragments from Dunhuang of Yijing's (635–713, 義淨) version. Nobel, *Suvarṇaprabhāsottama-Sūtra*, xxiv.

63 Edition and translation are in BT XVIII, 112–119.

64 Edition and translation are in BT XXV.

65 BT II, 7. The German title "Totenmesse", too, was deliberately chosen to strengthen this characterisation of the text. The designation is a bit misleading because it evokes Christian motifs. This edition comprises fragments of the eighth and ninth scrolls.

66 Charles Orzech recently highlighted the concept of liturgical 'subjects'. He writes, "[...] [i]n this view, 'subjects' are socially produced in ritual and discourse. The subject then can be understood as an institutional construct, typical, rather than unique and fully autonomous—a subject produced socially for institutional ends. Thus, liturgy, performed in congregation, produces a liturgical subject that is primarily constructed in a social performance." See Charles D. Orzech, "Tantric Subjects: Liturgy and Vision in Chinese Esoteric Ritual Manuals," in *Chinese and Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism*, ed. Yael Bentor and Meir Shahar (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2017), 21. He continues, "[...] we can see in such confessional liturgies a communal process through which the worshipper is created as a criminal subject in need of purification." *Ibid.*, 23.

which enhance its ritualistic features. Sponsors are given the opportunity to have their names inscribed in place holders based on Chinese *mou jia* (某甲) (a certain person, N.N.) at specific intervals provided by the text. The names included in the manuscripts shed some light on the persons who were active in the Uyghur Buddhist society of the Turfan region.

Peter Zieme achieved an important discovery because he identified a confession text he had originally published in the year 2001 in the reprint of his selected articles on Uyghur Buddhist studies.<sup>67</sup> The confession text in this unique manuscript, which also includes a remarkable version of the *Araṇemijātaka*, is a translation of the Chinese *Cibei shui chanfa* 慈悲水懺法 [The Dharma of Repentance Pertaining to the Water of Compassion] (T. 1910.45). A re-edition with matching Chinese text is highly desirable.

A late poem in strophical alliteration is dedicated to a glorification of the 35 Buddhas of Repentance to whom the practitioner bows.<sup>68</sup> Although there are similarities in this poem to other Buddhist works, the Old Uyghur work has some unique features regarding structure and wording.<sup>69</sup>

Occasionally, the Uyghurs used their own script to write down texts in Sanskrit, although the Uyghur alphabet is ill-suited to such an endeavour. One example of a Sanskrit text written in the Uyghur script is a particular confession text to which parallel passages exist in Sanskrit texts from Central Asia in Brāhmī script. A single fragment contains parts in Uyghur script and in Sanskrit in Brāhmī script.<sup>70</sup> The text mentions that the person making the confession, Indrasena, has a monastic background, because it states that he is a *saṃghasthavira*, a community leader or abbot.<sup>71</sup> The Sanskrit verse text was likely produced in Central Asia.<sup>72</sup>

67 Peter Zieme, "Araṇemī-jātaka und ein Sündenbekenntnistext in einer alttürkischen Sammelhandschrift," in *De Dunhuang à Istanbul: Hommage à James Russell Hamilton*, ed. Louis Bazin and Peter Zieme (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), 401–433 (pl. 36–53). Identification on p. 321 of the reprint.

68 The poem is edited and translated into Modern Turkish in Reşid Rahmeti Arat, *Eski türk şiiri* [Old Turkic Poetry] (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1965), 80–101.

69 See the analysis in Peter Zieme, *Die Stabreimtexte der Uiguren von Turfan und Dunhuang: Studien zur alttürkischen Dichtung* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1991), 219–228.

70 Edited in Jens-Uwe Hartmann, Klaus Wille, and Peter Zieme "Indrasenas Beichte," *Berliner Indologische Studien* 9–10 (1996): 203–216.

71 Hartmann, Wille, and Zieme "Indrasenas Beichte," 206–208.

72 *Ibid.*, 212.

### 2.3 *Amitābha Worship*

Pure Land Buddhism<sup>73</sup>—characterised by its visualisation techniques—had a deep impact on Uyghur followers. After groups of Uyghurs—who fled from Mongolia after the demise of the East Uyghur Khaganate in 840 and settled in the Turfan area—converted to Buddhism on a large scale around the turn of the first millennium, some of them must have subsequently encountered Chinese Buddhist visualisation practices. The Toyok Cave Temple complex was definitively a hub of meditative practices centered on visualisation techniques of Amitābha and his paradise, so the Uyghurs who settled there must have had access to this tradition. Nobuyoshi Yamabe highlights the importance of this site by combining textual and pictorial evidence—especially Cave 20 and 42—to tracing the history of the *Guan wuliangshou jing* 觀無量壽經 [Sūtra on the Contemplation of Amitāyus] and related texts.<sup>74</sup>

The early history of Uyghur Pure Land Buddhism has not been investigated in detail yet. The three foundational scriptures in Pure Land Buddhism, the *Smaller Sukhāvātīyūhasūtra*, *Larger Sukhāvātīyūhasūtra* and the *Guan wuliangshou jing* 觀無量壽經 [Sūtra (Concerning) the Contemplation of Amitāyus],<sup>75</sup> have been identified by scholars as well as the *Abitake* (Chin. *Amituo jing* 阿彌陀經) [Sūtra of Amitābha], a text which has only partly matching passages in Chinese Buddhist literature.<sup>76</sup> Either is its Chinese original lost or the *Abitake* is an original composition of a Uyghur author who compiled his text from various Chinese Pure Land sources and gave it its present form. Based on the materials discovered so far, Pure Land Buddhism did not spread among the Uyghurs of Turfan earlier than in the late 11th or early 12th century but remained an important Buddhist tradition until the late period (14th century). The *Āryāparimitāyurjñānanāmamahāyānasūtra* [Sūtra of the Great Vehicle Entitled Knowledge of the Noble One with Infinite Life], which was particularly popular in the Mongolian period, is extant in

73 For a recent anthology on Pure Land Buddhism, see Georgios T. Halkias and Richard K. Payne, ed. *Pure Lands in Asian Texts and Contexts: An Anthology* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2019).

74 Nobuyoshi Yamabe, "Practice of Visualization and the *Visualization Sūtra*: An Examination of Mural Paintings at Toyok, Turfan," *Pacific World: Journal of the Institute of Buddhist Studies* 4 (2002): 123–152.

75 There is also a well preserved Old Uyghur poetic adaptation edited in Kudara Kōgi 百濟康義 and Peter Zieme ペーター・ツィーメ, *Uiguru-go no Kanmuryōjūkyō* ウイグル語の觀無量壽經. *Guanwuliangshoujing in Uigur* (Kyōto: Nagata Bunshōdō, 1985).

76 On this literature, see Peter Zieme, "Local Literatures: Uighur," in *Brill's Encyclopedia of Buddhism. Vol. 1: Literature and Languages*, ed. Jonathan A. Silk, et al. (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2015), 875b–876a.

about 200 fragments in both block-printed and handwritten form.<sup>77</sup> The *Amṛtadundubhisvaradhāraṇī* [Dhāraṇī of the Sound of the Drum That is Like Ambrosia], a text sometimes assigned to either Esoteric or mature Tantric Buddhism, can now be added to the corpus of works dedicated to the worship of Amitābha.<sup>78</sup> Because only block-printed fragments are extant, the text was probably translated during the Yuan Dynasty (1279–1368, 元). Perhaps both texts, the *Āryāparimitāyurjñānanāmamahāyānasūtra* and the *Amṛtadundubhisvaradhāraṇī*, were translated into Old Uyghur based on versions in two different languages.<sup>79</sup> A fragment of a poem from Dunhuang related to Pure Land beliefs refers to the famous Vaidehī story.<sup>80</sup> Zhang and Zieme, the editors of this source, discovered that a text from the Turfan Collection in Berlin<sup>81</sup> features a parallel text that has, however, different spellings of proper names.

#### 2.4 *Worship of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara*

There are several Old Uyghur texts of ritual or practical background related to Avalokiteśvara,<sup>82</sup> the most popular of which is the translation of the *Guanyin jing* 觀音經 [Avalokiteśvara Scripture], the 25th chapter of Kumārajīva's (344–413, 鳩摩羅什) version of the *Lotus Sūtra*.<sup>83</sup> This section centers on the 33 forms of the bodhisattva's appearance and was transmitted as an independent text. A poem that praises Padmapāṇi Avalokiteśvara makes reference

77 For an edition and translation, see BT XXXVI, 41–121 (text A).

78 Edition and translation in BT XXXVI, 75–136 (text B).

79 BT XXXVI, 125.

80 Zhang Tieshan and Peter Zieme, "Two Old Uigur Fragments from Dunhuang Connected with the Pure Land Belief," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 71.3 (2018): 253–256.

81 Edited in BT XIII, 64 (text 7).

82 On Avalokiteśvara in Esoteric and Tantric Buddhism, see George A. Keyworth, "Avalokiteśvara," in *Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras in East Asia*, ed. Charles D. Orzech, Henrik H. Sørensen, and Richard K. Payne (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2011), 525–528. For the cult of this particular bodhisattva in Uyghur Buddhism, see also Yukiyo Kasai's paper in this volume.

83 A nearly complete scroll of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarikasūtra* is edited and translated in Wilhelm Radloff, *Kuan-ṣi-im Pusa: Eine türkische Übersetzung des XXV. Kapitels der chinesischen Ausgabe des Saddharmapuṇḍarika* (St. Petersburg: Imprimerie de l'Académie Impériale des Sciences, 1911). See also the edition and translation of a *Saddharmapuṇḍarikasūtra* scroll formerly housed in Berlin published the same year in Müller, *Uigurica II*, 14–20. This piece was rediscovered in the St. Petersburg Collection. Pchelin and Raschmann, "Turfan Manuscripts in the State Hermitage," 21–23. Fragments from other manuscripts are found in various collections.

to this chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra*.<sup>84</sup> The cult of the Thousand-armed and Thousand-eyed esoteric form of Avalokiteśvara spread across China in the 10th century.<sup>85</sup> There is a corpus of texts<sup>86</sup> translated from Chinese during the classical period of Uyghur Buddhism, which are ascribed to Šiṅko Šāli Tutuṅ (fl. second half of 10th c./beginning of 11th c.),<sup>87</sup> who was active around the turn of the first millennium. The most important text of this group, the *Qianshouqianyan Guanshiyin pusa guangda yuanman wuai dabeixin tuoluoni jing* 千手千眼觀世音菩薩廣大圓滿無礙大悲心陀羅尼經 [The Vast, Perfect, and Unobstructed Dhāraṇīsūtra of the Great Compassionate Heart (Taught by) the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara with 1000 Eyes and 1000 Arms = *Nilakaṇṭha(ka)sūtra*] (T. 1060.20),<sup>88</sup> is extant in several manuscripts, most of which are still un-edited,<sup>89</sup> although the relationship between this work and the *Qianyan qianbi guanshiyin pusa tuoluoni shenzhou jing* 千眼千臂觀世音菩薩陀羅尼神呪經 [The Sūtra of the Dhāraṇī Spell of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara with 1000 Eyes and 1000 Arms] (T. 1057.20) is not always certain.<sup>90</sup> Given that Šiṅko Šāli was probably the most illustrious translator

84 The edition and translation in BT XIII, 121–130 replaces Georg Hazai, “Ein buddhistisches Gedicht aus der Berliner Turfan-Sammlung,” *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 23.1 (1970): 1–21.

85 Keyworth, “Avalokiteśvara,” 526.

86 While the edition is still to be expected, it remains unclear whether the Old Uyghur version is based on T. 1057, T. 1060, or both texts.

87 Zieme, “Local Literatures: Uighur,” 876b. For a re-edition of two preserved colophons, see BT XXVI, 125–129.

88 The identification of a fragment in Brāhmī script that belongs to this text in Zieme, “Local Literatures: Uighur,” 872b, is highly important. See the catalogue entry (no. 43) in Dieter Maue, *Alttürkische Handschriften Teil 1: Dokumente in Brāhmī und tibetischer Schrift* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1996), 174. The text is edited in Annemarie von Gabain, *Türkische Turfan-Texte VIII: Texte in Brāhmī-Schrift* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1954), 61–62. For an in-depth study of the Chinese original, see Maria Dorothea Reis-Habito, *Die Dhāraṇī des Großen Erbarmens des Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara mit tausend Händen und Augen: Übersetzung und Untersuchung ihrer textlichen Grundlage sowie Erforschung ihres Kultes in China* (Nettetal: Steyler, 1993).

89 An edition and translation of two leaves of one manuscript are in Klaus Röhrborn, “Fragmente der uigurischen Version des ‘Dhāraṇī-Sūtras der großen Barmherzigkeit,’” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 126 (1976): 87–100. Raschmann and Sertkaya describe one partly preserved scroll that bears on the recto what is probably a short *dhāraṇī* of the Thousand-armed and Thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara. See Raschmann and Sertkaya, *Altürkische Handschriften Teil 20*, 168–169 (cat. no. 147).

90 The edition and Japanese translation of the St. Petersburg fragments are in Shōgaito Masahiro 庄垣内正弘, *Roshia shozō uigurugo bunken no kenkyū: Uiguru moji hyōki kanbun to uigurugo butten tekisuto* ロシア所藏ウイグル語文献の研究-ウイグル文字表記

of Uyghur Buddhist literature, we can perhaps infer that his reason for selecting the texts related to Avalokiteśvara can be found in his personal devotion to this particular bodhisattva.

Other manifestations of Avalokiteśvara were also popular, which is reflected in Old Uyghur literature and art. There is also a composite manuscript including the *Ruyi lun tuoluoni shenzhou jing* 如意輪陀羅尼神呪經 [Sūtra of the Dhāraṇī Spell of Cintāmaṇicakra].<sup>91</sup> Another text related to this bodhisattva that is preserved in many manuscripts and block-prints is the translation of the apocryphal *Foding xin da tuoluoni jing* 佛頂心大陀羅尼經 [Great Dhāraṇīsūtra of the Heart of the Buddha's Crest].<sup>92</sup> It was most likely translated in the pre-Mongol period but became more popular because the technique of printing, which spread under Mongol rule, facilitated the dissemination of the *dhāraṇī*. One pronounced practical function of this composition was its obstetrical benefit, because the second chapter is dedicated to making childbirth easier. But we also find a section with the ritual empowerment of water by means of talismanic writing. The Chinese original of the text was, until recently, mainly known from late prints from the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644, 明), dating from the 15th century.<sup>93</sup> There are also copies of the Chinese text from Dunhuang that bear different titles and an engraved version from the site of Fangshan (房山), dated to the Khitan Empire (907–1125, in Chinese sources

漢文とウイグル語佛典テキスト。 *Uighur Manuscripts in St. Petersburg: Chinese Texts in Uighur Script and Buddhist Uighur Texts* (Kyōto: Nukanishi Printing, 2003), 180–196.

- 91 Zieme, “Local Literatures: Uighur,” 876b. One leaf was already identified and published by Shōgaito, *Roshia shozō uigurugo bunken no kenkyū*, 196–199.
- 92 See the edition and translation in Georg Kara and Peter Zieme, “Die uigurische Übersetzung des apokryphen Sūtras ‘Fo ding xin da tuo luo ni,’” *Altorientalische Forschungen* 13.2 (1986): 318–376. A fragment of a block-printed folded book that was preserved only as a transcript when the edition was made was rediscovered in the St. Petersburg collection. Kara and Zieme, “Die uigurische Übersetzung,” 320, 329–330. See also Pchelin and Raschmann, “Turfan Manuscripts in the State Hermitage,” 16–18 (with some improved readings in fn. 20). For a lost fragment from the Arat Estate, which is nearly fully transcribed, see Raschmann and Sertkaya, *Altürkische Handschriften Teil 20*, 282–284 (cat. no. 339). Newly identified fragments from the Northern Section of the Mogao Caves (Chin. Mogao ku beiqū 莫高窟北区) (B 159:28, B 159:29, B 159:39) are mentioned in BT XXIII, 10. See also the edition by Aydar Mirkamal 阿依达尔·米尔卡马力, “Dunhuang xinchu huihuwen ‘Fo ding xin da tuoluoni jing’ yanjiu 敦煌新出回鹘文《佛頂心大陀羅尼經》研究。Research on the New Discovered Dunhuang Uighur Text of the *sūtra* ‘Fo ding xin da tuoluoni jing,’” *Wen jin xue zhi* 文津學誌 4 (2011): 54–62.
- 93 Herbert Franke, “Zu einem apokryphen Dhāraṇī-Sūtra aus China,” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 134 (1984): 318–336.



known as Liao (遼) or the Jurchen Jin Dynasty (1115–1234, 金).<sup>94</sup> The Chinese version from Dunhuang originated around the year 850.<sup>95</sup>

Only very few lines and the colophon of an *Avalokiteśvarastava* text are preserved.<sup>96</sup> Two *Avalokiteśvarasādhana* texts based on the tradition of mature Tantric Buddhism and translated from Tibetan are still not identified with any known Tibetan text.<sup>97</sup> Two block prints of the first text date to the years 1333 and 1336 respectively.<sup>98</sup>

It should be mentioned that a sizeable number of fragments of votive banners from the Museum für Asiatische Kunst (Berlin) found in the Turfan region relate to different aspects of this bodhisattva.<sup>99</sup> One example (inv. no. III 6355) of the Thousand-armed and Thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara is well-known.<sup>100</sup> Three banners show only the eyes of the bodhisattva.<sup>101</sup> Two banners (III 7307 and III 7308) were found in Toyok, the one from Murtuk (III 7787) is painted in a crude way. One banner from Toyok (III 7307) is inscribed on both sides in a late form of Old Uyghur.<sup>102</sup> It is tempting to see a connection with the Eye-Healing Avalokiteśvara known from Tibet and Mongolia, but this is

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- 94 Li Ling and Ma De, "Avalokiteśvara and the Dunhuang Dhāraṇī Spells," in *Chinese and Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism*, ed. Yael Bentor and Meir Shahar (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2017), 343–348. The authors discuss two further texts extolling Avalokiteśvara's role as a helper with childbirth, namely the *Jiuchannan tuoluoni* 救產難陀羅尼 [Dhāraṇī for Delivery from Childbirth Obstacles] and the *Nan yuewen* 難月文 [Text on the Difficult Months (of Pregnancy)].
- 95 Li and Ma, "Avalokiteśvara and the Dunhuang Dhāraṇī Spells," 345.
- 96 The first edition and translation are in Georg Hazai, "Ein uigurisches Kolophon zu einem Avalokiteśvara-Lobpreis," in *Tractata Altaica: Denis Sinor sexagenario optime de rebus altaicis merito dedicata*, ed. Walther Heissig, et al. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1976), 273–276. A new edition is provided in BT xxvi, 229–231.
- 97 See BT VII, 63–67 (text B = block-prints) and 67–68 (text C = manuscript).
- 98 Peter Zieme, "Bemerkungen zur Datierung uigurischer Blockdrucke," *Journal Asiatique* 269 (1981): 397–398. For the colophons, see also BT xxvi, 208–210.
- 99 Chhaya Bhattacharya-Haesner, *Central Asian Temple Banners in the Turfan Collection of the Museum für Indische Kunst, Berlin: Painted Textiles from the Northern Silk Route* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 2003), 174–231.
- 100 *Ibid.*, 59 (colour plate).
- 101 *Ibid.*, 203–205 (cat. no. 203–205). During the *BuddhistRoad* Mid-project Conference in Bochum, several participants mentioned a wooden panel covered all over with depictions of eyes that was found in 2010 in the vicinity of Domoko (Chin. Damagou 大瑪溝).
- 102 See the edition and translation in Takao Moriyasu in collaboration with Peter Zieme, "Uighur Inscriptions on the Banners from Turfan Housed in the Museum für Indische Kunst, Berlin," Appendix to: Chhaya Bhattacharya-Haesner, *Central Asian Temple Banners in the Turfan Collection of the Museum für Indische Kunst, Berlin: Painted Textiles from the Northern Silk Route* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 2003), 466b–466c.

perhaps too speculative, because this cult developed later.<sup>103</sup> One inscription identifies the main deity as Cintāmaṇicakra Avalokiteśvara, to whom a lay person, together with his wife, dedicated the banner.<sup>104</sup>

Female manifestations of Avalokiteśvara have to be mentioned as well, the most famous of which is Tārā. The *Tārā-ekaviṃśatistotra* was probably translated from a Tibetan original, but it is also possible that the translator consulted more than one version. Most of the extant copies are from different block-prints, while the *stotra* part is also preserved in handwritten form.<sup>105</sup> Another aspect of Avalokiteśvara is Cuṇḍī.<sup>106</sup> An Old Uyghur translation of a *dhāraṇī* dedicated to her has not been identified with any known version so far,<sup>107</sup> although it has similarities to the *Cuṇḍīdevīdhāraṇīsūtra* (T. 1075.20). What makes this text particularly interesting is that it is rich in ritualistic details (the construction of a *maṇḍala*, the position of the image of the deity, the description of various ritual tools, the sequence of the *vaśīkāraṇa* and *abhicāra* rituals, the accomplishment of the painting of Cuṇḍīdevī, etc.).

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- 103 Olaf Czaja, "The Eye-Healing Avalokiteśvara: A National Icon of Mongolia and its Origin in Tibetan Medicine," in *Tibetan and Himalayan Healing: An Anthology for Anthony Aris*, ed. Charles Ramble and Ulrike Roesler (Kathmandu: Vajra, 2015), 125–139.
- 104 Moriyasu and Zieme, "Uighur Inscriptions," 463a (line 10).
- 105 Geng Shimin, "Qādimqī uyğurčä buddhistik äsär 'Ārya-trāta-buddha-mātrika-vimsati-pūjā-stotra-sūtra'din fragmentlar [Fragments from the Old Uyghur Buddhist Work 'Ārya-trāta-buddha-mātrika-vimsati-pūjā-stotra-sūtra']," *Journal of Turkish Studies* 3 (1979): 295–306. Peter Zieme, "Zum uigurischen Tārā-Ekaviṃśatistotra," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 36.1–3 (1982): 583–597 (reprinted in FBV 474–488 with additions and corrections on 489–490, including newly identified fragments). One of the new fragments is part of the Chinese *stotra* written in Uyghur script. In Zieme's article, we find corrections to Geng's publication and the identification of text M in BT VII, 78. Later on, two fragments (U 4145, U 4135) are identified as part of the *Sitātapatrādhāraṇī*. See Peter Zieme, "Zum mehrsprachigen Blockdruck des *Tārā-Ekaviṃśatistotra*," *Altorientalische Forschungen* 16.1 (1989): 196–197. Cf. also Peter Zieme, "Further Notes on the Uigur Blockprints of the *Tārā-Ekaviṃśatistotra*," in *Shouju zhongguo shaoshu minzu guji wenxian guoji xueshu yantaohui lunwenji* 首届中国少数民族古籍文献国际学术研讨会论文集 [Proceedings of the 1st International Colloquium on Ancient Manuscripts and Literatures of the Minorities in China], ed. Huan Jianming 黄建明, Nie Hongyin 聂鸿音, and Malan 马兰 (Beijing: Minzu Chubanshe, 2012), 285–295. Further information is found in BT XXIII, 9.
- 106 Henrik H. Sørensen, "Central Divinities," in *Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras in East Asia*, ed. Charles D. Orzech, Henrik H. Sørensen, and Richard K. Payne (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2011), 99–100.
- 107 Edition and translation are in BT XXIII, 65–79. On p. 77, Zieme points out that the *Cuṇḍīdevīdhāraṇī* is also attested in Arat, *Eski türk şiiri*, 9 (lines 78–81).

## 2.5 *Ritual Texts of Mature Tantric Buddhism*

There was a new religious dynamic in Uyghur Buddhism under Mongol rule. The growing interest the Mongol elite took in mature Tantric Buddhism also affected the Uyghurs. This coincided with the spread of the block-printing technique, which enabled the production and distribution of a large number of texts. The efficacy of these texts was probably thought to be enhanced by the glosses in Brāhmī script sometimes added to the Indic elements in the text. One of the most widespread block-printed texts with glosses in Brāhmī script is certainly the *Sitātapatrādhāraṇī*.<sup>108</sup> Some scholars claim that next to various block-printed editions—most of them found at Murtuk—there should also be a handwritten manuscript<sup>109</sup> but this assumption is groundless. The exact version from which the Old Uyghur translation was made has yet to be determined. It is generally assumed that it must have been a Sanskrit text.<sup>110</sup> In a colophon, the initiator Kamala Ačari, also known as Kamala Anantaširi (fl. 14th c.), mentions that he commissioned the printing of 108 copies of the

108 The masterly first edition *cum* translation is Müller, *Uigurica II*, 50–75 (with parallel Chinese text). Müller already identified the majority of the extant fragments. Subsequent publications are Sergej Malov, “*Sitātapatrā-dhāraṇī* v uĵurskoj redakcii,” *Doklady Akademii Nauk SSSR* 1930-B (1927): 88–94 and Albert von Le Coq, “Kurze Einführung in die uigurische Schriftkunde,” *Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen an der Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Berlin. Westasiatische Studien* 11 (1919): 105–107. See also Zieme “Zum uigurischen Tārā-Ekaviṃśatistotra,” 591–592. The standard (re)edition is Klaus Röhrborn and András Róna-Tas, *Spätformen des zentralasiatischen Buddhismus: Die altuigurische Sitātapatrā-dhāraṇī, herausgegeben, übersetzt und kommentiert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2005), 237–321. Two further fragments from the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, reported to originate from Cave 181 in Dunhuang, were later edited by Ayşe Kılıç Cengiz, “Bibliothèque Nationale de France’ta muhafaza edilen *Sitātapatrādhāraṇī* fragmanları üzerine. On the *Sitātapatrādhāraṇī* Fragments which are Conserved in Bibliothèque Nationale de France,” *Hacettepe Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi* 26 (2017): 239–252. For catalogue information on the block-printed fragments in Berlin, some of which are duplicates of the ones in Müller’s first edition, see Abdurishid Yakup and Michael Knüppel, *Alttürkische Handschriften Teil 11: Die uigurischen Blockdrucke der Berliner Turfansammlung. Teil 1: Tantrische Texte* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2007), 33–93. Two fragments of folded books from Berlin (ed. Müller, *Uigurica II*, 57–59), which were considered lost during World War II, were recently rediscovered in the St. Petersburg Collection. See Pchelin and Raschmann, “Turfan Manuscripts in the State Hermitage,” 13–14, 23–24. On the Chinese versions in vol. 19 of the Taishō *tripiṭaka*, see Rolf W. Giebel, “*Taishō* Volumes 18–21,” in *Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras in East Asia*, ed. Charles D. Orzech, Henrik H. Sørensen, and Richard K. Payne (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2011), 31.

109 Röhrborn and Róna-Tas, *Spätformen*, 244–245.

110 *Ibid.*, 246–247. An important comparative study of the terminology of one particular passage is found in Louis Ligeti, “Le sacrifice offert aux ancêtres dans l’*Histoire Secrète*,” *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 27.2 (1973): 155–159.

text.<sup>111</sup> The colophon expressly states that longevity of the Mongol imperial family is one of the intended goals of printing the text. There is one additional colophon of a block-printed text called the *Sitātapatrāsūtra*, which states that a Sanskrit and an Old Uyghur version of this text were printed in an edition of 10,000 copies.<sup>112</sup> The colophon also mentions the Mongol emperor. Since the Mongol emperors venerated Sitātapatrā as a powerful divinity in military conflicts,<sup>113</sup> imperial patronage and distribution of this important text was probably encouraged with respect to the Uyghurs. Mythologically, Sitātapatrā is said to have originated from the Buddha's Uṣṇīṣa.<sup>114</sup> Another text held in high esteem among the Uyghurs during the Yuan Dynasty was the *Uṣṇīṣavijayādhāraṇī*.<sup>115</sup> It also exists only in block-printed editions,<sup>116</sup> which are quite similar to those of the *Sitātapatrādhāraṇī*.<sup>117</sup> Here, glosses in Brāhmī script are likewise found. In all likelihood, it is significant that glosses in Brāhmī script are—in most cases, though not exclusively—found with texts that have a ritualistic character. Also the majority of the block-printed fragments were found during the third Turfan expedition in Murtuk. Where the Turfan expedition code of folios or fragments of the *Uṣṇīṣavijayādhāraṇī* points to another site such as Dakianuṣṣāhri (= Kočo) or, specifically, ruin μ in Kočo this often coincides with the information that can be gleaned from the fragments belonging to the *Sitātapatrādhāraṇī*. Both texts were found at the same sites, obviously. Additionally, there is a handwritten fragment from Toyok (U 2378a) that contains an Old Uyghur explanation of the (inflected) Sanskrit terms in the *Uṣṇīṣavijayādhāraṇī* on its verso.<sup>118</sup>

111 The colophon is edited and translated into Modern Turkish in Arat, *Eski türk şiri*, 233–235. This first edition was later superseded by BT XIII, 170–172.

112 BT XIII, 172.

113 Robert E. Buswell Jr. and Donald S. Lopez Jr., *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* (Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014) s.v. *Sitātapatrā*.

114 Uṣṇīṣavijayā and Tārā are also connected with this *lakṣaṇa*.

115 For the edition and translation, see Müller, *Uigurica II*, 27–50 (with parallel Chinese text). On the Chinese versions in vol. 19 of the Taishō, see Giebel, “*Taishō* Volumes 18–21,” 32.

116 There is one block-printed folded book that contains not only this *dhāraṇī* but also the *Āryāparimitāyurjñānanāmamahāyānasūtra*. See BT XXXVI, 46.

117 Catalogue information, including newly identified parallels to the first edition, is provided in Yakup and Knüppel, *Altürkische Handschriften Teil 11*, 151–178. One fragment of a block-printed folded book formerly thought to be lost during World War II was rediscovered. See Pchelin and Raschmann, “Turfan Manuscripts in the State Hermitage,” 10–11.

118 Uğur Uzunkaya, “A Fragment of Old Uyghur *Uṣṇīṣavijayā-nāma-dhāraṇī* from the Berlin Turfan Collection,” *Erdem* 75 (2018): 223–250. See also BT XXIII, 9.

One should also mention a translation made by Puṇyaśrī (fl. 14th c.) around the year 1330 from the Tibetan version of the *Śrīcakrasaṃvaramaṇḍalābhīsamaya*.<sup>119</sup> This is clearly one of the most important ritual texts in Old Uyghur of tantric content. Another translation made from Tibetan during the Yuan Dynasty is a nearly complete booklet with square leaves, which contains Sakya Paṇḍita's (1182–1251, Tib. Sa skya paNDi ta Kun dga' rgyal mtshan) *Lam zab ma bla ma'i rnal 'byor* [The Profound Path of Guru Yoga].<sup>120</sup> Further texts of mature Tantric Buddhism are the following: a *Vajrapāṇīsādhana*,<sup>121</sup> a fragmentary description of Ratnasambhava<sup>122</sup> as well as part of a description of the five *tathāgatas* of which only sections on Ratnasambhava and Amoghasiddhi are preserved,<sup>123</sup> two fragmentary *maṇḍala* descriptions one of which relating to Amoghasiddhi and his consort,<sup>124</sup> a ritual instruction for a offering cake (Tib. *gtor ma*) ritual to Heruka,<sup>125</sup> a visualisation of Cakrasaṃvara,<sup>126</sup> two fragments of a yet unknown visualisation text including a *dhāraṇī* of a boar-headed Tejomahākāla,<sup>127</sup> a fragment of a visualisation of several buddhas located on the body parts of the practitioner,<sup>128</sup> a colophon to an unidentified text,<sup>129</sup> a fragment of a praise of Vajrasattva<sup>130</sup> as well as two fragments of block-prints of the Vajrasattva *mantra*,<sup>131</sup> a *Mañjuśrīsādhana* that was translated from Tibetan (*'Phags pa Jam dpal gyi sgrub pa'i thabs*) by Saṃghaśrī (fl. 14th c.) around the year 1300,<sup>132</sup> a fragmentary double leaf of

119 Friedrich Wilhelm Karl Müller, "Ein uigurisch-lamaistisches Zauberritual aus den Turfan-Funden," *Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* (1928): 381–386. An analysis and edition (with German translation) are in BT VII, 5–63 (text A). A parallel is BT VII, 69 (text E).

120 An Edition, translation, and comparison with the Tibetan original are in BT VIII, 17–79.

121 Edition and translation are in BT VII, 68–69 (text D).

122 Edition and translation in BT VII, 70 (text F).

123 Edition and translation in BT XXXVI, 145–149 (text D).

124 Edition and translation in BT VII, 70 (text G), 71–72 (text H).

125 Edition and translation in BT VII, 72 (text I).

126 Edition and translation in BT VII, 73–74 (text J). As shown in BT XXXVI, 159, this fragment might belong to text A in BT VII, because the fragment U 5689 runs parallel to parts of text A and parts of text J. But there are still some differences in the sequence of sentences. For an edition U 5689 and two further Cakrasaṃvara texts, see BT XXXVI, 159–171 (text F). The very late fragment Beida Fu T1 V (232, 4012, 483642) found on pp. 165–168 is an improved re-edition of Abdurishid Yakup, "A New Cakrasaṃvara Text in Uighur," *Kyoto University Linguistic Research* 19 (2000): 43–58.

127 Edition and translation in BT XXXVI, 151–157 (text E).

128 Edition and translation in BT VII, 74–75 (text K).

129 Edition and translation in BT VII, 75–77 (text L).

130 Edition and translation in BT VII, 78 (text M).

131 Edition and translation in BT XXXVI, 137–143 (text C).

132 Edited in Oda Juten 小田壽典, "Uigurubun monjushirijōjuhō no danpen ichiyō ウイグル文殊師利成就法の断片一葉. A Fragment of the Mañjuśrī-sādhana in Uighur

*Vajravidāraṇānāmasādhana*, presumably translated from Tibetan,<sup>133</sup> a ritual manual mentioning several gurus with Tibetan names,<sup>134</sup> and a text relating to Tibetan Buddhism of unknown content.<sup>135</sup> A composite ritual manual of four texts related to the Cakrasaṃvara cycle of Nāropa's (1016–1100) teachings, which dates to around the year 1350 and begins with a text that is similar to the so-called *Book of the Dead* (Tib. *Bar do thos grol*),<sup>136</sup> was discovered in Dunhuang.<sup>137</sup> The three other mature Tantric Buddhist texts of this book are an instruction based on Nāropa's teachings<sup>138</sup> by Mahāguru Dharmadhvaḥja (1108–1176, Tib. Chos kyi rgyal mtshan) from Amdo, a text on the six *dhyānas* of Caṇḍālī, and a sacrifice text for Cakrasaṃvara. This collection of four texts assembled in one book is a fascinating example of the late phase of Uyghur Buddhism and its complex relationship to Tibetan culture and yogic instruction in this region. We now know that in Gansu (甘肃), the religio-political situation was dominated by the inclinations of the ruling Mongol Bin (鬲) clan, who promoted Tibetan Buddhism among the Uyghur population. Scholars are of the opinion that the modern Yugur nationality descended from this Uyghur group. The decision to align with Khubilai Khan (r. 1260–1294)—and

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Script],” *Tōyōshi kenkyū* 東洋史研究 *Studies on the History of the Orient* 33 (1974): 86–109. For the colophon, see BT XXVI, 211–212.

- 133 Edition and translation in BT XXXVI, 174–177 (text G).
- 134 Edition and translation in BT VII, 78–79 (text N).
- 135 Edition and translation in BT VII, 79 (text O). Further unidentified tantric fragments, including a description of a Mañjuśrī visualisation are edited and translated in BT XXXVI, 179–195 (text H).
- 136 For a recent evaluation of the *Bar do thos grol* [Liberation through Hearing in the Bardo], see Yoshiro Imaeda, “The *Bar do thos grol*: Tibetan Conversion to Buddhism or Tibetanisation of Buddhism?” in *Esoteric Buddhism at Dunhuang: Rites and Teachings for This Life and Beyond*, ed. Matthew T. Kapstein and Sam van Schaik (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2010), 145–158.
- 137 Edition and translation in Peter Zieme and György Kara, *Ein uigurisches Totenbuch: Nāropas Lehre in uigurischer Übersetzung von vier tibetischen Traktaten nach der Sammelhandschrift aus Dunhuang British Museum Or. 8212 (109)* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1979). For improved interpretations of the first text, see Georg Kara, “Some Passages of the Uyghur Antarābhava-Treatise Revisited,” in *Splitter aus der Gegend von Turfan: Festschrift für Peter Zieme anlässlich seines 60. Geburtstags*, ed. Mehmet Ölmez and Simone-Christiane Raschmann (Istanbul, Berlin: Mehmet Ölmez, 2002), 93–101. See also the article by Siglinde Dietz, “Definitionen der ‘Zwischenexistenz’ im tibetischen und uigurischen ‘Totenbuch,’” *Ural-Altäische Jahrbücher* Neue Folge 24 (2010/2011): 82–94. Similar fragments from the Northern Section of the Mogao Caves (B 160:7, B 161:9) are mentioned in BT XXIII, 10.
- 138 See Ulrich Timme Kragh, “Prolegomenon to the Six Doctrines of Nā ro pa: Authority and Tradition,” in *Mahānūdrā and the Bka'-brgyud Tradition: PIAT'S 2006: Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the Eleventh Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Königswinter 2006*, ed. Roger R. Jackson and Matthew T. Kapstein (Andiastr: International Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies, 2011), 131–177.



FIGURE 13.1 Block print of the Sanskrit text of the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* in Uyghur characters with interlinear Brāhmī text

U 4705A AND U 4704C DEPOSITUM DER BERLIN-BRANDENBURGISCHEN  
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thus with Tibetan Buddhism—during the end of the 13th century is credited to the brothers Chūbaī (fl. second half of 13th–beginning of 14th c.) and Qabān (fl. second half of 13th c.).<sup>139</sup>

One of the most popular texts of mature Tantric Buddhism was certainly the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*.<sup>140</sup> There is not only the block-printed Old Uyghur translation but also a block-printed version of the Sanskrit version in Uyghur characters with accompanying interlinear Brāhmī text (fig. 13.1). A

139 Yang Fuxue and Zhang Haijuan, “Mongol Rulers, Yugur Subjects, and Tibetan Buddhism,” in *Chinese and Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism*, ed. Yael Bentor and Meir Shahar (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2017), 377–386, especially 378.

140 Edition and translation in BT VIII, 91–121. Further fragments are edited in Georg Kara, “Weiteres über die uigurische *Nāmasaṃgīti*,” *Altorientalische Forschungen* 8 (1981): 227–236. New identified pieces are listed in BT XXIII, 9.

single manuscript sheet featuring the *mantravinyāsa* [The Arrangement of the Mantra] in Sanskrit in Uyghur script is a recent discovery.<sup>141</sup>

Zieme is preparing an edition of fragments related to the *Guhyasamāja-tantra*.<sup>142</sup> The scroll of a text known in Old Uyghur studies as *bahṣi ögdisi* [Praise of the Teacher] in the Turfan Collection in Berlin (U 5678) is believed to be related to Tibetan Buddhism.<sup>143</sup> It mentions the Buddha Vairocana in one line (l.9). As mentioned above, the *Amṛtadundubhisvaradhāraṇī*, which is related to the worship of Amitābha, is known from only three fragments.<sup>144</sup> The *Māricīdhāraṇī*<sup>145</sup> is a text that was most likely based on a Tibetan version and translated in the Mongolian period.<sup>146</sup> Because she was associated with warfare,<sup>147</sup> Māricī was perhaps attractive as a goddess to support the Mongol Empire and their vassals. In the *dhāraṇī* she is invoked to protect against enemies and dangerous wild beasts. Text A, which is edited in *Türkische Turfantexte V*, is still enigmatic. It contains several ritual instructions including visualisations, a *dhāraṇī*, and several *mudrās*.<sup>148</sup> The manuscript contains some archaic spellings, which point to a rather early translation probably made from a Chinese original, if a loan word such as *hwašin* from the Chinese *hua shen* (化身 = Skt. *nirmāṇakāya*) should prove to be conclusive. The text does not seem to belong to mature Tantric Buddhism in the narrow sense.

## 2.6 Amulets and Talismans

The use of amulets and talismans is widespread in Esoteric Buddhism.<sup>149</sup> The first amulet made known to the public is dedicated to Avalokiteśvara and

141 Jens Wilkens, "A Sanskrit Fragment of the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṅgīti* in Uyghur Script," *International Journal of Old Uyghur Studies* 2.1 (2020): 27–35.

142 BT XXIII, 9.

143 Edition and translation into Modern Turkish in Mehmet Ölmez, "Tibet Buddhizmine ait eski Uygurca *Bahṣi Ögdisi* [An Old Uyghur *Bahṣi Ögdisi* Related to Tibetan Buddhism]," in *Bahṣi Ögdisi: Festschrift für Klaus Röhrborn anlässlich seines 60. Geburtstags / 60. Doğum Yılı Dolayısıyla Klaus Röhrborn Armağanı*, ed. Jens Peter Laut and Mehmet Ölmez (Freiburg, Istanbul: Simurg, 1998), 261–293.

144 See BT XXIII, 9, and the edition and translation in BT XXXVI, 124–136.

145 Edition and translation in BT XXIII, 89–114 (with corresponding Tibetan text).

146 BT XXIII, 89.

147 Sørensen, "Central Divinities," 119.

148 Edition and translation in Willi Bang and Annemarie von Gabain, "Türkische Turfan-Texte V," *Sitzungsberichte der Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse* 14 (1931): 324–340.

149 James Robson, "Talismans in Chinese Esoteric Buddhism," in *Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras in East Asia*, ed. Charles D. Orzech, Henrik H. Sørensen, and Richard K. Payne (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2011), 225–229. See also Paul Copp, "Altar, Amulet, Icon: Transformations in Dhāraṇī Amulet Culture, 740–980," *Cahiers d'Extrême Asie* 17 (2008):



was published by Wilhelm Radloff in 1911.<sup>150</sup> In the same year, Müller—who referred to Radloff’s publication in his supplement to *Uigurica II*—added further examples, such as an amulet for easy childbirth and one for removing a headache.<sup>151</sup> In 1937, Gabdul R. Rachmati published several other specimens—one for a person ill with fever, one to avert evil spirits, and one to avoid delivering a female child, among others.<sup>152</sup> Zieme published them again in 2005.<sup>153</sup> An apotropaic work with the still-enigmatic title *Garbaparimančanīsūtra* is preserved in printed and handwritten form.<sup>154</sup> The text, which includes a *dhāraṇī* and is unusually replete with metaphors, even for Old Uyghur standards, says that the *apsarases* Śaśī, Urvaśī, and Tilottamā continuously recite the *sūtra*.<sup>155</sup> The Buddha entrusts Ānanda with the task of helping a doe, heavy with young, in the throes of birth. Another apotropaic text which Radloff edited could be supplemented with further pieces by Zieme, who identified it as dedicated to the group of the Seven Guanyins, that is Avalokiteśvaras, and related to Amoghavajra’s (705–774, Chin. Bukong 不空) translation of the *Avalokiteśvaratrilokavijayavidyādharasūtra* (T. 1033.20).<sup>156</sup>

## 2.7 *Astrological and Astronomical Works*

Uyghur astrology relies heavily on Chinese paradigms.<sup>157</sup> A small number of fragments that definitely are from the pre-Mongolian period testify to the cult

239–264; Paul Copp, “Manuscript Culture as Ritual Culture in Late Medieval Dunhuang,” *Cahiers d’Extrême Asie* 20 (2011): 193–226.

150 Radloff, *Kuan-ši-im Pusar*, 110.

151 Müller, *Uigurica II*, 99–100.

152 Gabdul R. Rachmati, *Türkische Turfan-Texte VII, mit sinologischen Anmerkungen von W[olfgang] Eberhard* (Berlin: Verlag der Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1937), 73.

153 BT XXIII, 182–184. A large fragment of a scroll from the collection in Berlin (The Seven Guanyins), which was considered lost during World War II, was rediscovered in the St. Petersburg Collection. See Pchelin and Raschmann, “Turfan Manuscripts in the State Hermitage,” 8–9. Further amulets, some of which are connected with certain stars, are edited in BT XXIII, 184–185.

154 Edition and translation in BT XXIII, 151–177.

155 BT XXIII, 164 (lines H025–027).

156 Edition in BT XXIII, 179–182.

157 See Jeffrey Theodore Kotyk, “Buddhist Astrology and Astral Magic in the Tang Dynasty” (PhD diss., University of Leiden, 2017). On astrology in Esoteric Buddhism see Henrik H. Sørensen, “Astrology and the Worship of the Planets in Esoteric Buddhism of the Tang,” in *Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras in East Asia*, ed. Charles D. Orzech, Henrik H. Sørensen, and Richard K. Payne (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2011), 230–244. Astrology and planetary worship in the art of China and Central Asia are dealt with in Lilla Russell-Smith, “Stars and Planets in Chinese and Central Asian Buddhist Art in the Ninth to Fifteenth Centuries,” *Culture and Cosmos* 10.1–2 (2006): 99–124. Uyghur art is one of the main subjects of this important study.

of Tejaḥprabha Buddha among the Uyghurs. They correspond to the *Foshuo dawei de jinlun foding Chishengguang rulai xiaochu yiqie zainan tuoluoni jing* 佛說大威德金輪佛頂熾盛光如來消除一切災難陀羅尼經 [The Dhāraṇī for Eliminating all Disasters of the Tathāgata Blazing Light on the Summit of the Greatly Awesome Virtues of the Buddha Golden Wheel Spoken by the Buddha] (T. 964.19).<sup>158</sup> The names of donors mentioned in the fragments point to lay persons.<sup>159</sup> In her book on Uyghur patronage in Dunhuang, Lilla Russell-Smith discusses in detail a pictorial representation of Tejaḥprabha from Bezeklik Cave 18 (= Grünwedel's Cave 8).<sup>160</sup> The most popular Old Uyghur astrological work of Yuan period was the *Yetikän Sudur*, a text with talismans and *dhāraṇīs* dedicated to the worship of the Big Dipper<sup>161</sup> in order to procure long life,<sup>162</sup> a concept generally related to the heavenly bodies in medieval Chinese Buddhism.<sup>163</sup> It is preserved in handwritten and block-printed form (fig. 13.2). A small fragment in Tibetan script was also identified by Zieme,<sup>164</sup> who was able to reconstruct nearly the whole text.<sup>165</sup> Some of the seals or talismans are preserved.<sup>166</sup> Chinese, Tibetan, and Mongolian versions are also extant. The Old Uyghur version is related to the Chinese *Foshuo beidou qixing yanming jing* 佛說北斗七星延命經 [The Sūtra of the Seven Stars of the Big Dipper Procuring Longevity Spoken by the Buddha] (T. 1307.21). The relationship between the

158 There is also one temple banner inscribed with the *dhāraṇī* of this text. See Moriyasu, Zieme, "Uighur Inscriptions," 466a–468a. On Tejaḥprabha see Sørensen, "Astrology and the Worship of the Planets," 239–241.

159 BT XXIII, 85.

160 Lilla Russell-Smith, *Uyghur Patronage in Dunhuang: Regional Art Centres on the Northern Silk Road in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2005), 104–110. Cf. also Russell-Smith, "Stars and Planets," 103–113 and Takao Moriyasu, "Chronology of West Uighur Buddhism: Re-examination of the Dating of the Wall-paintings in Grünwedel's Cave No. 8 (New: No. 18), Bezeklik," in *Aspects of Research into Central-Asian Buddhism: In memoriam Kōgi Kudara*, ed. Peter Zieme (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), 196. In an article Russell-Smith describes the Uyghur painting as follows: "This Tejaḥprabhā composition is an important example of the links between the Uyghurs, Dunhuang, the Tanguts and central China" (Russell-Smith, "Stars and Planets," 112).

161 On the Chinese version, see Herbert Franke, "The Taoist Elements in the Great Bear Sūtra (Pei-tou ching)," *Asia Major* 3 (1990): 75–111.

162 On the connection between the worship of the Big Dipper and procuring longevity, see Kotyk, "Buddhist Astrology," 202–204. See also Sørensen, "Astrology and the Worship of the Planets," 237.

163 See Sørensen, "Astrology and the Worship of the Planets," 230.

164 BT XXIII, 128–129.

165 See the edition and translation in BT XXIII, 115–149, which supersedes all previous work on the Old Uyghur version.

166 See also Robson, "Talismans in Chinese Esoteric Buddhism," 228. The Chinese goddesses of the Big Dipper and their seals are depicted in Kotyk, "Buddhist Astrology," 203.



FIGURE 13.2 Old Uyghur Block Print of *The Yetikän Sudur*  
 U 496\_01, DEPOSITUM DER BERLIN-BRANDENBURGISCHEN AKADEMIE  
 DER WISSENSCHAFTEN IN DER STAATSBIBLIOTHEK ZU BERLIN—  
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Old Uyghur and the Mongolian versions is not sufficiently clear.<sup>167</sup> Although phrased differently, both extant Old Uyghur colophons mention that a *posatha* day was selected by the lay donors for copying (in case of a manuscript) or printing (in case of a block-print) the work.<sup>168</sup> The donors of the manuscript colophon request protection for the realm while the colophon of the block-print

167 See Johan Elverskog, “The Mongolian Big Dipper Sūtra,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 29.1 (2008): 90: “The opening passage of the Mongolian text provides a history of its translation: it was translated from Chinese into Mongolian, which in turn was used as the basis for the Tibetan translation. The colophon also notes that an Old Uyghur translation was prepared and printed, but it never states explicitly whether it was used as an intermediary in the translation from Chinese into Mongolian.”

168 For the colophons, see BT XXIII, 148–149.



FIGURE 13.3 Old Uyghur astrological text

U 494 RECTO, DEPOSITUM DER BERLIN-BRANDENBURGISCHEN AKADEMIE DER WISSENSCHAFTEN IN DER STAATSBIBLIOTHEK ZU BERLIN—PREUSSISCHER KULTURBESITZ ORIENTABTEILUNG

asks for welfare for the Mongol royal family. The latter colophon tells us that the lay female donor Silig Tegin commissioned the printing of 1000 copies of this text in order to recover from illness and never be reborn in a female body in the future.

The *Modingqie jing* 摩登伽經 [Mātāṅgīsūtra] (T. 1300.21)—known also under the Sanskrit title *Śārdūlakarṇāvadāna*—is a work with astrological contents.<sup>169</sup> We can now add at least four further fragments (Mainz 356a–c, U 293) to the published materials of this version.

In case of the *Grahamāṭṛkadhāraṇī*, the Old Uyghur fragments show corresponding parts to the *Zhuxingmu tuoluoni jing* 諸星母陀羅尼經 [Sūtra of the Mother Dhāraṇī Among the Stars] (T. 1302) as well as to the *Foshuo shengyaomu tuoluoni jing* 佛說聖曜母陀羅尼經 [The Holy Mother Dhāraṇī Spoken by the Buddha] (T. 1303.21).<sup>170</sup>

169 Edition and translation in BT XXIII, 47–60. The fragments U 1580 and U 1581 are actually part of the narrative cycle of stories called the *Daśakarmapathāvadānamālā*. See Jens Wilkens, *Altürkische Handschriften Teil 10: Buddhistische Erzähltexte* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2010), 191 (no. #232), 275–276 (no. 370).

170 Edition and translation in BT XXIII, 61–64.

Literature of astrological content must have been substantial at some point among the Uyghurs. The introductory part of a treatise housed in the Beijing National Library on the portents of meteors, depending on their outward appearance, was recently identified.<sup>171</sup> So far, the text as a whole has no matching Chinese parallel, although the editor identifies similar descriptions in Chinese astrological or divinatory texts. Matsui identified fragments of almanac divination texts related to the *Yuxiaji* 玉匣記 [Records of the Jade Casket] found at Dunhuang and dating to the Yuan Dynasty.<sup>172</sup>

In the late phase of Uyghur Buddhism, other astrological and hemerological works (fig. 13.3) flooded the scene, as did amulets devised for protection against various influences (illness, evil spirits, groundless accusations, death of livestock etc.) and for application in different aspects of life (childbirth, combat, and so on).<sup>173</sup> A new evaluation of these texts that takes the progress in Dunhuang studies into account is a desideratum.

## 2.8 *Spells and Incantations*

The *Āṭānāṭikasūtra* and *Āṭānāṭikahr̥daya* were first known from Sanskrit-Old Uyghur bilingual texts,<sup>174</sup> but later, monolingual Old Uyghur versions of both texts were also discovered.<sup>175</sup> Two leaves (U 3831, U 3832) of a *Āṭānāṭikasūtra* manuscript in gold letters on indigo paper are remarkable because the text is presented in a particularly prestigious way (fig. 13.4). The translation of the *Āṭānāṭikasūtra* was, in all likelihood, made from a Sanskrit text (version from Xinjiang).<sup>176</sup>

171 Abdurishid Yakup, "An Old Uyghur Fragment of an Astrological Treatise Kept in the Beijing National Library," in *Zur lichten Heimat: Studien zu Manichäismus, Iranistik und Zentralasienkunde im Gedenken an Werner Sundermann*, ed. Team "Turfanforschung" (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2017), 711–717.

172 Matsui Dai, "Uighur Almanac Divination Fragments from Dunhuang," in *Dunhuang Studies: Prospects and Problems for the Coming Second Century of Research*, ed. Irina Fedorovna Popova and Liu Yi (St. Petersburg: Slavia, 2012), 154–166.

173 Most texts are edited in Rachmati, *Türkische Turfan-Texte VII*. Some fragments are based on the system of the nine palaces (Chin. *jiu gong* 九宮). A re-edition of the amulets, including new ones, some of which are connected to the stars, is found in BT XXIII, 182–185.

174 Dieter Maue, "Sanskrit-uygurische Fragmente des *Āṭānāṭikasūtra* und des *Āṭānāṭikahr̥daya*," *Ural-Altäische Jahrbücher* Neue Folge 5 (1985): 98–122.

175 Edition and translation in BT XXIII, 31–45.

176 BT XXIII, 37.

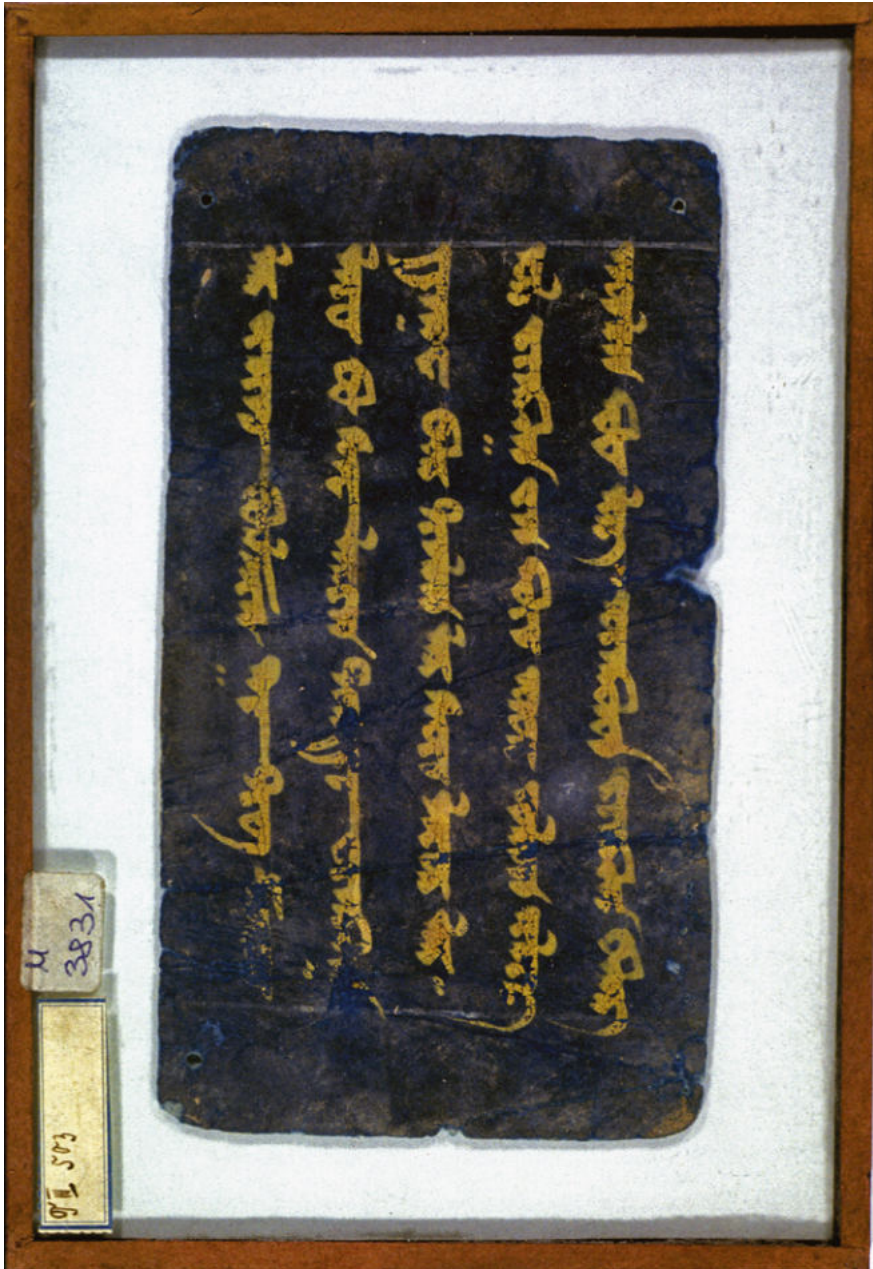


FIGURE 13.4 Old Uyghur leaf of the *Ātānātikasūtra*  
 U 3831 RECTO, DEPOSITUM DER BERLIN-BRANDENBURGISCHEN  
 AKADEMIE DER WISSENSCHAFTEN IN DER STAATSBIBLIOTHEK ZU  
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Three different versions of a snake charm entitled *Maitrīsūtra* that is related to the *Upasenasūtra* were identified:<sup>177</sup> first, a complete scroll containing a transliteration of the Sanskrit text in Uyghur script; second, one leaf of a small booklet with a Sanskrit-Old Uyghur bilingual text; and third, a *pustaka* manuscript in Old Uyghur. Only the first and the second text are independent works,<sup>178</sup> while the third is embedded in a manuscript that is a composite text with a basic narrative structure and formulaic parts.<sup>179</sup> As the title indicates and as is explicitly stated at the beginning of the third text, an important practical aspect of the snake charm is the perfecting of *maitrī*.

The practice of rainmaking with a special kind of stone is widespread in Inner Asia. There are a few fragments in Old Uyghur that mention this stone.<sup>180</sup> One of these fragments (U 3004) mentions a *maṇḍala* on the verso.<sup>181</sup> Interestingly, the word *mantal* (Skt. *maṇḍala*) is used together with the verb *ba-* 'to bind', which here means 'to construct' or 'to make use of in the context of a magical ritual'.<sup>182</sup>

An unidentified manuscript contains a quote from a ritual text along with two contracts and scribbles. In lines 13–15, the quote mentions that the practitioner should make a water *maṇḍala* in order to cause rain to fall.<sup>183</sup>

There are further fragments of spell-related literature. The Uyghurs knew the *Pañcarakṣā* quite well, as one can infer from extant *mantras* in Uyghur script. There are also fragments pertaining to individual works of the *Pañcarakṣā* collection.<sup>184</sup> And there is an archaic text that the editors interpreted as

177 Peter Zieme, "Indischer Schlangenzauber in uigurischer Überlieferung," in *Tibetan and Buddhist Studies Commemorating the 200th Anniversary of the Birth of Alexander Csoma de Kőrös*, ed. Louis Ligeti (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1984), 425–440. The story of Upasena is contained in the *Daśakarmapathāvadānamālā* as well.

178 Zieme, "Indischer Schlangenzauber," 427.

179 For this manuscript, see Wilkens, *Alttürkische Handschriften Teil 10*, 302–306.

180 Peter Zieme, "Appendix: Alttürkische Fragmente über den Regenstein," in *Weather Magic in Inner Asia*, ed. Ádám Molnár (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 1994), 147–151.

181 Zieme, "Regenstein," 148.

182 *Ibid.*, 148.

183 Raschmann and Sertkaya, *Alttürkische Handschriften Teil 20*, 170–171 (cat. no. 149, especially fn. 6).

184 Edition and translation in Peter Zieme, "Uigurische Fragmente aus der *Pañcarakṣā*," in *The Black Master: Essays on Central Eurasia in Honor of György Kara on His 70th Birthday*, ed. Stéphane Grivelet, et al. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005), 151–164. A fragment of an Old Uyghur translation of the *Mahāmāyūrī*, which is not only a transliteration of the *mantras* as in case of the other known pieces, is edited in Wilhelm Radloff, *Uigurische Sprachdenkmäler: Materialien nach dem Tode des Verfassers herausgegeben von S[ergej]*

containing rhymed sayings,<sup>185</sup> but which I prefer to treat as an incantation. In line 10, the word *saviš* ‘jinx, incantation, spell’ appears in the phrase *ačgu saviš* ‘revealing spell.’<sup>186</sup> However, the overall impression is that the incantation is not Buddhist in content. In the last three lines, the speaker announces that he wants to collect *taš* of certain animals, which the editors take to mean ‘testicles.’<sup>187</sup> But the literal meaning of the word is ‘stone’, and because all the animals mentioned are ruminants (sheep, bovines, goats, and stags), I take it to mean ‘bezoar’ (a concretion in the stomach or intestines of some animals).

## 2.9 Consecration Rituals

The stake inscriptions are a highly important group of local Buddhist sources, four of which are in Old Uyghur (nos. I, III, IV, and V) and one in Chinese (no. II).<sup>188</sup> These stakes made of wood are clearly connected to consecration rituals of Buddhist buildings. In the inscribed texts of stake inscriptions I and III, members of the Uyghur nobility appear as a group of faithful Buddhists. It is possible that there is a connection between these wooden stakes—either

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*Malov* (Leningrad: Verlag der Akademie der Wissenschaften der USSR, 1928), 109–112. It was later identified and reedited with parallel Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Mongolian, in Pentti Aalto, “Prolegomena to an Edition of the *Pañcarakṣā*,” *Studia Orientalia* 19.2 (1954): 29–34. Aalto also points out that the text published in Radloff, *Uigurische Sprachdenkmäler*, 194–196 is likely a commentary to the *Pañcarakṣā*, although it was—in Aalto’s words—“very clumsily edited”. However, Aalto’s assumption that the text is a commentary cannot be confirmed. In the first text Radloff edited, the deity is conceived of as male. Zieme identified a fragment of the *Mahāpratisarā* from the Northern Section of the Mogao Caves (B 464:146) as the *Mahāpratisarā* (BT XXII, 9). On the *Mahāpratisarā*, see Gergely Hidas, *Mahāpratisarā-Mahāvīdyārājñī, the Great Amulet, Great Queen of Spells: Introduction, Critical Editions and Annotated Translations* (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture and Aditya Prakashan, 2012). A reference to the Old Uyghur version is on p. 10.

185 For this interpretation see the edition in Semih Tezcan and Peter Zieme, “Alttürkische Reimsprüche. Ein neuer Text,” *Journal of Turkology* 2.2 (1994): 259–271.

186 Tezcan and Zieme, “Alttürkische Reimsprüche,” 262. The editors think that the keyword *saviš* means ‘Reimspruch’. Tezcan and Zieme, “Alttürkische Reimsprüche,” 259. For a discussion of the verb *sav-* “to bewitch” and its derivatives (*saviš* etc.), see Georges-Jean Pinault, Michaël Peyrot, and Jens Wilkens, “Vernaculars of the Silk Road—A Tocharian B—Old Uyghur Bilingual,” *Journal Asiatique* 307.1 (2019): 81b–82a.

187 Tezcan and Zieme, “Alttürkische Reimsprüche,” 264.

188 See the article by Takao Moriyasu, “Uighur Buddhist Stake Inscriptions from Turfan,” in *De Dunhuang à Istanbul: Hommage à James Russell Hamilton*, ed. Louis Bazin and Peter Zieme (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), 148–223, in which stake inscriptions I and III are edited and translated. According to Moriyasu (*ibid.*, 157), stake inscription V is from the Yuan Dynasty.



driving them into the earth or placing them into walls—and the use of *khadirakilakas* (pegs made of *khadira* wood) in Buddhist rituals of India and elsewhere. It is possible that the mention of a harpist (OU *kuḥhauči*) in an enumeration of persons from different walks of life in stake inscription I indicates that the consecration ritual itself was accompanied by music.<sup>189</sup>

### 3 Concluding Remarks

The appropriation of ritualistic literature took a long time in Uyghur Buddhism and served various purposes, from individual needs to imperial demands. The history of this process still has to be reconstructed on the basis of the extant sources. Such an endeavour would also have to take local varieties of Buddhism into account. The secular documents provide interesting materials, such as naming the four *mahārāja* kings and the seven sisters as witnesses in contracts.<sup>190</sup> What seems to be certain now is that Dunhuang was a source of new text-related ritual systems, such as the one exemplified in the *Shiwang jing* 十王經 [Scripture on the Ten Kings], which was extremely popular at Dunhuang. The text reached the Turfan region, presumably in the late phase of classical Uyghur literature, by the end of the 11th or the beginning of the 12th century. von Gabain was the first to discuss illustrated fragments of the Old Uyghur version of the *Scripture on the Ten Kings* retrieved from the Turfan region.<sup>191</sup> Kōgi Kudara later added a fragment found at Dunhuang.<sup>192</sup> Given the importance of the Chinese original of this scripture in its different recensions in the Dunhuang region,<sup>193</sup> it seems highly probable that the Uyghurs received

189 Jens Wilkens, “Buddhism in the West Uyghur Kingdom and Beyond,” in *Transfer of Buddhism Across Central Asian Networks (7th to 13th Centuries)*, ed. Carmen Meinert (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2016), 202.

190 Nobuo Yamada, *Sammlung uigurischer Kontrakte*, ed. Juten Oda, et al., vol. 2 (Osaka: Osaka University Press, 1993), 130–131 (document Em01 l. 17), 136–137 (document WP02 lines 17–18). See also Raschmann, Sertkaya, *Alttürkische Handschriften Teil 20*, 113 (cat. no. 074, fn. 6).

191 Annemarie von Gabain, “Kṣitigarbha-Kult in Zentralasien: Buchillustrationen aus den Turfan-Funden,” in *Indologen-Tagung 1971: Verhandlungen der Indologischen Arbeitstagung im Museum für Indische Kunst Berlin 7.–9. Oktober 1971*, ed. Herbert Härtel and Volker Moeller (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1973), 47–71, especially 53–56.

192 Kudara Kōgi 百濟康義, “Tenri toshokanzō Uiguru-go bunken 天理図書館蔵ウイグル語文献 Uigur Texts Preserved at Tenri Central Library,” *Biburia* ビブリア *Biblia* 86 (1986): 147.

193 Stephen F. Teiser, *The Scripture on the Ten Kings and the Making of Purgatory in Medieval Chinese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994).

the complex system of the purgatories and the related scripture as well as their iconography and rites from Dunhuang. Zieme studies the textual material in an article,<sup>194</sup> later complemented by Simone-Christiane Raschmann's paper.<sup>195</sup> The case of the transmission of this particular work may serve as an example of how open the Uyghurs were to religious innovations. Art historical research reveals that the esoteric pictorial programme of some of the caves at Bezeklik (Turfan)—especially the iconography of Avalokiteśvara—was also inspired by esoteric Dunhuang art.<sup>196</sup> This applies especially to Cave 20, where a pedestal, mural paintings, silk banners, and even vestiges of a wooden statue are connected with this bodhisattva.<sup>197</sup> The name Čituŋ (Chin. Zhi tong 智通) mentioned in a cartouche retrieved from the cave was identified as the same person who acted as a translator of the Chinese *dhāraṇī* mentioned above (T. 1057. 20).<sup>198</sup>

A further line of enquiry is ascertaining the ritual implications of why various works serving ritual purposes were combined in one manuscript.<sup>199</sup> To give one example, the last part of the confession text *Kṣanti kulmak nom bitig* [The Book Called Making a Confession] mentioned above is extant in fragmentary form in one specific piece of a scroll from the Turfan Collection in Berlin (U 5033).<sup>200</sup> The first part of the fragment refers apparently to the misdeeds of other people. It is followed by a colophon which remarks that two lay persons commissioned the copy of one scroll each of the *Yamarājasūtra*

- 194 Peter Zieme, "Old Turkish Versions of the 'Scripture on the Ten Kings,'" in *Proceedings of the 38th PIAC; Kawasaki, Japan: August 7–12, 1995*, ed. Giovanni Stary (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1996), 401–425. Zieme (p. 402) underlines that it is difficult to ascertain which Chinese recension the Old Uyghur fragments parallel, given their poor state of preservation.
- 195 Simone-Christiane Raschmann, "The Old Turkish Fragments of The Scripture on the Ten Kings (十王經 Shiwangjing) in the Collection of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, RAS," in *Dunhuang Studies: Prospects and Problems for the Coming Second Century of Research* 敦煌學: 第二個百年的研究視角與問題 Дунхуановедение: перспективы и проблемы второго столетия исследований, ed. Irina F. Popova and Liu Yi (St. Petersburg: Slavia, 2012), 209–216.
- 196 Li Lin, "Esoteric Buddhist Relics of the Uighur Kingdom Period in Bezeklik Temple," *Zentralasiatische Studien* 36 (2007): 61–78.
- 197 Koichi Kitsudo, "Historical Significance of Bezeklik Cave 20 in the Uyghur Buddhism," in *Torufan no bukkyō to bijutsu: Uiguru bukkyō o chūshin ni* トルファンへの仏教と美術: ウイグル仏教を中心に. *Buddhism and Art in Turfan: From the Perspective of Uyghur Buddhism*, ed. by Research Center for Buddhist Cultures in Asia, Ryukoku University (Kyoto: Ryukoku University, 2013), 142–143. See also Fig. 3.
- 198 Kitsudo, "Historical Significance," 147.
- 199 See also the colophon by Bodhidhvaja Śīla mentioned above.
- 200 Edited and translated in Peter Zieme, "Colophons to the *Sākiḥ yūkmāk yaruq*," *Altorientalische Forschungen* 10.1 (1983): 146–147.

(OU *y(a)mlaywaŋ-ke*, Chin. *Yanluowang jing* 閻羅王經), the *Säkiz Yügmäk Yaruk* [Brilliance of the Eight Accumulations], and *the Book Called Making a Confession*.<sup>201</sup> The context of the collection of texts to which the colophon refers could very well be a mortuary ritual to safeguard the wellbeing of the donors' deceased family members. Transference of merit for deceased family members was widespread among the Uyghurs. One example is a famous votive banner that was devised for the soul (OU *özüt*) of Kara Totok, the father of the dedicating person.<sup>202</sup> Zsuzsanna Gulácsi recently interpreted this specimen as a funerary banner.<sup>203</sup> Written information on textile materials in ritual functions is rather scarce, but one such document from a late period, viz. the Yuan Dynasty, is a request for embroidered depictions of Vajrapāṇi, Samantabhadra, and Mañjuśrī.<sup>204</sup>

201 A re-edition and translation of the colophon is in BT XXVI, 246.

202 Moriyasu and Zieme, "Uighur Inscriptions," 464c–465a.

203 Zsuzsanna Gulácsi, "The Manichaean Roots of a Pure Land Banner from Kocho (III 4524) in the Asian Art Museum, Berlin," in *Language, Society, and Religion in the World of the Turks: Festschrift for Larry Clark at Seventy-Five*, ed. Zsuzsanna Gulácsi (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018), 337–376.

204 Dolkun Kāmbiri 多魯坤 = 闕白爾, Umemura Hiroshi 梅村坦, and Moriyasu Takao 森安孝夫, "Uiguru bun bukkyō sonzō juryō meirei monjo kenkyū USp nanbā 64 nado ni mieru 'čuv' no kaishaku o kanete ウイグル文佛教尊像受領命令文書研究 USp No. 64 などにみえる 'čuv' の解釈を兼ねて. A Study on the Uyghur Order Document of Receiving Buddhist Portraits: Interpretation of the Word 'čuv' Seen in the USp No. 64 and Others Combined," *Ajia-Afurika gengo bunka kenkyū* アジアアフリカ言語文化研究 *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 40 (1990): 14–15 (photo on p. 16).

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